

# Is there a Need to Re introduce the Australian Military Pigeon Corp

By Paul Gibbs

In the April 2011 APFA magazine, (Vol 53 NO 8) I wrote an article commemorating ANZAC Day with the emphasis being on Pigeons that served and that were decorated for their service during the WW2. Recently I came across an article in the British weekly magazine – “ The Racing Pigeon” with the heading **“China Trains Army of Messenger Pigeons”**. It was interesting to note that as part of that article it stated that China has had a division of military homing pigeons since 1950!

The article went on to say – China is training 10,000 pigeons to deliver vital military communications in the event of the country’s communication systems breaking down. According to the Chinese state media, the pigeons are being trained by a special unit of the People’s Liberation Army in the central city of Chengdu.

“They will be primarily called upon to conduct special military missions between troops stationed at our borders,” said Chen Hong, an air force expert, to China Central Television (CCTV), the state broadcaster. **“In modern warfare, the pigeon is indispensable,”** he added.

“There are as many military pigeons as there are soldiers in the Swiss Army, for example.” Chen Chuntao, the officer responsible for the “pigeon army” said. The birds were the “most practical and effective short and medium distance tool for communication if there is electromagnetic interference or a collapse in our signals”.

A central city was chosen so the birds return to a central base after each mission. Currently the unit numbers are only a few hundred and have been primarily used for corresponding with Chinese based on islands in the South China Seas.

With several other countries, mainly in Europe i.e. Austria, Switzerland, France and with the U.S. also re visiting the use of military pigeons, should we too investigate the need and use of military pigeons here as well, as we tend to be involved in most UN and USA lead military operations, or are our military leaders and government too slow to adopt overseas ideas and military planning, much the same way that they did at the beginning of WW2 when it was thought that messenger pigeons had nothing to offer and couldn’t match the modern communication systems of the day. How wrong they were!

In closing, I believe the following quote by Antisthenes is appropriate:

**“Pay attention to your enemies, for they are the first to discover your mistakes”.**

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