



ARMI NIUS

NEWSLETTER OF THE PIB-NGIB-HQ-PIR ASSOCIATION

3/2023

Patron: Major-General B.W. (Hori) Howard AO MC ESM (Ret'd)

Welcome

Welcome to the July 2023 edition of *Armi Nius*. Along with the usual updates of coming events and other updates, we continue to explore the theme of leadership, which began in the previous newsletter following Anzac Day. Garry Young shares his memories of an outstanding PNGDF leader, and we feature an interview with PIB-PIR Association President Don Graham reflecting on his experiences over time both with military and civilian leaders.

Terry Edwinsmith offers a tribute to the work of Legacy, celebrating 100 years of outstanding service to families of war veterans through the Centennial Torch Relay.

There are two pieces about Vietnam: one a fascinating piece by Peter Darmody about the Tonle Sap River and its role in the Vietnam War; the other about a milestone in Australian music: Christopher Latham's musical tribute to Vietnam veterans, *Vietnam Requiem*, performed at the War Memorial in Canberra earlier this year.

And we feature Ian Ogston's reflection on David Forrest's novel about Australian fighters in the New Guinea Campaign, *The Last Blue Sea*. It seems to have a powerful impact on anyone who reads it.

We'll let you read the rest yourself. From the editors, thanks for your ongoing support of the Association, and we'll continue to seek out that combination of memories, updates, and things to think about, like leadership, sacrifice, team spirit, and giving back, not just taking. These qualities were highly valued by those to whom this Association is dedicated, and we suggest that they are much needed in Australia today, perhaps as much as they were back then.

Ian Ogston & Norm Hunter (Co-editors)

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Association updates:

2023 Annual General Meeting

The AGM will be held at the Geebung – Zillmere RSL Club, Brisbane on **Sunday 23rd July**. As in previous years, we will plan for Lunch to begin at the RSL at 12 Noon. The RSL has confirmed our free booking for the Collins Room from 1pm onwards for the AGM and General Meeting. An outline of the AGM Agenda has been sent out to all Members.

Kokoda Day, Broadbeach

The 81st Kokoda Day Memorial service will be held at the Rotary Kokoda Memorial Wall, Cascade Gardens, 2690 Gold Coast Highway, Broadbeach on **Tuesday, 8 August 2023**.

Please arrive by 10am with the service beginning at 10.30am. We intend to have lunch and a get together at the nearby Broadbeach Bowls Club following the Service.

Any Association member who has not already responded to the Kokoda invitation and wishes to attend should contact the organizing Secretary of the Rotary Club, Laurie Hamilton, at broadwaterrotary@gmail.com or phone **0413 747 577**.

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The articles that follow reflect the personal views of the authors, and should be read as independent of the Association, which does not hold official views on the topics addressed.

Reflections on a PNGDF Leader and Bougainville: Brigadier Lokinap

Introduction

Welcome to Part Two of my thoughts and relationship with PNG leaders; this piece is on a PNGDF Commander who was directly involved in the conflict on Bougainville. He faced incredible challenges and I have no doubt that he did his utmost to achieve the PNG Government's desired outcomes whilst facing a highly motivated insurgency that had the

advantages of terrain and local support. Brigadier Lokinap was given inadequate resources to carry out the mission and faced internal disloyalty throughout his tenure.

I have not set out to wilfully critique the Commander's performance or personality; it has been over 20 years since I last served in PNG or studied the Bougainville conflict in detail; hindsight is often an unfair assessment tool.

Brigadier Rocky Lokinap

Rocky and I were fellow officers in 2PIR in 1973 and 1974. I think he was posted to 1PIR as a Company Commander in early 1975. He was a well-respected officer in 2PIR with a good sense of humour. In hindsight, Rocky stood out as a future Commander of PNGDF as he performed well, showed good leadership, and was respected by his peers.

Rocky was the Commander of PNGDF when I was deployed to Bougainville in early January 1990. I was able to catch up with him at Arawa on one of his visits to his troops who were under the local command of Colonel Leo Nuia, the Joint Forces Commander. Rocky appeared to me to be heavily burdened by his appointment. The PNGDF and RPNGC were having little success on the ground, were taking casualties from the rebels and BCL Copper was closing the mine: something that the PNG government could ill afford to occur due to forecast revenue losses.

