

\$6m training base for E. Timor

The Minister for Defence, Joel Fitzgibbon, was joined by East Timor's Prime Minister, Mr Xanana Gusmao, to officially open the Specialist Training Wing at the East Timor Defence Force Metinaro Training Base in East Timor on March 6.

"I am pleased to announce the opening of the \$6 million Specialist Training Wing for the East Timor Defence Force at their training base in Metinaro," Mr Fitzgibbon said.

"This was a key project under the auspices of our bilateral defence cooperation program."

The Defence Cooperation Program with East Timor was established in 2001 and focuses on helping the East Timorese establish a professional, sustainable and affordable defence force.

Key activities under the program include training by means of embedded ADF advisers, education programs and large infrastructure projects, such as the Specialist Training Wing.

"The Specialist Training Wing will provide high-quality specialist training for the East Timor Defence Force in areas such as communications, logistics, engineering and medical skills delivered by Australian Defence Cooperation Program personnel," Mr Fitzgibbon said.

"This training wing symbolises the enduring commitment to developing East Timor's Defence Force and is testament to the hard work and drive displayed by both Australian Defence Cooperation Program staff and the East Timor Defence Force."

The opening ceremony was also attended by the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin; the Chief of the Defence Force, Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston; and the Chief of the East Timorese Defence Force, Brigadier General Taur Matan Ruak.



The East Timor Prime Minister, Xanana Gusmao (left) and Australia's Chief of Defence Force, Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston (centre), Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin (top right) and Minister for Defence, Joel Fitzgibbon, at a press conference after the opening of the Specialist Training Wing in East Timor.

War graves chief asked to serve a second term



Major General Paul Stevens AO (Retd) (above) has been reappointed Director of the Office of Australian War Graves for a second term. First appointed in April 2006, he will hold the position until 3 December 2010.

Announcing General Stevens's appointment, the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin, said he had served as Director of the Office of War Graves with distinction. In his time as Director, General Stevens has overseen the rededication of the Australian Corps Memorial Park at Le Hamel, on the Western Front, and the installation of interpretive material across the front.

He also oversaw last year's services at the Australian National Memorial, Villers-Bretonneux, France, marking the 90th anniversary of the 1918 battles on the Western Front and the Armistice. In recent years his office has undertaken a program to upgrade the structural and horticultural maintenance of the war cemeteries in PNG and at several Australian locations.

The Office of Australian War Graves maintains war cemeteries and individual war graves in Australia and Papua New Guinea and supervises the commemoration of Australian war dead in Korea and Malaysia. It also constructs and maintains national memorials overseas and commemorates eligible veterans whose deaths are related to their war service.

Major General Stevens graduated from the Royal Military College Duntroon in 1967 and served in the Vietnam War with the 105th Field Battery and the Headquarters of the 1st Field Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery. He has a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Queensland and is a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. He was the Australian Army's Chief of Personnel from 1993 until his retirement in 1997. He served on the Repatriation Commission from 1997 to 2003 as the ex-service member.

From 2003 until his appointment as the Director of the Office of Australian War Graves he was a project consultant, his work including a review of Defence Health Services.

Helicopters not compared apples-to-apples — Admiral

The Royal Australian Navy welcomes public debate on the contribution of its combat helicopters in supporting the fleet, according to Vice Admiral Russ Crane, Chief of Navy, commenting on a Special Report on Navy Aviation by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute entitled *Australian naval combat helicopters? The future*.

However, he called for all the facts to be presented.

"While I value the Australian Strategic Policy Institute paper and its contribution to the debate, it does not present a complete discussion [of] all the issues. The report provides an overly simplistic examination of the current cost of navy aviation compared with army aviation and the Southcare Emergency Medical Service Bell 412 helicopter," he said.

"This is not an apples-to-apples comparison [because of] the unique cost-drivers involved in military aviation, particularly navy aviation.

"A more accurate comparison would be with like types of helicopters operated by other navies," he said. Additionally, the Black Hawk operating costs could not be compared with the Seahawk costs. The Black Hawk, was used for moving troops in the field.



The Navy's Seahawk: "The heart of the current helicopter force."

The Seahawk carried complex sensors, weapons and communications for independent combat operations in the above- and below-water maritime environment, making it significantly more costly to operate.

He went on, "At the end of the day, an embarked helicopter is a critical element of a modern navy task group. I applaud any contribution to providing a better public understanding of our helicopter needs together with an appreciation of the resources involved and the skills required of our young aviators and technicians in operating these aircraft at sea.

"The Seahawk is the heart of RAN's current helicopter force and, while continuing to provide sterling service, they

are now 20 years old and ... replacement parts are becoming increasingly difficult to find to keep them flying."

Filling the gap left by the Seasprite program's termination had high priority. The Navy helicopter force consists of 16 Seahawks, employed primarily as submarine hunters from Navy's frigates; six Sea Kings, used for fleet support; and 13 Squirrel helicopters, for training Navy's young aviators. The Sea King helicopters will be replaced by the MRH-90 under Project AIR 9000 Phase 6. Defence will look to replace the Seahawk with a modern maritime combat helicopter to fly from Navy's current Adelaide and ANZAC frigates and the future Air Warfare Destroyers under the planned Project AIR 9000 Phase 8.