In this series, the men and women who fought Australia’s ground war in Afghanistan tell its story themselves. We hear the war as they lived it, and in the images they filmed, see it as they saw it.

Overview

This three part series tells the story of Australia’s involvement in the war in Afghanistan mainly from the perspective of the soldiers who fought there between 2001 and 2013. We learn how the war started and why Australia continued to be involved. We hear directly from the soldiers about the difficulties of fighting ‘a war on terror’ where the enemy cannot be easily identified. We also see and hear from Afghans about their responses to the successive waves of invasions of their country. Politicians and military leaders also reflect on their roles in the Afghanistan conflict.
Curriculum Guidelines

Afghanistan: Inside Australia’s War would be an excellent program to show to middle and senior secondary students of History, Politics, International Relations and Studies of Uprisings and Conflict. It would also be an ideal program to show to Defence Force students as an account of the complex and difficult nature of a great deal of modern warfare.

This vivid and compelling account of a war in which Australians have been involved for thirteen years, with 40 casualties, offers information that is crucial to understanding the difficulties and demands of global conflict in the 21st century. What happens in countries like Afghanistan and Iraq affects all of us. A powerful narrative runs through each episode and across the series. The images and reports that many Australians have watched and heard on the nightly news during those thirteen years are given both context and meaning — the deaths of soldiers and civilians, the hostile terrain in which the soldiers were fighting, their individual responses to what the experience meant to them at the time and when they returned from their tour or tours of duty.

An understanding of the ongoing mass migration of citizens from areas of conflict such as Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, from where thousands travel to countries not beset by sectarian strife and ongoing unrest and violence, can best be understood through knowledge of the war situations from which these people are fleeing.

There are three one-hour episodes in this series — each one dealing with a different period of this long campaign, with the story seen and told through the eyes and ears of Australian fighting men and women (airforce and navy characters there also):

EPISODE 1 — Acts of War covers the period from September, 2001 to August, 2005 when Australians took part in a second operation in Afghanistan.

EPISODE 2 — Hearts and Minds covers the period between 2006 and 2010 when the Australians returned to Afghanistan to help rebuild a country that needed assistance to establish and maintain a working society.

EPISODE 3 — We All Have to Get Home explores the exit strategy from 2010.

There are many approaches to developing an understanding of the complexities of wars. Maps are as important to civilians as they are to military personnel. A map of Afghanistan showing its position in the Middle East is essential to orienting students to the strategic importance Afghanistan has held over centuries of conflict. While there are many online maps students can access online, the one referenced below shows many of the areas and places featured in the series, including Uruzgan Province and the cities of Kabul and Kandahar.

http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/Afghanistan_map.htm

This site is also useful as a source for understanding something of the terrain and demographics of Afghanistan.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Following the background information in this guide is a synopsis of the three episodes in the series. For each episode there are sets of viewing questions and key quotes from each episode, intended for student discussion. Each episode deals very specifically with a different time frame and set of operational priorities.
Landlocked Afghanistan lies in the heart of the Middle East. Its location has made Afghanistan’s history a turbulent one, serving as a gateway for a continuous cycle of invaders dating back to Alexander the Great in 330 BC. Various international power rivalries have used Afghanistan as a pawn in a larger power game – Britain invaded twice in the 19th century in a larger struggle with Russia; and in the Cold War tension with the US, the Soviets invaded in 1979. The Afghans succeeded in expelling Britain, and with the covert help of the US, forced the Soviets to withdraw in 1989.

Following the collapse of the Soviet’s client communist regime in 1992, the Mujahedeen, the Afghan guerrillas that had fought against the Soviets, took power. Another civil war erupted as the Mujahedeen turned on itself and fought for control. From this in-fighting factions surfaced, such as the Taliban, The Northern Alliance and Al-Qaeda. In 1996, the Taliban emerged victorious. After years of civil unrest, they gained influence through the promise of stability and order. Yet this came with a price. While in power, the Taliban regime enforced an extremely austere interpretation of Sharia, or Islamic Law. The most severe of the regime’s policies was their treatment of women who were forced to cover themselves, banned from attending school and taking part in the workplace and required to have a male relative escort them whenever they left the home. Punishments for not adhering to the law included beatings, amputations and public executions.

The Afghanistan War
Under the label of Operation Slipper, Australia undertook military operations in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2014. This makes the Afghanistan War the longest military conflict in Australian history. At its height, the ADF had 1,550 personnel serving in Afghanistan and has spent an estimated $7.5 billion on its operations there. By the end of 2014, the US had spent USD $686 billion on Operation Enduring Freedom. Overall, Australia deployed over 33,000 Australian Defence Force personnel, Australian Public Service employees and Australian Federal Police to the Middle East Area of Operations. Currently, around 250 ADF members from the Royal Australian Navy, the Australian Army, the Royal Australian Air Force and defence civilians are deployed in Afghanistan as part of Operation HIGHROAD, mainly to train, advise and assist.
Uruzgan

Uruzgan is one of the poorest and most remote provinces in Afghanistan. 97% of the population is rural and 40.8% are living in poverty according to AusAID and the World Bank Economic Policy & Poverty Sector South Asia Region. The province is part of ‘greater Kandahar,’ the origin of many Taliban leaders, including Mullah Omar. In mid 2006 the Netherlands established leadership of the province as part of NATO’s assumption of responsibilities in southern Afghanistan. The complex alliance between the Taliban’s leader, Mullah Omar, and Osama bin Laden played a major factor in the US decision to strike Afghanistan in the aftermath of the September 11th terrorist attacks.

Osama bin Laden’s global militant Islamist terrorist organization, Al-Qaeda, had moved their operational headquarters from Sudan to Afghanistan in 1996. Following a series of bomb blasts targeting US facilities in Saudi Arabia and across Africa, the US retaliated with air strikes against suspected training camps in Sudan and Afghanistan in 1998. The complex alliance between the Taliban’s leader, Mullah Omar, and Osama bin Laden played a major factor in the US decision to strike Afghanistan in the aftermath of the September 11th terrorist attacks.

In August 2010 Dutch forces withdrew. The Netherlands government collapsed following NATO’s request for Dutch forces to stay in Afghanistan beyond August 2010. The United States assumed leadership and partnership with the Australians. Australians focused on reconstruction or building new infrastructure, implementing and supporting stabilization activities and capacity-building projects in the areas of health, education, agriculture, water and roads.

In 2012 the Australian government announced the transition of forces out of Uruzgan, officially concluding the engagement in Uruzgan by December 2013.
Many people worked on this production, including researchers, graphic designers, historical consultants, additional cinematographers and sound recordists. The individuals listed below are just the key crew.

About the Director – Victoria Midwinter Pitt

Writer and director Victoria Midwinter Pitt joined the ABC’s documentary unit straight out of university, where she’d studied History, Politics and Law. She later did a Masters in directing at the Central School of Speech and Drama in London.

As well as working on Four Corners, Enough Rope, and Newsnight (BBC), Victoria has written and directed an armful of major history documentaries including Leaky Boat (the story of the Tampa and the Howard Government’s campaign to turn back the refugee boats of 2001), Surviving Mumbai (the story of the 2008 terror attacks in Mumbai told by the men and women who found a way to survive them), Rampant: How a City Stopped a Plague (the little known story of how Sydney became the first place on the planet to turn back the spread of HIV AIDS), and Frontier (a history of the land wars between white and indigenous Australians, told through letters and diaries of the time).

Her work specializes in telling history through the direct accounts of the people who have actually lived it.

