

# AIR FORCE NEWS

Immediate  
Manawanui  
response

Caught  
out in the  
worst

First and  
final C-130  
flights

#274

DEC|24



# *Aviator*

O F T H E Y E A R

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## CHANGING MAGAZINE FORMAT

### From the editor

Tēnā tātou katoa. I would like to thank you all for taking the time to read *Air Force News* and for your keen interest in the Royal New Zealand Air Force. I know many of you are serving personnel, former service people, aviation enthusiasts, whānau of our personnel and young people keen to see what life is like in the Air Force.

It has been a great joy of mine for the past nine years to share the service's stories, to speak with its people and write about how the Air Force serves Aotearoa New Zealand and the global community.

Since the 1940s the story of the Air Force has been told in publications including *Contact* magazine, beginning in December 1940, followed by the *RNZAF News*, which featured during the 1950s and the 1960s and finally *Air Force News*.

In September we published the last hard copy edition, reverting to PDF only. From 2025, *Air Force News* will no longer be published in PDF form. This will be the final edition.

We will always tell the story of this service, but the way we will be telling it from next year will look a little different. Instead of our stories being told in a magazine format, they will be separate articles posted to our website. This will enable us to produce the information in a different way with more options including videos within the piece, graphics and showing our photography in a different way.

We are excited to see how this change will enhance our story-telling.

Many of you receive *Air Force News* via an email from me, but from next year, I will be regularly sending out emails with website links to our latest *Air Force* stories that you will be able to click on to view, so you can continue to be kept up-to-date with the latest news.

For any reader who would like to receive these emails, please email [AirForceNews@nzdf.mil.nz](mailto:AirForceNews@nzdf.mil.nz)

I understand change can be unsettling, but I sincerely thank you all for your patience and your support over the years.

*Rebecca Quilliam*

**Air Force News Editor**

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Photographer: LAC Jalesa Nomani



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# First Word



**B** | CHIEF OF AIR FORCE  
**Y** | AIR VICE-MARSHAL DARRYN WEBB

**A**s we look back on 2024, it's clear that this has been a year of major milestones and ongoing mission success. Your contributions have reinforced our role as a vital part of New Zealand's defence and security, and they make me feel very proud to be a part of that team. Thank you.

This year, we've seen progress on multiple fronts. Our fleet modernisation continues to take shape as we have released capability on the P-8A Poseidon platforms, welcomed the new fleet of C-130J Hercules aircraft and prepare to say a fond farewell to the workhorse that is the C-130H Hercules.

Whether in the skies over New Zealand or deployed on international operations, our people have consistently demonstrated the skills, resilience, and adaptability that define the Air Force. From participating in joint exercises with international partners to providing vital support during local response efforts, our Air Force has remained agile and ready.

The coming year promises to bring new opportunities and challenges – some within clear line of sight, others still yet to unfold. As I've said a few times over this year, I simply ask you to focus on what you can control, worry less about those things you can't, and do your job to the very best of your ability. I reckon we'll be in great shape for 2025 if we all take on board those fundamentals.

In wrapping up a year of hard work and success, it's important to take a moment to reflect and recharge. The festive season is a time to relax and spend quality time with family and friends, and I encourage everyone to do just that.

A well-deserved break will ensure we return in the New Year refreshed and ready for the challenges ahead. I wish all members of the Air Force and their families a Merry Christmas and a safe, happy, and prosperous New Year. Let's continue to work together to keep the skies safe and strong in 2025.

**“Looking ahead to 2025, Plan Astra continues to be a driving force in shaping the future of the Air Force. With a focus on modernising our capabilities, enhancing readiness, and developing the skills of our personnel, we are preparing for the evolving demands of both national defence and international co-operation.”**

# IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

WORDS | **REBECCA QUILLIAM**  
PHOTOS | **SGT VANESSA PARKER, PO CHRIS WEISSENBORN & LAC JESE SOMERVILLE**

**On the evening of October 5 the Royal New Zealand Navy's HMNZS Manawanui struck a reef near Samoa and the captain made the courageous and life-saving decision to evacuate her crew and passengers from the ship and get them safely to land.**

**In the immediate aftermath of the ship's sinking, Air Force personnel flew to the island nation to support their Navy colleagues.**

**A** P-8A Poseidon flew surveillance flights over the site, a team of Security Forces personnel provided a UAS (unmanned aerial systems) response, and a C-130J Hercules delivered equipment and personnel.

2 Security Forces Flight Commander FLTLT Jordan Flintoff said the mission was the first deployment of national significance to use the UAS for the Air Force.

A small Security Forces team travelled to Samoa with the UAS to perform a number of daily tasks. These included getting imagery of the ship and if there were any changes to its position, monitoring any changes to the diesel sheen coming from the wreck, and of three containers from the ship that had come to rest on the reef.

"It seems simple, but one of those containers would move frequently and so it wasn't just providing the information to the task group, it was tracking the migration and tracking the impact to the reef for other agencies like ITOPF (International Tanker and Oil Pollution Federation). It was great work that the team did.

"We provided situational awareness in real time of the site, which provided intelligence that could be developed for the task group commander to make decisions."

The value the team provided was the speed in which they could deliver the imagery, he said.

"The information flow from the imagery being captured was almost instantaneous – they could be operating the UAS while briefing me, at the same time I would be able to contact the task group with information, then they would have RFIs (requests for information) for us. We could then drive back, plug the SD drive in and the intelligence branch would have the product."

FLTLT Flintoff said working with other Defence Force personnel was easy.

"There were no awkward moments, everyone was super helpful and kind. The locals were really understanding too. We developed a great relationship with the local villagers, which culminated in being welcomed into one of their homes to share a meal."

The team developed a good relationship with the Navy's Matataua unit, which consists of divers and hydrographers.

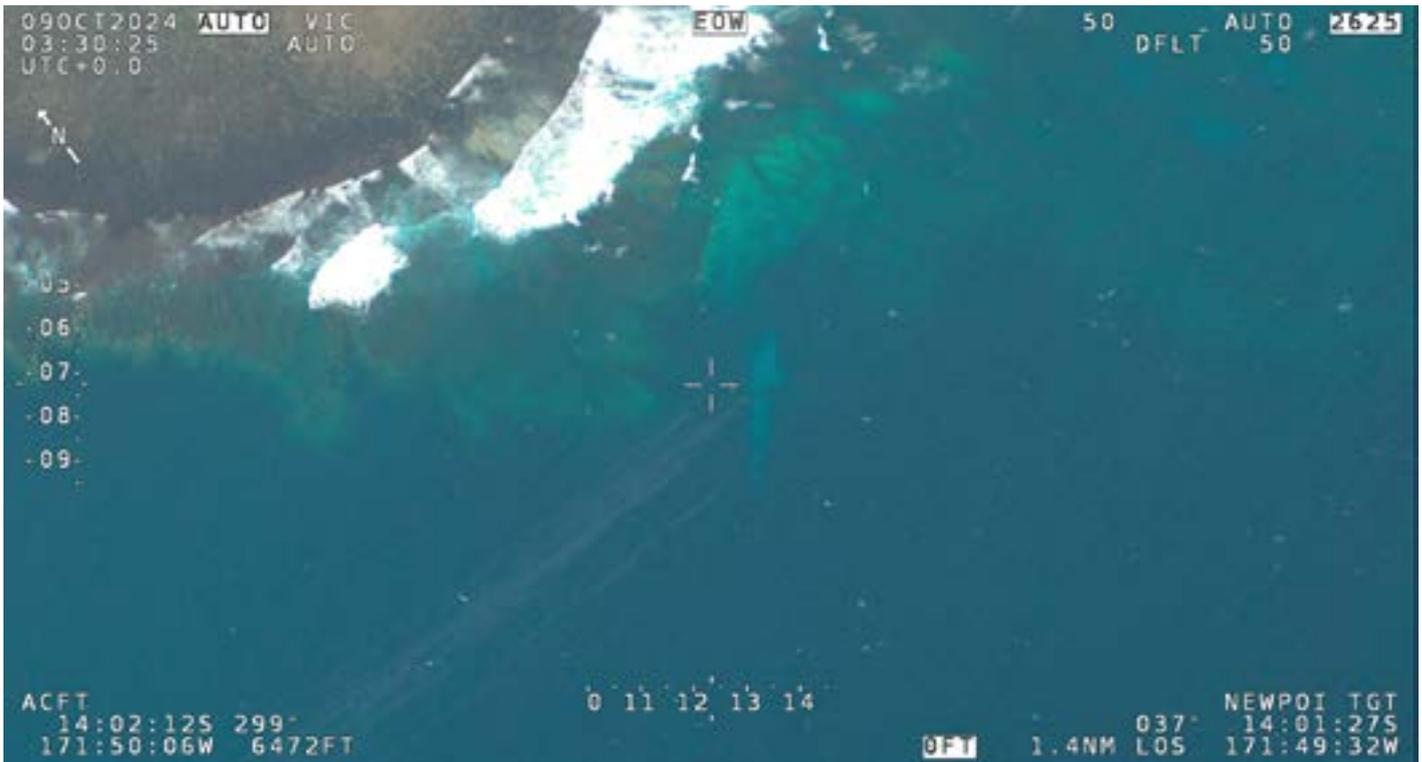
"One of the UAS platforms we were using was a Navy asset. We had a great relationship with the Matataua team, which saw us sharing observations in order to learn from each other," FLTLT Flintoff said.

The first two personnel operating the UAS were Aircraftman (AC) Jese Somerville and AC Phoebe Renee.

They were both called the morning after the incident and told to be at Base Auckland Air Movements in two hours and to pack for at least a 72-hour trip away. They ended up staying for 38 days.

"It was a bit of a dilemma," AC Renee laughed.

"When I got the call to go over it was a bit of a shock because I was asleep and hadn't heard what had happened. It was then a rush to get to base within two hours and have all my bags packed. It was nerve-wracking because we didn't know what was fully going on," she said.



“In our trade we’re always ready for short-notice tasks and callouts. We live so close to base, it’s happened before with last-minute tasks popping up, it’s not a super big deal. In Security Forces we’re always ready to respond in short notice.”

When the pair arrived in Samoa the situation was still fluid, but in a few days they were flying the UAS over the crash site and capturing the first ghostly images of Manawanui.

“As well as monitoring the containers we also filmed and photographed their removal,” AC Somerville said.

“We also did coastline surveys, along with our daily flights of checking the sheen, checking for any debris, baggage or rubbish.”

He was grateful the deployment involved only looking for diesel and baggage and nothing else.

“That was the biggest realisation because when we were flying over we weren’t really sure what the situation was going to be.

“Collecting imagery of the ocean is a skill that people have as a profession. We know how to fly the UAS, but collecting valuable intelligence was always a challenge we had to overcome quickly.

“There was a lot of learning on the job, but there always is with these last-minute situations. Photographing things on the ocean, we had to take into account the angle, the altitude and the weather conditions. It can all affect the imagery dramatically.”

The deployment had a powerful impact on both AC Somerville and AC Renee, they said.

“It felt like we were doing something that was having a direct effect. The Prime Minister, while in the country for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, came for a briefing before media turned up. Mr Luxon and his wife came over and spoke with us and thanked us and said he’d been seeing the images every day. It was really nice to get recognition on that level. We were just doing our job, but it showed how it had a big impact.”

C-130J Hercules loadmaster Flight Sergeant (F/S) Callie Lucas said they were also called on a short-notice task to fly personnel and equipment across to Samoa to stem a potential spill.

“We were on standby from 9pm on the night it happened and were tasked mid-morning on Sunday to prepare the aircraft and head north.

“The biggest thing for us was that it was the C-130J’s first mission of national significance. We’re still on the testing and development phase with the new aircraft with it arriving in New Zealand only seven days before the event.”

