

# RNZAC ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER #216 December 2022

**Meetings** Happy Hour: Thursday 2 February 2023 at 1700 hrs at the Papanui RSA.

**Whose is it?**



**QAMR**

## Command Change



"As I hand over the reins of the Regiment to LT COL Jacob Murray, my heartfelt thanks go out to all the soldiers, officers, staff and their families for your dedication, professionalism and comradeship over the last two and a half years of my command. I wish you and your new CO all the best for the coming year. Keep looking after one another. Train safe. Ake Ake Kia Kaha". ~ Lieutenant Colonel Edward Crawl'll take some time to thank the out-going CO, LT COL Ed Craw.

Noting we've known and worked together intermittently from when we were young bucks, that TPR Brears standing properly to attn outside the SSMs office now and again and, that 2LT Crow rocking around on his bad a#se Toyota Corolla you still have to this day. The past 2 years working alongside you, as a Comd team for the Regiment have been an honour!!

You have enabled me to grow and develop and, more importantly, be more than just work colleagues.

Although on the work front, particular times have been challenging for you as a commander, you have shown great composure, adaptability and perseverance. All this whilst still balancing your own challenges on the personal front!

Furthermore, still coming to work with some humorous banter to throw at me now and again. I've appreciated it all!

Rightly said by the BDE Commander, performance punishment on your next posting as BDE Chief of Staff.

Congratulations and well deserved by the way Sir, because you're the right man for the job! I'll look forward to continuing on having those casual catch-ups. Fortunately, those catch-ups will more than likely eventuate into begging for more ExCO funds to go towards our Regimental functions. Surely you'll retain that soft spot for your favourite unit in 1 (NZ) BDE.

All the best to you, Steph and those two Troopers.

Kindest Regards

RSM

The regiment now welcomes the incoming CO, LT COL Murray.



## **Last Post**



Received From Noel Graham. It is with sadness to report the death of M936387 WO2 Murray Blackley, RNZAC on 18 Nov 22 in Dunedin.

When Murray Thomas Blackley left Otago Boys High school at the end of the year in 1961, he was 17 years of age and was ready to commence work as a Cadet Radio Technician for the New Zealand Post and Telegraph Dept, better known as the Post Office.

At the age of 22 years on the 5th of January 1966 he joined the Royal New Zealand Corps of Signals as a result of having his birth date drawn in a conscription ballot. He served in the Signals until March 1969 and during that time learned a considerable amount of knowledge of radio telephony and the equipment required to use it. An example of this there was a report that I heard he was seen on a tarpaulin with a soldering iron in his hand and a ZC1 radio set with its internal parts lying about him while he fixed it - when he was finished the task it worked.

During his military service to this date, he appears to have taken an interest in the 2nd Scottish Squadron that paraded in the Dunedin Drill Hall and soon joined Russell Meek in the Squadron Q Store. Although Murray's radio skills were still used to the best effect, he became a storeman, eventually rising to the position of Squadron Quartermaster Sergeant with the rank of Staff Sergeant.

Time passed and when the position of Squadron Sergeant Major became vacant, he was the natural candidate for the job and, was promoted. Murray was discharged on the 3rd of October 1990 on the completion of his engagement.

Murray, as a result of the Scottish basis of the unit also took an interest in the Dunedin Scottish Society and served for many years as the Squadron representative on this group which had been involved in the establishment of the Scottish Units throughout New Zealand prior to World War 2.

He maintained his interest in the Ex-members association for as long as it existed.

Murray, you were a pleasure to be with, and you will be sorely missed.

Rest in Peace.

Our condolences go to Murrays wife Irene, family, friends, and comrade

## **Admin & Log**

The Association has received a Christmas card from the Governor General Rt.Hon. Cindy Kiro and her husband Dr Richard Davies.

**Answer: RUSSIA**, Destroyed Russian tanks in the Sumy region, Ukraine

### **Ukraine war: Is it the end of the road for tanks in modern warfare?**

**The days of tanks have not ended but possibly paused till they are modified with better armour and counter-measures, as also their tactics are redesigned for evasive measures**

The *Moscow Times*, in an article of 6 September, stated that Russia has thus far lost over 1,000 tanks in its Ukraine operations. Over 50 per cent of armour casualties were in the first seven to eight weeks of the war when Russia attempted to seize Kiev in a short and swift operation, which failed. It was overconfident in its strategy of capturing Kiev that resulted in it moving its armoured columns on roads in a single file, making them sitting ducks once leading elements were targeted and destroyed. There were also reports of mechanised groups outrunning their logistic trains resulting in tanks being abandoned for lack of fuel, as also of them being bogged down in mud.