Victoria’s films have screened at the UN, on the world’s major broadcast networks and film festivals, been nominated for Emmy Awards and UN Media Peace Prizes and won Australia’s premier awards – Walkley and AFIs.

Executive Producer – Alan Erson

Alan Erson is General Manager and Head of Factual at Essential Media and Entertainment in Australia. He is the EP of hundreds of non-fiction series and films including Why Anzac with Sam Neil, Australia: The Story of Us, The Great Australian Race Riot, What’s the Catch?, Kids on Speed?, Contact and Afghanistan: Inside Australia’s War. He is an award winning writer, director and producer and has worked with broadcasters around the world including Seven Network, ABC, SBS, BBC, Discovery, National Geographic, NHK, Arte France and CBC Canada. Previously he was Head of Factual at the ABC leading the commissioning team responsible for over 100 hours of TV and multiplatform content each year.
PRE-VIEWING STUDENT ACTIVITY

Before watching this series, students could discuss their understanding of how we generally learn about wars in which Australians have been involved.

- What does the noun ‘war’ generally describe? Does it always refer to a conflict situation?
- Compile a list of the wars in which Australians have fought since white settlement.
- Have any wars been fought in Australia on Australia’s land mass? What were these ‘wars’ and what do we know about them?
- How is information about the conduct of wars been conveyed to non-combatants? Who generally compiles and/or authorises this information?
- What are some of the ‘controls’ and restrictions often placed on serving personnel and journalists reporting from a war zone in terms of telling their stories? What is the purpose of these restrictions in each case?
- Why might the identity of serving officers in national defence forces need to be concealed when they are speaking about their war experiences?
- Why is secrecy and even deception an essential part of warfare?
- How have communications technologies and social media essentially changed the way wars are reported?
- How do ‘citizen journalists’ use social media?
- How do soldiers these days often record actions and events while they are serving in a war zone?
- What differences are there likely to be in an account of a war by serving soldiers compared to an official history or reports from correspondents working in war zones?

The Language of War

Apart from developing some understanding of the geography and history of Afghanistan, students may need to refer to the Glossary which provides explanations of some of the words and acronyms used by participants in the series. Some of these words such as ‘insurgents’, ‘jihad’ and ‘warlords’ can mean different things in different contexts, e.g. when does an ‘insurgency’ become a terrorist uprising, when is a ‘warlord’ a good guy or a bad guy?
Glossary

ADF — Australian Defence Force

Operation Slipper — the name of Australia's operations in Afghanistan

Taliban — a fundamentalist Muslim movement whose militia took control of much of Afghanistan from early 1995 and in 1996 took Kabul and set up an Islamic state. The Taliban were overthrown by US-led forces and Afghan groups in 2001 following the events of September 11. It was believed the Taliban harboured Osama bin Laden.

Jihad — jihād is an Islamic term referring to the religious duty of Muslims to maintain the religion. In Arabic, the word jihād is a noun meaning the act of ‘striving, applying oneself, struggling and persevering’. Many Muslims assert that jihad does not mean a holy war or using violence to achieve their ends.

Insurgency — an occasion when a group or groups of people attempt to take control of their country by force

Uruzgan — the province in Afghanistan where Australia's troops were based

Coalition of the willing — coalition of the willing generally refers to a group of allied countries in a military intervention, especially the United States and its allies in the Afghanistan and Iraq wars

Special Operations Task Force — units trained for specialist work

SASR — Special Air Services Regiment. SASR personnel are specially selected and highly trained to act with discretion and discipline in situations that may have national and strategic consequences. Personnel are required to work in small teams for extended periods.

Infantry — foot soldiers

Engineers — Combat Engineers belongs to the Royal Australian Engineers (RAE) Corps. RAE soldiers are known as ‘Sappers’ and are responsible for assisting our forces to move whilst also denying mobility to the enemy. Sappers are trained in a broad range of tasks including bridge-building, clearing minefields, demolitions, field defences as well as building, road and airfield construction and repair. A Sapper, trained as a Combat Engineer, is a combat soldier with a wide range of trade and technical skills. Combat Engineers can wield a chainsaw, build a bridge, clear a minefield, build a road or airfield and use explosives to demolish a target.

LRPV — Long range patrol vehicle

AK 47 — automatic and semi-automatic assault rifle developed in Russia at the end of World War Two; also known as a Kalashnikov

RPG — often referred to as ‘Rocket Propelled Grenade’ but the acronym formally stands for ‘Ruchnoy Protivotankoviy Granatomet’ meaning ‘Hand-held Anti-tank Grenade Launcher’

I.E.D — Improvised Explosive Device. An improvised explosive device is a bomb constructed and deployed in ways other than in conventional military action. It may be constructed of conventional military explosives, such as an artillery round, attached to a detonating mechanism. IEDs are commonly used as roadside bombs. IEDs are generally seen in heavy terrorist actions or in unconventional warfare by guerrillas or commando forces in a theatre of operations. In the second Iraq War, IEDs were used extensively against US-led invasion forces and by the end of 2007 they had become responsible for approximately 63% of coalition deaths in Iraq. They have also been used in Afghanistan by insurgent groups, and caused over 66% of coalition casualties

HVT — American term for High Value Target

Mullah Omar — Taliban leader from 1996 - 2001 when the Taliban lost power in Afghanistan. Believed to have died of natural causes in Pakistan in 2013

Warlords — strongmen; local leaders of Afghan groups. Pacha Khan Zadran is a militia leader and a politician in the southeast of Afghanistan. He was an ex Soviet-fighter militia leader who played a role in driving the Taliban from Paktia Province in the 2001 invasion, with American backing, and he subsequently assumed the governorship of the province. In 2002, he engaged in a violent conflict with rival tribal leaders in the province over the Governorship of the province, shelling Gardez City and obstructing two separately appointed governors sent by then President Hamid Karzai

Ramp ceremony — A memorial service for a fallen soldier, held at the airport prior to the departure of the aircraft carrying the soldier’s body, or for the arrival of the same aircraft at the deceased’s home base.

George Bush — President of United States 2001 - 2009

John Howard — Prime Minister of Australia 1996 - 2007

Hamid Karzai — served as President of Afghanistan for almost ten years, from 7 December 2004 to 29 September 2014

A detailed timeline outlining Australia’s military involvement in Afghanistan can be found on pages 24 — 27 of this guide.
SERIES SYNOPSIS

Never before have Australia’s fighting women and men talked so candidly to the nation about war so soon after the shooting stopped. Afghanistan: Inside Australia’s War draws on the raw experiences of our longest war – from private soldiers to Prime Ministers. In their own words and through their own extraordinary helmet-cam battle footage (much of it never seen before) Australian warriors lay bare their hearts in a searing, profound 3 x 1 hour epic - not just how they fought a war, but why and to what end.

The contributors to the series are all members of the ADF who served in the 12 year war, the politicians who sent them to fight or Afghans with sharp insights into Australians’ contribution to the war.

Their accounts are complemented by Dan Wyllie’s spare, down to earth narration and elegantly cut archival footage. Afghanistan would become Australia’s first self-shot war and from the ADF archives of professionally and personally gathered footage come images that are poignant, dramatic and fresh. The series takes viewers inside the experiences of Australian soldiers in action, on patrol and at base.

The series puts Australia’s war in Afghanistan in the context of a global war on Terror. The events of 9/11, Bali, Madrid, London and Iraq plus candid reflections of PMs Howard and Gillard sit up against the experiences of Australian soldiers who constantly examine the reasons why they fight. Afghan commentators like Senator Hila Achekzai and former Warlord Pacha Khan Zadran reveal the complexities of that country, the moral as well as military maze in which our soldiers fought.