She was grateful to be able to help her Navy colleagues during a “really unfortunate situation” and bring the ship’s crew and passengers back to New Zealand.

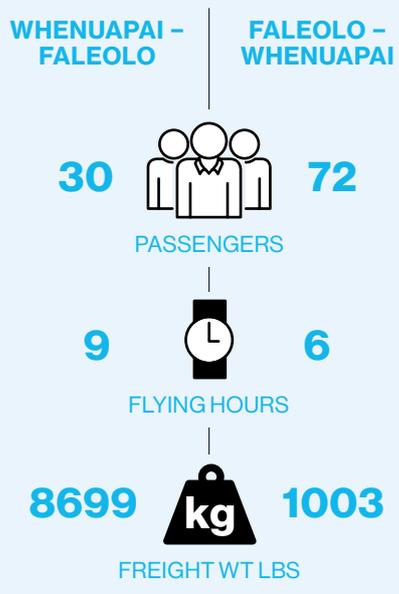
“The crew we took home came out to the aircraft dressed in civilian clothing, from what I understand the majority of them lost their gear, so they had been provided shoes (cros) and clothing to get them home.

“The majority of the team was in good spirits and happy to be heading home. The mood, given the circumstances, was good,” she said.

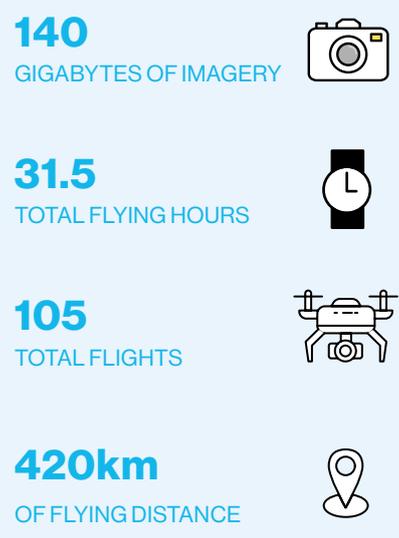
“It was one of those deployments that was constantly evolving, so for us there were lots of changes over a very short period and I think the maintenance and operations teams did an amazing job to get the aircraft off the ground in time to support the crew in Samoa.”



## BY THE NUMBERS



### UAS IMAGERY (AS AT NOVEMBER 14)



**LEFT & TOP RIGHT:**  
Imagery captured by the P-8A Poseidon of the wreck site

**LEFT MIDDLE & BOTTOM:**  
The C-130J bringing home crew and passengers

# Caught out in the worst



B | EDITOR  
Y | REBECCA QUILLIAM

**Two men running the length of New Zealand, twice, for charity, were in need of help themselves when they were caught in freezing conditions on an exposed ridge on the Tararua Ranges.**

## WANT TO DONATE?

Click [here](#) to donate to Stefan Ozich's charity run.

**T**he conditions were not suitable for civilian helicopters to collect the runners, but an NH90 helicopter was up for the task.

Stefan Ozich started a mission to raise \$1 million for men's mental health charity Last Chance Project, by running from Cape Reinga to the Bluff and back again – covering more than 6000km.

The project came about after the death of Stefan's brother by suicide last year and the loss of a good friend in the same circumstances a year before that.

"I decided to do something that was quite extreme, not only to push my own body, but to raise as much money as possible to help bring changes to the mental health sector because men are the most affected and least represented in it."

He has so far raised nearly \$100,000.

By Labour weekend Stefan with Sam Pendreigh, his pacer for many of the legs, had reached the Tararua Ranges.

Stefan admitted before they set off they made a number of mistakes including not bringing adequate gear to prepare for worsening conditions and failing to check the weather report.

The pair were caught out with conditions deteriorating badly and on an exposed ridge near to the Dracophyllum Hut, they battled strong winds, rain, hail, and sleet.

"We were completely drenched. In that moment I was genuinely scared for my life because we were so exposed. We got to the hut and decided we couldn't go on because the next mountain ridge was more exposed, longer and higher. We couldn't go backwards either," Stefan said.

"We were in a position where I was getting hypothermic, Sam was in a better condition. My emergency blanket had ripped, which made it worse. We ate food and tried to warm up, but for me it was futile. We realised we were compromised. We had no options. We had to make the tough call to call in for help."



It was a relief when they heard the sound of the NH90 rotors. Sam's father was a pilot in No. 3 Squadron and flew Iroquois helicopters during the Vietnam War rescuing people.

It was like a "full circle" being rescued by the same squadron his dad was in, Sam said.

"It felt great to get out of there for sure. We knew we were in a shit situation, but we didn't really want to admit it until it was too late.

"I've been in the Iroquois, but the NH90 was a lot more modern to fly in."

Squadron Leader (SQNLDR) Andrew Stewart was piloting the NH90 for the rescue. It was the second successful rescue he had led that weekend, with the first winning a tramper to safety from the Ruahine Ranges.

That second flight was in wind reaching about 30 knots, which the NH90 could handle, but the turbulence in the mountains was too strong for some civilian helicopters.

During the rescue SQNLDR Stewart said there was a lot of heavy rain and low cloud.

"We wanted to complete the mission while it was still light. Our maintenance team did a fantastic job getting the helicopter ready extremely quickly, enabling us to complete the job just as it was getting dark. We flew to a small helipad at the back of Dracophyllum Hut that we could just fit in to and land, and send a medic in to them.

"The guys were able to make their way to the helicopter. They were very cold, but didn't need medical attention. Once we got them into the helicopter it was into heated blankets to warm them up. It was only about 4°C or 5°C, so it was pretty cold, the hut didn't have a fireplace and they didn't have sleeping bags."

The biggest challenge for the flight was the reduced visibility, SQNLDR Stewart said.

"It was very hard to see so we flew really low and slow on our way to the hut.

"By the end of the weekend we were pretty happy. The first job we were airborne for two hours and the second one we were airborne for an hour and a half – so just over three hours flying and we saved three people was a pretty rewarding thing to do for all those involved."

**LEFT**  
(L-R) Sam Pendreigh, Stefan Ozich

**MIDDLE RIGHT**  
Search teams preparing for the search

**BOTTOM RIGHT**  
Dracophyllum Hut

**RIGHT**  
NH90 flying in to collect the runners



# *Aviator*

O F T H E Y E A R

# A firefighter who was at the forefront of lifesaving actions during last year's Auckland floods, and played a key in improving Air Force firefighting systems, has been named 2024 Aviator of the Year.

WORDS | SIMONE MILLAR & REBECCA QUILLIAM  
PHOTOS | LAC JALESA NOMANI

Leading Aircraftman Joe Shields said he was honoured and humbled, “especially amongst the standard of the other aviators who were nominated”.

The achievement comes on the back of being named the Aviation Rescue Firefighter of the Year.

“I was really surprised as I feel like I've just been doing my job, to the highest standard I can,” he said.

Speaking from Hawaii where he was completing a leadership course, LAC Shields said he joined the Air Force in 2021 after a career as a plumber, when the job security was low during the Covid pandemic – and it's a role he would recommend to anyone looking to start a career in the service.

“No two days are the same, particularly in my trade. We're one of the only trades that have got zero notice to move. We get paged and we have to move straight away.

“There are also so many opportunities working with the Defence Force. If you'd said to me three years ago I would be in Hawaii with a bunch of multi-national countries, I would have thought you were joking.”

After completing basic firefighter training LAC Shields was posted to Auckland in August 2022 and has been a key member of the Auckland Aviation Rescue Fire Flight team ever since.

Base Fire Master Warrant Officer (W/O) Phil Webley said LAC Shields has a great vision of what good looks like.

“He utilises his excellent communication skills, relationship building skills and sometimes just brute determination. He has made significant contributions, which have resulted in wide-ranging improvements to the operational effectiveness of the Flight.”

LAC Shields was a first responder in the 2023 Auckland Anniversary floods, which resulted in saving lives and initiating improvements to Air Force responses.

“We were called out to the suburb of Henderson, where houses were completely under water. There was one house where a man, paralysed from the neck down, was floating in his bed. The water was rising and if he'd been left alone any longer, he would have been completely submerged,” LAC Shields said.

W/O Webley said as a result of the floods LAC Shields recognised the need for better protection for Base Auckland firefighters in flooding events. He researched what was being used by Fire and Emergency New Zealand and recommended items for purchase.

“Base Auckland now has two complete water safety kits that have been deployed numerous times and have dramatically improved the safety of personnel working in and around water.”

LAC Shields regularly volunteers his time in the Auckland community, where he is a key member of the West Harbour Fire Brigade, attending many notable emergency incidents in the local area.

When reflecting on the firefighting trade, he said: “It's the unknown, not knowing what you might be faced with at any time. We can get called out at any moment, and I enjoy the unpredictability of what you'll be responding to. I enjoy helping people and my country at the same time.”

The Aviator of the Year is awarded annually to the serviceperson who takes action to make a significant and positive contribution to the Air Force and Defence Force, and who personifies our core values.

# *Innovator*

O F T H E Y E A R

# When Corporal James Daly realised there was no training facility to simulate real-life firefighting situations, he set about building one himself.

WORDS | REBECCA QUILLIAM  
PHOTOS | SGT VANESSA PARKER

**H**e spent the next three years creating a program that will revolutionise training for his trade and could potentially be picked up by air forces around the world. Corporal (CPL) Daly's work has earned him this year's Innovator of the Year award.

"There are products on the market that can be used, but it's very expensive and we were never going to get. So I thought, why not make it myself? I've spent about 5000 hours on it and with the help of the Innovation team we made a prototype into a fully working simulator.

"When I was given the Innovator of the Year Award I was extremely happy. I wasn't sure if I was going to win as there were a couple of other really amazing innovations."

The computer program covers all three types of firefighting – command and control, for the people who make decisions; drivers, sitting in a cockpit with a steering wheel, pedals and a joystick driving around the airfield, and applying water or foam to a burning aircraft; and the work done by the firefighters.

"Once the scenario is set up in the program you can drive to the location where the fire is, park and then apply the water or foam to try to extinguish the fire. You're talking with your team and using tactics and teamwork to try to put the fire out as quickly as possible," CPL Daly said.

"It's similar to the flying simulator, but a much cheaper version. The beauty of it is it's multi-user, so you can have multiple cockpits where you can have multiple trucks and people training at the same time."

Keeping the project a secret for the first 18 months, CPL Daly said when he revealed what he was working on, his bosses were "blown away".

"Some Warrant Officers caught wind of it and introduced me to the Innovation team and with them we built it up to where it is now, at a much faster rate. They helped provide the hardware, they helped fund it to where it needed to be.

"It's going to revolutionise the fire trade dramatically. We do have an old Seasprite on the airfield that we practise with, but you can't light it on fire, it's old and you can't really do much with it. With this, you can simulate real fire as close as possible and it's a much better training aid than what we currently have."

CPL Daly worked on the project in his spare time and realised he needed to learn how to do the work from scratch – "I YouTubed a bunch of tutorials".

"There's still a way to go before it's properly finished, but it's at a level where it can be used to train. It should be fully developed in two years."

The program can also be adjusted for other trades to use, such as for gaining airfield driving permits. Trainees can gain confidence on the airfield and its layout, so when they take the test, they have a better chance of passing, he said.

"The simulator training means removing the chance of incursions like hitting an aircraft, or cutting an aircraft off or driving in the wrong area.

"A lot of air forces don't use simulators because of the high costs involved. An example of a driving simulator that is on the market, it's over \$1,000,000 and mine costs a fraction of that. The simulation I'm building isn't on the market – nobody has done it before.

"The world needs this. I went to Fiji earlier this year for a firefighting course and their training could use some help. This kind of simulation would dramatically improve their training and help them in their jobs. I'm hoping this simulator will help save lives."



