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Memoirs of Anthony Richard Turton***

Strim's, Combat Engineers and Battlefield Surgeons

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The fire fight was intense with bullets whizzing around wildly, like enraged hornets swarming from an invisible but recently disturbed nest. There were only small arms at this early stage of the contact, with their characteristic chatter like a nervous Honey Guide leading the Badger to a hive in the forest. Suddenly a different noise from a ballistic round propelling a Strim off the rifle of the unseen enemy, tossing it angrily towards the SADF section, searching for soft flesh on which the angry beast contained within the High Explosives could feed. It slammed home into the shoulder of a young man, spinning him around and dropping him like a bag of wet flour. Then silence as everyone waited for the detonation. But nothing.... Gingerly, the soldiers lifted their heads to see their buddy lying prone, with the tailfin of the Strim jutting from his shoulder. "Shit, it's a misfire..... Watch it.... It can detonate at any moment", came the staccato order from the Platoon Commander. Then more of nothing. It was apparently not going to go off. The Section Leader called in a Casevac and the young soldier was transported to a field surgery, unexploded rifle grenade in his shoulder. The surgeons surveyed their patient, noting minimal bleeding. Ordering a Tiffy to place a 6mm steel plate between them and the patient, the surgeons gingerly hooked the tailfin with a thin rope passed over a hastily rigged pulley. As it swung free Combat Engineers whipped it away, leaving the Surgeons to deal with their patient, now bleeding profusely from the hole in his shoulder. He survived. The surgeons were bloody heroes, largely unrecognized for the role they played.



This photo shows a small combat team operating in the Cuvelai area. Note the white sand that is a local characteristic.