Episode 1 runs from the war’s trigger — the attacks on the USA of September 11, 2001 — through to the first Special Forces clashes to the war’s biggest battle, Operation Anaconda. That temporary victory, ousting of the Taliban and withdrawal of Australian troops is followed by their return in August 2005 as part of a coalition to fight a rising insurgency — a very different war begins.

Episode 2 is the story of Australia’s efforts to quell the Taliban-led insurgency and win hearts and minds for the Afghan government of Hamid Karzai. Australian soldiers reveal the successes and strains of their mission to help (by building schools, hospitals, roads and other infrastructure and, simultaneously, to hunt the insurgents destabilizing Uruzgan — the province in which Australians operated.

In Episode 3 as the world looks for a way to break through and get out of the war in Afghanistan, Australia sends in its main fighting force to join the coalition surge to train an Afghan army to secure the country. In some of the series’ most moving moments, soldiers describe the insider killings of Australian mentors by the Afghan National Army — fighters they are meant to be training. Yet the Australians fight on, paying a price in deadly ambushes and attacks using improvised explosive devices. As they have throughout the war, Australians continue to ask themselves why they fight. In 2013, Australia follows America’s lead in withdrawing most of its combat troops.

As much as a war story, Afghanistan: Inside Australia’s War is a portrait of a generation. What Australia’s fighting men and women did on our behalf is chilling, fascinating and often inspiring. The way they did it — the search for solid moral foundations from which to fight this confusing war — is perhaps their most lasting legacy.
PERSONNEL

Apart from the many soldiers who speak about their experiences in this series, some of whom are only identified by their rank and initial, such as Sergeant S, as they are still serving members of Australia’s Special Forces, several individuals are identified, particularly senior army officers, several of them now retired.

They include:

LT GEN David Morrison, AO
(Recently named Australian of the Year 2016)

Lieutenant General David Morrison’s 36-year military career began when he joined the army in 1979. Morrison has held a number of regimental positions, including Brigade Major of the 3rd Brigade as part of Operation Lagoon in Bougainville, Commanding officer of the 2nd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment and Director of Preparedness and Mobilization. He took up the position of Colonel Operations, Headquarters International Force East Timor. On his return to Australia, he was posted to the Deployable Joint Force Headquarters as Chief of Staff. Then in 2004 he was appointed as Director-General Preparedness and Plans – Army until he became the Commander of the Australian Defence Colleges in 2006. In June 2011, he was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant General and was appointed Chief of Army until he retired in May 2015. Lt Gen Morrison joined the Male Champions of Change organization in 2013, an organization focused on gender equality.

MAJ GEN ‘Gus’ Gilmore, AO, DSC

Major General Gilmore served in the Special Air Service Regiment as a Troop and Squadron Commander, before commanding the SAS Regiment in 2001 and 2002. Promoted as Brigadier in 2005, Maj Gen Gilmore commanded the coalition Advisory Support Team to the Iraqi joint headquarters in Baghdad. In 2010, he deployed to Afghanistan to command all NATO and
other Special Forces assigned to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). Upon return to Australia he was promoted to Major General and appointed ‘Special Operations Commander Australia’ in 2011. In 2013 Maj Gen Gilmore was appointed Deputy Chief of Army. Ma Gen Gilmore has been in the military since 1979.

LT GEN Peter Leahy

Lieutenant General Peter Leahy is a retired senior officer of the Australian Army. In his 37-year career he held command at almost every level in the army, culminating with the rank of Lieutenant General in the appointment of the Chief of Army. He served in this appointment from 2002 until 2008 – the longest period of service as Chief since the 1920s. During his command, Australian troops were under continuous global deployment - the army’s busiest operational period since the Vietnam War – with numerous, concurrent, large-scale war fighting deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq, and complex stabilization deployments to East Timor and The Solomon Islands. He enabled the Army to respond to the growing demands of modern conflict by focusing on its expansion and development throughout his appointment. After retiring from the Army, Lt Gen Leahy joined the University of Canberra as a Professor and the foundation Director of the National Security Institute. He is a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and has been appointed to the Boards of Codan Limited and Electro Optic Systems Holdings Limited. He is a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and has been appointed to the Boards of Codan Limited and Electro Optic Systems Holdings Limited.

LT GEN Ken Gillespie

Lieutenant General Ken Gillespie retired from the Army after 43 years of distinguished service. He held a range of regimental and staff appointments before serving with the Australian contingent of the United Nations force in Namibia in 1989-90 as the second-in-command. For his work in Namibia he was awarded the Conspicuous Service Medal. In 1999, he was promoted to Brigadier. In this rank he was the Chief of Staff Training Command - Army, and commanded the United Nations Sector West multinational brigade in East Timor, for which he was awarded a Distinguished Service Cross. In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, he was the first National Commander of Australia’s contribution to the Afghanistan War. He was promoted to Lieutenant General and appointed as Vice Chief of the Defence Force in July 2005. In July 2008, he was appointed Chief of Army, a position he held until his retirement in 2011.

For his distinguished service and high order achievements, Lieutenant General Gillespie was advanced to Companion in the Military Division of the Order of Australia in the Australia Day 2011 Honours List. He is now the Defence Adviser to the NSW Government, and has formed his own small strategic consultancy company.

CPL Ben Roberts-Smith, VC, MG

Corporal Ben Roberts-Smith enlisted in the Australian Army in 1996. Posted to the 3rd battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment (3RAR) as a Rifleman before advancing on to be a section commander in Direct Fire Support Weapons platoon. Prior to deployment to Afghanistan, CPL Roberts-Smith served twice as part of the Rifle Company Butterworth Malaysia, and conducted two operational tours of East Timor. In 2006 Cpl Roberts-Smith deployed as part of the Special Operations Task Group (SOTG) in Afghanistan, where he was awarded the Medal for Gallantry for his actions in hazardous circumstances as a patrol sniper in the SOTG - Task Force 637. Cpl Roberts-Smith was part of a two-man team tasked to move out of their Observation Post in order to locate and neutralize the Militia and regain the initiative, which they successfully achieved in peril. Following his deployment in 2009 and then again in 2010, Cpl Roberts-Smith was awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions during a helicopter assault into Tizak, Kandahar Province. With his members of his patrol pinned down by three machine gun positions, he exposed his own position in order to draw fire away from his patrol, enabling them to fire at the enemy. His actions enabled his patrol to break-in to the enemy position.
CPL Daniel Keighran, VC

Daniel Keighran enlisted in the Australian Army in 2000. Corporal Keighran was posted to the 6th battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment (RAR), where he served as a Rifleman in Delta Company. After service in Malaysia, East Timor and Iraq, CPL Keighran was first deployed to Afghanistan in 2007 where he served in support of the Special Operations Task Group (SOTG).

In 2010, CPL Keighran redeployed to Afghanistan with Mentoring Task Force 1 (MTF-1). On 24 August 2010, Keighran was part of a joint patrol with the Afghan National Army’s 1st Kandak which was attacked by high volume enemy fire from three separate locations. Upon realizing the forward elements of the patrol needed fire support, CPL Keighran moved under sustained enemy fire to an exposed ridgeline and deliberately and repeatedly showed himself in order to direct suppressing fire. When his patrol sustained an Australian casualty, Lt Cpl Jared MacKinney, with disregard for his own safety, Cpl Keighran left his position of cover to deliberately draw fire away from the casualty. Cpl Keighran was awarded the Victoria Cross for most conspicuous acts of gallantry and extreme devotion to duty in action. In 2011 Cpl Keighran transferred to the Active Reserve and is currently working in the mining industry.