# *Volunteer*

O F T H E Y E A R

# Working with the Marlborough Pasifika community, with a focus on youth wellbeing, has earned Base Woodbourne metalwork instructor Sergeant Jale Tikotikoca Lal the Volunteer of the Year award.

WORDS | REBECCA QUILLIAM  
PHOTOS | CPL SEAN SPIVEY

“It caught me by surprise, but I’m definitely honoured,” he said.

Sergeant (SGT) Lal’s volunteer work comes naturally as he sees the people he works with akin to his extended family.

“If I can do it for my family, why can’t I do it for others? I’m just trying to offer opportunities here. I work off the mind-set of, if I could I should.”

After establishing a structure for a local community committee to look after welfare issues and initiatives among Pasifika people, he focussed his attention on sports and wellbeing of the youth in Marlborough.

He established and runs the Navigator Sports club, which promotes youth involvement in sports, mentorship, coaching, and community development.

SGT Lal saw a need in the community for involvement with local youth and is supported by his family.

“They understand the goal behind it as well. We do it as a family – my wife is always there for me. But I think being able to think a little bit deeper in the sense of, I’m in a place where I can help where some may not be able to, so why shouldn’t I do it?”

A couple of years ago he saw the local Pasifika children had a lack of activities in the area when the rugby season ended.

“It gave them time to get up to mischief and labelled as trouble-makers. Most Pacific families are first generation, they are either straight from the islands or they haven’t lived in New Zealand for very long.”

So he turned his attention in their direction and now feels like an “adopted dad” to some of the young people.

“I’m like a taxi driver,” he laughed. “They often have mums and dads who work later on shift work, so I make sure they get home after sports practice before it gets dark.”

One of the opportunities SGT Lal has made available for some of the local kids was to take part in a rugby league tournament for under-14 and under-15 teams, in Christchurch. Those types of activities needed subs and tournament fees to be paid for.

“So we do a lot of fundraising. Part of what we do is teach the kids not to depend on handouts, so we enforce the mind-set of working for what you want. For example, as part of fundraising for this tournament, we did a walkathon. We walked up Mt Vernon, which is part of the Wither Hills.

“We got the kids to go out and look for sponsors and each kid raised about \$100 – some kids raised more. When we got up the top most of them were feeling the heat, some muscles were hurting. But when we go to Christchurch they know they’ve done the hard work to get there and they won’t let the opportunity slide and will do their best at the tournament.”

SGT Lal uses his sports work as a way to teach the kids some life skills.

“I’m hard on them – if they can’t make it to training they need to give me a good reason, so they are prepared for when they start working, they know how to communicate. Also, just teaching them to be respectful and being aware of who’s around them and being mindful of the things they say.

“We’ve got quite a few good people around who help out. It takes a village to raise a child and we work quite closely with schools. At times I get called upon to have a chat with some of the kids because they see me as independent from the school and from the household.”

SGT Lal is grateful to be able to do his voluntary work and enjoys seeing what the youths get out of it.

“I think my role as an instructor definitely helps and coaching has helped my instructing as well. Being able to understand how people retain information and absorb how they are taught has helped me in both aspects.”

# FIRST C-130J FLIGHT TO ICE



WORDS | CHARLENE WILLIAMSON  
PHOTOS | LAC ANDY JENKINS

**Flying one of the new C-130J Hercules to Antarctica for the first time was like getting out of an old manual truck and into a new SUV, the pilot says.**

**T**he recent flight, by NZ7011, carried cargo to the ice that will support the New Zealand and United States scientific research programmes at Scott Base and McMurdo Station.

The pilot, Flight Lieutenant (FLTLT) Tristan Nysse, says being the first to fly a new C-130J to Antarctica was a rewarding experience.

“We are just a small team at the C-130J Transition Unit so having completed our first flight to the ice is not only a success for the aircrew. It’s also the maintenance crews and everyone involved in the C-130J delivery who have put in a massive effort to make this possible.

“Putting into practice all the knowledge we have been building about the aircraft and taking it to the most extreme environment it has been to so far with the Air Force is incredibly fulfilling,” he said.

FLTLT Nysse has flown to Antarctica 11 times since he joined No. 40 Squadron seven years ago, all in the retiring C-130H.

He said the C-130J flies similarly to the H model.

“It has a lot of systems working to help you out and make some things easier, but also brings with it a lot more to monitor.

“It is a bit like getting out of an old manual truck and into a new SUV with all the bells and whistles.

“It’s nice having the extra power of the new engines and more advanced electronic planning systems which makes preparing for our tasks much faster and simpler.”

Operation Antarctica is one of the New Zealand Defence Force’s largest summer deployments, and one of the Defence Force’s most enduring missions: it has been contributing personnel to work on the icy continent since the 1950s.

The C-130J is scheduled to make six trips this summer season carrying a mix of passengers and cargo.

Senior National Officer Major Lucy Wright, who manages the Defence Force’s deployment to Antarctica, says the first flight with the C-130J is a significant milestone in the introduction of new capability in support of the Joint Logistics Pool.

“The C-130H has been a reliable workhorse for the Antarctic programmes for close to 60 years and everyone is very excited to have the new C-130J continue to provide that support.”

The Defence Force typically deploys around 140 personnel each year to Antarctica. This includes a team based at Harewood Terminal in Christchurch, who are responsible for moving passengers and cargo on a variety of flights operated by the Air Force and the United States Air Force.

The Air Force took delivery of the first C-130J in September this year and the fifth aircraft in the fleet is due to arrive soon.

# LAST C-130H FLIGHTS TO THE ICE

WORDS | SUE EDEN  
PHOTOS | CPL SEAN SPIVEY

**The Air Force has kicked off its summer season in Antarctica with its first ice flights for the season, in support of New Zealand and United States Antarctic programmes.**





Every year the Defence Force provides people power to Antarctica New Zealand by deploying personnel in a variety of roles to Antarctica. Others support Antarctic operations from New Zealand.

As well, the Air Force transports people and cargo to and from Antarctica, as part of its support to New Zealand and the United States world-leading science and research programmes.

These commitments are part of New Zealand's contribution to the New Zealand/United States Joint Logistics Pool, which supports both nations' Antarctic programmes.

From September to March, about 15 flights are scheduled to go to Antarctica, using the Air Force's Hercules and Boeing aircraft.

The RNZAF's first C-130H aircraft arrived in New Zealand in April 1965 and within six months of coming into service landed on the ice in Antarctica for the first time that year.

Last month the last flights for the C-130H aircraft were flown – marking 60 seasons of Antarctica support.

Air Component Commander Air Commodore Andy Scott said the C-130J Hercules have taken over the flights now.

“Our C-130H aircraft have provided incredible service over many years, but we're looking forward to using our newer and faster C-130J which also has a larger carrying capacity which means it can transport more passengers and cargo to the ice.”



The Defence Force deploys personnel to work at New Zealand's Scott Base, including as communications operators, who keep in touch with field research teams 24/7.

At the US National Science Foundation's McMurdo Station, Defence Force personnel are employed in a variety of roles, from logistics to firefighters, fuel operators, drivers, and ship offload teams. A team of Defence Force tradespeople help with maintenance and building works at both bases.

Major Lucy Wright, the senior national officer who manages the Defence Force deployment to Antarctica, says it is logistically challenging as personnel surge in and out of Antarctica depending on their role, with weather changes at times requiring quick thinking and juggling of the schedule.

"It's not uncommon for aircraft to turn back to Christchurch, known as a 'boomerang', at the start or end of the season due to weather. It pays to be prepared for a longer stay, with extra clothing just in case," she said.

"It's truly something special to be working with Antarctica New Zealand and the United States Antarctic Programme helping them deliver their Antarctica operations. It's a great team effort."

**“While I’m yet to get my hands on the controls, the C-130J Hercules is similar to the H model to fly, so our experienced pilots and crew, having used their skills over many seasons, will be looking forward to getting the new aircraft airborne to Antarctica very soon.”**

*- Air Commodore Andy Scott*

# STEALTH FLYING AND FAST-ROPING BRINGS INCIDENT RESPONSE SKILLS

WORDS | JO PRIESTLEY  
PHOTOS | CPL NAOMI JAMES & CPL RACHEL PUGH





## Rescuing hostages was the backdrop for a joint exercise between No. 3 Squadron and NZ Police held recently in the Whanganui, Waiouru and Manawātū region.

The week-long exercise simulated various critical scenarios involving fast-ropeing out of an NH90 helicopter onto target locations to rescue hostages and apprehend the offenders. The exercises involved night time low-flying in stealth mode by the NH90 crew, an intensive and important training aspect of the operation.

Fifty-six Air Force aviators and support crew took part, supported by three NH90s and 14 Police personnel.

Squadron Leader (SQNLDR) Lachie Johnston said the operation presented an opportunity to support NZ Police and complete full mission planning cycles in support of the ground mission.

“As well as having the flying skills necessary for such operations, it’s essential crews have an understanding of the call signs, mission and plans. This ensures that the crews have a shared understanding of all the moving parts, and are able to readily adapt in the face of new threats or a changing scenario.

“It also means that when the time comes for aircrew to use the training for real, it isn’t the first time they have come across a full scenario with such complexity,” SQNLDR Johnson said.

NH90 pilot Flight Lieutenant Jamie Besley said low flying and flying at night required a lot of training.

Inspector Freda Grace, NZ Police Manager Operations Support, said having established relationships, interoperability, and understanding how both agencies could jointly solve and resolve this type of high-end critical incident only comes from training together.

“The joint training – or interoperability – includes communications, tactics, equipment, and standard operating procedures around the safety settings, ensuring that we both understand what, how and when things are going to happen,” she said.

**“Missions involving low flight at night require an elevated level of skill and teamwork to achieve the aim effectively and safely, with the aim being to navigate to a specific point at a specific time in order to deliver a concentration of force utilising the element of surprise.”**

**- Flight Lieutenant James Besley**

# URBAN FLYING IN CHALLENGING CONDITIONS

WORDS | REBECCA QUILLIAM  
PHOTOS | SAM SHEPHERD

**Flying a helicopter in freezing, windy conditions at night, above a busy urban environment, within a heavily-used flight path are the ideal conditions for honing skills in challenging circumstances.**

**N**o. 3 Squadron recently trained with NZ Police for a simulated scenario in central Wellington culminating in a rooftop rescue from the top of the ANZ tower and “hostages” winched on board an NH90 helicopter.

Workers and residents in the CBD couldn't miss the distinctive sound of the rotors of two NH90s as they made their way over the city before hovering above the high rises. The wind chill factor brought the temperatures to below 0°C, but the training was achieved with police working successfully alongside the NH90 crews.

NZ Police Manager Operations Support, Inspector Freda Grace said there were some real advantages in New Zealand Police and the Defence Force being involved in joint operations.

“It demonstrates and allows us to test and adjust our interoperability. It gives both agencies the opportunity to work together, which helps us establish relationships,” she said.

“When you have good relationships, you have a trust in what each person is going to do and how that is going to unfold. That is really important when you're doing something like roping out of the NH90.”

Testing procedures with the two agencies was an important activity, because if there was a requirement to deploy on an operation, both groups understand each other's capabilities and safety requirements, Inspector Grace said.

“It means we have tried, tested and adjusted our operating procedures to ensure that both groups are able to get out of it what they need to deploy operationally, to ensure New Zealanders are safe.

“I think it's important to recognise that for rescue operations, weather or crime events, it doesn't really matter what it is, that you are able to work together to achieve the outcomes.”

The exercise was an “awesome example” of being able to work together in trying conditions and displayed the ability to be flexible and agile and still make the training work, Inspector Grace said.

