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Call the Hands

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Al Faw Peninsula Iraq - NGS MISSION

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HMAS ANZAC III

It took 31 years for the RAN to go to war and use a destroyer as a gun platform. HMAS BRISBANE was the last DDG to serve on the Vietnam Gun Line and its last NGS mission occurred in September 1971.

HMAS ANZAC departed Fleet Base West for her deployment to the Gulf on 28th October 2002. She was to be the first RAN destroyer since the Vietnam conflict to be used for the duty she was designed, Naval Gun Support (NGS).

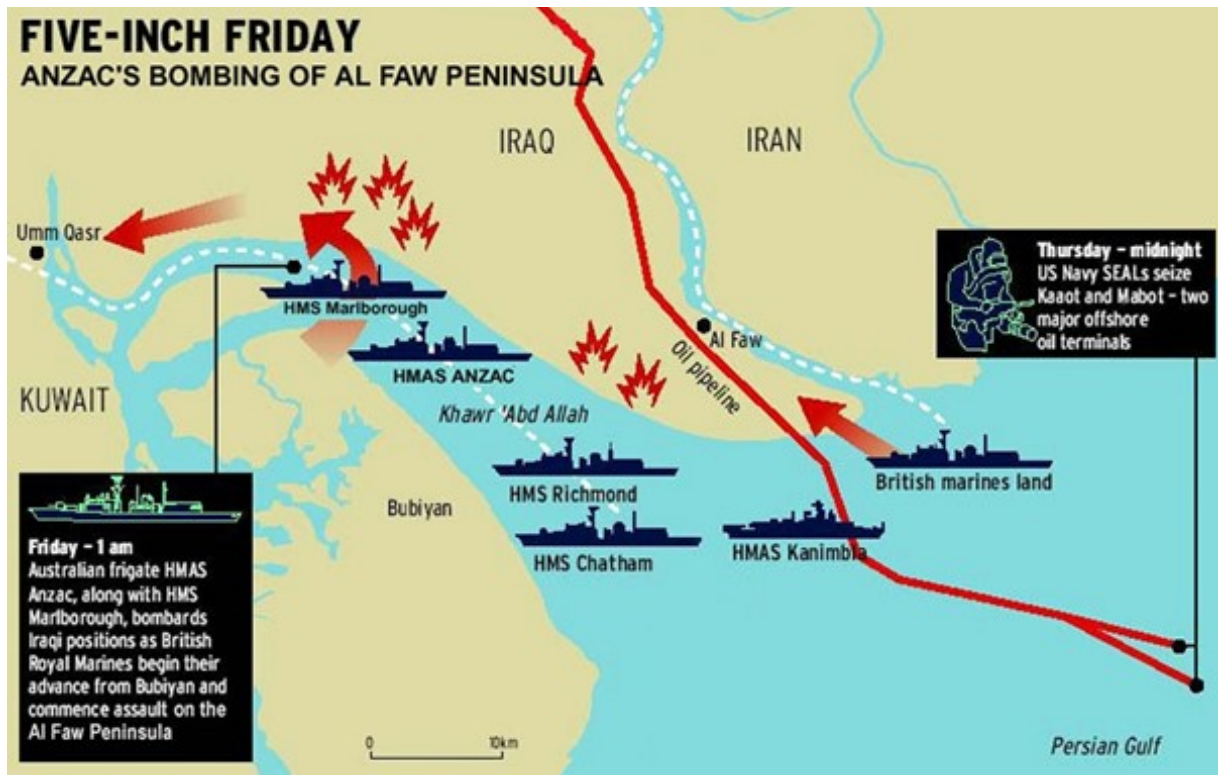
ANZAC was under the command of Captain Peter G. Lockwood, RAN, later to become Commodore P.G. Lockwood DSC, CSC, RAN now retired. Commodore Lockwood has been good enough to share his unclassified paperwork with the author.

His Supply officer, CMDR Stuart Wheeler RAN, wrote a paper titled “Five Inch Friday”. This paper was the only article other than the Captain’s post operation report which is still classified. In future this report may become general reading material so there is little information on which to base this paper in open source.

ANZAC was fitted with the following armament:

- Single 5 inch 54 calibre (127mm)
- Two Raphael Typhoon 12.7mm
- Phalanx 20mm close-in-weapons system
- Eight Harpoon Surface-to-surface missiles
- Mk. 41 vertical launch system – Sea Sparrow and evolved Sea Sparrow
- Two triple Mk 32 torpedo launchers
- Various 12.7mm Browning and small arms

ANZAC third deployment to the Persian Gulf took her through to May 2003, as part of Operation Falconer. On 21st March, ANZAC was called on to support a Royal Marine assault on the “Al Faw” Peninsula. The Royal Marine’s mission was to capture the peninsula before the Iraq forces could sabotage the oil terminals.



On 19th March, US Navy Seals and Polish GROM forces commenced a sea and air assault under the command of Naval Special Warfare Task Group (CTG 561). ANZAC stood by to extract forces if required. The US Navy Seals secured both oil terminals. This action was followed by a wave of “Tomahawk” land attack missiles. Over 800 missiles were delivered in the first 24 hours from 35 allied warships and submarines stationed in the Gulf.

On 20th March, Royal Navy ships *Marlborough* (Type 23), *Chatham* (Type 22) and *Richmond* (Type 23) were detached for bombardment duties.



HMS Marlborough, Duke class, Type 23 Guided Missile Frigate Royal Navy image

The Royal Marines were faced by resistance from the Iraq Forces and called for immediate NGS to engage Iraq Command Posts. ANZAC received the first call-for-fire at 05:58. ANZAC fired six ranging salvos followed by a five-round fire-for-effect with the salvos hitting bunkers and artillery positions. ANZAC answered another call-for-fire destroying a T59 artillery piece in a fire mission of just three rounds. It was extremely accurate fire and at near maximum range.

“Naval Gunfire Support was used to encourage capitulation with success on a number of occasions. It was employed to suppress enemy activity at short notice, to shatter confidence and neutralise fixed protective gun positions. The Battery Commander reported “success on the Al Faw was due to the aggressive use of indirect fire support, especially the swift response to NGS ships which had a huge impact on the ground and shattered the enemy’s will to fight.” A total of 17 fire missions were executed with just 155 rounds of 5 inch and 4.5 inch ammunition being expended”. Vice Admiral Peter Jones: “The Maritime Campaign in Iraq”.

ANZAC completed seven fire missions over a period of three days. The ship received a Meritorious Unit Citation on 27th November for her service during this deployment. In March 2010, ANZAC was awarded the battle honours “Persian Gulf 2001-03” and “Iraq 2003”.

References:

- Semaphore newsletter of the Sea Power Centre Australia Issue # 6, August 2003
- Maritime Campaign in Iraq, Vice Admiral Peter Jones AO DSC RAN Rtd.
- Battle of Al Faw (2003) – 3 Commando Brigade, Royal Marines
- The War in Iraq – ADF Operations in the Middle East 2003, Australian Ministry of Defence – paper
- Five Inch Friday – paper by CMDR Stuart Wheeler RAN, HMAS ANZAC Supply Officer
- HMAS ANZAC – Ship’s general details RAN ships web page