MAJ Clare O’Neill

Major Clare O’Neill is an officer in the Royal Australian Engineers of the Australian Army and first deployed to Afghanistan in 2006 with Reconstruction Task Force 1. O’Neill oversaw reconstruction work in areas of health, education and civil infrastructure in Uruzgan. On her second deployment in 2008 with Reconstruction Task Force 4, O’Neill continued reconstruction work and the rebuild of vital bridges destroyed by the Taliban along Highway One from Kabul to Kandahar. Maj O’Neill also provided engineering assistance for the earthquake recovery in Indonesia in 2009 and Army Aboriginal Community Assistance Project in Western Australia. She was seconded from the Army as the Aide-de-Camp to the Governor-General in 2011. O’Neill is a Chartered Professional Engineer and has a Bachelor of Civil Engineering (UNSW) and Master of Arts (Deakin University). Clare is the 2013 Chief of Army Scholar and Fulbright Professional Scholar in Australia-US Alliance Studies.

Dr Janine Gregson

Dr. Janine Gregson joined the military in 1995 as a medical officer in the Royal Australian Army Reserves. As an anaesthetist, Dr. Gregson deployed to Bougainville and Solomon Islands where she gained the Australian Service medal for services. The Royal Australian reservist spent four months working in the Role 3 Multinational Medical Unit at Kandahar airfield in Afghanistan.
The story begins on September 11 2001, the terrible American moment revealed from Australian points of view: Brigadier Garry Banister who was in the Pentagon on that fateful day and Australian Prime Minister, John Howard, who was also in Washington. The episode shows how America and Australia were sucked into war against the Taliban government in Afghanistan — one of the poorest countries on earth but, for hundreds of years, a graveyard for superpowers.

The film charts the war’s first phase: from dramatic accounts of the Australian SAS, handpicked to partner the US Marines in the first ground invasion, to the fall of Kandahar and the strategic confusion, individual heroism and massive firepower of Operation Anaconda, the biggest battle of the war.

It also reveals Australian troops’ excitement to be fighting their country’s first major action since Vietnam: ‘It was like putting on the green and gold for Australia,’ says Signaller Martin Wallace (Retd).

SGT M (Retd) describes the culture shock of Afghanistan: ‘It's like a biblical experience with guns.’

In Operation Anaconda, the war’s biggest battle, the US unleashes the full fury of its firepower. ‘This was the first time that anyone had ever heard what war sounded like for real,’ says SGT M. ‘It was proper, proper war.’

But even that overwhelming military might could not hammer out a decisive victory; three years later many of the same Australian soldiers found themselves returning to Afghanistan, to a war that would only get deadlier.
Administration in the period ahead to consider what actions Australia might take in support of the US response to these attacks.

- What is Lieutenant Peter Leahy’s response to the nature of the attacks on America?
- Terror and Terrorism, it’s everything and it’s nothing — LTCOL I
What do you understand by this observation? In what ways were earlier wars, including the Korean and Vietnam wars, easier to prosecute and even understand with clearer identities and even goals?

The air strikes

- This will be a monumental struggle of good versus evil. But good will prevail — President George Bush
  
- Explain the stated grounds and reasons for the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. What were the American objectives?
- Describe the responses by some Australian soldiers to be joining American forces in Afghanistan?
- In what sense could the Afghan people be held responsible for the attacks on American soil?

The Ground Invasion

This is not just America’s fight... This is civilization’s fight — George Bush

- How was the strong connection between the US Pacific Marine Corps and Australia’s SASR (Special Air Services Regiment) forged?
- Why did Australia and other western countries including Canada, the UK and the Dutch decide to join the Americans in Afghanistan?
- How many Australian SAS were flown in to join the 1,000 Americans at the base near Kandahar?
- How was this initial squadron deployed?
- Was there any way of telling who were the ‘enemy’ Taliban in the villages?
- What were some of the soldiers’ initial impressions of how people lived in Afghanistan?
- Explain some of the difficulties described by Australian soldiers in fighting this war?

A new Afghan government and the search for bin Laden

I get it that they don’t like us. It’s their country and we’d probably have some fairly strong feelings if the shoe was on the other foot — Sergeant G

- Which of the two stated aims of the invasion — to capture Osama bin Laden and to overthrow the Taliban as the government of Afghanistan — were achieved in the first months of the war?
- What is the most likely reason for the Taliban leaving Kandahar just before the planned assault?
- What were the American Special Operations Group doing in South Eastern Afghanistan at this time?
- What did they find when they went in to search the caves at Tora Bora?

Operation Anaconda

Where the bloody hell are these guys? — Captain S

Here was the most telling lesson of Anaconda, a pattern that would run through the decade of war to follow. The coalition would bring overwhelming technology and weaponry to bear. But the enemy would vanish, only to return and fight on. The US war machine is incredible, but it doesn’t matter how much ordinance you drop in any location. If the enemy is smarter, they’re not going to be there.
How did Andy Russell, the first Australian casualty in Afghanistan, die?

Describe the terrain in the Shahi Kot Valley where the Australians were sent as part of the fighting force?

Why was the decision made for Afghan soldiers to lead the fight in Operation Anaconda?

How did they underestimate the size of their enemy opponents?

How did the weather contribute to the ‘fog of war’ that descended on the valley?

How does the CGI map illustrate the difficulties of fighting in this valley?

How was Anaconda now being fought — from the air or on the ground?

What was the stated outcome of this battle for the coalition forces?

What ‘special relationship’ was thought to have been formed in the Shahi Kot Valley during Operation Anaconda?

In December 2002 what did the ‘snapshot of Afghan village life’, compiled by Australian troops leaving Afghanistan, reveal? What were some of the basic and largely unmet needs?

What did President George Bush outline as the main reason for sending forces into Iraq?

What evidence was produced to support the claims that Saddam Hussein had a cache of dangerous weapons?

How did events such as the 2002 Bali bombings encourage people to believe that there was a ‘terrorist’ enemy to be destroyed?

How soon was the initial objective of toppling a government achieved in Iraq?

Why were the television images of the statue of Saddam Hussein being pulled down important as propaganda to increase international support for the Iraq invasion?

How can a war widely broadcast on international television affect the decisions and final outcome of the hostilities?

How soon did President Bush announce that the Iraq ‘War on Terror’ had been won?

Should we go back in?

We couldn’t see the end game — Lt. Gen Ken Gillespie (retired)

What’s the shape of peace? — Lt. Gen Peter Leahy (retired)

How do both politicians and military personnel now recall feeling about the USAs call for a recommitment and personnel redeployment into Afghanistan at this time?

What was one of the first things that happened in the village at Bag Koshak where the Australians were on patrol that showed the returning Australian troops that Afghanistan remained a dangerous place?

What are some of the strongest memories of the soldiers who took part in the 5 hour siege that day?

What does one of the soldiers speculate that many Afghans thought about these troops returning three years on from the initial 2001 invasion?

How does the history of Afghanistan make this fear understandable?

A new life for Afghans?

Some of the money that was promised never appeared...the aid dollars that did arrive seemed to stick in the fingers of a small few — Lt. Gen Ken Gillespie (Retired Chief of Army 2008—2011)

What were some of the more visible changes to life for the citizens of Afghanistan in the early days of their new government?
Episode Two
– HEARTS AND MINDS

1 Rebuilding Afghanistan

By 2006 the Australian transport planes were carrying a new kind of soldier to a new kind of war in Afghanistan... not just to fight an enemy but to rebuild the country.

