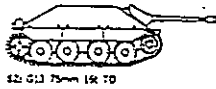


NEWS FROM AROUND THE CORPS.....

LEOPARD TURNS TWENTY



D. WHITE

Twenty years ago in 1977, the Leopard AS 1 Main Battle Tank (MBT) entered service with the Australian Army. It was the replacement for the Centurion Tank, which had given sterling service since 1952, including four years on active service in South Vietnam. Following a paper evaluation of possible contenders for the new MBT, it was decided to undertake trials of the M60A1 tank, then in service with the United States Army, and the Leopard 1 tank, a German design. The tanks were extensively tested during 1972 and 1973 by the Medium Tank Trials Unit, commanded by **Major (Later Lt Col) Peter Jarratt**. The unit was formed from B Squadron of the First Armoured Regiment, although it operated as an independent organisation. The trials tanks comprised two M60A1 MBTs, two Leopard 1A2 MBTs and a Leopard Armoured Recovery Vehicle.

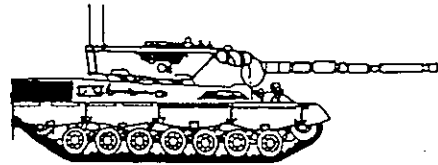
A great deal of speculation was around during 1974, awaiting for the Government's decision as to which tank would be purchased. It was commonly thought that the M60A1 would be the winner on cost grounds, but the decision was made in favour of Leopard, clearly the better of the two vehicles. The final order for tanks stood at 101, being made up of 90 MBTs, 5 Bridge layers and 6 Armoured Recovery Vehicles. (A further 2 Armoured Recovery Vehicles were purchased later.)

The first vehicles, two Armoured Recovery Vehicles (ARV), arrived at Port Melbourne in November 1976, with a further 4 ARVs and 8 MBTs arriving before Christmas. The ARV is an essential part of the Leopard family, as it is used to remove the tank's power pack for servicing, a task which under normal conditions takes only about 20 minutes. The pack can be serviced much easier on the ground sitting on a stand, where all components can be easily checked and adjustments or replacements made, a far cry from the days of the Centurion.

After conversion courses undertaken by the Armoured Centre, the 1st Armoured Regiment had Leopard Squadrons operational from April, 1977. The command of the 1st Armoured Regiment in 1976 had been given to **Lieutenant Colonel Peter Jarratt**, who had the distinction of being the Medium Tank Trials Unit Commander, then operating the Centurion for its last year of service and overseeing the first year of Leopard in the Royal Australian Armoured Corps' only Tank Regiment.

The Leopard family is likely to be in service until about 2010, thus giving some 30 - odd years service. It can only be hoped that a MBT will be retained by the Army of the future, as we do not want to end up like, for example, the RNZAC who were given Scorpion Light Tanks in place of a MBT a poor substitute and one from which it will take a long time to recover.

Long live the MBT!



THE FIRST BLACK HAT AS RSM OF THE ARMY

At the beginning of this year, the RAAC achieved another first, when the new RSM of the Army (RSM-A) was appointed. Warrant Officer Class 1 Peter 'Pedro' Rosemond is the first 'Black Hat' to hold the job as the senior soldier of the Army.

WO 1 Rosemond has had a distinguished career in the RAAC, serving in South Vietnam with the 1st Armoured Regiment and on an exchange posting with the Royal Tank Regiment. He has served as the Regimental Sergeant Major of the 2/14th Light Horse (Queensland Mounted Rifles), 2nd Cavalry Regiment, School of Armour, 1st Brigade, 1st Division and the Australian Defence Force Academy.