Both the PNGDF and RPNGC were not behaving well on the ground with numerous reports of members of the security forces harassing and, on occasions, harming locals as payback for rebel attacks resulting in security forces deaths. In addition, I felt Rocky was being undermined by Leo Nuia who wanted to take a much harder line against the locals and the BRA. On more than one occasion, I heard Leo make derogatory comments about the government in Port Moresby and the way the forces were being led by Rocky. I understand, to some degree, Leo's frustration. He had limited assets, especially helicopters to conduct counter insurgency style operations and a government who had virtually no appreciation of the difficult terrain the security forces were operating in. Government directives were often ignored on the ground which caused Rocky much angst.

Rocky, in my opinion did not have the strength of character nor the Machiavellian traits of Leo, who trusted virtually no-one and had little respect for the laws of armed conflict. I think Rocky was a decent person trying to meet the requirements of government and supporting his troops on the ground, yet receiving limited intelligence on which to base his plans to quell the uprising. Rocky was removed as the Commander around 1993 and, unfortunately, I lost contact with him.

(Lt-Colonel) Garry J. Young CSM

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LEGACY: A Hundred Years of Service

In 1923, Legacy made a promise to help veterans' families carry on with their lives after the loss or injury of their loved ones. It was a simple promise that Legacy keeps today, providing the same stability, guidance, and assistance that a partner would normally provide to his or her family.

Legacy Australia had its beginnings in a national movement to provide support to ex-servicemen and to the widows and children of those who died while on active service during the Great War and subsequently to other wars that Australian servicemen participated in.

In 2023, Legacy is celebrating its achievements with the Legacy Centenary Torch Relay 2023 presented by Defence Health, marking 100 years of service to those who require a 'helping hand'. The badge of Legacy is the torch and the laurel wreath.



The torch arrives in Melbourne

Legacy provides educational scholarships, mentoring to families who require assistance, children's camps, holiday accommodation, financial assistance if required, and access to professional help via the State Branch network. Volunteers provide the link between the families and the state-based Legacy head offices.

Legacy aims to salute the sacrifice of veterans and provide continuous care to those who have given so much, by honouring the past, thanking the present and building the future for those Veterans' families in need.

Beginning in Pozieres, France, then on to London, UK, the torch has passed through Western Australia, South Australia, and the Northern Territory. At time of writing (July 2023) it had passed through Queensland and New South Wales, is due in the ACT on 28/8/23, Victoria on 5/9/23, Tasmania on 3/10/23, finishing back in Melbourne on 12 & 13th October.

My interest in this project is several-fold. I was a Legacy ward with my brother and sister in our early years of life. I am presently a Legatee (volunteer) with a Brisbane Club, and I was an official for the Brisbane leg of the relay as the torch arrived from the Sunshine Coast on its way to Melbourne.

Join me in celebrating the Legacy Centenary 2023 <https://www.legacytorchrelay.com.au/>

Terry Edwinsmith (Sgt 1PIR 1967-68)

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Reflections on Leadership, Part 1

An interview with Major Donald Graham (ret'd)



Armi Nius co-editor Norm Hunter sat down with PIB-NGIB-HQ-PIR Association President Don Graham for a conversation about leadership, based on Don's experiences in military and civilian life.

Norm had sent a small number of questions for Don to think about before the interview. What follows is an edited version of the discussion.

The interview took place at Sanctuary Cove on 6 July 2023.

NH: Thanks for agreeing to do this, Don. I'd like you to share your thoughts about leadership, based on your military and civilian experiences. Can I start by asking if any examples of what you'd describe as outstanding leadership come to mind?

DG: Yes, they do. There are three officers who were exceptional leaders, and with whom I had warm personal relationships. They were Major General Sir James Harrison, Major General Michael Jeffery, and General Sir Peter Cosgrove.

Let me start with Sir James Harrison. He was Commandant in command of the Officer Cadet School, Portsea, in 1953, when I was 18 years old.

NH: What was it about his leadership that impressed you?

DG: He had certain personal qualities, and he was always true to them.

NH: What were they?

DG: He was 'old school'. A 'gentleman' in everything he did and said.

NH: So, can you tell me what being 'old school' and a 'gentleman' looked like?



DG: He wasn't a bully or a bureaucrat. Whether up or down, he treated everyone with respect. In his bearing, including his dress, he presented himself with a quiet pride, but not arrogant. He was a very good all-round sportsman and a great advocate of team spirit. He was a skilled diplomat, always calm and in control of the situation, and he had very good command of language. He was strongly loyal – very encouraging and supportive of his charges.