A new war wrapped around an ancient riddle. One thing to invade Afghanistan, another altogether to rule it — Narrator

• What did the arriving Australian Reconstruction Taskforce troops notice about the soldiers whose tour of duty had finished?
• After Bin Laden fled to Pakistan and the Taliban were toppled as a government, did this put a stop to international acts of terror?
• Who were some of the other nations taking part in this ‘sprawling coalition of America’s allies’ in Afghanistan?
• How did the Australians end up being allocated Uruzgan province and who were their partners in this region?
• Who preceded the main Australian force and what was the job of these soldiers?

2 Whose hearts and whose minds?

You would find it very hard to work out who is Taliban compared to most dudes standing on the street — Warrant Officer M

• How did the troops go about their mission to try and identify anti-government insurgents?
• Where were the insurgents believed to have a training camp in the Chora Valley?
• How was the Afghan style of fighting markedly different to that of the coalition forces?
• What was the Australian forces initial role in this early encounter with the insurgents — some of who were Taliban fighters regrouped?
• How is this battle shown in the episode? Where were the cameras positioned recording the sights and sounds of this night time battle?
• Who provided and piloted the bombers and helicopters that preceded the work of the ground troops?

3 ‘It was apocalyptic’

I’m not the guy who was obviously pulling the trigger in the plane or whatever but I was the guy that

4 Ideals and realities

The Australian government has committed an ADF reconstruction task force ensuring that Afghanistan has the infrastructure and institutions to support its democratically elected government — Australian Prime Minister John Howard in Parliament in late 2006.

• What was the reality on the ground for the soldiers in Afghanistan? How was Uruzgan Province much more than ‘a piece of dirt’?
• How does John Howard reflect today on the need ‘to graduate your expectations’? What do you think he means by this statement?
• How did Engineer Major Clare O’Neill express her sense of both the needs of the people and the difficulty of implementing change? What were some of the challenges she saw in the reconstruction project in Afghanistan?
• Why was it so important to offer incentives for the men to bring their pregnant wives to the hospitals?
• How did Hila Achekzai, Senator for Uruzgan in the Afghan National Parliament, regard the work of the Australian engineers?

5 Understanding the bigger picture

My aim actually had nothing to do with the Taliban. It was to make the Taliban irrelevant by focusing on the society...giving the people a fair go — Brigadier Mick Ryan, Commanding Officer, Reconstruction Taskforce 1

• How was it made clear to the local people that the reconstruction work was a joint operation with the Government of Afghanistan?
• Why was the task of persuading the locals to embrace their new national government so difficult in these provinces?
• What does Lieutenant Peter Leahy, now retired Chief of Army at the time, identify as the central problem for the task forces working for the Afghan people?
• How was the friction between different tribal groups manifesting itself in 2006?
• Who are most often the casualties of suicide bombs? How is this method of killing designed to create fear in populations?

6 Fighters and builders

We’re going to bring a better quality of life. We’re going to make sure people get educated, get medicine, whatever they need. To do that you’ve got to create space in the area you’re operating in, so you’ve got to wrap knuckles — Warrant Officer R, Second Commando Regiment.

I think we all became a bit more committed and a bit more passionate and I don’t think we had any compassion for our enemy from that point because it (the deaths of fellow soldiers) makes you realise what you can lose — Corporal Ben Roberts - Smith, VC.

• In what ways was it difficult for the soldiers to both hunt and help at the same time?
• How do the images showing this work of clearing compounds illustrate the nature of this work?

7 Afghanistan 2006

Coalition deaths increase by almost half to 191
10 Australians wounded
329 Civilian casualties

2008

Invisible enemies, laying expert traps — Sergeant A from Second Special Commando Regiment

The reserve commandos pressed on, until a routine night raid brought these men to the ultimate contradiction of the mission to hunt and to help — Narrator

• How were the insurgents changing the way they fought against the coalition forces?
• What did the Australians think this mostly unseen enemy were doing and why?
• What do the statistics reveal about who the victims of this fighting mostly were?
• How difficult would it have been for the soldiers to be reconstructing the country through building hospitals and schools at the same time as they were suffering mounting casualties in battle?
• What does Engineer Major Clare O’Neill notice about the consequences for locals they’d worked with from the earlier deployment?
• How could the soldiers know who was planting the IEDs and bombing the villages?
• What was the night time fighting strategy adopted by the coalition — ‘dominating the night’?

Words will never adequately express our regret that women and children were killed. These were people we were risking our lives to protect. When all the facts are made known it will be clear we made the correct decision under truly awful circumstances.

Part of an open letter from soldiers charged with the manslaughter of an adult and five children on a night time raid in a village.

On the first morning of the trial the military judge said the soldiers owed no duty of care to civilians. The charges were dismissed by the judge.
A corrupt regime

What is our purpose in Afghanistan? — President Obama in 2009

- Had building up the new government kept Afghanistan clear of terrorists and other insurgents from different tribal groups?
- Did the presence of soldiers from outside Afghanistan hasten the end of hostilities or compound them? What did the soldiers think?
- What was the new direction taken by sending in infantry to fight the insurgents in 2009?
Episode Three – WE ALL HAVE TO GET HOME

There were centuries old hatreds alive and at play in Afghanistan

1 The heart of the matter

- We’re all passionate and we all believe in the cause, but at the very moment when you are confronted with your own mortality, there isn’t one part of you that thinks this is the right political decision for us to be there. You don’t think about country. You don’t think about religion. You believe that it’s bigger than any one of us. That we’re all acting for each other, because we all have to get home — Ben Roberts-Smith and Daniel Keighran.

- What similar view of the task in Afghanistan is expressed by these Australian soldiers, each one highly decorated with a VC award for their acts of courage in Afghanistan? What priority does each one express?

2 The fight the West was now planning to hand over to the Afghans

Basically we’d stirred up a hornet’s nest

- In 2010 what was the specific nature of the mentoring task that the coalition of the west now decided to attempt in Afghanistan as a possible exit strategy?

- What was the task of the Special Forces in this operation? Describe what happened in the Shawali Kowt valley and Tizak in Uruzgan when they first went in there? Had the estimate of the enemy they would encounter been accurate?

3 ‘Afghan –isation’

We will shift the emphasis of our mission to training and increasing the size of Afghan security forces so that they can eventually take the lead in securing their country — President Obama

- How difficult and complex was this mentoring/training task seen to be by Angus Houston who was Chief of Australia’s Defence Forces from 2005-2011?

- Which of Australia’s army forces was charged with leading this ‘mentoring’ mission?

- What was their task in relation to the Afghan soldiers?

- What does the film footage show of the Uruzgan Province where the mentoring of the soldiers was to take place? How do soldiers like Jason Groat and James Fanning describe the area in which they were operating?

4 Acts of courage

- Describe Daniel Keighran’s act of courage in the Tangi Valley at Derapet?

- What was the result of this battle?

- Why was the initial Battle of Derapet not followed up, according to Major General Cantwell?

5 The politicians, the wolves and the lions

- Almost a decade after Australian troops went into Afghanistan, the Australian Parliament debated the strategy of the war. What were some of the divergent views expressed? How did Peter Leahy, a senior army officer, describe this debate?

- What do you understand by the description of one of the soldiers that ‘We’re literally putting ourselves in their backyard and inviting them to have a go at us’? How did some of the soldiers feel about this new more aggressive and direct approach to the fighting?

- How important was it to have warlords such as Mattiullah Khan, ‘the heavy of the village’, working with the Australians in this mentoring role?

- A lieutenant colonel acknowledges Khan’s ability to redistribute money amongst the people in ways that were common in Afghanistan but not necessarily through legitimate channels — ‘bakshish’ and ‘wasta’? Was this approach appreciated by all Afghans?

