

RNZAC ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER #245 August 2025

Meetings Happy Hour: Thursday 4 September 2025 at 1700 hrs at the Papanui RSA.

Whose is it?



QAMR

13/08 WEC SQN provided an NZLAV Troop to Army Command School for Exercise Alam el Halfa, an open country platoon level exercise designed to test the army's future officers.

This opportunity enabled QAMR personnel who did not participate in Exercise Talisman Sabre to refine their NZLAV skills, develop infantry/armour cooperation, and allow officer cadets to apply theoretical lessons in a practical setting.

We appreciate ACS for extending the invitation to train together. WEC SQN will now focus on the upcoming Exercise Beersheba, a team-building and resilience exercise.



20/08 The unit supported Palmerston North's screening of Devils on Horses held at the Globe Theatre earlier this month.

The documentary-drama explores the close bond between soldiers and their horses during World War I, focusing on the Sinai–Palestine campaigns.

The event was a great opportunity to showcase the old and the new — with mounted troopers on horseback alongside today's modern vehicles. Special thanks to the crews for their support — your participation was appreciated by the event organisers and well received by the public.



26/08 Support Squadron Promotion

This morning, the CO had the privilege of promoting SGT Brown at Support Squadron. This well-deserved promotion is a reflection of her hard work and dedication in her role at the workshop. We wish her all the best as she looks forward to some well-earned leave in the near future.



28/08 Congratulations to WO2 Mabbett on being presented today with the Clasp to his Long Service and Good Conduct Medal.

This award marks an outstanding milestone of 21 years of irreproachable service, reflecting his long, loyal, and exemplary commitment to the New Zealand Army.



Admin & Log

RNZAC Association Subscriptions

A big thank you to all the Members who have already paid their subscription. The subscription helps us to keep the website running and support good causes like the RNZAC History project. If you haven't paid already the subscription of \$30.00 can be paid by internet banking direct to the RNZAC Association:

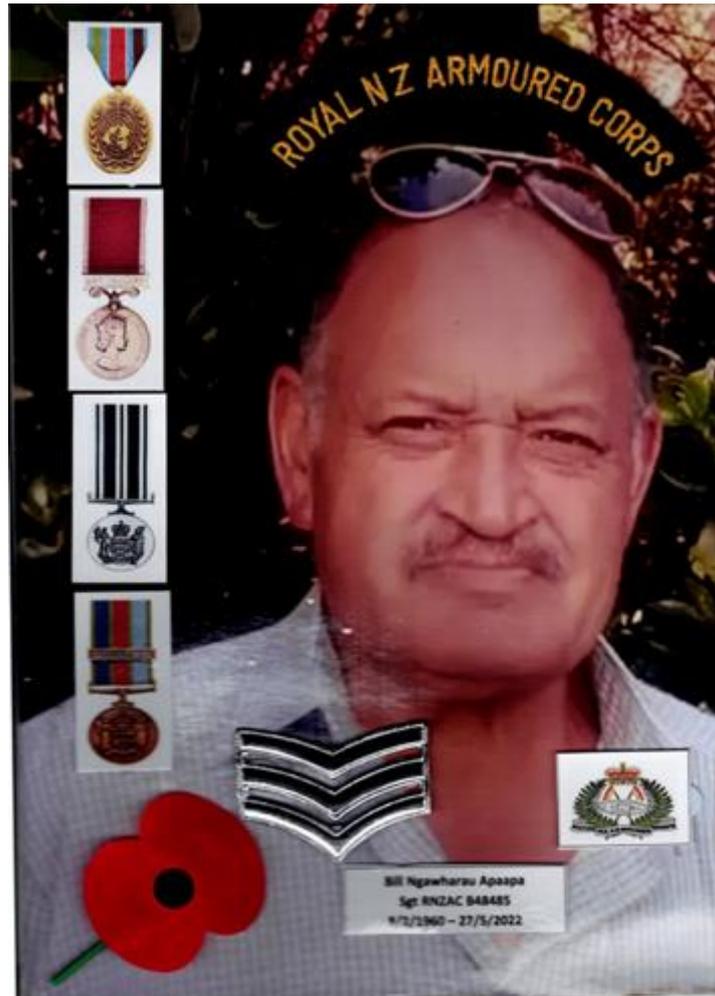
Account number: 03 0566 0209452 001

(Please include your surname and initials in the details field.)

