

# AIR FORCE NEWS



#265

FEB|24

## MAVERICK OR MENTOR?

STORIES OF LEADERSHIP IN THE AIR FORCE

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**EDITOR**  
Rebecca Quilliam

**CREATIVE DIRECTION**  
Sam Shepherd

**DESIGN**  
Matt Chan  
Mike Hutchinson

**PHOTOGRAPHY**  
Sam Shepherd  
Corporal Naomi James  
Corporal Rachel Pugh  
Corporal Sean Spivey  
Leading Aircraftman Andy Jenkins

**Printed by**  
Bluestar  
Private Bag 39996,  
Wellington

**Distribution**  
Email: [airforcenews@nzdf.mil.nz](mailto:airforcenews@nzdf.mil.nz)

ISSN 1175-2327  
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# FIRST WORDS



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AIR VICE-MARSHAL DARRYN WEBB

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Effective leadership lies at the core of all that we do as an Air Force. Delivering military air operations remains fundamentally about you, the aviator.

It's appropriate therefore to spend time talking about behaviours and leadership in order to maximise our potential.

A military aviation operating environment is complex, where success often goes to those who think, decide and act faster than the adversary. We call this decision superiority, driven by culture, training, systems and tools. All of these elements are further underpinned and enabled by leadership - from senior positions right down to junior aviators.

Leadership should enable the complete application of air power across the force, empowering and trusting our teams to make difficult and often time-bound decisions. Air Force leaders at every level must push those decisions to the lowest, competent and capable team or individual level, sound in the knowledge that leadership provides a foundation stone to enable successful outcomes.

Having emphasised the criticality of leadership to mission success, I will touch on a couple of additional elements that resonate with me.

Leaders set the culture, which is a powerful aspect of any organisation. A strong and coherent culture enables the sense of collective purpose and the trust needed for military aviation activities and, ultimately, to win on operations.

Leadership is tested when things go wrong.

I experienced this in my role in the national Covid response. Leadership in this environment required the courage to make rapid decisions with incomplete information, and across areas beyond my own experiences. And the same for my teams. I took heart from the trust and support offered to me and simply did my best. That's all I ask from you.

Most importantly, is that at all stages of your career you are leading. Leading yourself, leading your team, and leading your boss. If we all keep "front of mind" the fact we are leading in some way every day, then this will ensure we are better prepared for an uncertain future by growing the best leaders possible - your efforts today will enable the RNZAF's future success.



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## AIRCRAFTMAN HOLLIE BRUCE

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Leadership can be defined as motivating a group of people to act towards a common goal. To me, leadership is about encouraging one another to perform to the best of your abilities.

Leadership plays such an important role in the Air Force and the Defence Force as a whole as without it we would never be able to achieve the tasks that are presented to us.

My leadership journey within the Air Force has only very recently begun on the R3/23 recruit course, but while there, I was faced with many challenges and worked with many different people, allowing me to start building a foundation on how to work more effectively within a team as a leader or even just as a member of the team.

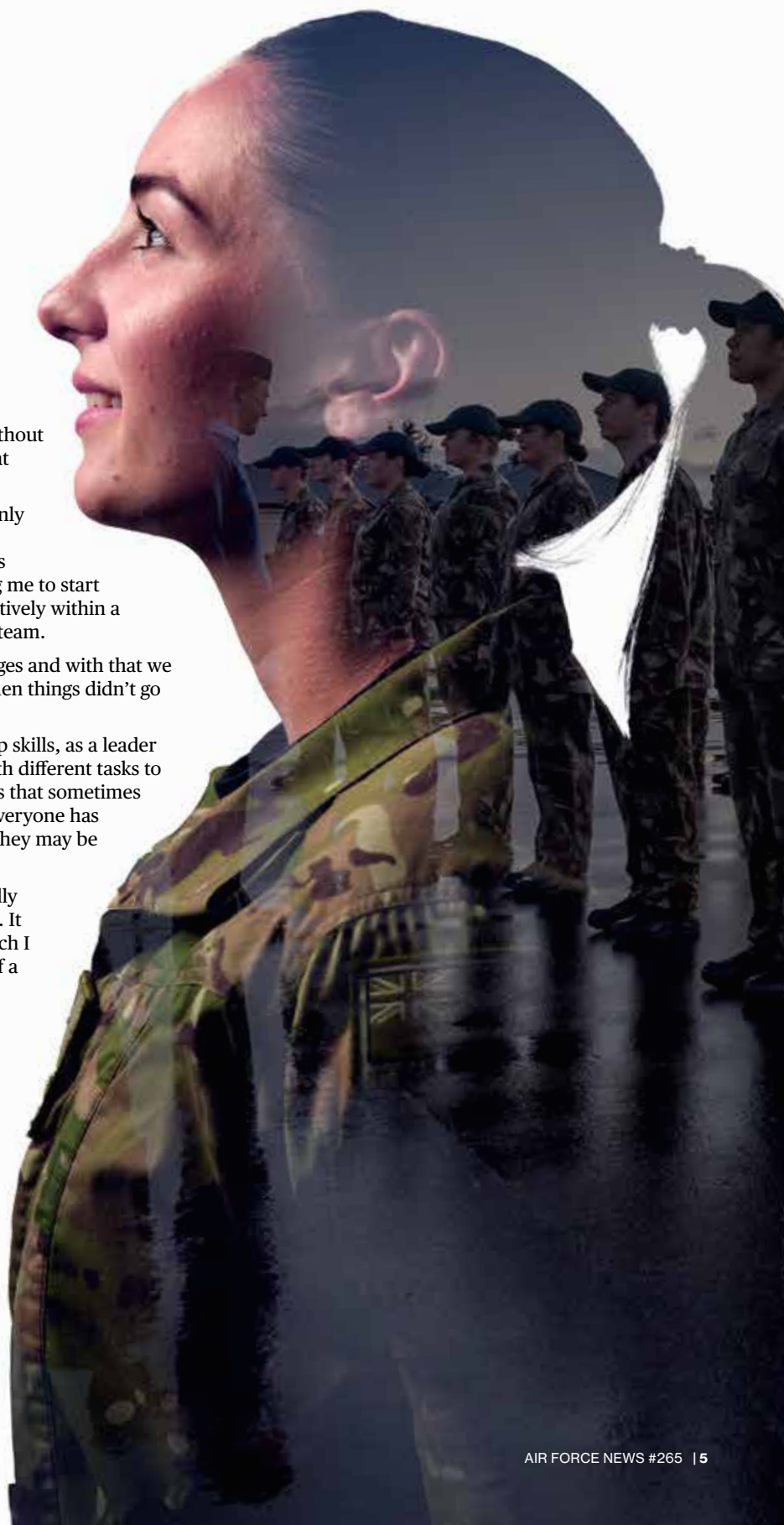
Recruit course came with many different challenges and with that we had to learn how to adapt and “bounce back” when things didn’t go exactly to plan.