- How did the capture and killing of Osama bin Laden in May, 2011 change the nature of the coalition’s mission, one of their aims back in 2001 being to capture bin Laden and oust the Taliban?

- What did President Obama announce about the staged withdrawal of American troops?
6 Enemies within

*Someone is accountable...and I felt responsible* — Major General John Cantwell (Retired)

*My commitment changed not at all. I was here as part of the regiment, as part of the Australian army to go overseas and defeat an insurgency* — Sergeant T

- How did the issue of trust and identifying an enemy come to the fore in spectacular fashion when an Australian army cook was killed?
- What difficulties were the Australians having in persuading the Afghan soldiers that the fight was for their country and not that of the Australians?
- What happened at Sorkh Morghab when the Australians and Afghan soldiers were on morning patrol at their base?
- How did this incident affect the resolve of the soldiers to persist with their mission of mentoring?
- With 51 members of the international forces killed by uniformed Afghan soldiers, to what announcement did some of the Australian soldiers attribute this frightening violence? How did others respond to the deaths of 11 Australian soldiers in 2011?
- What cumulative effect did the enormity of commanding troops in such a difficult situation finally have on Major General Cantwell?
- Was there any way of knowing if the Taliban had been defeated or that their numbers were in decline?

7 Getting out

*Force alone cannot make us safe. We cannot use force everywhere that a radical ideology takes root. A perpetual war will prove self-defeating* — Barack Obama

*Australia’s longest war is ending, not with victory, not with defeat but with, we hope, an Afghanistan that’s better for our presence here* — Tony Abbott

- When the Western coalition formally handed Afghanistan’s security back to the Afghans, had the ‘job been done’ as far as the Australians were concerned?
- What were the circumstances that led to Cameron Baird being awarded the Victoria Cross?
- What were some of the mixed feelings expressed by some of the soldiers about the end of their mission?
- What were some of the major achievements from their time in Afghanistan?
- What compliment do the Afghans such as Tajwar Kakar and Hila Achezkai pay the Australians?

8 Leaving Afghanistan

*In 2014, the year after Australian forces left Afghanistan there was an election for a new President. The country’s first ever democratic transfer of power* — Narrator

*In 2011 more than 3000 civilians died in the fighting that was only getting fiercer* — Major General David Morrison (Retired), Chief of Army 2011 – 2015 and recently appointed 2016 Australian of the Year

- What happened in Uruzgan after the assassination of Matiullah Khan, the once Taliban but later local warlord assisting the Australians and Police Commissioner in the province?
- How does ex-Prime Minister John Howard reflect on the purpose of the long war?
- In what sense do some people believe that our involvement in the wars in Afghanistan and later Iraq have made Australia a possible target for terrorists through the activities of those young men who have gone to other troubled countries in the Middle East such as Syria to fight with Islamic State groups?
- For what reason were Australian forces sent back into Iraq?
- Two senior Australian Army Officers, now retired — Lieutenant General Peter Leahy and Major General John Cantwell — reflect on the nature of these wars in the Middle East:

> Our enemies have figured out that terrorism is a way to our weakness. They’ve got us to react to that. We live in fear. Their intent was to suck America into these wars. And America...we’re with it, we’ve been sucked in so these bleeding wars will go on — Peter Leahy

*We’ll all watch Afghanistan in the future and wonder as to whether it was all worth it* — Lieutenant General David Morrison (Retired), Chief of Army 2011 – 2015 and recently appointed 2016 Australian of the Year

- How much of what we see and hear in the three episodes of this program bears out the truth of these observations from two men who led troops in these wars?
- The program ends as it began with soldiers reflecting on the nature of their experience fighting in Afghanistan and how it has changed them. What do several of them most value about their experiences in Afghanistan and what do they most miss on their return to civilian life in Australia?

*By mid 2015
91,991 people had died in the war in Afghanistan
7,253 Westerners
84,738 Afghan civilian fighters and foreign fighters*
Having watched and listened to this account of what happened in Afghanistan from an Australian perspective over 13 years of engagement, select one or more of the following statements or questions for discussion or writing. Much of the factual material headed AFTERMATH in this guide, about PTSD and what the Australians achieved in Afghanistan could provide a good starting point for these discussions.

- Outline some of the conflicting consequences of combat expressed by soldiers appearing in this program.
- Under what circumstances do you think one country should go into another country to take part in civil wars and/or to control insurgent actions such as those of the Taliban?
- While this program does not deal directly with the ethics of drone warfare which can be used to launch attacks far from the action on the ground, what might be the advantages of conducting attacks that are clearly distant from those of hand-to-hand combat? Is ‘killing’ killing, however it is done?
- How do you think the constant images on the nightly news of the damage done to civilians in war zones ‘brings the war back home’? Do these ubiquitous images, more common since the Vietnam War, tend to deaden responses or encourage opposition to the conduct of wars?
- Is it possible to manage ‘moral injury’ or PTSD, the emotional wounds left by having seen the horrors of war? How do some of the soldiers talk about their priorities when faced with the challenges of killing people and protecting their fellow soldiers?
- Identify any wars from our recent or more distant past that you think could be described as ‘just wars’ — for example World War Two and the concerted multinational fighting that stopped the territorial incursions and genocidal horrors of the Nazis?
- What are some of the many difficulties illustrated in this series in doing two jobs at once — fighting ‘enemies of the state’ and rebuilding the society through improving health, education and infrastructure? How were these sometimes contradictory activities equally important in Afghanistan?
- Explain how well this series balances a range of perspectives about the different stages of these military operations in Afghanistan. How do the often confronting images and the music enrich these accounts? What did you find most emotionally engaging about the accounts and images presented?
Australian Casualties

41 Australian soldiers died during the war, 40 of which were combat casualties. Since Operation Slipper commenced, 262 ADF members have been wounded in action in Afghanistan. Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) were the greatest threat to Australian soldiers, killing 14. Across the entire coalition, 3,496 were killed in combat in Afghanistan.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder: Organization + Funding

The 2010 ADF Mental Health Prevalence and Wellbeing Study estimated that 90% of ADF members have experienced at least one potentially traumatic event at some time in their life and that 1 in 5 of the ADF population had experienced a mental disorder in the previous 12 months. It is estimated that more than half of the ADF have experienced anxiety, affective or alcohol disorder at some stage in their lifetime. This figure is significantly higher than the matched community rate. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) remains a significant problem. The ADF announced that ‘de-stigmatizing’ mental illness is at ‘the top of the priority list’ in the mental health area for Joint Health Command.

Afghanistan Elections

On the 18th of September, 2005 Afghanistan held its first parliamentary elections in more than 30 years. Despite threats of violence, more than 6 million turned up to vote. Over half the votes were cast by women.

The inauguration of President Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai on 29 September, 2014 marks Afghanistan’s first democratic transfer of power—but the election was contentious. Afghanistan held Presidential and Provincial Council elections on 5 April 2014. Out of the 11 candidates not one obtained the fifty percent plus one vote required to win the Presidential poll outright. The Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan (IEC) then held a second round run-off vote between the two leading candidates on 14 June 2014: Ahmadzai versus Dr. Abdullah Abdullah. Dr Abdullah accused the government and the electoral institutions of manipulating the results. Following an audit conducted by the United Nations an agreement was made between the two candidates. Under the deal Ahmadzai became President and Dr. Abdullah Abdullah agreed to be a part of the national unity government as a chief executive.

Achievements in Uruzgan by 2013

Schools increase from 34 in 2006 to more than 200 active schools in 2013, including 26 girls-only schools and 19 co-ed schools.