Mike Sheppard, Treasurer, RNZAC Association.

Warning Order – Cambrai 2025

The Association will be commemorating Cambrai on Saturday 22nd November. Note it in your diaries now. (Church Parade, lunch and Association AGM).



HE PANUI

Hura Kohatu/Unveiling

William (Bill) Ngawharau Apaapa

Reg: B48485 (Sgt)

Sunrise: 8/2/1960

Sunset: 27/5/2022

Nau mai haere mai

We wish to invite whanau and friends to join us as we unveil our beloved dad, koro, brother, nephew, friend.

Saturday, 20th September, 2025

Service: 10am Pukehou Urupa

68 Wairoa Road Tauranga

Followed by:

Kai, refreshments and entertainment:

Ngati Kahu/Te Pura Sports Club Tauranga

Wairoa Pah Road(off Main Waihi Road SH2)

NO EFTPOS

Any queries to David Rawiri Apaapa 021-0240-8198

Nga mihi

Brian & Waikawa Reihana

Last Post

Army GS has been advised of the death of W39488 WO1 (Rtd) Stewart McKenzie COUCHMAN, RNZAC

Sadly, I have been advised that W39488 WO1 (Rtd) Stewart McKenzie COUCHMAN passed away at 1730h, Friday 22 August 2025, aged 82. Between 1961-1985, WO1 (Rtd) Stewart COUCHMAN completed 24 years' service to Aotearoa New Zealand, completing Vietnam and Malaya operational deployments.

WO1 (Rtd) Stewart McKenzie COUCHMAN SSM, RF Cadet Sch bio.



Stew Couchman has conducted his last parade, switched off and dismissed to the tank park.

Rest in Peace

WO1 Mark Thompson

SO2 Ceremonial and Events (Army)-ARMYGS, Army General Staff

Communications

Kia ora gents, I trust you are well.

Recently, I discovered that the changes to the NZ AFA and NZ LSGC requirements are not well known. As so, I am reaching out to you to contact your respective association members to inform them of these changes.

In short it means:

With effect from 1 Dec 1977 (backdated)

1. The 15 years NZ Armed Forces Award (AFA) and the New Zealand Long Service and Good Conduct (LSGC) period was reduced to 14 years unblemished service, and
2. The AFA and LSCG Clasps were deduced from additional 15 years to an additional 7 years of unblemished service for each additional clasp.

So what? if our RNZAC comrades completed 14 years unblemished service then they would be entitled to their AFA or LSGC and if individuals have completed 21, 28, 35 years etc of unblemished service then they would be entitled to clasp/s to their AFA or LSGC.

I have attached the MD10150 application form for individuals to apply.

The qualifying requirements are:

About the New Zealand Armed Forces Award

The New Zealand Armed Forces Award was instituted on 6 May 1985, for award to Regular Force officers of the New Zealand military.

The 1985 Royal Warrant. Eligibility for the award was backdated to Regular Force officers serving on or after 1 December 1977, to include officers who had left the New Zealand military between 1 December 1977 and 5 May 1985. Fifteen years unblemished service were required.

The date of 1 December 1977 was chosen because this was the effective date that the United Kingdom had modified the Royal Warrants for the long service awards for their non-commissioned ranks and non-regular force personnel, to produce common eligibility conditions in all three British military Services. When the New Zealand Royal Warrants for the New Zealand long service awards for New Zealand non-commissioned ranks and non-regular force personnel were approved in 1985, to produce common eligibility conditions in all three New Zealand military Services, the New Zealand Government decided that 1 December 1977 would be the appropriate date to backdate these awards to, and that this would also be the appropriate date to which to backdate eligibility for The New Zealand Armed Forces Award.