I believe this helped me develop better leadership skills, as a leader needs to be adaptive and resilient when faced with different tasks to best prepare and organise their team. This means that sometimes you have to lean on your team and understand everyone has different strengths and weaknesses so therefore they may be better suited to help resolve any arising issues.

It means that your team sees you as more of an ally rather than someone who “bosses” them around. It creates better team morale and overall trust, which I believe to be two of the most important factors of a strong and capable team.

Overall, I found that the recruit course has provided me with a solid foundation to build up core leadership skills to continue to use as I progress in my career in the Air Force and I am excited to see how I can continue building on this in the future.

I truly believe that leadership is about supporting those around you to help each other achieve your best potential, and in turn creating a more efficient team to complete the tasks at hand.



WHAKAORATIA TE MAURI ME NGĀ UARĀ

# ETHOS & VALUES

From day one of recruit course our aviators are introduced to the concept of being a military leader and to understand the values and ethos that underpin the Defence Force. The building blocks to becoming a senior leader start with teaching each recruit to lead themselves, before moving towards leading teams, capability and finally, the organisation. The leadership journey means recruits can envision a clear path from understanding basic leadership skills to influencing top decision-makers in government.

**STORIES**

LEADERSHIP BUILDING BLOCKS  
BUILDING LEADERS  
LIVING THE VALUES

# OS VALUES





# LEADERSHIP BUILDING BLOCKS

FLIGHT LIEUTENANT YVONNE REID



***We are teaching strategic self-awareness and self-reflection to ensure recruits are continually developing their leadership abilities.***

Base Woodbourne boasts “the Air Force starts here”. And it does in so many ways. The base is the foundation of the Air Force because everyone who joins the service starts their career there.

Hopeful aviators looking to begin their career, either in the ranks as trade professionals or as officers, are introduced to military life and the Defence Force Leadership Development Framework, at the Command Recruit Training Squadron (CRTS). Here the foundation leadership blocks are laid with behavioural expectations at the Lead Self level.

Leadership begins with leading self and, although the context may change as leaders progress through the organisation, it is critical that leaders continue to “lead self” at all levels of the Defence Force.

Flight Lieutenant (FLTLT) Yvonne Reid said the concept of Lead Self was to take accountability for your actions and standards, as well as learning to contribute to a team.

“It’s where initial discipline is taught as they transition from civilian life to military life. We teach everything they need to know to set them up for military service and the foundations for leadership development aspect is at the Lead Self level using the NZDF Leadership Development Framework.”

CRTS instructors use both theory-based and practical leadership lessons, providing feedback and always tying it back to the framework.

“We check if their bed space is up to standard. If they fail to meet the standard - what is that action/inaction telling us? As staff we may need to focus more on their attention to detail, time management, situational awareness, and how this ties into the workplace.”

Leadership principles can be taught although some people may appear to be more “natural” leaders than others, FLTLT Reid said.

“We don’t get to see all the developmental opportunities they have encountered prior to them arriving on course. Unfortunately some recruits and officer cadets are not able to display the behaviours within the limited time that we’ve got to test them and don’t graduate their initial training course.”

Aviators periodically return to CRTS at key milestones in their career to attend Professional Development Courses (PDC). They receive formal instruction and feedback to hone their leadership skills and develop their strategic self-awareness as they advance in their careers and through the Leadership Framework.

At the next leadership level, the Corporal PDC and the RNZAF Officer Commissioning (ROC) Course, aviators are introduced to the Lead Teams concept. On these courses the staff expect more from the aviators.

“They all need to model the Defence Force ethos and values as they are going to be the moral compass for their team - they need to hold themselves to account at the Lead Self level and they need to hold others to account as well,” FLTLT Reid said.

At the Lead Teams level, personnel are assessed on their ability to lead a team during a practical leadership activity.

“They make decisions and align their behaviours to meet the intent that has been given to them by command. They then get things done through others by mobilising a team to achieve the mission while keeping command informed. At the end of the activity they must be able to debrief command in a clear, concise manner and show they can take accountability for their team’s actions and decisions.”

So, how important is it to start leadership training from day one?

“We can begin that growth curve right from the start. We can say how it affects them now, in the context of the course they are on, how it plays forward to the next course and how it plays forward to the workplace, post-course. We can do that graduated build based on where they are at as an individual,” FLTLT Reid said.

“The leadership application that we are looking for is how an individual can slide from collaborative to autocratic style, based on the situation requirement - the ability to apply the full scale of the leadership spectrum appropriately.

“It’s the same foundational leadership building blocks with the context changing as they progress in their careers. We are teaching them strategic self-awareness and how to maintain continual self-reflection to ensure they are continually developing their leadership abilities.”







# BUILDING LEADERS

WING COMMANDER BO PALMER



***The leadership philosophy isn't about changing people's values, but giving them a framework.***

While CRTS looks after foundational leader development for Air Force, programmes for the advanced levels (operational and strategic) are run by the Institute for Leader Development (ILD).

The Assistant Director Leader Development at ILD, Wing Commander (WGCDR) Bo Palmer says the Defence Force leadership framework has recently undergone a refresh including bicultural elements.

“All the leadership development programmes are specifically designed to help people with the transition from one level of leadership to another. The programmes can also help civilians as they come into Defence Force, so that all our leaders can understand a) the framework and where they now fit, and b) how they can add value while operating at that level of leadership,” WGCDR Palmer said.

“There are phases you go through in leadership when you go to a new level - what we call orient, build and advance - and the aim of our programmes are to help leaders get to the advanced stage quicker, so the organisation is benefitting from better leaders at a much earlier rate than if we did nothing.”

At the operational level the focus is on lifting people's thinking and leadership out of the tactical space and into the operational level, he said.

“Then at the strategic level it's how leaders think strategically, how they grow their capacity to deal with complexity and how they manage organisations and work closely with other government departments and agencies and set agendas - how they create political confidence.

Everyone brings their own personality to their leadership, which creates much-needed diversity, he said. It is about utilising your strengths and understanding how to mitigate behaviours that limit your ability to influence in a positive way.

In the NZDF hierarchical rank structure, there is leadership at every level.

“After Lead Self, every level is leading the level below them. We have seven leadership levels across the structure, but at every level we are all leading 'self' and leading our direct reports, and also impacting those around us. Of course not everyone is going to make the top levels of leadership but everybody should have the opportunity to develop themselves, to be a better leader tomorrow than they were today,” WGCDR Palmer said.

The new symbol or “tohu” of the framework is a tōtara tree, which helps to explain and describe the development of Defence Force leaders. For example the growth of leaders begins at the core of the trunk. The innermost ring is the first level of leadership, Lead Self, and the next level is Lead Team and so on. Lead Self and Lead Teams remain at the core of all levels of leadership.