NH: Can you recall anything he said that had a lasting impression on you?

DG: I certainly can. When we graduated from Portsea in June 1953, he gave three pieces of advice to the young officer graduates:

- (i) If practicable, stay single until you're at least 30. By then you'll have done the promotional exams and got yourself established in military life. Then you'll be able to give the necessary time to your family.
- (ii) Do your promotion exams as soon as possible: before you get married and have other important responsibilities.
- (iii) Keep fit. Play sport and get to understand the power of team spirit.

NH: Did you follow that advice?

DG (chuckling): Yes!

NH: Did it turn out to be good advice?

DG: It did, and it turned out to be good advice not just to a young military officer, but also to a young man. I served under him later in Perth in 1959, where he was General Officer commanding Western Command, and was now a Major General. Shortly after I arrived, he called me in and asked if I'd taken the advice he'd offered on that Graduation Day back in 1953. I said I had. He then said, 'I'm going to appoint you as my Aide-de-Camp, and have you promoted to Captain. And he did, and it was a very rewarding experience.

NH: It sounds like one of his special qualities was that he believed in the potential of people. Is that what you were referring to when you spoke about his loyalty?

DG: Absolutely. That's exactly what I was referring to, and I saw him demonstrate it many times. He was widely respected in the military and in civilian life, and he was later appointed Governor of South Australia, which his experience in the military prepared him for, but it was those qualities I mentioned before that made him the leader he was.

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NH: Are you ready to move on now to the second leader you'd like to talk about?



DG: Yes, that's Major General Michael Jeffery. I met Lieutenant Michael Jeffery in Perth when I was working with National Servicemen in 1959, and we were colleagues and became very good friends: loyal and close.

NH: What was it about him that makes you see him as an outstanding leader?

DG: He had some similarities to Sir James Harrison, but Michael was one of the 'new school' of leaders: well-educated and a graduate of Duntroon. Like Harrison, in his bearing and his dress he epitomised a leader. He was less formal in his relationships with soldiers, but never familiar. He knew where the balance lies, having served with the SAS, RAR and PIR.

He was very capable: well-organised, well-spoken, and a good thinker but at the same time always practical. We shared a very strong commitment to the future of Papua New Guinea, wanting to contribute to its future. He was subsequently promoted to Lt Colonel, and commanded 2PIR Wewak prior to PNG independence.

(We paused here and I shared with Don the way I believe the 'Chalkies' had a similar aspiration to contribute to PNG's future, and that the confidence shown in us by the regimental leadership, from the Commanding Officer, Lt Colonel Bruce Hearn, through officers like Major Michael Jeffrey and Captain John Rawson, to the RSM and others was instrumental in drawing out the best we had to offer as young educators preparing native soldiers for the role of the armed forces in a democratic society.)

I told Don about my experience as captain of the combined Army battalion rugby team in Port Moresby in 1968, and my relationship with the number of officers in the team. The fact that I was a sergeant was never an issue: I was the team captain and rank was irrelevant. My relationship with those officers in the battalion rugby team was contextual. I even socialised with them after the game, then when we returned to the barracks, they were officers and I was a sergeant. It was a natural transition. There was no tension in that relationship; it was built on mutual respect, not rank.)

NH: In a rugby team, or in a regiment, or in other organisations in the wider world, do you think that perhaps leadership is more about respect than position or rank? You seem to be saying that both James Harrison and Michael Jeffery epitomised that.

DG: That's absolutely right, and it's a good example of the 'team spirit' I mentioned earlier. It isn't something that only happens in sporting teams, and I think respect plays a big part in leadership: how the leader treats people will be how they see him. A leader has to earn respect. It doesn't come to you because you have a higher rank than they do. These three officers I've selected were highly respected, and I think that was not only because they were very capable, or because of the way they presented themselves: they always treated people with respect, irrespective of rank or status, and that's what they got back.

NH: It sounds like they were like the person in Kipling's poem who can 'walk with kings nor lose the common touch'.

DG: Very much so. They all had that quality and capability. As you know, Michael Jeffrey went on to be Governor of Western Australia and then Governor-General of Australia. And he never lost that common touch.

NH: I don't think you have either.