The 2020 Royal Warrant. Eligibility for the award was backdated further to include Regular Force officers who had left the New Zealand military between 6 February 1952 and 30 November 1977.

Length of qualifying service.

a) For those who have served in the New Zealand Armed Forces on or after 1 December 1977:

This criteria was amended in 2020. The Award is now awarded for 14 years unblemished service. This change was backdated to 1 December 1977. Under the 1985 Royal Warrant 15 years unblemished service were required.

b) For those who have served in the New Zealand Armed Forces only in the period 6 February 1952 and 30 November 1977:

This criteria was added in 2020. The Award is awarded for 15 years unblemished service. The 1985 Royal Warrant did not include recognition of Regular Force officers who retired from the New Zealand Armed Forces before 1 December 1977.

Clasps

a) **For those who have served in the New Zealand Armed Forces on or after 1 December 1977:**

This criteria was amended in 2020. Clasps are now awarded for each additional 7 years unblemished service. This change was backdated to 1 December 1977. Under the 1985 Royal Warrant 15 years unblemished service were required for each clasp.

b) **For those who have served in the New Zealand Armed Forces only in the period 6 February 1952 and 30 November 1977:**

This criteria was added in 2020. Clasps are awarded for each additional 15 years unblemished service. The 1985 Royal Warrant did not include recognition of Regular Force officers who retired from the New Zealand Armed Forces before 1 December 1977.

About the New Zealand Army Long Service and Good Conduct Medal

The New Zealand Army Long Service and Good Conduct Medal was instituted by Royal Warrant in 1985 to replace the British Medal for Long Service and Good Conduct (Military). Eligibility for the New Zealand award was backdated to 1 December 1977 to include personnel who had been released since that time. It is awarded to non-commissioned New Zealand Army personnel on completion of 14 years' unblemished service.

Prior to 2020, the length of required service was 15 years unblemished service. This was reduced to 14 years' unblemished service in 2020. This change was backdated to 1 December 1977.

New Zealand Army soldiers who completed their military service prior to 1 December 1977 required 18 years' service to be awarded the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal (Military).

Personnel who completed their military service on or after 1 December 1977 require 14 years' unblemished service to be awarded the New Zealand Army Long Service and Good Conduct Medal.

Clasps

This criteria was amended in 2020. Clasps are now awarded for each additional seven years unblemished service. This change was backdated to 1 December 1977. Under the 1985 Royal Warrant fifteen years unblemished service were required for each clasp.

Kindest regards,

Tommo

WO1 Mark Thompson

Answer: Israel Merkava tanks some with 'cope cage' style armour screens

To better protect its armour from top-down attacks by drones and, to a lesser extent, anti-tank guided missiles (ATGM), the U.S. Army wants to buy more than 1,500 passive Top Attack Protection (TAP) add-on armour systems for its tracked combat vehicles. The systems are designed to protect the top of vehicles, where there is less armor protection, from overhead attacks. The request for TAP systems in the Army's Fiscal Year 2026 budget plan comes as Ukrainian, Russian and Israeli armoured vehicles have proven especially vulnerable to attacks by loitering munitions, drone bombers, and first-person view (FPV) drones that transformed the nature of modern warfare.

The budget announcement comes after many have raised the alarm that the U.S. is not moving fast enough to adapt its armour capabilities and tactics based on lessons learned from the war in Ukraine. This is especially so when it comes to adding overhead protection for its highest-risk armoured vehicles — those that will likely be at the forward edge of a future ground battle.

“Currently, there are no tanks in the world, to include the M1 Abrams, that have the effective passive armour protection needed to defeat modern top attack threats,” retired Army Maj. Michael Liscano Jr., a former Abrams Tank and Bradley Fighting Vehicle Capability Manager, told us. “Future next generation tanks are being designed with this protection along with active protection systems, such as the M1E3 for the United States Army, but for now you will see top turret mounted cope cages, top turret mounted multilayer explosive reactive tiles, and armour plates on top of the turret, and other methods to reduce damage of top attack systems.”