“Even the Chief of Air Force (CAF) first of all has to lead self and lead his small team. The behaviours don't change but, the context changes, compared with a Pilot Officer or a Corporal leading a team working in a bay at Ohakea or Whenuapai,” he said.

“CAF also has responsibility for leading the whole of the Air Force. He has the experience, knowledge, ability to deal with complexity and lead the organisation while gaining the trust and confidence of Chief of Defence Force and the various Ministers he reports to or meets.

“As you grow from the time you join the organisation, you are given opportunities and exposure to things that will help develop you as a person and as a leader.”

# LIVING THE VALUES

WARRANT OFFICER KERRY WILLIAMS



***It's important to have the confidence to acknowledge good leadership and courage to go out on a limb to make a difference if we have the opportunity.***

Just be a good human. It's not a complicated expectation, but if people in the Air Force practise that basic premise alongside the foundation of the service's ethics and values then aviator skills can be built on that, Warrant Officer of the Air Force, Warrant Officer (W/O) Kerry Williams says.

"My message to recruits is three things - step out of bed every morning and be a good human; every now and then be an even better human; and look after your mates. If they do those three things standing on our foundation of values, they can't fall far."

When thinking about ethos and values, W/O Williams says the service offers a pathway to shape people's personal values to align with the Defence Force's, which contributes to making a great team, building the ability to produce great outputs.

Translating that into Air Force life is in the actions personnel take when nobody is looking, he said.

"It's leading by example, doing the right thing. It's observing others and it's calling on the value of comradeship."

When personnel reach the level of leading leaders, that's when the "rubber hits the road" and they are more influential in the organisation.

"I've always thought there was a recovery piece in there as well - if you've learnt some lessons after making mistakes as a junior aviator. You get into the senior non-commissioned or officer positions

and you get that chance to reset and drive a positive organisational perspective based on where you fit into it," W/O Williams said.

There can't be a discussion about ethics and values without mentioning the Defence Force's four core values - Tū Kaha (Courage), Tū Tika (Commitment), Tū Tira (Comradeship) and Tū Māia (Integrity).

"Those four can cover off pretty much every behaviour within our space. Every value has its merit but integrity is doing what you've said you are going to do. It really is that piece when you're on your own and people aren't looking, you do the job to the best of your ability for what you've been tasked with doing.

"Commitment is around making some personal sacrifices, along with committing to your mates, and your role in the service. And courage - it's tough to step up and do a lot of that stuff. So it's the courage to demonstrate the commitment and integrity to support people in challenging and unfamiliar environments that is essential."

Throughout his career, W/O Williams paid attention to the leadership styles he didn't want to take on.

Making a behavioural change in an entrenched organisation can be difficult, but W/O Williams says he's proud of "tidying up the language" during his time at No. 5 Squadron.

"Under my watch, unpopular at the time until people got it, was elimination of the C-bomb."

He also asked personnel use some emotional intelligence and situational awareness before using the F-word during meetings, phone calls, and in open conversations.

"Out on the flight line with a mate, go for it, but when other people are around, some awareness of your level of language is appropriate."

He encountered pushback from this position with complaints that staff were "walking on eggshells" all the time.

"Nobody had been brought into my office and been given a dressing-down because of their language lately - so, were they really walking on eggshells or was the plan actually working because they were checking themselves before saying something?"

There is always work to do in maintaining ethics and values in such a diverse and large organisation, he said, especially around the acceptance of social aspects of the force that can enhance the reduction of sexual harm and the use of substances and alcohol. That's comradeship and looking after our mates.

"But we need to consider the impact of an individual's behaviours and unwillingness for some to call out that behaviour. One thing I'd love is for our commanders and managers to have more conversations with their people and where necessary documented in their performance reviews - so there is still some work to be done in those places," W/O Williams said.





ARONGA WHAKATAKANGA

# MISSI FOCU

## STORIES

IMMEDIATE RESPONSE  
ON THE SCENE  
LEADERSHIP DURING CHAOS  
BASE COMMAND  
HOSTILE TERRITORY

# ION S

A calamity can often strike without warning. Whether it be generated by humans or a natural disaster, leaders need to be ready to direct their teams in the aftermath. In order to be ready for crisis, leadership skills, like any others, must be practised over and over beforehand. So the way you lead in the quiet times helps to build the skills you need when you have to dig deep.







# IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

SQUADRON LEADER ANDY SCRASE



***When I think back there's a fair bit of pride, with something like that with a real singular focus that drags everybody together to achieve the same aim.***

After co-ordinating the initial emergency response and rescues from Ohakea, Squadron Leader (SQNLDR) Andy Scrase led the first Air Force detachment into Hawke's Bay in the aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Gabrielle. His first job was to establish a permanent footprint at Bridge Pa, about 10km from Hastings.

"We'd had pretty good reports on the scale of the devastation, but I think with that kind of event, it doesn't matter how much people tell you about it, you don't truly appreciate it until you see it for yourself," he said.

The immediate concern was to ensure the teams on the ground were being looked after and were in the right place to get out the door and do the job.

"We were focussed on working together to get things set up so it would all work. We had to establish lines of communications immediately and establish where we were getting our taskings from."

That process to start with was "quite messy", SQNLDR Scrase said.

"But the command and control we used was some of the best I've ever seen. The Operations Order had a phrase in it saying 'I trust you as commanders and if you see tasks that can be completed within your abilities, then you have my authority to go ahead to achieve that'."

From there the team was trusted to liaise with the civil defence authorities and crack on with tasks that needed to be done.

"So the real key to victory to achieve things was that freedom of movement we had to operate in," he said.

"Everyone has different perspectives from the different levels they are working at, but because everyone was working in the same direction, their actions and work goes towards achieving the same thing."

Leadership in his role meant having a lot of confidence in his people, trusting them and not micromanaging them, SQNLDR Scrase said.

"Also understanding your responsibility in that leadership position is actually to support the people going out the door and achieving tasks."

"It's about identifying all the information they need and making sure they have it as soon as possible. And filtering some where you can, that's filtering out the background noise that's not relevant to what they are getting on with."



# ON THE SCENE

SQUADRON LEADER ANDREW STEWART



***Our first job was to pick up a police officer and take him for a recce around the Esk Valley. We saw people stuck in places in the valley, so we ended up picking them up until the helicopter was full.***

Piloting the first NH90 over the devastation wrecked by Tropical Cyclone Gabrielle compelled Squadron Leader (SQNLDR) Andrew (Stewie) Stewart to urgently send messages back to Base Ohakea to convey the magnitude of the disaster.

“We were looking at Esk Valley, which essentially looked like a tidal wave had come down during the night. Then elsewhere there were square kilometres where the water was above the rooflines and there were hundreds of people stuck on rooftops in horrible weather.”

SQNLDR Stewart was then directed to people stranded on roofs in Pakowhai, south of Napier. With all usual communications systems down, he needed to use a high frequency radio to get the message back to Ohakea to launch more helicopters. They sent over another two immediately.