“It showed how well No. 3 Squadron crews were able to bring victims into the aircraft. If that was a real-life event, they would have assisted in saving lives.”

**“The weather was cold, windy and miserable, which played into our hands in that it allowed us to not be working in daylight on a nice, fine sunny day. They were challenging conditions and as we know crisis situations often don't occur at a convenient time or in convenient weather conditions.”**

*- Inspector Freda Grace, NZ Police*

# UNIQUE CONDITIONS FOR SOUTH-EAST ASIA EXERCISE

B | FLIGHT LIEUTENANT  
Y | S

**More than 50 personnel from the Defence Force recently deployed to Singapore and Malaysia to participate in the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA), Exercise Bersama Lima, meaning Five Together in English.**



**W**e were excited to be back in Singapore, with this being the first time they have hosted the exercise since 2018 due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Working alongside our colleagues from Singapore, Australia, Malaysia and the United Kingdom, the exercise involved more than 2000 personnel, 38 aircraft, five ships, four ground-based air defence systems, 250 ground troops, and four dive teams.

The exercise saw the first deployment of one of No. 5 Squadron's P-8A Poseidons to an FPDA exercise, and the squadron's first involvement in the exercise in more than four years.

The significance of the P-8A's involvement was not lost on Detachment Commander Wing Commander (WGCDR) Mark Chadwick.

"Operating out of Republic of Malaysia Air Force Butterworth, Operations, Maintenance and Poseidon Operations Centre staff deployed to the exercise and for many it was their first exposure operating in the South-East Asia environment.

"Able hosted by the Royal Australian Air Force's 92 Wing detachment, the combination of hot and humid working conditions and high-density operational flying areas provided distinctive and challenging work conditions for all trades alike."

The unique conditions were such that they were very difficult to replicate and so extremely valuable training was able to occur to further understand and advance the P-8A system, WGCDR Chadwick said.

"The exercise offered an important opportunity to practise and refine our surface, subsurface, and air to air warfighting skills alongside our regional partners while continuing to enhance interoperability amongst the exercise participants.

"Additionally, the exercise provided the detachment the opportunity for significant investment into the Malaysian economy through the numerous food vendors located around the area," he said.

The Royal Australian Air Force F-35A Lightning II also participated for the first time. The introduction of both capabilities to the FPDA exercise, alongside surface and air assets from all four other partner nations, increased the overall exercise complexity and training value for all parties.

Working with our partners was a highlight for all, including Air Warfare Specialist Corporal J.

"For me the best part of the exercise was communicating with and working alongside our FPDA partners. Gathering information and passing it to foreign fighter jets and warships for their use was a really cool experience. It gave a lot of meaning to the procedures that I've only ever practised in a simulator and it was very rewarding to see it conducted in real life with great success."

New Zealand has been an active member of the FPDA since 1971, joining Commonwealth nations in the region to consult one another in the event of armed aggression against Malaysia and Singapore.



Initially the agreement was focussed on Air Defence, but as Malaysia and Singapore's military capabilities progressed, the FPDA's focus shifted towards training and support. Since 1981, the military forces of the five countries have been conducting regular exercises, enhancing interoperability and promoting stability and security in the South-East Asia region.

The FPDA exercises provide training opportunities focussing on high-end conventional warfighting, while also being flexible to respond in a dynamic security landscape. This includes expanding the exercises into maritime security, counter-terrorism, humanitarian aid and disaster relief, non-conventional warfare and asymmetric threats.

This exercise was no exception. It synchronised exercise scenarios across command posts and various field exercises, enhancing operational realism across all domains of warfighting.

For us, the opportunity to exercise the warfighting capabilities of the P-8A, and the personnel in the command elements, was a chance to demonstrate and further enhance interoperability with some of our regional partners.

The Defence Force's Senior National Officer for the exercise, Lieutenant Colonel Steven MacBeth, said the exercise held significant value for all participating nations to enhance interoperability and defence cooperation.

"By working closely in joint training scenarios, we can refine operational readiness, improve coordination and share best practices with our partners. This exercise strengthens the relationships and trust needed operate together to maintain stability or when, and if necessary, there is a requirement to respond to a crisis."

No international exercise is complete without some comradeship. The opening ceremony was celebrated with Banyan Night – a formal dinner and cultural exchange. Participants also competed in a sports tournament prior to the exercise starting, getting to know their new team members, experiencing the wrath of the Singaporean volleyball skills, and trying to figure out the rules of bucket ball on the fly!

We can't wait for Ex Bersama Lima '25. The exercise, hosted by our Malaysian friends, will build on our progress and continue to strength our interoperability with FPDA partners.

Five Together!

\*some names removed for security reasons

# Multi-tasking in the mountains

B | LEAD CONTENT EDITOR  
Y | ANDREW BONALLACK



## No. 6 Squadron's Seasprite deployment goes from mastering the peaks of Marlborough to scoping fishing activity near Nelson.

**M**ountain flying might seem an odd activity for a maritime pilot and crew, but it's a vital skill for helicopter aircrew.

Positioned in the Air Force's Dip Flat training camp in the Wairau Valley, Marlborough, flight and ground crews in two Seasprite SH-2G(I) helicopters honed the techniques and skills needed to fly in and around Marlborough's mountain ranges.

Exercise Bluebird is an annual Air Force exercise, designed to introduce new aircrew to a mountainous environment, and keep experienced aircrew current.

Mountains create unpredictable flying conditions. Thinner, colder air affects a helicopter's power and performance. Pilots are likely to encounter unexpected wind directions depending on whether they're near a valley, bowl, pinnacle or ridge.

The skills are necessary because maritime aircrew will encounter dramatic terrain in their careers, including missions to the sub-Antarctic islands, Kermadec Islands and volcanic Pacific Islands.

Tasking Officer Sub Lieutenant (SLT) Angus Graves says two observers and one loadmaster got their first qualifications, while 12 other personnel regained currency.

"The first week was amazing. When we arrived, there had just been this big dump of snow and was super-cold. But the first days were stunning, really clear. We got both helicopters up and achieved a huge amount. The following week the weather wasn't great."

While in the neighbourhood, the squadron assisted Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) in a fisheries tasking in the Marlborough Sounds and Tasman Bay.

"Flexibility is the key to air power," says SLT Graves.

"We asked MPI if there were any taskings we could do. We put a helicopter on patrol around D'Urville Island and Tasman Bay, with a focus on amateur charter vessel operators.

"When those boats go out, there's various things they say they'll do, and we're checking to see if that's what they were doing."

According to MPI, amateur charter vessel operators are paid for providing a vessel and guide services for recreational fishers. They are required to register with Fisheries New Zealand and must report what is caught on their fishing trips.

Steve Ham, Director of Fisheries Compliance at MPI, says the collaboration is invaluable.

While they were in the area, the squadron was due to do school visits in Nelson, but the weather became too difficult, SLT Graves said.

"Overall we flew about 56 hours across the two weeks, so we got a good amount in and did everything we wanted to achieve, except the school visits.

"Exercise Bluebird is definitely a highlight for us. A lot of work goes into it, moving the squadron down to Base Woodbourne, but it's good living together and the base mess hosts us. It's great for team building, and you get to see a lot of beautiful mountains."

**"From time to time Fisheries New Zealand will utilise the air or sea assets of the New Zealand Defence Force for fisheries compliance patrols. We view this joint agency approach as essential to ensuring rules and regulations are being followed, and we appreciate the co-operation we enjoy with the Defence Force in keeping our shared fisheries sustainable."**

**- Steve Ham  
Ministry for Primary Industries**

# Boxing Day tsunami: 20 years on



**B** | EDITOR  
**Y** | REBECCA QUILLIAM

**On 26 December 2004 at 07:58:53 local time a magnitude 9.2 earthquake struck near the west coast of northern Sumatra, Indonesia. It triggered a massive tsunami with waves towering up to 30m high, devastating communities along the surrounding coasts of the Indian Ocean.**

**M**ore than 227,000 people were killed across 14 countries in one of the deadliest natural disasters in recorded history.

That day Defence Force staff were called and told to prepare to come to the aid of the survivors.

Warrant Officer (W/O) John Beere, at the time a loadmaster on the C-130H Hercules, was called about the disaster and was on a plane leaving for the devastated area two days later.

“The assumption was we were going to turn up to work and do some contingency planning in case, but we ended up leaving that afternoon.”

Operation Sumatra was a high-tempo deployment, with most of No. 40 Squadron involved, two Hercules, two Boeings and a number of Defence Force staff on the ground.

After landing at Halim airfield in Jakarta, the team flew to one of the hardest hit areas, Banda Aceh.

“For the first couple of missions we were evacuating as many people as we could from there to Jakarta. There was some aid coming in – mainly blankets. You could see the devastation, like someone had got a hand and wiped it across the landscape.

“All the palm trees had been flattened. About a week into it you could see yellow tarpaulins covering the bodies on the roads. There was a DC-3 aircraft on a concrete plinth. The churches and mosques stood out because they were made of concrete and could withstand the water surges.”

There was a smell of death about the place, W/O Beere said.

The type of work the team did in Indonesia was the reason Defence Force personnel trained and joined the services for, he said.

“We know we’re going to do that sort of stuff and that’s us contributing to disasters and providing relief. It does have a sense of excitement because you’re going into the unknown and you are

**PHOTOS**

Devastation in Indonesia caused by the Boxing Day tsunami

Photos: Brad Antrobus



**“There are a number of operations I’ve done like that, you see the appreciation of the people you’re helping. You sit on the ramp and fly out with 150 people looking at you and see the relief.”**

**- Warrant Officer John Beere**



making a difference. That’s probably the biggest thing, you know what you do, even though it might seem small, does make a difference.”

Squadron Leader (SQNLDR) Gabrielle Knight was a logistics specialist in No. 40 Squadron at the time. She looked after all the logistics support for the aircraft, including aircraft parts, food for the crews and whatever else was needed.

Deployed for six weeks, SQNLDR Knight started in Banda Aceh before being based in Jakarta.

“There was a high flying rate – I don’t think we had many days off. The crews were flying a lot and the maintenance team that I was a part of worked pretty hard,” she said.

“I remember being really sad watching the people come off the aircraft when they landed. They would get off that aircraft with a plastic bag and that was about it.

“There wasn’t much government support – I think the Indonesian government was overwhelmed by the volume of people coming in. Unless they had family, I don’t think there was much support available.

“Coming from New Zealand, it was pretty confronting. I often wonder what those people are doing now.”

It was SQNLDR Knight’s first humanitarian aid and disaster relief (HADR) deployment and she watched the challenging and massive global response. Humanitarian groups sent huge numbers of people into Banda Aceh, which took a lot of resources away from the residents. The disaster prompted change in the way those types of events were responded to.

“For me, as a young person, watching the huge United States’ system kicking into gear was amazing. Every pallet they rolled off was well and truly stamped with American flags and USA all over them.”

SQNLDR Knight was awarded a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit for her role. It was something she was deeply uncomfortable receiving.

“I felt like I didn’t deserve it because there were a lot of people who did amazing work.”

It’s only been recently could she square receiving it by understanding the award was a tribute to everybody’s work.

“Looking back, what has stayed with me was wondering about the fate of those people I saw coming off the planes. That first exposure has always made me pay attention to the people in subsequent HADR deployments. It’s made me think about other developing countries and what they could potentially go through, especially thinking about climate change and the change in weather patterns and what that means for our Pacific neighbours.”

