

Chapter 14 – Combat Service Support Team

Officer Commanding

Major Brendan Stevens

The deployment of 4th Combat Service Support Team (4 CSST), on Operation TANAGER, in support of the Australian Battalion (AUSBATT) has been the pinnacle of many soldier's career to date. During our deployment we provided the most comprehensive level of combat service support available to all Australian troops deployed in East Timor. 4 CSST were able to undertake this mammoth task with relative ease. This was due to the level of integration and interaction that we established with the rest of the Battalion Group and the dedication and professionalism of every soldier and officer within 4 CSST. The ability to support AUSBATT, was enhanced through the support from our family and friends, who provided us with a steady stream of mail, care packages and well wishes that kept our spirits at a high level.

The soldiers and officers of 4 CSST, through their diligent application, provided the conduit to fix, fuel and arm the AUSBATT. Cheerful faces never waned as dusty roads, late nights and the ever present threat focused our thoughts.

Company Sergeant Major

Warrant Officer – Daryl Ragen

During their deployment on Operation TANAGER, the 4 CSST soldiers were assigned the enormous task of supporting the Commanding Officer AUSBATT Mission. The Non Commissioned Officers and soldiers under command of 4 CSST cannot be given sufficient credit for their ability to achieve this colossal task. All members displayed diversity and flexibility while providing essential logistic support and proving their worth as a Security Force. In accomplishing this task, the members have set high standards for the logistic soldiers on future operations.

Administration Platoon

Administration Platoon 4 CSST deployed on Operation TANAGER with its members encompassing a wide range of trades and skill sets. The centre of 4 CSST was the Operations Cell. Working in Operations is one of the most thankless jobs you can have. Many hours were spent by the Operations staff planning and liaising with the sub-elements of the AUSBATT for tasking. The Operations team provided timely, accurate advice and tasking down to the Platoons of 4 CSST. The efficiency and flexibility of the Platoons of 4 CSST, made Operations staff work particularly easy. Administration Platoon was separated into three sections, consisting of the Signals Section, the Catering Section and the Quarter Master Store.

The Signals Section, lead by Sergeant Pete Turner, provided 4 CSST Combat Net Radio and Computer and Information Systems support. The Computer Technician maintained the computer server shelter, the local movie theatre and of course all the satellite systems in Fort Batugade. When the team first arrived, they had quite a task ahead of them; however, a few telephone poles later and any bag of cement they could find, the Signals Section managed to give the communication network of Fort Batugade a suitable revamp. All in all, the Signals Section performed extremely well and effectively managed the communication capabilities of 4 CSST in Fort Batugade.

The Catering Section at Fort Batugade were the most talked about cooks in the Area of Operations (AO). Originally catering for Alpha Company, 4 CSST and the Brazilian Military Police, the Catering

Section found themselves feeding up to 300 people at lunchtime. Word spread fast around the AO and eventually we had many regular AUSBATT and United Nations Transitional Administration East Timor (UNTAET) personnel who conveniently came to 'conduct liaison' at Fort Batugade around lunchtime. The Catering Section will long be remembered for their slogan "Burgers are better at Batugade", as well as their cinnamon donuts, popcorn chicken and Aussie pizzas.

Last but not least were the ever hardworking Quartermaster Store (Q-Store). After much shuffling around the AO, Corporal James Forrest-Cook assumed the role of Company Quarter Master Sergeant (CQMS). The CQMS performed tirelessly to reorganise the Company Q-Store to not only achieve unit level logistic support of 4 CSST, but also to provide the unit level logistic support to two of the Rifle Companies. The CQMS drove a hard bargain and with the help of his logistic staff, the Q-Store was up and running effectively in no time. The logistic staff performed exceptionally well during Operation TANAGER and contributed greatly to the high morale of the soldiers, especially when it was care pack time! During the deployment, the Q-Store kept 4 CSST issued with everything from bars of soap, to all the latest and greatest of gucci kit on offer to AUSBATT.

In conclusion, Administration Platoon performed a vital role in assisting 4 CSST to provide the AUSBATT with the stores, ammunition, water and food to maintain its operational tempo. Along the way there were some funny, mundane, ludicrous and often thankless jobs that kept the ball rolling. Upon reflection, the Platoon can say they had plenty of laughs among the long hard hours.

Maintenance Platoon

Arte et Marte

The early days saw a hectic pace being set with a considerable backlog of work, as well as satisfying force protection tasks. Our 'experienced' linguist, Sergeant Andy McShane, at one particular Vehicle Check Point (VCP), was overheard telling a local lady that if she were to take the next road on the left she would see a large horse holding a bicycle pump.