Over 60,000 children attend school, 15% (9,300) of whom are girls.

In 2012, 516 students including 36 girls graduated school.

Since 2010 there has been a 15% increase in teachers in the province (including 77 females)

The first University campus in Uruzgan opened in 2011.

A functioning hospital in Tarin Kot was built with a women’s wing and surgery unit.

29 public healthcare facilities, up from 9 in 2006

322 health posts in operation throughout the province, staffed by 106 healthcare professionals and 493 volunteer community health workers

Up to 80% of pregnant women now receive at least one antenatal visit, up from 50% in 2007

Australia alone completed 500 small-scale infrastructure projects in 116 villages

There are over 320km of improved roads

Electricity now reaches 100% of the Tarin Kot centre.
CORRUPTION

According to Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index, in 2005 Afghanistan ranked 117th among the 158 countries surveyed on the Corruption Perceptions Index. By 2007 only two of 179 nations surpassed it in corruption. Since 2011, it has remained at the very bottom of that index.

AID

As of 2012, Afghanistan receives by far the greatest amount of aid donated to any country in the world. Its level of aid is almost double (80% more than) the next biggest aid recipient, the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Australian aid to Afghanistan has increased rapidly over the last ten years, increasing from just a few million dollars in 2000-2001 to $130.9 million in 2014/2015.

The Abbott government cut Australia’s aid to Afghanistan by 40% in the 2015-2016 budget, reducing it to $84.6 million. According to figures from the OECD, global aid contributions have fallen 22% between 2012-2013.

AFGHANISTAN

In 2001, the World Bank ranked Afghanistan as the poorest country in the world. By 2014, this status had barely shifted, and it remained near the bottom of the list, despite its GDP growing at an average rate of 9% between 2001 and 2012. School enrolments have increased from fewer than one million in 2001, to close to 8 million as of 2014 (including three million girls from almost zero). As of 2014, basic health services are available to 85% of the population, up from 10% in 2001. Over 12,000 kilometres of rural roads were rehabilitated over the course of the Afghanistan War.

Women hold 3 out of 25 cabinet seats and 120 judicial positions. In a July 2013 law, the quota for women in provincial councils rolled back from 25% to 20%. 81% of men aged 15 to 64 participate in the labour force, while only 16 percent of women do. By the end of 2014 Afghan forces assumed full security responsibility and the ISAF mission completed. Presently, there is a NATO-led non-combat mission ‘Resolute Support’ with 42 nations contributing 13,223 military and non-military personnel to provide further training, advice and assistance to the Afghan security forces and institutions.
September 2001 In Washington, President Bush and PM John Howard mark the 50th Anniversary of the ANZUS Treaty signing.


September 2001 Bush declares ‘the deliberate and deadly attacks, which were carried out yesterday against our country, were more than acts of terror, they were acts of war.’

14 Sept 2001 John Howard becomes the first Australian PM in history to invoke the ANZUS treaty and offer to come to America’s assistance.

20 September 2001 In his address to Joint Congress, President Bush declares Al Qaeda as responsible for the terrorist attacks, and makes the connection between Al Qaeda and Taliban rule in Afghanistan. He calls for the Taliban to “hand over the terrorists or share in their fate”.

7 October 2001 Operation Enduring Freedom begins with strikes against Al Qaeda training terrorist camps in Afghanistan.

22 Oct 2001 The first contingent of the Special Forces Task Group departs Perth for Afghanistan.

03 Dec 2001 The Special Forces Task Group and United States Marine Corps occupy a remote desert airfield codenamed ‘Rhino.’ Forward Operating Base (FOB) Rhino is the first firm foothold the allies have in Afghanistan.

6 Dec 2001 At the Bonn Conference in Germany, an Afghan Interim Authority is established with Hamid Karzai as Chairman.

17 December 2001 Following strikes on the mountain caves, Tora Bora falls - there is no sign of Bin Laden.

29 January 2002 President Bush gives his ‘Axis of Evil’ speech, and announces a global war on terrorism.

16 Feb 2002 SGT Andrew Russell is killed in a mine explosion in Helmand Province – Australia’s first combat casualty since Vietnam.

2 March 2002 Operation Anaconda being in the Shahi Kot Valley in the South East of Afghanistan, is the first major confrontation of the war.

5 September 2002 An assassination attempt is made on Interim President Hamid Karzai in Kandahar City.


17 December 2002 The third contingent of the Special Forces Task Group officially returns to Perth, completing Australia’s contribution.

10 Feb 2003 President Bush confirms that Australia is part of the ‘Coalition of the Willing’ in any military action against Iraq.

19 March 2003 The Iraq War begins with a US-led coalition invasion. Australian forces are amongst the first to cross into Iraq.

1 May 2003 6 weeks after the initial invasion, President Bush makes his famous “Mission Accomplished” speech – declaring the end of major combat operations in Iraq.

11 March 2004 A series of coordinated train bombs attack Madrid, killing 191 people and wounding 1,800.

16 September 2004 A rocket narrowly misses Interim President of Afghanistan Hamid Karzai in another assassination attempt.

9 Oct-Nov 2004 Hamid Karzai wins presidency with 55% of the vote. Despite Taliban threats of violence, there is a high turnout of voters.

24 June 2005 The Dutch invite Australia to partner them as the fourth nation in the Regional Command South.

7 July 2005 London is hit by a series of suicide bombings. 52 civilians are killed and over 700 are injured.

13 July 2005 The Government announces Australia’s renewed military commitment to Afghanistan with a deployment of 150 Special Forces personnel.

24 August 2005 The first contingent of the Special Forces Task Group deploys to Afghanistan.

18 Sept 2005 Afghanistan’s first parliamentary elections in more than 30 years. Despite threats of violence, more than 6 million vote, with over half of the votes cast by women.

July 2006 In Chora Valley Australian troops conduct Operation Perth. Heralded as a success, the valley is “cleaned out of Taliban”.

23 August 2006 The first Reconstruction Task Force (RTF-1) advance party departs for Afghanistan. The task force will support the Dutch-led Provincial Reconstruction Team in Uruzgan Province.

10 April 2007 PM John Howard announces that another Special Operations Task Group of around 300 personnel will deploy to Uruzgan province.
• 10 June 2007 The Taliban attempt to assassinate Karzai in Ghazni.

• 8 October 2007 Trooper David Pearce, a driver with Reconstruction Taskforce 3, is killed by an IED in Uruzgan province.

• 25 October 2007 SGT Matthew Locke of the SAS is killed by enemy small-arms fire in Uruzgan province.

• November 2007 Commando, PTE Luke Worsley is killed by enemy small-arms fire in Uruzgan province.

• November 2007 Kevin Rudd is elected as the new Prime Minister of Australia.

• 27 April 2008 Commando, LCPL Jason Marks is killed by enemy small-arms fire in Uruzgan province. At a Military Parade, another assassination attempt is made on President Karzai.

• 8 July 2008 Signaller Sean McCarthy is killed by an IED in Uruzgan province.

• 2 September 2008 Patrolling Afghan, US and Australian forces are ambushed by enemy fighters. For his actions during the ambush, Trooper Mark Donaldson is awarded the Victorian Cross.

• 24 September 2008 An Australian platoon helps wounded civilians following an IED strike in Sorkh Morghab

• 16 October 2008 The Mentoring and Reconstruction Task Force – 1 takes over from Reconstruction Task Force - 4. In addition to reconstruction efforts in Uruzgan province, the new rotation’s role also includes capacity building and mentoring of the Afghan National Army.

• 27 November 2008 LT Michael Fussell is killed by an IED in Uruzgan province.