# An Aussie experience





**The Joint Enabling (Training and Support) team conducted a staff visit at Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Amberley visiting its Security and Fire School and Command Support Group. The visit sparked discussions around the RAAF Firefighter secondments to support our Aerodrome Rescue and Firefighting (ARFF) trade. Two RAAF personnel talked with *Air Force News* about their experiences here.**

### **Leading Aircraftman Kyle Esplin – RAAF Base Amberley**

I had the privilege of participating in a three-month secondment with the Royal New Zealand Air Force, working alongside their ARFF at Base Ohakea, Woodbourne, and Auckland. This experience not only broadened my skills as a firefighter but also allowed me to immerse myself in New Zealand's culture and explore its natural beauty.

The majority of my secondment was spent at Ohakea, where I adapted to new procedures while sharing my RAAF experiences. Woodbourne was next, this base introduced me to the South Island. My final stop was a brief yet impactful stay at Auckland, working and exploring its surroundings.

A memorable part of the exchange was experiencing my first New Zealand Anzac Day, where the shared spirit of our nations was evident from the dawn service and throughout the day. I also had the chance to compete in the UFBA (United Fire Brigades' Association) North Island Combat Challenge, which tested my physical endurance and allowed me to compete against firefighters from across New Zealand's North Island.

The physical training instructors' Adventure Challenges also gave me the opportunity to experience the rugged terrain on a mountain bike and the various walking trails.

This secondment was more than a professional development opportunity—it was a life-changing experience that strengthened my skills, deepened my appreciation for the Anzac bond, and left me with lifelong memories. Over and above everything, the friendships developed during my time with the Air Force will always be the highlight of my trip. I'd like to thank everyone involved in making it a once in a lifetime opportunity.

### **Corporal Elliott Ambler – RAAF Base Tindal**

I was lucky enough to be the second RAAF firefighter selected for the secondment this year. I would like to say this was only possible through the efforts of individuals back in Australia and in New Zealand, for which I am very appreciative.

The privilege to be selected to represent the RAAF in another nation is something I have not taken for granted, especially with that country being the other half of our Anzacs. So, to put it simply I was overly eager to get over here to learn and experience as much as I could.

Since arriving in New Zealand more than two months ago I have been living and working out of Ohakea. In this time, I have learnt and experienced a few things I would like to share. I learnt that our nations operate in a similar manner with priority on the projection of Air Power.

Even though New Zealand is a much smaller Air Force, they surely don't perform like they are. Our policy and procedures also closely align, which has made this transition a lot more practical.

Our vehicles and equipment may differ from things such as providers, age or type but what doesn't differ, and what I believe is more important is how we operate those appliances and what our main objectives are when responding to an incident. One thing I would mention is if in the future we could find a solution to utilise each other's members as drivers, then we could become a much more optimal coalition force.

The exciting part for me is I still have another month to go after experiencing Woodbourne and the South Island, then heading to Auckland to then Waiouru to observe the Firefighter Intermediate course conduct rural training, to compare with RAAF rural training.

I hope this initiative continues so that it can help strengthen our two nations' relationship, build diverse firefighters that are capable to work alongside each other no matter where that may be and showcase that interchangeability and interoperability are highly achievable.

**LEFT**  
LAC Esplin with the Woodbourne ARFF personnel

**RIGHT**  
(L-R) LAC Esplin, CPL Jack Carey after conducting live "hot" fire training, New Plymouth

# Recognition for outstanding work



B | SENIOR COMMUNICATIONS ADVISOR  
Y | JO PRIESTLEY

**Base Ohakea's No.3 Squadron has received the international Barry Marsden Memorial Award for its outstanding contribution to the preservation of life during Cyclone Gabrielle.**

The award is presented by the United Kingdom-based Honourable Company of Air Pilots. It is named after Canadian pilot and aerial firefighter Barry Marsden, a founder of Conair, a company that specialises in aviation firefighting equipment.

Cyclone Gabrielle hit the North Island in February last year, devastating parts of the Northland, Auckland, East Coast and Hawke's Bay regions.

No. 3 Squadron was at the forefront of the New Zealand Defence Force's response with four aircraft and 150 Air Force staff involved.

Master of the Honourable Company, Richie Piper, was in New Zealand recently and presented the award to the Commanding Officer of No. 3 Squadron, Wing Commander (WGCDR) Chris Ross.

He recounted the squadron's responses, rescuing numerous people (including children and animals) stranded on the roofs of their homes, where floodwaters had almost completely submerged single-storey houses.

"At the end of the first day, a total of 23 people and five dogs were rescued by No. 3 Squadron crews. A significant number of these were completed by hoist under trying conditions, testing the limits of all involved," said Mr Piper.

Although only one part of a much larger response, No. 3 Squadron's efforts in the days and weeks following Gabrielle represented an outstanding team effort, which in turn ensured the preservation of multiple lives of their fellow New Zealanders, Mr Piper said.

ABOVE  
Richie Piper (in front) WGCDR Chris Ross (behind)



“One rescue of note saw an individual with an existing spinal injury needing to be recovered from their bedroom on their second floor. This multiple-agency rescue was led by the NH90 winch person, who demolished the bedroom window, enabling the patient to be moved to the roof, winched into the helicopter and evacuated to Hastings hospital,” said Mr Piper.

In the days following the initial response, the number of rescues decreased and the focus moved to the conduct of airborne logistical support, including the movement of industrial generators, food, water, supplies and people to isolated communities.

Over the whole period, the crews evacuated 384 people and 23 pets, transported 37 VIPs, and moved 25,600kg of external loads and 66,810kg of internal loads.

Mr Piper said this was a whole-of-squadron effort – none of this would have been possible without the maintenance personnel of No. 3 Squadron whose efforts saw the NH90s break global flying rate records. They flew a total of 302.9 hours during the response (198.5 hours of which were flown in the first week).

“This is a remarkable achievement in itself, noting the lack of maintenance staff No. 3 Squadron had available at the time. This small group of deployed maintainers, supported by the remaining team in Ohakea, worked tirelessly in undesirable weather conditions, carrying out the regular daily servicings with the limited tools available, all the while doing so with a positive attitude, knowing that they were directly contributing to supporting those in need,” said Mr Piper.

WGCDR Ross said there’s no better feeling than going out and doing a job and knowing you’ve helped someone.

“I remember seeing Esk Valley and Pakowhai for the first time after the flooding with hundreds of people and pets stranded on rooftops and horses and cattle swimming around in their backyards. You could see where people had climbed up into their attics and busted holes through the roof. People kept it together until they were in the helicopter with their loved ones and that’s when many started to cry, knowing they were now safe.”

The Barry Marsden Memorial Award means a lot to the squadron as it recognises the entire team of pilots, helicopter loadmasters, operations support and maintenance staff who were involved in the rescue effort, and the enduring support they gave for the month following the cyclone, said WGCDR Ross.

# 50 years of service above and beyond



WORDS | JO PRIESTLY  
PHOTO | CPL RACHEL PUGH

## At an age where many have settled comfortably into retirement, Palmerston North's Grant Ellis is still working full-time for the Air Force – a job he has held for the past 50 years.

**M**r Ellis enlisted in January 1973 aged 18 and now aged 70 has no plans to retire.

"I resigned from the Air Force when I was 68 but I got bored and rejoined as a civilian. Longevity runs in my family, and I was worried I still had 20 or 30 years stretching in front of me," he said.

His career as an airframe fitter started almost by accident.

"I really wanted to be a motor transport mechanic but there weren't any positions available. I was offered a position as an airframe fitter in the Air Force. I enlisted and spent the next 43 years in uniform working on all types of aircraft including Harvards, Devons, Bristol Freighters, DC-3s, Aerospace CT/4B Airtrainers, Air Tourers, F27 Friendships, Hercules, Andovers, Strikemasters, Aermacchis, Iroquois helicopters, and A-4K Skyhawks."

The last aircraft still flying that he's worked on are the C-130H Hercules and "they're on their way out" and being replaced with the C-130J.

When he first qualified Mr Ellis looked primarily after the aircraft's structure, flight controls, hydraulics, landing gear and fuel tanks. However, after completing the Air Force's first Airframe/Engine Technician course three years later, his trade title changed to aircraft technician.

He deployed Singapore from 1977 to 1979 with No. 41 Squadron where he worked on Iroquois helicopters and Bristol Freighters.

On his return to Wigram in 1979 Mr Ellis worked on Aerospace CT/4B Airtrainer, the primary pilot training aircraft and the Fokker F27 Friendships, a turboprop airliner, which was used as a navigation trainer. He "stayed on the tools" servicing military aircraft until promoted into a supervisory role in 1985 as a Sergeant.

In 1986 he relocated to No. 14 Squadron at Ohakea supervising and training aircraft maintenance personnel. In the squadron received 18 Aermacchi "Macchi" jets which provided pilots with the advanced flying training component of their Wings course.

Mr Ellis reached his highest military rank as the Maintenance Warrant Officer in No. 75 Squadron, but the disbandment of the Air Force's Air Combat Force in 2001 saw him and 364 other staff made redundant.

Mr Ellis re-enlisted as a Sergeant the following year, on a fifteen-year contract and over a number of roles made the rank of Flight Sergeant before transferring to a civilian position within the Defence Airworthiness Authority. He retired in 2022, but after a year he decided retirement wasn't for him and returned as a civilian.

Now, taking on a role as the A109 helicopter Component Control Planner Technician, Mr Ellis reached his 50-year anniversary on October 12.

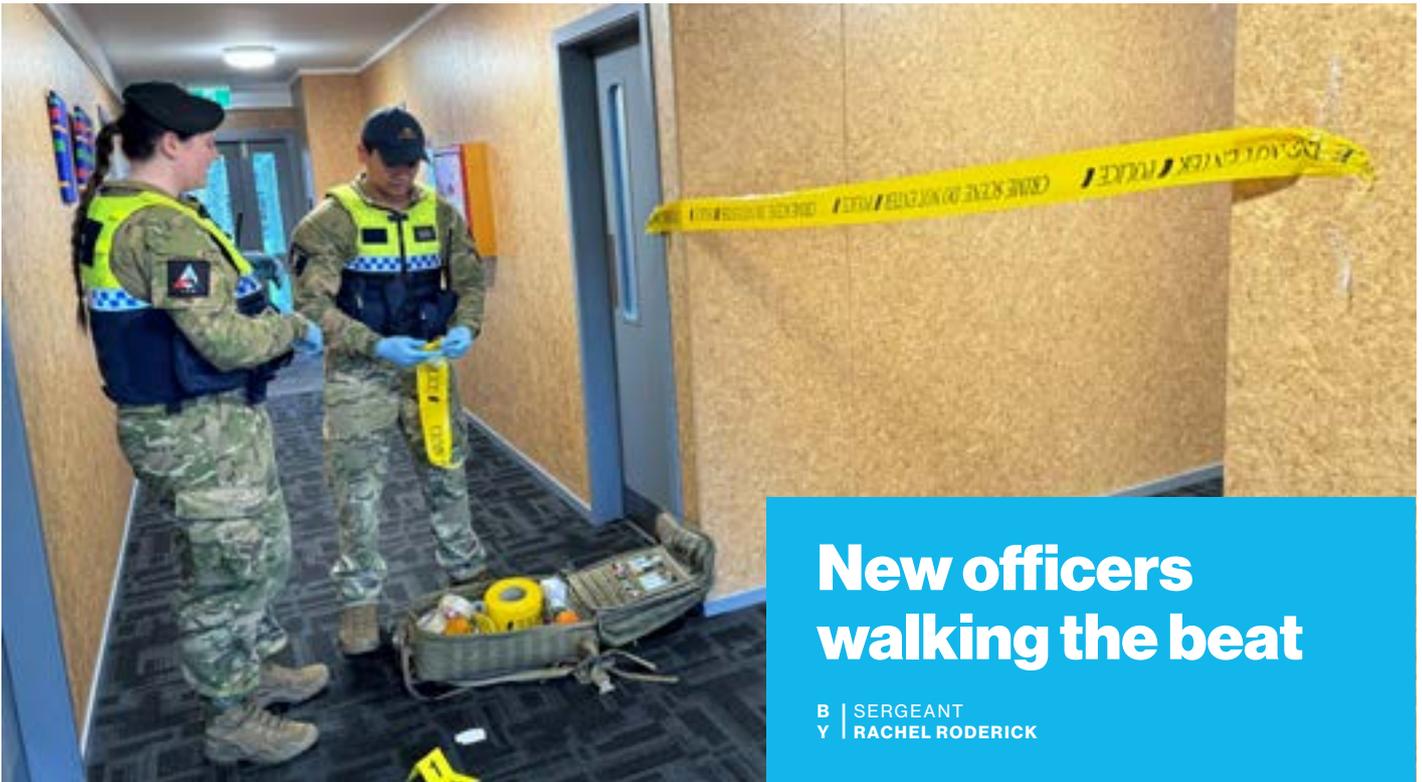
His biggest challenge was working on the Strikemaster where the "aircraft had to be virtually disassembled to reach the part you needed to fix".