Work within the platoon was monstrous, Vehicle Section was being swamped daily with requests for repairs. Corporal Craig Webb aged twenty years, due to the serviceability problems associated with the Reverse Osmosis Water Purification Unit (ROWPU). The equipment became known as the 'Rarely Operating Water Purification Unit'. The General Engineering Section was in full swing, constructing improvements to Fort Batugade and building 'Big Green Things' for the Engineers. Throughout, the Recovery Section was testing their skills on a daily basis.

It wasn't long before the Maintenance Advisory Service rolled into the AUSBATT and turned the place upside down. Once the dust had settled and all was said and done, Maintenance Platoon was staring down the barrel of a 2000-hour backlog of work. The boys hitched up their pants, tightened their belts and attacked the onslaught of hours with great gusto. The boys ground the days away, not once relinquishing their quality of work or the professionalism they showed towards the deployment, even when hardships were placed upon them.

It can be safe to say that many of the men from Maintenance Platoon walked away at the end of the deployment with new and improved skill sets. Added to this, a higher level of knowledge, not only of their trade, but also of the operating procedures within an organisation such as 4 CSST and what it means to provide good combat service support.

Transport Platoon

We Can and We Do

Transport Platoon was the moving force behind 4 CSST – you need it, we move it. The Platoon was dispersed between Dili, Batugade, and Tonobibi. 1 Section and 2 Section rotated through Dili every six weeks, as did the guys in Tonobibi, while the rest of us soaked up the luxury of Fort Batugade.

It was the road conditions in East Timor that posed the biggest challenge for the Platoon. Having deployed from Darwin, the 'land of plenty' as far as long straight roads are concerned, the narrow, winding, hilly roads took a bit of getting used to. After the first couple of 'bingles', however, the guys

were driving the roads like true professionals. The next challenge was settling into the routine of day to day life. This included finding the time to have a rest and bit of a look around our area (people here call them piquets), as well as getting out and about for some leisurely walks around the countryside to meet the locals (these are called patrols).

The variety, weight, and sizes of loads that were hauled whilst in East Timor gave each member of the Platoon a wealth of experience, by moving everything from mail to plant equipment. The Platoon's flashy tyre changing machines are known far and wide across the AO, and it is rumoured that Big Beau is going to subsidise the blue uniforms and Beaurepairs signage. Despite being accused of speeding, not giving way, and every other vehicle misdemeanour, the 'Mongrel Mob' has managed to complete all tasks sent our way. Yet over the six month period we have delivered 1 326 500 litres of fuel, 22 521 104 litres of bulk water, about 3150 tonne of cargo and drove in excess of 289 936 kilometres.

In between all that, a few of the guys managed to found "Club Buggery" - not just a club, but a way of life! Complete with local furniture, the Club was a place to relax and forget about work! The Club was also the proud sponsor of a number of events, including the 'Club Buggery Cup' - a short course event within the Transport accommodation at Fort Batugade.

Supply Platoon

"You want it! We got it! Can you just give us a quick hand to look for it?"

Supply Platoon was manned with highly motivated and intelligent staff primarily selected from Supply Company, 1 CSSB and the wider Australian Defence Force. The job of identifying the personnel for the operation required much thought, with the following considerations in the forefront of our minds when selecting such a group:

- Ensure that selected staff is always good-humoured for the role of peacekeeping operations and that they are able to maintain that attribute until redeployment. They will need it!
- Make sure that if your staff has the slightest hint on where an item is within the Supply chain, that they do not let anyone know. Sometimes it's just safer to keep them guessing.
- Always select these staff on the basis of their ability to hide 352 separate staff demand items under their stretchers, and when asked about those items, deny all knowledge of having seen them in the first place.
- Did we mention good sense of humour?

The Fort Dili Supply component consisted of 13 staff, which was responsible for the receipt and issue of all stores coming into East Timor and for the clearance of stores returning to Australia. The task was for the most part, 'educational' and we learnt a great deal that was not taught during Initial Employment Training.

The Fort Batugade component consisted of eight staff who successfully managed all of the stores pushed forward to Fort Batugade and controlled all of the Repair Parts for the AUSBATT. These hardworking, merry band of men and women - not only stored, accounted for, stock-taked, issued and receipted all of the stores for the AUSBATT staff in the AO, but were integral in conducting defensive patrols to ensure peace and harmony reigned supreme in Batugade. They worked endless hours to meet their tasks and still maintained an excellent sense of humour (see points 1 and 4 of selection criteria). Balancing acts, with the Whisky 36 Forklift, kept most soldiers entertained during those lulls in the battle. Not to be outdone, the 'Dili Deviates' thought it only fair to see if their Tadano Crane can lift the same weight as what the book said - the book lied.

The staff within Supply worked very hard over the six months and ensured that all material travelling both in and out of East Timor was accounted for and distributed in the most expedient, professional and doctrinally-correct manner, to assist the commander in achieving the AUSBATT mission.