“After the first day of flying around I thought we would be there with at least three helicopters for a week and then at least one helicopter for up to a month. That was the scale of destruction we saw after that first day, realising there would be massive flow-on effects for a while.”

SQNLDR Stewart had seen his fair share of disasters, he was the first Defence Force helicopter on the scene following the Kaikoura earthquake and had been part of the effort to help with Australia’s devastating wildfires a couple of years ago. While he was able to use that experience, the Hawke’s Bay deployment was the most challenging due to the urgent nature of the response.

“We knew if we weren’t pulling people off roofs they would either drown or be up there for the night risking hypothermia. I drew on all my previous experience to help in Hawke’s Bay. It might not be directly related, but it all helps. For a lot of the crew it was their first experience of a Natcon (national contingency) callout.”

Helicopters and crews ended up being deployed in the region for a month. SQNLDR Stewart was deployed for the first week of the disaster and then the taskings were more about sustainment and other crews came in to help.

It was gratifying to see so many Defence Force teams and outside organisations come together to help in the aftermath of the disaster, he said.

“In New Zealand you find that everyone wants to help as much as possible. The maintainers and other support staff at Ohakea were pulling some huge hours getting the helicopters up and ready - at some points we were having five or six helicopters deployed around New Zealand, of the fleet of eight.

“So everyone was giving that buy-in. It was easy leadership getting people to work those longer hours - the maintainers and refuellers, everyone wanted to get stuck in. We almost had to stop people from volunteering for everything. It was heart-warming.”







# LEADERSHIP DURING CHAOS

SQUADRON LEADER SAM ESTALL



***Tasks would come in and they'd come up with a plan, but no plan ever survives first contact. Mike Tyson used to say everyone has a plan until they get punched in the mouth.***

As the detachment commander of the rotary wing task unit in the midst of the chaotic environment Cyclone Gabrielle left in its wake, Squadron Leader (SQNLDR) Sam Estall fielded tasking requests from numerous quarters.

“I was in charge of the No. 3 Squadron team and attached enablers - so fuel, communications, security forces and medical,” he said.

“It was quite a complex command and control situation there because there were three streams of taskings - we could get tasks directly from Army, but we were also receiving tasks from the Emergency Operations Centre, so effectively from the civilian side, and then we could still also receive tasks from higher up, via Joint.”

He was also working alongside civilian helicopter companies, which worked with an Air Liaison Officer to allocate tasks.

“It sounds really messy and it was really messy, but it worked fine actually. There would sometimes need to be some “horse trading” with the civilian helicopters when missions with a higher priority landed unexpectedly, but the team made it work, SQNLDR Estall said.

“In reality, each day would start with a tentative plan, knowing that it wasn't necessarily going to happen like that and a whole bunch of other tasks would come in, in real time throughout the day and we would deal with them in real time. It was very reactionary.”

The destruction of the cyclone had left small, isolated communities totally vulnerable and several requests for high priority but sensitive tasks came in from NZ Police.

“These were tasks that needed to be done by Defence helicopters, so we had to quickly co-ordinate with all the other stakeholders, re-organise the entire day's plan and push the new tasks to the crews while they were airborne.

“It was pretty chaotic. The challenge on the leadership side was to deal with all that noise so that the crews could go out and do their jobs. We wanted to protect the flying crews and the maintainers from that constant churn and chaotic nature of that, so we could just tell them what jobs to do and when.”

Coming from Taradale, SQNLDR Estall said it was rough seeing his home town badly damaged.

“I have friends and family still living there and everyone on the detachment knew someone who lived there or had family in the area. No matter where you are in New Zealand, it's always close to home for us. I did some flying in the area a few days after the cyclone went through and the devastation was unreal.

“It was also good to see, on consecutive days things start to improve as well. Awatoto was completely under water. I took a series of photos and each day it got better and better. It was good to see the recovery happening in real time - you could see the roads being restored and bridges being fixed and traffic starting to flow and areas starting to dry out.

“But you land at some of the communities and it's not until you get on the ground you realise how hard they are doing it as well.”

# BASE COMMAND

WING COMMANDER GEOFF PIERCE



***We knew fuel in Hawke's Bay needed to be conserved for the community, so each day we sent a tanker from Ohakea to fuel the aircraft.***

Base Ohakea was the nexus for the personnel deployed to Hawke's Bay following the devastating cyclone. And Wing Commander (WGCDR) Geoff Pierce was at the heart of the communication team.

"As part of our national emergency plan we come under 1 Brigade and communications were quickly established between us," he said.

"We had helicopters pushing forward on a national contingency response across to the East Cape - we had two going across there immediately. Then we started planning all the support enablers to support that."

The biggest and most immediate challenge was the lack of communications into the shattered area.

"Right across the board communication was the major problem and we had to work that out on the fly. I had the Pinzgauer forward to where we needed it. Quickly in theatre the Pinzgauer became the communications system to the aircraft as well, so the detachment commander was able to jump in the back and speak with the aircraft directly."

WGCDR Pierce led the daily commander's update brief with the Base Commander so he was aware of what his assets were doing and where they were going, as well as ensuring he was hooked in with the commanding officer of 1 Brigade, making sure the response was covered.

Finding roads that were open for the tankers was a challenge, with the team pulling every data source they could to make sure they had the right information for the ground movements, he said.

"The first three or four days got us into a rhythm. Once we were established at Bridge Pa and we got good communications, we were able to include all the commanding officers in the daily meetings and they could respond to the Base Commander or detachment commander's RFI (requests for information)," he said.

Leaning on previous experience with the Christchurch earthquake response and being the Defence Attaché in Japan when they did North Korean missile crisis training, WGCDR Pierce said he was in a good position to "work on the fly" ensuring command and teams were getting necessary information.

"I think from the initial callout until we were established and it was becoming more of a daily process, everyone stepped up," WGCDR Pierce said.

"We had good communications between the base commanding officers and the base enabler units, and we had a local emergency response group on stand-by ready to move. The base just got in behind it - you look back and you've got to be proud of the fact the base did respond so quickly.

"We already had helicopters in Auckland for some previous flooding and we had eight of our emergency response group also up there, so then to stand it up straight away with Gabrielle, it was pretty impressive to see that work."



# HOSTILE TERRITORY

FLIGHT LIEUTENANT CRAIG HARNETT



***The task was unusual because normally we would talk with the former war lords or local dignitaries and negotiate the handing over of ordnance or weapons, but this was a case of we're going in to get it.***

Flying in a Chinook helicopter at first light into hostile Afghanistan territory to destroy more than five tonnes of enemy ordnance was something Flight Lieutenant (FLTTL) Craig Harnett will never forget.

The mission in October 2007 was dangerous so the team was encouraged to call home to family before taking off, so long as they gave nothing away.