"The most satisfying role I had was as Flight Sergeant, where I could fly under the radar and get things done. I was respected because of what I knew and achieved.

"A personal highlight was being awarded today's version of the Chief of Air Force Commendation. I received this for keeping the Macchis flying during a period of low staffing - when we were required to have three waves of six flying a day for flight training - at a time when the jets were experiencing ongoing serious engine problems."

He still runs 8km five times a week and plans to keep working as long as he has something worthwhile to contribute. Mr Ellis has been married to wife Clare for 47 years and they have two children and two grandchildren.

His bucket list trip when retired is to travel to Canada where he can indulge his love for hiking and trail walking.



## New officers walking the beat

B | SERGEANT  
Y | RACHEL RODERICK

### The New Zealand Defence Force Joint Military Police Unit has 10 new Military Police personnel.

After fourteen weeks at Trentham Military Camp, the Defence Force Investigators Basic Course 24/01 recently marched out.

Welcoming new recruits into the Joint Military Police Unit (JMPU) allows us to continue to diversify our unit and provide much needed personnel resourcing, which enables us to operate more effectively across the spectrum of MP duties including deployments.

The course entailed instruction on basic service police procedures, the comprehension of military law, the tactical use of force, emergency response driving, and the conduct of criminal investigations.

It is designed to teach the recruits how to operate as a Military Police officer competently, legally and fairly within the stations they have now been posted to.

One of the benefits of being a Joint Service Unit is that graduates from the Defence Force Investigators Basic Course can be posted to any camps or bases within New Zealand. For example new Air Force graduates have been posted to Linton Army Camp and Army graduates have been posted to Devonport Naval Base.

The students were asked for some insight into the course and the challenges they faced.

Acting Corporal (A/CPL) Cheyenne Beukman said the course was constantly changing and she had to stay flexible.

“But as an MP you have the ability to work across all three services and see how they all work. There are so many aspects to the role that I didn’t know about to begin with, but when you start to see and learn about them, the different elements become fascinating.”

Her favourite memories from the course were the ones where the whole course were together - whether on course or socialising after hours.

“I met some cool people and made friends that are going to be around for as long as we are in the same unit and it’s a bond that you can’t really explain. You can’t get through the course alone, you need to work as a team and help each other, not only inside the team exercises but also after hours with study and revision and sharing knowledge.”

A/CPL Keryn Naysmith’s course highlights were the defensive tactics and urgent duty driving.

“I found it quite challenging to distinguish that perfect balance of being confident with what I’d learnt and back myself more, and developing a rapport with people who I’m dealing with.”

The graduates are now all performing the role of Military Police in various camps and bases. They will undergo further on-the-job training under the supervision of experienced MPs to further consolidate their learning.

If you are interested in learning new skills and like the idea of supporting the Defence Force in a Military Police role consider looking to join the unit. The next MP Investigators Basic course starts in May next year. Drop in to your local MP station and ask about the opportunity to experience some real-time exposure to the MP role as part of the trade change process.

## Medics hone emergency response skills



WORDS | SIMONE MILLAR  
PHOTOS | LAC JALESA NOMANI

### Fourteen Air Force medics recently put their skills to the test at Kaipara Weapons Range north of Auckland.

**T**he week-long exercise featured a range of scenarios personnel may encounter as part of a Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief, either on deployment overseas or in New Zealand.

“We were looking at what kind of situations medics would need to respond to, if an earthquake struck a Pacific Island, and we needed to tend to civilians and personnel,” said Corporal (CPL) Kelly Sunnex, who was in charge of the exercise.

“One day we were responding to a road being blocked, people being crushed under fallen trees and another to a motor vehicle accident. We also had a focus on technical skills and survival training, such as setting up camp.”

Medics from Base Auckland, Ohakea and Woodbourne participated in the exercise alongside a nurse from the Royal Air Force.

“The medics had a range of experience, with some still on the New Zealand Defence Force Medic Course, so the experience to learn from other medics was really valuable,” said CPL Sunnex.

Leading Aircraftman Echo Weeks recently graduated as a medic and said this was the first time participating in a full-medical exercise, after being posted to Base Auckland.

“It was awesome, I really enjoyed it. I think the idea of having different scenarios brought a different perspective every day.

“The combination of trauma and primary health care was really useful. In my role I do a lot of primary care, but in a field environment it’s much more challenging as there are limited supplies and it requires more critical thinking and social awareness,” she said.

Each day a different team had the chance to be part of the directing staff, allowing personnel to build the skills needed to run scenarios, as well as be part of the response.

Personnel also got the chance to build relationships and share experiences with medics from other Air Force bases, which CPL Sunnex said was invaluable.

“It was an awesome exercise. Everyone clinically did really well, worked as a team and we got to build relationships with personnel from Ohakea and Woodbourne. Everyone was very switched on.”

# Supporting Antarctica operations from the ground



WORDS | CHARLENE WILLIAMSON  
PHOTOS | LAC J ANDY JENKINS

## The Harewood Terminal Team (HTT) based in Christchurch facilitates hundreds of passengers and cargo flights to and from Antarctica every year.

They directly support Operation Antarctica, one of the Defence Force's most enduring missions. While it is situated alongside RNZAF Air Movements in Christchurch, the HTT is a separate operationally deployed tri-service team.

Through Operation Antarctica the Defence Force shows a commitment in support of Antarctica New Zealand.

Operation Antarctica is comprised of a range of commitments including air transport, logistic support to the New Zealand Antarctic Programme and the bulk of the New Zealand contribution to the New Zealand/United States Joint Logistics Pool.

The Joint Logistics Pool is a shared pool of manpower in air and sea assets and equipment that enable Antarctic operations in New Zealand, Terra Nova Bay, Scott Base and McMurdo Station. The HTT is a large part of the Defence Force's commitment to this.

Officer Commanding HTT Flight Lieutenant (FLTLT) Josh Ahdar said Christchurch holds a special place in Antarctic operations.

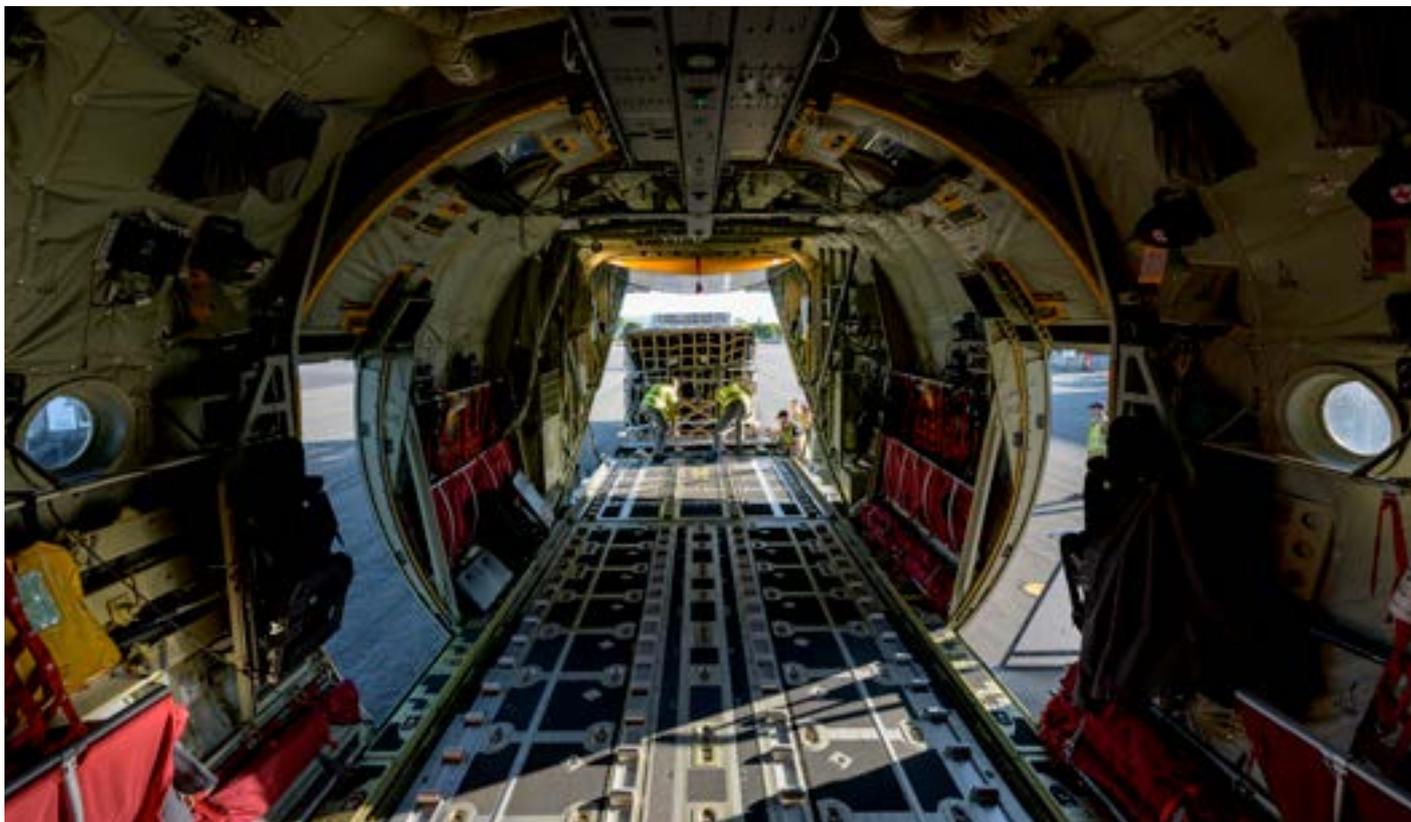
"It is one of only five international airlift gateways in the world. The American, Italian, Korean and New Zealand Antarctic programmes all base their airlift from Christchurch.

"The programmes that our team help to support are focussed on how the continent and its ecosystems are impacted and how these changes will affect the rest of the planet. Changes in Antarctica have a huge flow-on effect to the rest of the world through rising sea levels, ocean circulation and weather patterns.

"Being part of a team that provides a significant contribution to Antarctic scientific programmes that aim to protect, value and understand one of the most unique environments on the planet is what I enjoy the most," he said.

The Defence Force has been contributing personnel to the work on the ice continent since the 1950s. No. 40 Squadron and the C-130s have been flying to Antarctica in a role much like it is today since 1965.

The HTT is responsible for cargo and passenger facilitation for all flights between Christchurch and Antarctica.



For air transport these programmes enlist the support of a wide range of aircraft, including the Boeing 757, C-130H and C-130J, United States Air Force (USAF) C-17, Italian Air Force (IAF) C-130J and the US Air National Guard (USANG) L-C-130s (ski Hercules).