• 4 January 2009 PTE Gregory Sher is killed in a rocket attack in Uruzgan province.

• 20 Jan 2009 Barack Obama inaugurated as the 44th US president.

• 16 March 2009 CPL Mathew Hopkins is killed during an engagement with the Taliban in Uruzgan province.

• 19 March 2009 SGT Brett Till is killed by an IED during a route clearance task in Uruzgan province.

• 27 March 2009 President Obama announces a new strategy for Afghanistan with an additional 4,000 troops, shifting emphasis to training local security forces with the goal of handing over security in 2011.

• 29 April 2009 PM Kevin Rudd announces that Australia will increase its troop commitment to 1,550 personnel to accelerate the training mission for the ANA to take responsibility for security in the Uruzgan. This announcement is the first statement made about Australia’s future military draw down.
- 18 July 2009 PTE Benjamin Ranaudo is killed by an IED in Uruzgan province.
- 20 August 2009 Afghanistan’s second Presidential election is fraught with violent attacks from the Taliban and fraud. Abdullah Abdullah, the opposing candidate, refuses to participate. The election goes ahead with only one candidate, Hamid Karzai.
- 1 December 2009 President Obama revises US strategy by surging troop numbers by 30,000 (bringing total to 100,000). He confirms the US will withdraw forces by 2011.
- 20 January 2010 Members of the first Mentoring Task Force (MTF-1) contingent deploys to Afghanistan. ‘Reconstruction’ has been removed from the title as the emphasis turns to mentoring.
- 20 Feb 2010 Dutch coalition government collapses over the Afghanistan mission, marking the end of Dutch military involvement in Uruzgan.
- 22 February 2010 Australia declares it is not prepared to assume leadership of Uruzgan, nor willing to nominate a new leading partner.
- 7 June 2010 Sappers Jacob Moerland and Darren Smith are killed by an IED in Uruzgan.
- 11 June 2010 During a campaign to clear insurgents in the Shah Wali Kot valley Australian Special Forces targeting a key Taliban leader find themselves gravely outnumbered by enemy forces. In fierce fighting Ben Roberts Smith is awarded the Victoria Cross and 13 others are awarded medals for gallantry. The first Battle Honour since Vietnam is awarded to 2 Commando and SAS regiments.
- 21 June 2010 Shortly after, Commandos PTE Timothy Aplin, PTE Scott Palmer and PTE Benjamin Chuck are killed when their helicopter crashes in Kandahar province.
- 24 June 2010 In a leadership spill, Julia Gillard becomes Prime Minister.
- 9 July 2010 PTE Nathan Bewes is killed by an IED in Uruzgan province.
- 1 August 2010 The Dutch formally end their mission and hand over command in Uruzgan to the US and Australia.
- 13 August 2010 Trooper Jason Brown dies as a result of gunshot wounds sustained in an engagement with insurgents in Kandahar province.
- August 2010 PTE Tomas Dale and PTE Grant Kirby are killed by an IED in Uruzgan province.
- August 2010 Julia Gillard wins the election for Prime Minister.
- 24 August 2010 In Derapet, a force of Afghan and Australian troops is ambushed in a coordinated enemy attack. LCPL Jared MacKinney is killed during the engagement. CPL Daniel Keighran is awarded the Victoria Cross and 5 others are awarded medals for gallantry.
- 27 Sept 2010 The Director of Military Prosecutions, Brigadier Lyn McDade lays manslaughter charges against members of the 1st Commando Regiment for an incident that occurred in Afghanistan during a raid on 12 February 2009.
- 19 October 2010 Parliamentary debates on the objectives and strategy of the Afghanistan War commence.
- 2 February 2011 CPL Richard Atkinson is killed by an IED in Uruzgan province.
• 19 February 2011 Sapper Jamie Larcombe is killed during an engagement with insurgents in Uruzgan province.
• 1 May 2011 President Obama announces that Osama Bin Laden has been killed.
• 20 May 2011 The Chief Judge Advocate dismisses charges against members of 1st Commando Regiment and rules that ‘Australian soldiers have no duty of care at law to protected persons or friendly forces during armed conflict.’
• 23 May 2011 SGT Brett Wood is killed by an IED in Uruzgan province.
• 30 May 2011 LCPL Andrew Jones is killed in a green-on-blue attack Uruzgan province. LT Marcus Case dies of wounds sustained in a helicopter crash in Zabul province.
• 06 June 2011 Sapper Rowan Robinson dies from gunshot wounds sustained in an engagement with insurgents in Helmand province.
• 23 June 2011 President Obama announces an accelerated withdrawal from Afghanistan.
• 4 July 2011 SGT Todd Langley is killed during an engagement with insurgents in Uruzgan province.
• 22 August 2011 PTE Matthew Lambert is killed by an IED in Uruzgan province.
• 29 October 2011 CAPT Bryce Duffy, CPL Ashley Birt, and LCPL Luke Gavin are killed in a green-on-blue attack in northern Kandahar province.
• 8 November 2011 Another Afghan soldier turns his gun on his Australian mentors, wounding three more of them.
• 31 May 2012 The Government announces that Australia will take on the leadership role of Combined Team Uruzgan.
• 02 July 2012 SGT Blaine Diddams MG is killed during a small arms engagement with insurgents in Uruzgan.
• 17 July 2012 The Australian Government formally announces the start of the transition process of handing over security in Uruzgan.
• August 2012 Sapper James Martin, LCPL Stjepan Milosevic and PTE Robert Poate are killed in another green on blue attack Uruzgan province.
• August 2012 PTE Nathanael Galagher and LCPL Mervyn McDonald are killed in a helicopter crash in Uruzgan province.
• October 2012 CPL Scott Smith is killed by an IED Helmand province.
• Nov 2012 Stephen Smith, Minister for Defence, announces that Australian-trained Afghan troops can operate on their own and Australian troops will pull back from patrol bases and forward operating
• 26 March 2013 ISAF announces the closure of Tarin Kot base will occur later that year. Following this closure, the majority of Australian forces will return home from Afghanistan; some 400 personnel remain in Kabul, most of them on a training mission.
• 23 May 2013 Obama delivers a speech to the National Defence University in Washington, in which he states, ‘... neither I, nor any President, can promise the total defeat of terror…force alone cannot make us safe. We cannot use force everywhere that a radical ideology takes root... a perpetual war... will prove self defeating.’
• 18 June 2013 NATO hands over security for the whole of Afghanistan to the Afghan government for the first time since the Taliban were ousted in 2001.
• 22 June 2013 CPL Cameron Baird MC, is killed by small arms fire during an engagement with insurgents in Uruzgan province.
• 25 June 2013 Another assassination attempt on President Hamid Karzai.
• 27 June 2013 Kevin Rudd replaces Julia Gillard and is sworn in as Prime Minister.
• 21 August 2013 Tony Abbott elected as Prime Minister.
• 28 October 2013 At a ceremony in Tarin Kot, PM Tony Abbott remarks, ‘Australia’s longest war is ending, not with victory, but with, we hope, an Afghanistan that is better for our presence here’.
• 16 December 2013 PM Tony Abbott announces that Australian troops have completed their withdrawal, bringing an end to Australia’s longest overseas combat deployment.
REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

THE ANZUS Treaty

Read the transcript of a 2015 interview with retired Major General John Cantwell where he talks about what the experience commanding Australian forces in Afghanistan and Iraq might mean for the future of these countries.
http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2015/s4300778.htm


Key Concepts in Military Ethics, edited by Deane-Peter Baker, UNSW Press, 2015

John Cantwell, Exit Wounds, Random House, 2013

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