"I thought I'd done a good job talking to mum and making it just like a phone call to say hi and that I was okay - but after returning to New Zealand, mum said she knew we were about to do something, she picked it up."

Operation Atash was carried out at the tail end of FLTTL Harnett's six-month rotation as part of Crib 10. His role was as one of two Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) operators embedded in the rotation.

The team had received intelligence that a large cache of Taliban ordnance was being stored in a cave near Qardendah Village and the militant group was keen to get their hands on it.

"In fact they were cutting a road into the area so they could truck all this ordnance out, so there was a rush to beat them to it."

The New Zealand-led mission was supported by the United States military, which provided Apache gunship and Chinook helicopters.

"We had four EOD personnel from the 720th Ordnance Company helping us because of the size, location and complexity of what we were doing.

We also had two Kiwi patrols providing all-round security during the operation," FLTTL Harnett said.

"We landed near the location and were prepared for resistance to our arrival and our intentions. It was pretty terrifying when we got out of the back of the helicopter, you couldn't see a thing with the amount of dirt and dust the Chinooks kicked up.

"We got off the ramp, moved out a bit and lay down on the ground and waited for the sky to clear so we could work out which direction was which. Thankfully there was nobody there having a go at us."

FLTTL Harnett made his way to the cave where the cache was believed to be, but found only a couple of boxes of machine gun bullets. Worried the intelligence was wrong, he went into the village where it was discovered the villagers had moved the cache into two of the local houses.

His fellow EOD operator, Sergeant (SGT) Te Whaea Edwards, went to the second house and both teams methodically went about removing the ordnance, which included rockets and landmines.

They then hired locals and 25 of their donkeys to transport it all to a neighbouring valley for its destruction.

"We set up a corridor, loaded the donkeys up with ordnance and they travelled back and forth all day delivering the weapons where we could conduct the demolition safely without any risk to the locals or damage to their buildings."

The explosion was "massive", FLTTL Harnett said.

"It was like one of those big dust storms you see in the movies that just blacks everything out. We heard the sound of the explosion and it went completely dark as all the dust from the explosion drifted over us, which was pretty unnerving."

Time was running out for the team to leave the area and it came down to literally the last few minutes for FLTTL Harnett to notify the Patrol Commander to request the helicopters return to take them back to base.

"We didn't want to stay the night because it was an area that was unsafe. Given what we'd just done, we'd probably just upset a few people."

The task's execution rested on the shoulders of FLTTL Harnett and SGT Edwards who co-ordinated everyone involved, including the American EOD team and the land transport (donkeys).

"Knowing the time pressure we were under, it was a case of working as quickly as we possibly could but always mindful of ordnance being booby-trapped."

Looking back, FLTTL Harnett said he'd be lying to say he wasn't scared before the mission.

"Especially stepping off those helicopters into the unknown and the harsh reality of what we were about to do. It was quite the experience."





WHAKAARO ATAMAI

# THIN SMALL

## STORIES

IN THE DEEP END  
PUSHING BOLD IDEAS

# THINK

# SMART

Embracing innovation and finding ways to work smarter, not harder has been an unswerving mainstay of how the Air Force has operated since its inception. Continual improvement is encouraged and celebrated. The Think Smart component of the Leadership Framework has benefitted the service in countless ways and is part of the reason our Air Force is held in such high regard on the international stage.



# IN THE DEEP END

FLYING OFFICER MIKAELA HEALD



***It was a last minute callout – I found out just a couple of days before needing to leave and ended up staying in Hawke’s Bay for about three weeks.***

Flying Officer (FGOFF) Mikaela Heald had not long finished her Officer’s Commissioning Course when Tropical Cyclone Gabrielle hit the North Island. She was deployed from Base Ohakea’s Materiel Support Wing to shell-shocked Napier to work in the Hawke’s Bay Emergency Coordination Centre.

It was a logistical nightmare. Shortly after arriving FGOFF Heald was thrust into the leadership position of logistics manager at the centre. This was a high pressure and high tempo environment where the crossover of various Government agencies quickly became complex and difficult to navigate. Despite these challenges, she hit the ground running and quickly built on her leadership skills.

“A lot of my work involved plans to recover equipment we’d sent out, for example generators and satellite dishes, and coming up with effective solutions to complex issues. There were no processes put in place, so I was working it out on the go.

“A highlight was flying in a helicopter to meet some of the hub leaders. This was also where I was able to get information I required to recover the gear – it was pretty awesome being able to talk to them and hear about what they experienced.”

Added to the pressure was the high rotation of staff, with teams being replaced every three to five days.

“It was tricky because we didn’t have the consistency of people, which meant constant retraining was required,” she said.

The leadership abilities that FGOFF Heald needed to call on were her people skills, she said.

“We were working with Fire and Emergency New Zealand, the council, NEMA (National Emergency Management Agency) and volunteers. Most of my work was solving problems. The biggest one was getting all of our gear back because at the time everything was sent to where it was immediately needed and the tracking was minimal. It was basically putting out fires for three weeks.

Looking back, FGOFF Heald was grateful for the experience and “getting thrown in the deep end”.

“It was incredibly tiring and I worked some really long hours – sometimes up to 16-hour days. The days went so fast with everything that needed to be done.

“My main focus was to be logical and try not to be stressed by the situation. It was great working with different organisations like Fire and Emergency, who were all excellent people.

“It was fantastic to see how valuable the Defence Force is in those circumstances. We operate really well in those sorts of situations and it was evident as the majority of the leadership positions were filled by Defence Force personnel,” she said.

FGOFF Heald’s efforts were noted by her superior officer, who reported she displayed solid leadership and tactical proficiency in her role.

“The manner in which she managed herself and her team goes beyond her rank, and her contributions have been important to the success of the response following Tropical Cyclone Gabrielle in the Hawke’s Bay region.

“Her attention to detail and ability to think critically and make informed decisions have been important to ensuring ongoing mission success.”

Another senior officer said FGOFF Heald created a high performing team from a collection of multi-agency personnel with varying degrees of experience and competence.

“Most telling for me was the work ethic she inspires within her team, which was a huge contributing factor to their success.”









# PUSHING BOLD IDEAS

SQUADRON LEADER WIN WALKER

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***We've got pockets of genius around the place and until now it's been difficult to reach out to them.***

Deep within Base Auckland is a toy shop of sorts, a growing laboratory of various technology to inspire Air Force innovators to experiment, work smarter and bring ingenious ideas to their work space.

The innovation lab houses equipment including virtual reality, drones, 3D printers, 3D scanners, and gaming computers with software needed to build simulations. The list is growing.

“It’s to ensure our innovators are working within a very safe framework where they can do bold things without bumping up against existing capability. They can go out and perform bold experiments because we know it’s not going to be fitted to an aircraft or on the road,” Squadron Leader (SQNLDR) Win Walker said.