Health Platoon

Health Platoon was comprised of 24 personnel from a variety of units, with a range of clinical expertise. Upon arrival in Timor, the members of Health Platoon were divided and positioned at three different locations.

The Dental team was based at Batugade, travelling to Dili and around the countryside on a regular basis to maintain the oral health and hygiene of all the AUSBATT troops. Major Constantine was at the helm and was followed closely by her trusty dental assistant and dental technical magician (who spent more time either on patrol or engraving lighters than fixing teeth). In addition, Fort Batugade contained a two man Regimental Aid Post (RAP), a Nursing Officer and medic, whose members consistently provided medical support for range practices, first aid lessons, assisting Civil Military Affairs tasks and patrols with A Company. A Preventative Medicine team, consisting of two technicians, were responsible for the Batugade AO and provided a fogging and spraying service that brought about the reduction of Dengue and Malaria carrying mosquitoes.

In Balibo, 4 CSST provided a second Preventative Medicine team and a pathology expert that never left a slide unturned. Radiology support for the AO was also based in Balibo, along with four medics from 4 CSST who were constantly on tasks with the Aviation Detachment. Other tasks allocated to the medics included providing lessons to soldiers, maintaining fort security tasks and ensuring the health and well being of the troops in the Balibo area by maintaining a resuscitation, Low Dependency Ward (LDW) and a RAP capability.

Located approximately 5 kilometres from the border, was Maliana. This was where 4 CSST provided a Resuscitation Team, an Evacuation Team, LDW, a RAP and a Preventative Medicine Team. The Health Team at Maliana averaged one resuscitation treatment every week, with 90 percent of these treatments being conducted upon East Timorese locals. The cases treated varied from pregnancy complications to Haemorrhagic Fever. First aid lessons were provided to both AUSBATT soldiers and local villages up to four times a week. With the help of the Australian Light Armoured Vehicle (ASLAV) and Armoured Personnel Carrier (APC), the Health Team was able to conduct clinics in villages that had not been exposed to outsiders for long periods of time. In doing this, the Health Team was able to administer first aid and, in some cases, evacuate those in dire need of further medical attention.

1 Joint Amenities Unit

1 Joint Amenities Unit (JAU) provided recreational facilities and Duty Free goods to the deployed forces. Based at Fort Dili, JAU regularly visited the six major Fort locations of Aidabaleten, Batugade, Balibo, Tonobibi, Maliana and Bobonaro. At each of the six locations the staff sold Duty Free goods to all the soldiers. The arrival of the 'JAU Truck' was always eagerly anticipated. The truck was patronised very well, with many battle weary soldiers looking for some 'retail therapy'.

Australian Forces Post Office 5

Australian Forces Post Office 5 (AFPO 5) has provided support to East Timor based troops since 1999. The postal staff provided a significant improvement in the morale of the AUSBATT, through the efficiency in which they processed large amounts of mail, both into and out of East Timor. Between April 2001 and October 2001, a total of 103 772 kilograms of incoming mail, in 9181 mailbags, was sorted by AFPO 5. A total of 60 645 kilograms of outgoing mail, in 6616 mailbags and worth \$200 438 in postage, was sent to Australia. Now that was a lot of postage stamps.

Deployed Forces Cash Office

Imagine a world where a representative from your local bank comes to your house or your place of work and offers you money (in your choice of three currencies), provides hard cash for you to pay your employees and takes the necessary details to pay your personal bills for you. This was the world of the AUSBATT soldier on deployment in East Timor.

The staff from the Deployed Forces Cash Office travelled the AO, providing support to all soldiers. The supply of cash was used to engage the local community through trade, purchase another new electronic appliance from the JAU truck or to wash down the dust with a can of soft drink.

Psychological Support Team

The Psychological Support Team was a two-person detachment whose purpose was to maintain the operational effectiveness of all AUSBATT troops and to provide AUSBATT commanders with advice. This support encompassed the provision of critical incident stress management for all troops, and the provision of psycho-educational advice to commanders. The Psychological Support Team conducted timely and accurate counselling to all the troops of AUSBATT, often assisting soldiers and commanders alike, in recognising a realistic perspective on situations involving critical incidents and personnel problems associated with working in a high stress operational environment.

Theatre Equipment Account

The Theatre Equipment Account was located with 4 CSST at Fort Dili and was responsible for the issue of personal weapons, combat body armour and other important equipment, for individual or small bodies of troops entering East Timor. In addition, the Theatre Equipment Account staff were responsible for ensuring that stock-takes were conducted and that inventory control was maintained, for all the equipment accounts in East Timor. 'Big Brother' was ever watchful!



*Craftsmen Evans, Dunn, Hill and Gillette
from Maintenance Platoon*

*CSST Catafalque Party
on ANZAC Day
in Fort Dili*