While the documents don't describe exactly what the TAP system might look like, it is quite likely that it will share similarities with the so-called cope cages that began as ad-hoc additions to Russian tanks in 2021, and then were used by Russia, Ukraine and Israel in more standardized designs. They have since appeared on tanks and armoured personnel carriers elsewhere around the world, too.

TAP “is a passive add-on armour to the base vehicle configuration,” according to the Army's Fiscal Year 2026 Justification Book. “It is strategically placed over crew compartments and hatches, working in tandem with the base vehicle armor to mitigate damage from overhead threats. It is most effective against Explosively Formed Projectiles [EFPs] and Shaped Charge Jets.”

EFPs are basically projectiles turned into molten darts able to punch through any armour. Shape charges focus the kinetic energy of the munition in a single direction. Without seeing

a rendering of the TAP system, it is hard to know just how they will defeat these kinds of weapons. One method could be what Ukraine has done with its donated Abrams. In addition to cope cages around the turret, they added more explosive reactive armour (ERA) to upper portions of the tank in addition to arrays of U.S.-standard M19 Abrams Reactive Armor Tiles (ARAT) along the sides of the hull as well as Soviet-designed Kontakt-1 ERA tiles on the fronts of both sides of the hull. We have also seen upper cope cages with ERA tiles installed atop them, which could help achieve the explosive resistance the U.S. is looking for.

We have reached out to the Army for more details about how the new TAP system will work.

The TAP kits are “intended to be installed on all combat vehicles with future expansion to other US Army vehicle systems,” the Justification Book added. “The Top Attack Protection (TAP) quantity per platform varies based on platform base armour and crew compartment locations.”

The Army is allocating about \$92 million to install TAP systems on 1,528 vehicles, according to the budget documents. It is part of a \$107 million Vehicle Protection System (VPS) package that also includes Laser Warning Receivers (LWR) and Signature Management Paint (SMP).

The LWRs are designed to provide early warning to armour crews about being targeted by laser range finders, laser target designators and Laser Beam Rider Air-to-Ground Munitions.

“The system will alert the crew to which of the three categories of threats are targeting the system and allow for the crew to respond based on that threat,” the budget documents explain.

SMP is a paint scheme that reduces the probability of thermal detection and is part of the Army’s “Camouflage, Concealment, Deception, and Obscuration layered survivability approach for ground combat vehicles.” The Army plans call for 389 vehicles across multiple ground combat platforms to receive the new camouflage. While this is a new buy, the Army has for years looked into better ways of helping reduce their armoured vehicles’ infrared signatures to make them harder to detect.

These systems are in addition to the active protection systems (APS), like the Israeli-designed Trophy integrated onto a portion of its existing Abrams tanks since 2017.

From a previous story: “Trophy is a hard-kill APS designed primarily to protect against anti-tank guided missiles, as well as other types of infantry anti-armour weapons, such as shoulder-fired rockets and rocket-propelled grenades. The system uses an array of small radars positioned around the vehicle it is installed on to detect threats and cue pre-loaded launchers. The launchers use a small explosive charge to expel a burst of kinetic projectiles to defeat or at least disrupt targets through force of impact. Trophy’s manufacturer Rafael just recently unveiled a new version of the system that adds additional capabilities against top-down threats, including drones.”

While the Army Justification Book doesn’t offer any detailed physical description of the proposed TAP systems, cope caging used by Russia, Ukraine, and Israel ranges from hastily

added armor plating to plates attached to poles on tank turrets to full-on enclosures by armour plating and metal mesh.

Russia and Ukraine have suffered heavy armour losses. Russia has seen the destruction, damage or capture of almost 20,000 armoured vehicles, including at least more than 4,000 tanks, according to the Oryx open source tracking group. The actual figures are higher because Oryx only tabulates losses for which it has visual verification. Ukraine has lost roughly 3,800 armoured vehicles, including at least more than 1,200 tanks, Oryx states.

The Ukrainian tank losses include at least 22 of the 31 U.S.-donated Abrams tanks, the Oryx statistics show. These tanks proved so vulnerable to drone attacks that by April 2024, Ukraine began to withdraw them from the battlefield. After being modified with additional armor and other protective screening, they appeared once again on the front lines.