“It’s a playpen where innovators can make big assumptions and test if they are going to work or not. We treat mistakes as learning opportunities towards success. Previously it would be unfathomable to invest in something that may fail; now, it’s just recognised that if it demonstrates enough viability, desirability, feasibility that it could work, then we should try it and see if there is value.”

The facility encourages curiosity, problem-solving and brings together a cluster of creative people all aimed at bringing the problem-solvers close to the problem.

Last year the Air Force Strategic Innovation Plan was signed off, sparking a surge in innovative ideas. The plan provided the organisation the remit, with clear guardrails, rules and a budget for personnel to easily push innovative ideas through.

“It meant that we had a clear mandate to explore bold ideas and commanders an equal mandate to approve things,” SQNLDR Walker said. “It’s been positive in that we haven’t seen a giant influx of low-level, low-complexity innovations, because commanders are feeling empowered to say, ‘This is something different but let’s see if it works, we’ll approve it within the rules we already have’. Which leaves RNZAF innovation to work with the far more high-complexity ideas.”

There had been a spectrum of innovations to have come from RNZAF, he said.

“What we’ve been given by the Office of Strategic Management is a set of guardrails that we can make investments into budding ideas. If we see the merit in something and someone has a clear vision of what they want to achieve and there’s something that we can actually invest in with time, guidance, further training, networking, physical hardware, then we’ve got money we can spend against that. Through each phase of development we can invest more as we grow in confidence that this idea has merit.”

One of the personnel to take advantage of the innovation lab and the Strategic Innovation Plan’s funding is a base firefighter. He taught himself a gaming programme that enabled him to build a 10km-radius simulation of the base in extraordinary high-detail.

“He then came up with a simulation where firefighters could approach synthetic aircraft in different conditions. He brought this to us and immediately it had merit and there was real buy-in from his command,” he said.

“We bought a high-end gaming laptop, various subscriptions and we’ll pay for some of the imagery that he will use within the simulation, all so he can showcase it to the Base Commander, Base Operations and Operations Squadron this year.”

There might be projects within the Defence Force where the innovation team can identify people who are demonstrating passion and put them on the right boards or sit them on the right working group, even though they may not necessarily be at the right rank or of the right trade groups to be part of those things, SQNLDR Walker said.

“We’ve got lots of examples where junior people have demanded excellence out of the organisation and developed their own expertise. We’re there to help network, resource and guide.”

When it comes to leadership, there are three types of leader in innovation. Firstly there is the innovative leader who has all the good ideas, then there is the leader of innovators who accept ideas and notions that came from their team and encourages those notions. Lastly the leader of innovative culture.

“It’s difficult not to read the Think Smart competency at that Lead System/Lead Capability level and not think that that is largely what we’re putting in place and promoting. It’s just that we want that far more deeply entrenched so that it’s hardwired in the DNA of the RNZAF.”

WHAKAAWEAWE TĀNGATA

# INFLU OTHEI

## STORIES

LEADING FROM THE TOP  
AN EYE TO LEADERSHIP

# LEADERSHIP JOURNEYS

Each step of an aviator's career path includes leadership training with the goal of becoming influential at higher and higher levels. The first step begins at the Aircraftman rank and the peak is being appointed Chief of Defence Force, who is tasked with influencing the country's government to ensure the Defence Force is properly funded to carry out its missions. We take a look into the leadership journeys of a couple of our aviators.



# LEADING FROM THE TOP

AIR MARSHAL KEVIN SHORT  
CHIEF OF DEFENCE FORCE



***Individuals came into the Air Force and they were taught a trade. What we talk about now is life skills, leadership skills, how to communicate, how to work in a team.***

When Chief of Defence Force Air Marshal (AM) Kevin Short joined the Air Force four decades ago, the leadership training that new aviators received looked vastly different to today's learning style.

"To me it's giving everyone a full toolset so you can be successful as an individual and be really who you are. The old days it was all about passing courses for a particular trade - so it's quite different now."

Never consciously seeking out leadership roles, AM Short said during the selection process for the Air Force the recruiters must have recognised something in how he interacted with them to recommend an officer's role, which required the applicant demonstrate leadership, innovation and intellect.

"However, the first 10 years was all about not using any of that, but just doing what I was told. I found that very constraining. As a result I was considered a bit of a mischief-maker in my early days because I was using my ingenuity and initiative in a mischievous way - not necessarily a successful way for my future.

"It wasn't until I became a Squadron Leader that the responsibility and true leadership and support came through, which was about a decade later."

Now training focusses on bringing in young, intelligent people to the organisation and keeping them engaged, he said.

AM Short has served as the Chief of Defence since 2018 and will be leaving the post later this year.

During the past six years, one of the biggest challenges in his leadership role has been securing the resources for the Defence Force so it can complete the work that consecutive governments have required.

"I think the Government and Ministers take a while to understand the complexities of the Defence Force. They see us always delivering and because of that, when I say we are under-resourced and need more money, or a capability needs to be replaced, they don't see it because they see us deliver. It's to our detriment almost."

AM Short's term will likely always be associated with the Defence Force's response to the Covid pandemic, however he said while Operation Protect was a huge challenge, the pandemic meant there were fewer balls to juggle because business was paused.

"It simplified everything because we couldn't exercise with our friends and allies overseas, we couldn't deploy and support other countries. It felt like you had one leg tied, one hand secured and you couldn't get beyond this tethered state, you couldn't do what you wanted to do and it went on too long - this feeling of not being able to undertake training or core business. But everyone felt that way.

"I take my hat off to those who served, they did an incredible job over the Covid years in supporting the Government's needs. Equally though it went on too long and I couldn't get them out of the role of managing the

MIQs because they were doing such a good job and nobody else was setting up a system to replace us."

A new Chief of Defence will be appointed this year and AM Short had some advice to offer.

"You have to know the whole organisation. In my case I have an Air Force background and I understand that, but you've also got to understand how the Army generates its force and how it delivers, you've got to do the same with the Navy and you've got to get that balance across the whole force.

"You also have to have a really deep belief in the organisation. One of the reasons I enjoy my job so much is I'm still as passionate about the Defence Force, about the Air Force as I was when I joined and that passion and energy comes out in my job - it makes my job so much easier.

"And be patient because things don't happen as quickly as you think - from a change perspective, or introducing new equipment. So you have to have patience in what you do and that will be reflected throughout the organisation as well."