DG: Well, I hope I haven't. I'll tell you something about my friendship with Michael. He and I made an agreement that if a PNG service medal ever came to pass, we would present it personally to each other. It took six years of lobbying, but the medal was finally awarded, and Michael and I received notification of it in the mail on the same day. Michael was now Governor of Western Australia, and I was retired in Queensland. As agreed in PNG, the mutual presentation was conducted at a formal dinner at Government House, Perth, with our old army and civilian friends from the 50s.



Presenting the medals, Government House, Perth

NH: The 'Chalkies' have received a PNG medal too, so the recognition you wanted for them and others like them has come to pass. Thanks for what you did to help bring that about.

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NH: Are you ready to talk now about the third leader?

DG: Yes, it's another example of an officer who became a good friend: Sir Peter Cosgrove.

DG: I met Peter Cosgrove in Sydney when he was a Captain and I was a Major. We established a life-long friendship from that meeting.

NH: What was it about his leadership that impressed you?

DG: Like the other two, his bearing and the way he presented himself were that of a leader. He was very capable, and an outstanding problem-solver. He had a natural ability to relate to people, and everyone respected him. He also showed that he was courageous, engaging



in combat with distinction on a number of occasions. He cared deeply about the safety of the men under his command, and he carried that sense of responsibility over into pretty much everything he did. He was awarded the Military Cross during operations in South Vietnam as a Lieutenant. He also had a natural understanding of diplomacy and how to work with people, and he had a great capacity and capability to stay calm and assess a situation.

NH: Can you think of an example of that?

DG: Yes. Lt-General Peter Cosgrove was Chief-of-General Staff of the Australian Army, and in 1999 he led Australia's contingent in East Timor. When they arrived in a C-130 Hercules, he told the military personnel to leave their weapons in the aircraft and walk out unarmed to meet the Indonesian military personnel and local people to converse with them and listen to what they had to say, showing them that the Australians brought goodwill and were not a threat. It was a brave thing to do, as the threat of violence was real. On other occasions he saw the need for a show of force and made clear the weaponry the Australians had at their disposal, but that initial unarmed encounter had a big impact on the Indonesians and the locals.

NH: As well as his diplomatic skills, you said Peter Cosgrove had great organisational ability.

DG: Yes. In 2006 Peter was not long retired. In January that year Cyclone Larry struck North Queensland and Innisfail was devastated. The Queensland Premier phoned Peter and asked him if he was prepared to lead the recovery effort. Peter showed that sense of responsibility I mentioned before, and said Yes on the spot. He used his great organisational ability and took it on without any remuneration. He assessed the situation and led a very successful recovery action. It was typical of him. He just has a personality that generates respect and loyalty, and as you know, like Michael Jeffery he went on to be Governor-General of Australia.

(At this point Don showed me a personally signed copy of Peter Cosgrove's autobiography, *General Peter Cosgrove: My Story*. Cosgrove has written inside the cover: 'To a great old soldier and friend, Don Graham'. It was clear to me that it was a source of pride for Don to be regarded by Peter Cosgrove as a friend.)

DG: I'll tell you something else about him that shows the kind of leader he was. When he was Chief of-General Staff of the Australian Army, I was Senior Staff Officer of 4 Task Force at HQ in Melbourne. I saw that a medal had been awarded to members of the CMF who had served for a significant period of time, but there was no comparable medal for the 'quiet achievers' of the regular Army, Navy and Air Force, male and female, such as cooks, bandsmen, buglers and others. I approached the Federal Minister about it and got a non-committal response. I then took it to Peter Cosgrove, who immediately agreed with me and used his influence to gain the support of the Prime Minister, John Howard. Mr. Howard then facilitated the necessary protocols to have it approved by Her Majesty, and the medal, called the Australian Defence Medal, went ahead.



Don, Barbara & Peter Cosgrove

NH: Don, it's been a pleasure to talk with you about leadership today: such an important topic for our times. I'm sure our members will greatly enjoy sharing in your insights and wisdom. Many thanks.

DG: Thanks for the conversation. It certainly got me thinking. I've enjoyed talking with you, and I'll look forward to our next conversation.

Don and Norm were not able to touch on all of Don's thoughts on leadership in this interview, so they have agreed to catch up later and continue the conversation.

Part 2 of the interview will appear in the next edition of *Armi Nius*.

Maj. Donald Graham (Ret'd) is President of the PIB-NGIB-HQ-PIR Association. He served in the Australian Regular Army from January 1953 to January 1978, and in the Citizens Military Forces from January 1978 to August 1983.