Last ice season the HTT supported 170 flights to the ice, including the USAF C17s, IAF C-130Js US ANG LC130s and our own C-130H and Boeing 757 aircraft. They transported approximately 4500 passengers and 2.3 million pounds of cargo.

FLTLT Ahdar said he enjoys the variability of the role as no two days or ice seasons are the same.

“There is a lot of unpredictability and delays that affect flights to Antarctica, often flight schedules are only as good as the moment we print them off.

“The weather changes rapidly and to the extremes in the continent and because of the lack of divert air fields there is inability to refuel if faced with inclement weather.”

Aircrews need a high level of certainty that they can make it to the ice without a diversion before they can depart Christchurch, often meaning delays as they wait for better flying conditions.

“The weather conditions in Antarctica present unique and high-risk challenges for each flying crew. It keeps everyone on their toes.”

Every year the team see a different set of challenges when it comes to cargo loading and some flights are truly memorable, FLTLT Ahdar said.

“A lot of the cargo are things that many in Air Movements wouldn’t be exposed to, such as the cargo we load on the C-17 with its greater airlift capability. The heaviest item we have ever airlifted from Christchurch were runway compaction rollers, weighing in at 87,000lbs.

“Drill rig, cranes, CAT D8T bulldozers, articulated dump trucks, 60,000lb excavators, cargo sleds and helicopters are just a few of the types of cargo we load each season.”

The HTT has taken many forms over the years as the Defence Force’s presence in Christchurch has changed, but largely its roles and responsibilities have remained the same.

“The team is made up of 27 personnel from all three services. Eight are RNZAF Air Movements staff who post out and deploy to HTT for the summer season and fill subject matter expert roles.

“The rest of the team are a mix of all services and all bring a range of skill sets.

“I would encourage any trade or service to join the HTT as it offers a unique opportunity to be involved in an Operation on home soil, work with other services, agencies and leadership, while also playing a key part in climate change research,” FLTLT Ahdar said.

Personnel are posted to the HTT for the duration of the summer ice season which runs from October to February each year. The job covers multiple shifts over a 24-hour period.

## Ingenuity and skill needed for upgrade

B | MAINTENANCE FLIGHT COMMANDER, NO. 6 SQUADRON  
Y | SQUADRON LEADER ANDRE BUDEL

**In a remarkable display of engineering prowess and Kiwi ingenuity, a team of design engineers led by the Air Force's Military Design Organisation has produced a complex upgrade to the SH-2G(I) Seasprite helicopter's communication system in just a matter of months.**

**T**he upgrade ensures that the helicopter will continue to operate seamlessly within a broader network of modern Defence Force and partner sea, land and air-based platforms.

No. 6 Squadron Commanding Officer Commander (CDR) Alex Trotter described the benefits of this upgrade as being crucial both to the squadron and the Navy.

"It allows the SH-2G(I) to continue to operate alongside allies and partners in a tactical maritime environment, delivering its full range of warfighting effects.

"For the Navy the SH-2G(I) is a critical force multiplier, providing over the horizon targeting, Information, Surveillance and Reconnaissance, and strike capabilities to the platform it is operating from. This upgrade will ensure the Sprite remains, capable, credible, and interoperable for the remainder of its time in service."

A critical element of this success story is the collaboration between the Defence Force's Capability Branch and the design engineers in the Air Force and its strategic partners: Beca Applied Technologies and Airbus NZ.

Leveraging these partnerships allowed for the pooling of expertise and resources, accelerating the design process while ensuring that every aspect of the upgrade met the functional, safety and reliability requirements. This was all done while adhering to Defence Aviation Rules, the regulatory framework recently introduced to the Defence Force.

Becoming a design engineer in the Air Force is a pathway offered to its engineering officers who undertake advanced aerospace training in New Zealand and abroad throughout their careers. Design engineers gain a series of authorisations that allows them to design and certify modifications to aircraft of varying complexity, and this modification was right up there.



The project demonstrated the strength and novelty of having a sovereign design team capable of delivering advanced technological upgrades. This has become a rare and valued asset in modern-day defence forces, where there is a growing reliance on overseas industry to provide timely design services.

The ability to rapidly deliver complex technical solutions internally not only expedites project timelines but also offers the Defence Force greater control and flexibility over the final product.

“The tactical environment is unstable, increasingly hostile, and evolving at a dizzying pace – with the challenges of responding to it becoming increasingly complex. Having an in-house design organisation capable of reacting with the speed and proficiency of the Military Design Organisation is critical to meeting this challenge,” CDR Trotter said.

The complexity of the upgrade to the naval helicopter was significant and riddled with fishhooks from start to finish. This is in part due to needing to integrate state-of-the-art equipment into an aging aircraft coupled with the multi-disciplinary aspects of the upgrade.

Even when the design was complete on paper it still required regulatory finesse from the Air Force’s Continuing Airworthiness Management Organisation to approve its fitted safely.

The engineering team had to navigate a web of technical requirements, each with its own set of challenges.

Software analysis was required to ensure robust, error-free communication protocols, while avionics teams focused on integrating these protocols with the helicopter’s existing and introduced avionics systems.

Structural engineers made necessary adjustments to accommodate the new hardware, all while maintaining the aircraft’s operational integrity. Additionally, the human user interface was refined to enhance ease of use and operational efficiency under demanding conditions.

The successful completion of this project showcases the Air Force’s ability to provide advanced technological upgrades with the agility required to maintain an operational advantage.

The Air Force’s Head of Design and Engineering, Wing Commander (WGCDR) Michael Bunting said to deliver an interdisciplinary project in a short time required careful project management.

“Success required delivering on aggressive timeframes for establishing design and airworthiness requirements designing and provisioning a solution and certifying all work.

“Teamwork across all areas was essential, and when combined with a clear goal tied to an operational output proved to be the significant factors in the successful delivery of a design, which exceeded time, cost and performance expectations,” WGCDR Bunting said.

As the helicopter takes to the skies and over the seas with its modernised communication system, it serves as a testament to the advantage that the Air Force has with its in-house design team, supported by its strategic partners, when required to deliver capability at speed and with excellence.



# Overcoming alcoholism:

## My journey through PTSD and recovery

### My name is Flight Sergeant Tim Wilson, and I am an alcoholic.

**F**or over two decades now, I have battled a relentless enemy. An enemy that had a profound grip on my physical and mental wellbeing. What began as a convenient way to cope, quickly spiralled into a dependence that consumed me.

Some of you reading may have memories of both my misadventures and an alcohol-dependent culture. The theme of this article is to share what alcoholism looked like for me and what worked for me to combat it.

At all times during my struggle I had a choice. What I didn't have until only recently was the emotional intelligence to make that choice.

My struggle with alcohol was deeply rooted in my experience with service related post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The trauma and moral injuries sustained from my service were not things I had capacity to process. This was due to maturity, organisational culture, but above all, ego. Coming from high-performing units, I had developed a solid and respected reputation. A reputation that I would detrimentally defend and fight to sustain.

Nights were particularly hard. Sleep often evaded me as memories replayed in my mind, leaving me emotionally fatigued. Alcohol seemed like the only way to escape, a temporary reprieve from the constant symptoms.

At first, it worked. A few drinks helped me fall asleep, dulled the edges of the memories. But as time went on, I needed more to achieve the same effect.

My relationships suffered, work was impacted, and I was losing myself in the process. The person I had been – disciplined, strong, and reliable – was replaced by someone I struggled to recognise.

The turning point came when I realised that nobody was coming to help me. I had disguised my feelings so well that even the closest people to me had no idea of the pain I was in. It became apparent that if I didn't share my problems that they would remain just that, my problems.

As aircrew I was acutely aware of the perceived stigma and operational risk of being medically downgraded and unable to fly. It was difficult for me to put my own needs before the needs of my squadron and the Air Force.

Tired of the constant brain fog, negative thoughts, and hangovers I was faced with a choice: continue down a path I knew had no end, a brick wall I was destined to forever bang my head against or, talk. Really talk.

I rescheduled the appointment twice before I finally got the courage to go. I remember sitting in the Defence Health Centre waiting room considering how I would start the conversation (if at all) with the doctor.

I buried the lead in a list of minor physical ailments, this was not the doctor's first rodeo. After a couple of follow-up questions, I finally whispered: "Sir, I'm not okay. I need your help."

Any reservations I had quickly dissipated as I was encouraged and supported by multiple Air Force and Defence Force resources.

A significant breakthrough came in the form of an official PTSD diagnosis. This allowed me to "put a pin" in what was the root cause of my addiction.

A switch was flicked. My enemy now had a name and I was going to defeat it.

The years of abuse had taken its toll on my body physically, I knew I had to get fit.

I met with a physical training instructor to develop a regime, as well as educating myself about nutrition and weight loss techniques. I found a programme that was compatible with my lifestyle and set realistic time-based goals.

Through Defence Health I was able to access an intense treatment programme, a three-day residential course held at a private facility. Here in an isolated environment I would participate in various evidence-based components such as Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR), Prolonged Exposure Therapy, Therapeutic Movement, and Psycho-Education. The aim was to effectively reduce PTSD symptoms.

It worked. Although the sessions were emotionally draining and extremely confronting, I was motivated to see it succeed.

At the writing of this article I am 93 days sober. That may not seem like a significant number to most, but for me it is everything. That is 93 days of my wife, sons, friends and colleagues getting the best of me.

Sobriety has encouraged me to practise emotional regulation, which has improved my overall patience and resilience. Situations which ordinarily would trigger or upset me are now able to be processed without incident.

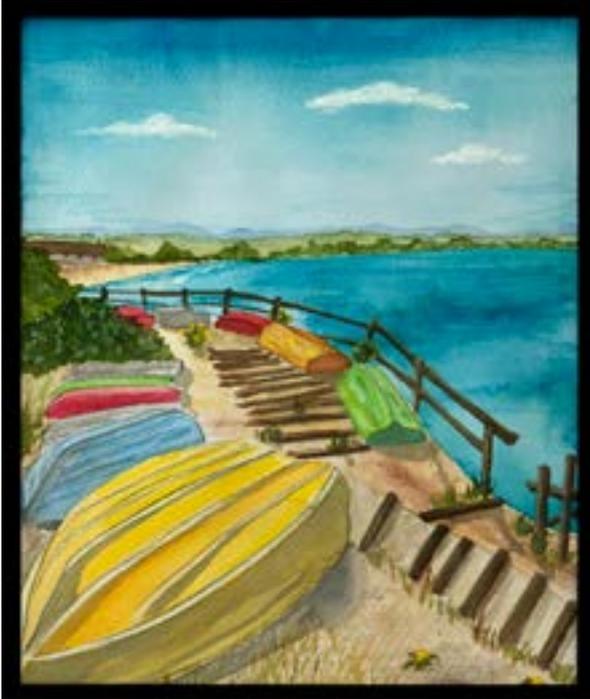
My story is an all too familiar one within our community. However recovery is possible. There are people and resource available to you, at all times.

You just need to ask.....

Kimihia Ka Patu

# Art aids in recovery

B | SENIOR COMMUNICATIONS ADVISOR  
Y | CHARLENE WILLIAMSON



## Thirty incredible pieces of art were recently on display in Christchurch's Arts Centre as part of the New Zealand Army's Art in Recovery initiative.

"A Shared Journey of Recovery" was an exhibition celebrating and recognising Defence Force personnel who have been injured, wounded or became ill as part of/ during their service to our country. It also recognises their family and friends, and the families of our fallen.

Art in Recovery has been running since 2018 and this was the first time art work has been open to the public to view.