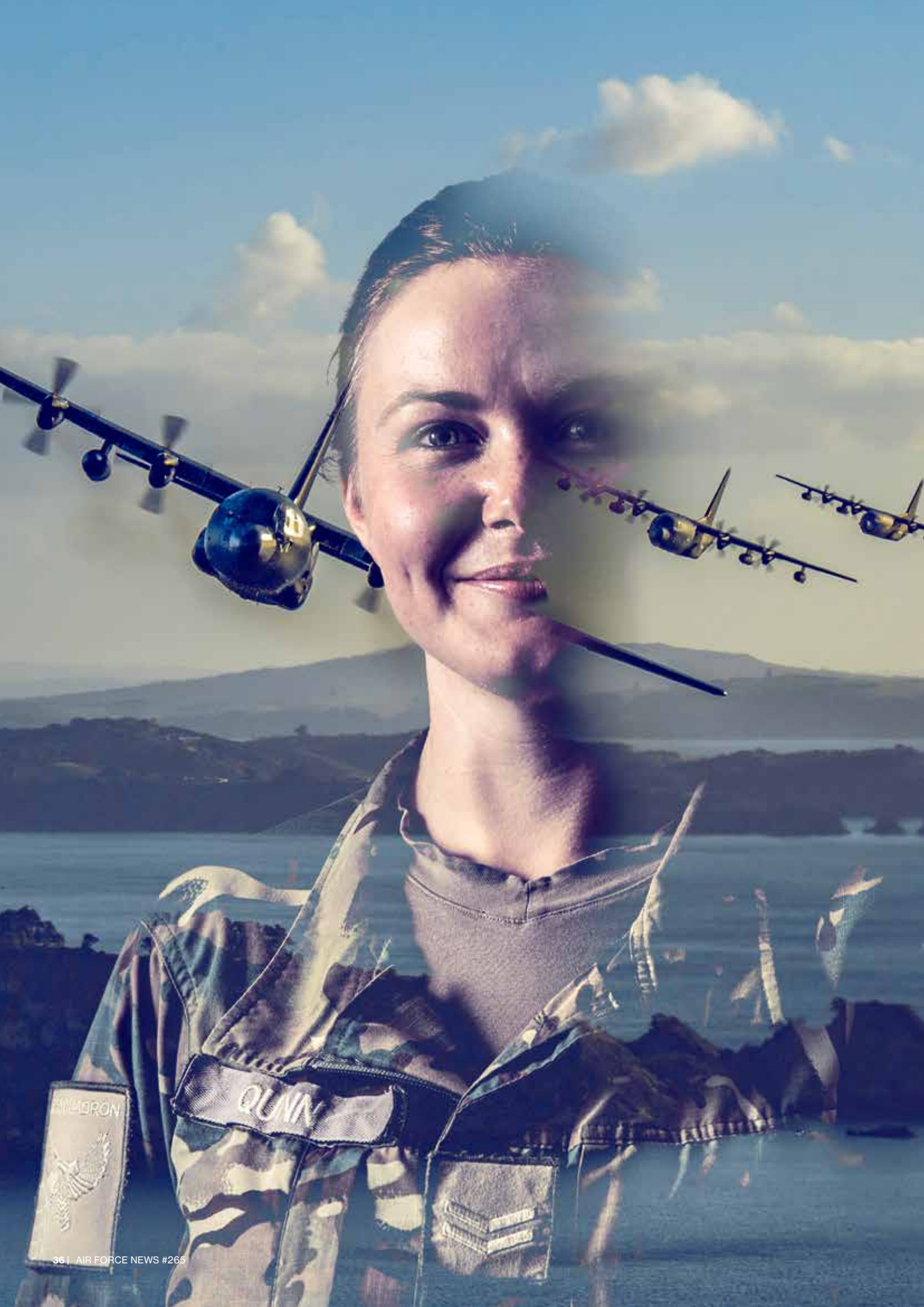
AM Short said he has also been lucky with his leadership team.

"They give me the confidence and trust that what I do as a leader is going down through the organisation. So you've got to have the right leadership team in place supporting you."



VICE HOUSE







# AN EYE TO LEADERSHIP

CORPORAL JO QUINN

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***There was minimal guidance from the programme itself, so the Lead Self aspect has been tremendous right from the beginning.***

Being the solo Kiwi on an Australian Air Force leadership course underlined the unique outlook the New Zealand Defence Force can bring to the world stage, Corporal (CPL) Johanna Quinn says.

As one of the Air Force's emerging leaders, the Communications and Information Systems technician was chosen for the three-month Leader Enrichment Programme (LEP). The course involved group work and presentations to Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) senior leaders on different topics.

Participating in the work gave CPL Quinn a sense of the value she was able to add to the team.

“I was the only New Zealander in my course, so I was able to provide a Kiwi perspective, because obviously our culture, policies and initiatives are very different to the Australian Air Force.”

The online course linked the international groups, who were spread across three different time zones. That aspect and fitting the work in around everyone's fulltime jobs was a challenge, CPL Quinn said.

“It's unlike any other course that I've been on, in terms of the freedom we had to make it our own and take it in our own direction. There was minimal guidance from the programme itself, so the Lead Self aspect has been tremendous right from the beginning.”

The teams worked through four modules and at the end of each one they had a tele-conference with the RAAF senior leadership team to present their findings on the topic.

They included supporting senior leaders, national power, disruptive innovation and beyond the future force. The freedom to interpret those topics brought a range of presentations from each team, she said.

“Module three, on disruptive innovation, was a fun one. It was set up like a shark tank concept. We had to identify a problem and present a solution for it. It was amazing what people came up with.

“We developed an aviator's guide to strategic policy and did an elective leadership programme for Leading Aircraftman personnel - kind of like the LEP - but drawing on the professional development courses. The intent of that was to give people a head start and more exposure to leadership theory before they are promoted to Corporal, and to develop this broad base understanding of management and leadership,” she said.

The final module on future force was looking at 2050 and beyond and CPL Quinn's syndicate concentrated on what the cyber world would look like then.

“I really dug into the rise of consumer digital technologies and how that's perpetuating a cyber-entrenched society, which is vulnerable to attacks from non-traditional vectors,” she said.

“The massive thing for me was having a forum to present my research, so I had to justify my ideas, firstly to my peers when we were developing the engagement and then to the senior leadership team. It gave me exposure to presenting my ideas and then having my research both challenged and reinforced from different directions.

“The course really opened my eyes to how the senior leadership team approached issues of strategic policy, but also developing effective strategies for upstream and downstream communication. It really was a challenge, but it was so important in our everyday jobs as well and something I will use.”

WHAKATUPU RŌPŪ

# DEVELOP TEAM

Teamwork in the military is critical when achieving mission success. This is true whether the aviator is ground or air crew, working in intelligence, communications, logistics or any of the many trades that comprise the Air Force. Being able to develop a team to achieve success is a vital skill - and not just when our aviators are performing their military roles, but also when they are away from the workplace. We take a look at how one of our physical training instructors contributed to developing our impressive Invictus Games team, which gained success at last year's event.

**STORY**

A COACHING MOMENT

# LOP MS





# A COACHING MOMENT

CORPORAL OLLIE BAKER

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***We asked them what success was going to look like. For some it was just getting on the plane, so just getting to the games was a huge win for some of them and then to compete and do their best was also a win.***

Coaching a group of inspirational Invictus Games athletes as they compete on the world stage was an incredibly humbling moment for physical training instructor Corporal (CPL) Ollie Baker.