Norm Hunter was a 'Chalkie': a National Serviceman Teacher who served as a sergeant in the Education Section at 1 PIR, Taurama, 1967-68.

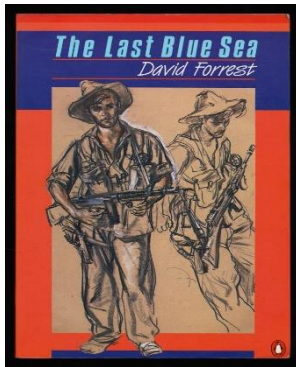
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Thoughts on reading *The Last Blue Sea* by David Forrest

On finishing *The Last Blue Sea*, which is David Forrest's account of the experiences of a small group of Australian soldiers fighting on the Kokoda Track from Owen's Corner north-east of Port Moresby through toward Lae and Salamaua in World War 2, I felt like I might have needed post-traumatic stress counselling. The last time I felt this intensity of description of the nature of warfare at an individual, human, and therefore terrifying level was when I read 'All Quiet on the Western Front'. I have never been able to face that novel or the subsequent movie again.

The other intense effect on me came as a result of having a little more understanding of the difficult nature of the environment of PNG where the action took place. A short excursion on the Kokoda Track made me more than aware of the near impossibility of this terrain for warfare.



Another was that my father would have been fighting in these actions on the north coast of PNG but for the fact he caught malaria and scrub typhus at Milne Bay and was temporarily repatriated to Australia. Only a few of his battalion (2/9th) made it out alive from these campaigns. Maybe I am lucky to exist at all!

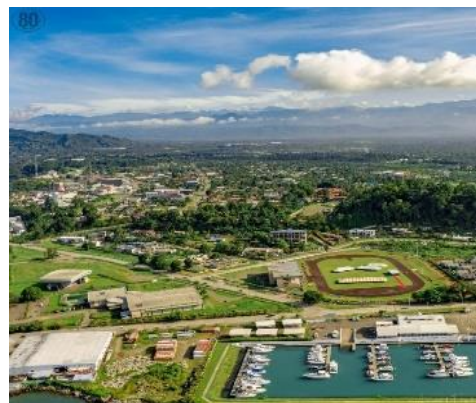
The quality of the writing is astonishing. I actually felt I was walking the final mountain track with the 'Admiral' and Jones at the end of the book and felt every jolt of pain and each slip in the mud, every step with them.

Why is this story not included in the canon of Australian classic novels?

(Sgt) Ian Ogston, Goldie River Training Depot, 1970-71



Port Moresby Harbour today



Lae today

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The Tonle Sap River: A Place of Beauty, and History

Cambodia's Tonle Sap (meaning "Great Fresh River") is the largest freshwater lake in Southeast Asia. It is connected to the Mekong River by the Tonle Sap River.



During the rainy season, water from the Mekong River flows into the Tonle Sap, filling the lake and flooding the surrounding floodplain and forests. The size of the lake expands, increasing from about 3000 to 12000 square kilometres. In dry season from November to May, the water flow reverses and flows from Tonle Sap Lake along Tonle Sap River and into the Mekong River.

The annual flooding of the Tonle Sap is vital for the region's agriculture and fisheries. The floodwaters deposit nutrient-rich sediment on the floodplain, creating fertile soils for rice cultivation. It also triggers the migration of numerous fish species from the Mekong River into the lake, leading to one of the most productive freshwater fisheries in the world.

Human settlements are scattered along the shores of the Tonle Sap, with floating villages being a distinctive feature. These villages consist of houses built on stilts or floating platforms, adapting to the lake's ever-changing water levels. The communities rely on fishing, agriculture, and aquaculture for their livelihoods, creating a unique way of life interconnected with the lake's ecosystem. During the Vietnam War, the Tonle Sap Lake played a significant role, primarily due to its geographical location and its connection to



Watercolour by the author, on location

The Mekong River. The North Vietnamese Army and the Viet Cong utilised the Mekong River and its tributaries, including the Tonle Sap River, to transport troops, supplies, and weapons between Cambodia and South Vietnam.