New Zealand Army Liaison Officer Injured, Wounded and Ill, Captain (CAPT) Rebecca Millar, said the exhibition allowed stories to be shared through art and aims to enhance a sense of wellbeing.

"We have 20 artists and more than 30 pieces of art across a variety of mediums including mouth painting, sculptures, welding, digital art and more.

"Our oldest former serving artist is 89 years old and it's been lovely to see him reconnect with military through his art."

She said Art in Recovery was about raising awareness of recovery through art by exhibiting and showcasing work by Defence Force people.

"The journey to recovery can be found in many forms, including art and creativity which is just one therapeutic method that can help in the recovery process," CAPT Millar said.

Former Royal Air Force and Royal New Zealand Air Force aircraft technician Gill McFarlane spent 17 years in uniform. She now works as a civilian at Base Woodbourne in health and safety.

Mrs McFarlane has two pieces of art in the exhibition and says her first taste of Art in Recovery was in 2021 with the Art in Recovery Workshop where she discovered a love of painting landscapes.

"It was so refreshing to be able to talk about what was happening inside my head, and have an outlet to encapsulate my feelings.

"When I got home, I tried all the different techniques taught and then I started to paint watercolours. I have been doing that for about a year now. I found I really enjoying painting landscapes. I doubt my paintings are technically correct, but it was more about enjoyment than technical skill.

"I didn't consider art as an outlet until I attended the Art in Recovery workshop, and now it is a regular tool in my mental wellness toolbox," she said.

Mrs McFarlane said it meant a lot to her to be a part of Art in Recovery.

"I think it is really important to create open, honest conversations around mental health and mental injuries. For such a long time there has been massive stigma and I think we are moving away from those attitudes and Art in Recovery is a really cool way to do that," she said.

As a non-public funding event, this initiative could not have happened without the support of sponsors The Fallen Heroes Trust, Veterans' Affairs New Zealand and the RSA.

## Long look at Aotearoa

WORDS | REBECCA QUILLIAM  
PHOTOS | CPL RACHEL PUGH



**An opportunity to explore a country on the other side of the world was too good to ignore and it led Royal Air Force (RAF) People Operations Specialist Corporal (CPL) Sian Murphy to pack her bags and be posted to Base Ohakea.**

She had applied to take part in Exercise Longlook, an exchange programme between the United Kingdom and New Zealand. The opportunity originally aimed to deploy a squadron's personnel from the UK to here and for the Defence Force to send a squadron to the UK on the return flight. It enabled both squadrons to work outside of their comfort zones and identify different ways of working. However, personnel from each country can now apply and deploy as individual augmentees.

"If you put in the work into the exchange application process you are rewarded with great opportunities," CPL Murphy said.

Arriving to New Zealand in September from RAF Brize Norton, CPL Murphy has spent four months at Ohakea and will return home by Christmas.

"I have been able to travel to the other side of the world, not knowing a single person, but still feel like I am part of the wider output/family of air power and Defence within a different organisation."

CPL Murphy's application was originally based on a study comparing the Defence Force and RAF welfare pillars. However, her focus took a shift to reviewing and analysing Op Respect.

With CPL Murphy's role in the UK, working within Service Discipline, she has been able to support the Op Respect team by using her knowledge on unacceptable behaviours and identifying the comparisons between the two policies.

"I was able to look into the Defence Force policy and highlight similarities, differences and also suggest and provide the Senior Leader Team with alternative options and recommendations., which has positively impacted the review of Op Respect."

After meetings with the Warrant Officer of the Defence Force, Warrant Officer of the Air Force and the Op Respect team, CPL Murphy has linked both nations' policy point of contacts together, enabling a stronger and more agile approach to each organisation's policies around inappropriate behaviours.

"During my tour, I have been able to visit all three Defence Force air bases, completing the Tūrangawaewae induction programme at Ohakea, the mentoring scheme, the School to Skies programme in Auckland and spent a week with recruits at the Command Recruit Training Squadron in Woodbourne."

The exercise provided opportunities to maintain and strengthen the international relationships between the two countries, despite their geographical location, she said.

"I have met some amazing personnel within the Defence Force and I will be forever grateful of their warm welcome and kindness."

It was the first time CPL Murphy had visited the country, but she laughed that the timing could have been a bit better.

"I'm staying until December 16, which is sad because the weather is just getting warm and I'll be going home to cold and gloomy weather"

**"It has taught me no matter where you go in the military you will always feel a sense of belonging."**

# Interbase Football

B | SQUADRON LEADER  
Y | ANTHONY CLEGG



**Change was in the air for this year's Interbase Football tournament. Not only did we have the classic four seasons in one day Auckland weather, but the inaugural Women's Super 7s mini-tournament was held, there was a move to the Ranui Swanson Football Club and a sponsors evening was hosted at the Swanson RSA as part of fostering community and club ties.**

**D**ay one saw some high-speed games from the men. Despite the score lines pushing out, the games felt a lot closer and there was definitely no shortage of on-field passion. Ohakea outplayed the Shelly Bay Seahorses in the first half, to take the eventual win.

The Women's Super 7s was a highly competitive event with three evenly matched teams, Auckland, Ohakea and a mixed team. In the smaller format players were able to develop their game without the heavy emphasis on fitness.

Auckland and Woodbourne men had a give and take no quarter match to end the day, with Auckland's pace and cohesion proving to be the decider.

Day two is when the bodies start to feel it, and it was noted the men's games weren't played at the same frantic pace. The scores were close at the break, with the young legs and speed of Auckland and Ohakea teams winning the eventual grind against the Shelly Bay Seahorses and Woodbourne respectively.

The second and final day of the Women's Super 7s saw a re-seeding from the previous day's results and the teams really getting into the new format.

Day two evening saw the over-35s make another return this year thanks to work by Warrant Officer Bruce Kropp. A number of legends dusted off their boots and came out, and some heroic efforts were made by some of the open men's players backing up from two days of games.

We didn't achieve the result we wanted, though this was due to an opposition selection mismatch against a team full of young players, the score blew out. However the over-35s did the mahi and still provided a strong showing.

Day three was a highly anticipated finals day. A lot of paths were worn on the sideline from pacing coaches and managers. The Seahorses and Woodbourne were locked in a 90-minute wrestle that went down to the closing minutes to decide the eventual winners, Woodbourne.



The women returned to a full 11-a-side for Auckland versus Ohakea, another closely fought match, with the progression from the Super 7s on show. Ohakea's ability to finish proved to be the decider as they clinched their first tournament win since 2016.

The men's final, Auckland versus Ohakea, was filled with an abundance of energy and mathematical calculations based on the previous two days' results. A draw and talk of shared trophy was unpalatable for either team. Once again another match that went down to the closing minutes to determine the winner. Ohakea proved eventual winners, backing up their 2023 win.

Off the field the daily prize-giving ceremonies were a show piece on their own, as Squadron Leader Jozef McGurk's poetry, recorder and guitar performances were captivating, setting the bar high and inspiring those that followed to break the mould to also break out a rap or poem.

For the first time in recorded history, Ohakea took out both the women's and men's tournaments, along with the inaugural Super 7s. Perhaps Auckland's sporting dominance is shifting to Ohakea? Although there was a clear competitive spirit on the field, off the field the vibe and feel was also that of friendships, community and family. See you at Interbase 2025 at Ohakea!

A month later, the Air Force men and women went on to compete at the Interservice tournament. The women squared off against a very dominate NZ Army team, who ultimately took a clean sweep to regain the Buckle's Cup. The men battled hard across their two games, but couldn't capitalise on their chances. In a surprise, but welcome upset, the Royal New Zealand Navy men went on to win the Anne Waldie Memorial Bowl for the first time in 36 years!

#### INTERBASE TOURNAMENT RESULTS

**Men:** Ohakea

**Women:** Ohakea

**Women Super 7s:** Ohakea

#### INTERSERVICE TOURNAMENT RESULTS

**Men:** Royal New Zealand Navy

**Women:** NZ Army



**B** | CORPORAL  
**Y** | RACHEL PUGH

Through covering the Black Falcons season and various Wings courses this year, I've captured a lot of imagery of T-6C Texan IIs that I am really happy with. One of the really special memories was shooting air-to-air while returning from Exercise Wise Owl in Woodbourne.

We were flying in a four-ship formation home, but towards the end of the journey my pilot and I broke away from the others and spent some time shooting the other aircraft as they sailed around the clouds in perfect synch. Most of the time military tasks are hectic and exciting, but up there in the quiet sky that day was a rare peaceful moment.

# Notices



## C-130H RETIREMENT EVENTS

Commanding Officer of No. 40 Squadron invites NZDF personnel to the:

Lockheed C-130H(NZ) retirement from service, at RNZAF Base Whenuapai, on January 31, 2025.

Parade and No. 40 Squadron open afternoon: 1330 – 1630

Retirement hangar party: 1730 – 2330

For more information, please email: [40SQNAAdjutant@nzdf.mil.nz](mailto:40SQNAAdjutant@nzdf.mil.nz)

## NO. 23 ACS/5 CET 60<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY REUNION

**Wigram and Surrounds  
9/10 January 2026**

Less than 18 months to go now, and this will probably be the last hurrah.

Contact any of the following for more information:

Gary Danvers: [garydanvers@gmail.com](mailto:garydanvers@gmail.com)

Dave Bryant: [davebryant4@icloud.com](mailto:davebryant4@icloud.com)

Barry Lennox: [btr.lennox@gmail.com](mailto:btr.lennox@gmail.com)

Click [here](#) for more information.

## 1976 AIRMAN CADET 50 YEAR REUNION

**Calling for registrations to attend the reunion and take up the opportunity to catch up with old mates or reconnect with those you lost touch with.**

The organising committee needs your contact details to send you regular updates.

**When:** January 15–18, 2026

**Where:** Base Woodbourne

**Register:** [1976sprogreunion@gmail.com](mailto:1976sprogreunion@gmail.com)

**Facebook:** 76Sprogs 50 Year Reunion

# Coming Soon!

## Tāngata Whaiora

**KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR YOUR HANDBOOK TO DEFENCE HEALTH SERVICES.**

For serving Regular, Reserve and Territorial Force members of the New Zealand Defence Force.



Wondering what your medical grading means?  
Unsure when to see a doctor?  
Worried a health concern may stop you deploying?

For answers to these and other health questions, scan the QR Code.



TE OPE KĀTUA O AOTEAROA  
DEFENCE FORCE

Defence Health



INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT PLAN							
MESSAGE TYPE << ≡ (FPL	7 AIRCRAFT IDENTIFICATION — HOHOHO1	8 FLIGHT RULES — I	TYPE OF FLIGHT MAGIC << ≡				
9 NUMBER — 1	TYPE OF AIRCRAFT SLEIGH	WAKE TURBULENCE CAT / M	10 EQUIPMENT — NAUGHTY AND NICE LIST << ≡				
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18 OTHER INFORMATION — OPERATOR/CHRISTMAS INC							
REMARK/OPERATING 100 NAUTICAL MILES LEFT AND RIGHT OF TRACK BETWEEN CAPE REINGA AND BLUFF DURING NIGHT HOURS IN THE VICINITY OF GOOD GIRLS AND BOYS >> ≡							
SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION (NOT TO BE TRANSMITTED IN FPL MESSAGES)							
19 ENDURANCE — E / 12 00		ELVES ON BOARD → P / 4		EMERGENCY RADIO → R / U V E			
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REMARKS → N / FLASHING RED BEACON ON NOSE OF AIRCRAFT << ≡							
PILOT IN COMMAND C / CAPT S. CLAUS >> ≡							
FILED BY JOLLY OPERATIONS FLIGHTPLANNING@XMAS.COM				ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS SUPPLEMENTARY RATIONS TO INCLUDE MILK, COOKIES AND CARROTS			
							