Twenty-one New Zealand Defence Force athletes took part in the event, in Düsseldorf, Germany in September last year.

In the lead-up to the games, CPL Baker created training programmes for the competitors.

“Some of them were more rehabilitation-oriented and others were more tailored to the competition itself and trying to get the best result they could get at the games.”

Combining specific sports with the training programme and factoring in some challenging injuries was a complex task, he said.

“I had to make it sport-specific, but also assist them day-to-day, which was quite an interesting challenge. It was very humbling, rewarding and inspiring seeing what they were able to do. They have had a lot of challenges in their lives, so being able to help in some way was very gratifying.”

Two Air Force and one Army instructor made up the squad of coaches and CPL Baker said their leadership technique was to work as a team.

“We would work together and discuss how we were going to look after each competitor and the team as a whole.

“We would check in with the competitors regularly to see how they were going and if they needed any assistance. When we got to the games all the work we needed to do was done, so it was just trying to make sure they were in the right place at the right time, they were in the right mindset - just trying to motivate them to give the best that they could.”

Bringing empathy and understanding to the coaching role was important, CPL Baker said.

“I’ve never had to go through any of the injuries or mental health challenges that they have gone through, so I had to try to understand that and focus on keeping them motivated. That was really tough and so for them to go out there and have fun and produce the results that they did was so inspiring.”

Measuring the success of the trip meant different things to different athletes, he said.

“We asked them what success was going to look like. For some it was just getting on the plane, so just getting to the games was a huge win for some of them and then to compete and do their best was also a win. Others were gunning for medals and it was fortunate that we did really well. It was different for each person but I think just providing a safe environment for them to train and compete in, was also important for us.”

It was important for the athletes to turn up on the day without any distractions and so the coaches ended up “running around in the background like headless chickens”, CPL Baker said.

“By the end I was just immensely proud. It was the first time I’ve not only represented the New Zealand Defence Force on the international stage, but also New Zealand as well.

“Walking on the stage and seeing the country’s flag and having the crowd cheer for us as a country, you’re almost lost for words. So being in that environment with those people, it was a very proud moment.”

WHAKAWHANAKI AHUREA HAUMAKO

# DEVELOP A POSITIVE CULTURE



## STORIES

POSITIVE DIRECTIONS  
FIGHTING SPIRIT

# OP TIVE RE

A positive workplace culture is invaluable, but sometimes we need guidance on the best way to achieve that. We speak with an Air Force psychologist about what type of leader brings out the best in their people as well as a chaplain who explains how he keeps an eye on our aviators' spiritual health.



# POSITIVE DIRECTIONS

FLIGHT LIEUTENANT API TAIAPA



***We need to successfully look after, care for and manage troops, hold people to account, drive them forward, and have mission outcomes, whatever that mission outcome is.***

There's more to leadership in the military than giving orders. To get the best out of a team, leaders also need to understand how to get the best out of their people, while looking after them at the same time, psychologist Flight Lieutenant (FLTLT) Api Taiapa says.

"Culture is so important and we know that. We know that it enables success, however you want to define success," he said.

"We know that culture is good for mental health and good for performance. I think that, in terms of the mahi that I do, it is important to work with people so they can take that positive culture back to their units."

Fostering that culture can sometimes come down to the impact of small leaderships acts like allowing an early knock-off, or encouraging physical training, through to bigger philosophies linking in purpose and meaning, FLTLT Taiapa said.

"It all has a massive effect and I think it flows on."

A positive culture didn't necessarily mean everyone being "eternally optimistic or happy all the time", he added.

"It means everyone working to move a culture towards a positive direction, whatever that positive direction is."

Comfortably sitting alongside culture is the notion of connection.

"I think sometimes we can under-value the importance and the power of connection and how connection can enable you to make positive change, how it helps you to lean on others, how it drives cultures forward - I think that's really important."

We asked FLTLT Taiapa what, in his opinion, made a good leader and the answer wasn't straightforward.

"That's the million dollar question," he laughed.

There was a tension point between balancing people's needs and mission outcomes. This was often seen in the deployment space and around deployment debriefs.

"As clichéd as it sounds to care for other people, I think that means sometimes taking a firm stance and forcing them to do something they don't want to do and challenging them through kind respectful ways, like putting their wellbeing first," FLTLT Taiapa said.

"I think it is an easy to say but it can be hard to do. All of us want to do a good job and we sometimes put that good job above everything else.

"Then there needs to be that difficult conversation with the people who are working hardest, saying they have to slow down even though the work might be pushed back a while, it means they will be able to carry on working effectively," he said.



# SERVANT LEADERSHIP

CHAPLAIN BILL DEWAR



***We provide a confidential space for people from all walks of life, whether they have a faith or not, to download their hurts, worries and frustrations – and begin to unpack what this means for them.***

Chaplains in the military have a unique pastoral role where they provide guidance to all ranks. Generally, chaplains practise within a servant leadership model, which refers to the example of Jesus Christ who served people from all walks of life, from the very successful to the marginalised.

Chaplain Bill Dewar said people in the role were called to serve all, “whether we agree with the opinions or actions of the person or not”, and regardless of whether they were religious or not.

“We are asked by Command to support people who are going through difficult times and many people walk in or make contact to talk with us about their day to day life. We act as a sounding board for questions they have, we serve and support them without judgement through difficult times and also during exciting events or stages of life.

“Through this type of service, we gain the confidence and trust of many people right through the Command chain.”

As Defence personnel, chaplains complete leadership courses where they learn about leading self and leading others.

“We use this knowledge and training along with our servant leadership skills to help people who have lost their way,” Chaplain Dewar said.

How does someone lose their way?

“A Defence Force member came to see me one day and after a little chit-chat I asked them how they were going. They looked at me and said they didn’t know where they were going in life and felt lost. There was a sense of hopelessness, frustration and loss, emotions that many of us will have experienced at one time or another.

“With our training, servant heart, and years of experience walking alongside people through difficult times, we can help people find their way back, whether that be emotionally, physically or spiritually.”

Chaplains are happy to help people of all denominations, or with no religious inclination at all.

“We carefully listen to their story, at times this is all a person needs, many find their own answer and leave feeling heard, supported and valued. Chaplains can help provide a different perspective on a situation, help the person identify options and encourage or support them to make a plan for moving forward,” Chaplain Dewar said.

“Chaplains are human like everyone else, we will not always get things right, perfect or be liked by everyone, but ultimately, we try to do our best to follow the example of Jesus Christ, who considered himself a servant to all, putting others’ needs before his own.

“It is a privilege to walk with people as they navigate all aspects of their life. By listening, walking alongside, providing guidance and being there to support people, chaplains are a catalyst in developing a positive culture within the Defence Force,” he said.