This network of waterways provided a covert means to move personnel and equipment, bypassing traditional land-based routes and avoiding detection. The dense vegetation and complex water systems surrounding the Tonle Sap Lake offered cover and concealment for guerrilla fighters, allowing them to establish base areas, training camps, and hidden supply caches. The lake's flooded forests and remote areas provided a strategic advantage for these forces, enabling them to launch surprise attacks and evade detection by American and South Vietnamese forces.

(Sgt) Peter Darmody, Murray & Igam Barracks, 1967-68

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A 'Gurkha' Regiment for the PNG Defence Force?

In the July 14 edition of *The Australian*, journalist Richard Lloyd Parry reports that the commander of the PNG Defence Force, Major-General Mark Goina, has announced a 'bold vision of a local version of the Gurkhas, the famously tough Nepalese soldiers known for their expertise in jungle warfare'.

General Goina said, 'I'd like to see members of our defence force follow the path the Gurkhas have taken'. General Goina's plan is to increase the force to 10,000 by the end of the decade, including boosting the navy to enable it to effectively protect PNG's 5,000km of coastline.

Parry suggests that this initiative is part of PNG's attempts to maintain its own pathway between China on the one hand, and the US and its allies including Australia on the other. He suggests that the PNG Defence Force, currently numbering 3650 personnel, most of whom are infantry, is well short of the numbers and expertise that would make it an effective deterrent to a hostile nation, adding that it is 'chronically underfunded'.

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Open Day 2023, Taurama Barracks, Port Moresby

An Open Day parade was held at Taurama Barracks in May this year. The event attracted large numbers and it is expected that it will have a positive effect on the regiment's recruiting program.



1 RPIR march to the Coronation Parade in Port Moresby, May 2023



PNGDF Commander (centre) inspects Pipe & Drum items at Taurama Barracks Open Day 2023,

(images courtesy of Greg Pike, Gold Coast PNG Club)

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Vietnam Requiem: Composer Christopher Latham

Christopher Latham's "Vietnam Requiem" was performed to much acclaim at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, in June this year. It was described by one reviewer as 'a triumph and quite possibly the most moving concert performance this writer has ever attended'.



Latham said he wanted to do something to honour the sacrifices and commitment of the regular soldiers and national servicemen who served in Vietnam in the 1960s and early 70s, which, he suggests, is long overdue.

Latham drew from a range of composers, fusing their work into his own to create a sweeping three hour instrumental and choral epic, combining classical, popular and ethnic

Vietnamese music.

The work's movements were written by a cross-section of Australian composers, including Peter Sculthorpe, Ross Edwards, Graeme Koehne, Andrew Schultz, Elena Kats-Chernin, and Latham himself, performers who had entertained the troops in Vietnam at the time, including Normie Rowe, Little Pattie, and Mark Williams, along with Redgum's John Schumann, and jazz singer Nina Ferro. A special and unique contribution came from Vietnamese musician Phan Vinh Huong, whose family escaped the war when he was four years old. He now lives in Australia. They were supported by the Canberra Symphony Orchestra and guest instrumentalists, led by concertmaster Kirsten Williams, complemented by military bands and several choirs. The performance is on YouTube.



Christopher Latham conducts the Requiem



EXERCISE TALISMAN SABRE 2023

From 22 July to 4 August, Australia will host the largest ever Exercise Talisman Sabre across northern Australia, with approximately 30,000 military personnel to participate, almost double the number involved in 2021.

Exercise Talisman Sabre is the ADF's most significant International Military Exercise. Its preparation, operation and evaluation dominate Army operations, and, to a lesser extent, the Navy and RAAF every two years. This Exercise will receive substantial media coverage, especially TV news bulletins.

Now in its tenth iteration, Talisman Sabre is the largest bilateral combined training activity between the Australian Defence Force and United States military, affirming the closeness of the Alliance.

The biennial exercise is designed to build and consolidate military-to-military ties and co-ordination, aiming to strengthen strategic partnerships across the region.

Nations participating in 2023 include Fiji, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, France, United Kingdom, Canada, and Germany.



*Platoon from 2 RPIR will join the international Exercise
(image courtesy of Gold Coast PNG Club)*

The Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand will attend as observers. Talisman Sabre 2023 will run primarily in Queensland, but also in Western Australia, the Northern Territory and New South Wales. The 14-day exercise will include large scale logistics, multi-domain firepower demonstrations, land combat, amphibious landings, and air operations.

(Sgt) Greg Ivey, 2 PIR 1969 –1970, & media release from the Department of Defence.

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