

Chapter 12 – 131 Locating Battery

The members of 131 Location Battery Surveillance Troop departed Brisbane on Easter Sunday 2001, eager to replace the troop attached to the 1RAR Battalion Group. After a short stop over in Darwin, the troop boarded the HMAS Jervis Bay for the 12-hour trip to Dili. The only highlight of the journey was the condition of Gunner Matthew 'Motion Sickness' Tinney, who managed to bring up a seafood platter from the night before, \$25.00 well spent!

Our first night in country was spent at Battalion Support Group (BSG) Dili, after a humid restless sleep, we were herded into the Unimogs the next morning and driven to our new home, Balibo. Everyone in the troop at one stage of the 4-hour drive looked at the mountainous terrain and thought about the impending pain to follow.

After the hand-over period had been conducted, the troop commenced its task of establishing a favourable reputation within the Battalion Group. Which after a bit of work we succeeded in doing. For the first eight weeks the two sections deployed back to back, four days in the field and four days rest at Balibo. It was during this first few weeks that Gunner Aaron 'Darbs' Darbellay was sent back to Australia after injuring his neck, back and arm in a fall. However, all was not lost for 'Darbs', he went on to win the footy tipping for the troop.

With the first few weeks gone by we began to get into a routine with the procedures required to get the job done. Things practiced in Australia were thrown out the window and the 'lets do what works' approach was quickly adopted. Face to face meetings with the wildlife were next on the list of things to adapt to. Sergeant Les 'Bowey' Bowman soon found that monkeys sound just like people coming toward you when you are a bit edgy. Luckily no animals died on any recons. Gunners Michael Harris and Ben 'Muss' Street soon found that things bite in the bush and we had the opportunity to practise Casualty Evacuation (CASEVAC) procedures with the Blackhawks (scorpions produce excellent training aids).

Another thing that made for great entertainment was the radio net. Being used to the Artillery net and fire control orders, the general traffic kept the radio piquet amused. One of the standouts in radio traffic was when we joined a new net for the first time and the Patrol reported in that they were in position and commencing their task. We do this by calling in that "This callsign is ready at grid —", to which we received the reply, "ahh, ready for what? Over". Other radio related moments included Gunner Aaron 'Boo' McGregor asking 'Muss' "What is the callsign for Griffin? (reconnaissance helicopter)". 'Muss' not knowing the answer then asked Bombardier Aaron 'Davo' Davies, "What callsign is Griffin". To which he replied "Griffin is Griffin you #@%*\$!".

The closest call of the trip came during an Observation Post (OP) task around Junction Point (JP) Memo. Lance Bombardiers Scott Congdon, Philip 'Groover' Grieves and 'Boo' were motionless, cammed up and waiting for the perfect photo. A local was then heard walking along the footpad that was a metre in front of their position. All of a sudden he stopped, ensuring the coast was clear, turned towards them, undid his trousers and prepared to relieve himself. To his horror, just as he was about to do the deed, he looked down and saw three soldiers not less than a metre away. He quickly packed his tackle away and did the Harry Holt. The members called in "OP Compromised" and proceeded back to JP Memo..... dry.

Also during our time together we have all revealed hidden fears. The following details each member's personal phobia:

Joe Ellul:	Anuptaphobia	(fear of staying single)
Danny McGinley:	Hereiophobia	(fear of challenges to doctrine and/ or radical deviations)
Les Bowman:	Athazagoraphobia	(Fear of being forgotten)
Aaron Davies:	Mottephobia	(fear of moths)
Michael Edwards:	Ataxophobia	(Fear of disorder or untidiness)
Scott Congdon:	Misophobia	(Fear of being contaminated with dirt or germs)
Philip Grieves:	Scotomaphobia	(Fear of blindness in visual field)
Clinton Hoddgets:	Rhabdophobia	(Fear of being severely punished or beaten by a rod).
Trent Kennedy:	Bogyphobia	(Fear of bogies or the bogeyman)
Aaron McGregor:	Chaetophobia	(Fear of hair)
Bill Pearce:	Aviatophobia	(Fear of flying)
Michael Harris:	Somniphobia	(Fear of sleep)
Mathew Tinney:	Emetophobia	(Fear of vomiting)
Graeme Jones:	Defecaloesiophobia	(Fear of painful bowel movements)
Brent Bryce:	Arachnophobia	(Fear of spiders)
Aaron Darbellay:	Ambulophobia	(Fear of walking)
Ben Street:	Acarophobia	(Fear of itching or of the insects that cause itching)

Many memories will be treasured by the members of Cracker 131 that will be with them and they can share with others for many years to come.



131 Locating Battery Surveillance Detachment



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

Surveillance Equipment used in East Timor

Troop Commander Captain Joe Ellul at Recon Surveillance and Intelligence HQ

Troop Sergeant Major Warrant Officer Danny McGinley briefing the troops prior to a patrol

Bombardier Scott Congdon in his element as the troop's photographer during a display for the media, in Balibo.



*Sergeant Les Bouman Briefing TNI
on surveillance equipment at Batugade*



*Bombardier Aaron Davies directs
Gunner Aaron Mc Gregor before clearing
an abandoned village on the border.*



*Lance Bombardier Phillip Grieve
practising break contact drills at
Balibo Range*



Gunner Benjamin (Muss) Street at the surveillance lines, Balibo



Early morning on the border Gunner Matthew Tinney as signaler after Cracker elements were inserted by S-70A the previous night.



Gunner Aaron McGregor at Balibo Range practising break contact drills.



Above: Bombardier Michael Edwards orientates the ground surveillance radar on the border.



Left: Lance Bombardier Trent Kennedy at Batugade for TNI display.

Below: Gunner Brent Bryce and Lance Bombardier Clinton Hodgetts prior to a patrol insertion.