While these were not the most updated variants and only featured export-grade armour, the destruction of the tanks from top-down attacks likely helped inform the Army's decision to install the Vehicle Protection Systems.

Adding to concerns about tanks on the battlefield, the war in Ukraine has shown that the days of achieving air superiority so that ground forces can move with relative freedom are over. Drones have democratized precision-guided munitions and traditional counter air capabilities cannot overcome the problem. In other words, American troops will have to fight in the future with great fear of what threatens them from above. This is why hardening armour protection from this vector of attack is so critical.

Anticipating these threats, Russia began kitting out its armour with cope cages shortly before invading Ukraine. By 2023, Russia began marketing cope cages to other nations during the Army-2023 defence exhibition. As we described at the time: "There are clearly alternative configurations involving this tank cope cage, some featuring more supporting tubes and with more extensive corrugated metal. The 'walls' of the cage can also be covered with a hanging mesh to defend against attacks from the sides of the turret. The same mesh is found between the turret and the hull, to prevent the entry of drones in this potentially vulnerable area."

Ukraine followed suit and by April 2024, standardized Cope Cages were being installed on its fleet of Abrams tanks.

Less is known about how many armoured vehicles Israel has lost fighting Hamas in Gaza since Oct. 7, 2023, and then battling Hezbollah in Lebanon during a short-term ground invasion that began on Sept. 30, 2024. However, less than two weeks into the Israel-Hamas war, cope cages began to appear on Israeli Merkava tanks.

There are still several unanswered questions about the Army's TAP passive armoured add-on program. In addition to not knowing what they will look like, it is unclear from the budget documents exactly which vehicles will receive them. We've reached out to the Army and will update this story with any pertinent details provided.

It will be a few years before the Army's armoured vehicles will see the new TAP systems. A contract is not expected to be awarded until April 2026, with the first delivery anticipated by November 2027. In the meantime, the threat from drones and loitering munitions is only

going to increase, especially in a potential high-end fight against an adversary like China or Russia.

Howard Altman, The War Zone twz.com.

Humour

The Forgotten Shoes...

Arnold and his wife were cleaning out the attic one day when he came across a ticket from the local shoe repair shop. The date stamped on the ticket showed that it was over eleven years old. They both laughed and tried to remember which of them might have forgotten to pick up a pair of shoes over a decade ago.

"Do you think the shoes will still be in the shop?" Arnold asked.

"Not very likely," his wife said.

"It's worth a try," Arnold said, pocketing the ticket.

He went downstairs, hopped into the car, and drove to the store. With a straight face, he handed the ticket to the man behind the counter. With a face just as straight, the man said, "Just a minute. I'll have to look for these."

He disappeared into a dark corner at the back of the shop. Two minutes later, the man called out, "Here they are!"

"No kidding?" Arnold called back. "That's terrific! Who would have thought they'd still be here after all this time."

The man came back to the counter, empty-handed. "They'll be ready Thursday," he said calmly.

The Carload of Nuns...

A cop pulls over a carload of nuns.

Cop: "Sister, this is a 65 MPH highway -- why are you going so slow?"

Sister: "Sir, I saw a lot of signs that said 22, not 65."

Cop: "Oh sister, that's not the speed limit, that's the name of the highway you're on!"

Sister: Oh! Silly me! Thanks for letting me know. I'll be more careful.

At this point the cop looks in the backseat where the other nuns are shaking and trembling.

Cop: Excuse me, Sister, what's wrong with your friends back there? They're shaking something terrible.

Sister: Oh, we just got off of Highway 119.

Linguistics Lesson...

A linguistics professor was lecturing his class.

"In English," he explained, "a double negative forms a positive.

In some languages, such as Russian, a double negative is still a negative."

"However," the professor continued, "there is no language wherein a double positive can form a negative."

A voice from the back of the room piped up...

"Yeah, right."

Reminders

RNZAC Association Web site: www.rnzac.co.nz

Contributions to this newsletter are gratefully accepted.

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Mike Smith, Editor