Tanks were targeted by a collection of anti-tank weapons held by Ukrainian troops in organised ambushes as also employing airpower, as Russia initially failed to attain air supremacy nor provided their mechanised columns with dedicated air support. Subsequently, effective employment of suicidal drones added to Russian concerns. Rarely in history has armour been moved as causally and non-tactically as in the initial stages of the Ukraine conflict as the Russians did. It projects a sad state of operational planning by a nation which considers itself a superior military power in Eurasia. Russia was compelled to alter its tactics post which reduced its losses.

A similar scenario emerged in the 44-day Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict in 2020. Armenia claimed to have destroyed 137 Azerbaijani tanks while Azerbaijan announced the degradation of over 130 armoured vehicles of Armenia. These figures cannot be verified, though inputs confirm that there was immense loss of mechanised vehicles on both sides. Most casualties on the Armenian side were due to UAVs employed by Azerbaijan.

Large casualties of mechanised vehicles in both recent conflicts have reignited the debate of whether the age of tanks has come to an end. This discussion has been a regular feature since the emergence of the ATGM (Anti-Tank Guided Missile) which enables challenging tanks at longer ranges. A \$100,000 UAV, suicidal drone, the US Javelin, Ukrainian Stugna-P or other ATGMs destroying a far costlier armoured vehicle implies victory for the anti-tank weapon, mainly because of the price factor.

The first major challenger on the battlefield against the tank, after the recoilless gun or artillery in direct firing role, was the ATGM. To counter it, nations like Israel mounted mortars on tanks while others employed smoke canisters. With the induction of top attack ammunition, the armour content began undergoing a change aimed at strengthening vulnerable portions of the tank. Post the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, the development of anti-drone weapons gained importance. Thus was born a plethora of mobile cannon systems. Simultaneously research on enhancing electronic warfare capabilities to counter drones and UAVs commenced.

Integrating air power with mechanised forces operations is paramount as it can be effectively employed to suppress ATGMs or anti-tank missile launchers. A fallout of the arrival of UAVs was creation of integrated battlegroups comprising armoured vehicles, infantry combat vehicles, artillery, engineers, electronic warfare equipment and air defence, all with matching mobility supporting each other and capable of countering emerging threats.

This is where the Russians were initially lacking, which the Ukrainians skilfully exploited. Though the Russian army fought in a battlegroup concept, it ignored its basic tenets and suffered heavy losses. Training of the crew was another important factor which the Russians ignored. Russian conscript soldiers with low morale and limited training were more a liability than an asset. With a terrain conducive for employment of armour, Russia could have planned better.

The ground reality remains that tanks are essential for success in operations, especially if the terrain is armour conducive. Apart from firepower and the ability to break through prepared defences while creating panic, they also shield the infantry as it advances. Currently, no country in the world is considering reducing its armoured vehicles, despite lessons from Ukraine and Armenia-Azerbaijan, but on the contrary, increasing numbers is also redesigning them. The US Marine Corps has decided to bank on US Army tanks rather than maintain their own. Even Ukraine has demanded tanks from the US and European allies, aware that their employment could be a game-changer.

Redesigning of tanks implies enhancing capabilities including segregating crew from stored ammunition, remote sensing and active protection systems amongst others. However, a major challenge involving modifying the tank is not impacting its weight, which influences manoeuvrability, carrying capacity and speed. The lighter the tank the more effective it would be in the battlefield.

In modern warfare every effective weapon system results in an adversary developing a counter leading to modifications within the system to enable it to beat the challenge. Swarm

drones and loitering ammunition are the latest cheap alternatives to costly armoured vehicles. Currently, there is no 100 per cent effective counter to loitering munitions and swarm drones other than electronic warfare equipment. While currently there are ad hoc solutions to defeating these weapon systems, a permanent solution may soon be on the cards.

The day of integrated battle groups, with the right element of all arms and services, with matching mobility, trained and equipped to meet future challenges on the battlefield is the need of the hour. India is moving towards integrated battlegroups. Their composition, structure and training must enhance their capability to fight seamlessly in all terrains and against all nature of threats.

Simultaneously, lessons learnt from conflicts are implemented in tactics, organisation structures and drills to enhance the staying power of the equipment. Hence, the days of tanks have not ended but possibly paused till they are modified with better armour and counter-measures, as also their tactics are redesigned for evasive measures.

A nation's banking on employment of armour for national security cannot sign its death certificate. Any counter developed to beat the latest challenge will result in a new threat leading to additional study and research. This cat and mouse game of tanks versus anti-tank weapon systems will remain.

Maj Gen Harsha Kakar September 21, 2022 09:47:31 IST

*The author is a former Indian Army officer, strategic analyst and columnist. Views expressed are personal.* Firstpost-Viewpoint News

## Humour





## **Reminders**

RNZAC Association Web site: [www.rnzac.co.nz](http://www.rnzac.co.nz)  
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**Mike Smith, Editor**