

A LOOK AT

EXERCISE SWIFT EAGLE 96

THROUGH THE CYNICAL EYES OF THE ADJUTANT, CAPTAIN C.G. MILES

The first major exercise 4RAR deployed on since its reforming was Exercise Swift Eagle 96. This would be the first big opportunity for 4RAR to be in the spotlight and be scrutinized by the rest of the Army. 4RAR's tasks on the Exercise were to provide Exercise Control and a company size enemy group.

As B Company was in Malaysia, the Battalion's support to the Exercise consisted of BHQ, C Company and Admin Company. Deployment to the exercise area was by two methods, sea and air. The CO, OPSO, ADJT, IO, RSO, RQ (War) and LCPL Tobin were given the opportunity to go by air. When weighing up whether to spend 5 hours on a RAAF Hercules or 5 days on the HMAS Tobruk, the decision was made easy on which method of transport to utilise. The remainder of the Battalion were faced with spending 5 days on the Tobruk. This encouraged a large number of 4RAR personnel to become more aerodynamic in an attempt to improve the speed of the ship to shorten the journey. So led by the BN 2IC they shaved their heads (as you do). If you happened to be flying over the HMAS Tobruk you could have been excused for mistaking it as a big floating grey billiard table with a heap of 'cue balls' and an 'eight ball'.

The first staging point on the way to the exercise area was Townsville. It was here that the Battalion was well hosted by 1RAR. It was also the first opportunity for those who had travelled on the Tobruk to have a few beers. This proved hazardous for one young lieutenant who as a result of the previous night's activities decided to make his own contribution to the CO's Orders Group the following day, in multi-coloured liquid form.

On deployment from Townsville to the exercise area the Battalion was split up. BHQ deployed to Cowley Beach Training Area to establish Exercise Control (EXCON) (Main), Admin Coy to Innisfail and C Company to Koombaloomba Forest as an enemy company. The Operations Cell, consisting of MAJ O'Bryan, SGT Iverach and CPL Bosnjak, split from BHQ to establish the EXCON (Tac) CP at Atherton for latter phases of the exercise. Attached to the Ops Cell were RQ (War), PTE Parrington and Kiwi (PTE Ellis) the cook.

Concurrently, the ADJT and IO were conducting Umpire Training for the New Zealand umpire contingent. Once the language barrier had been overcome ('...thus umpire treeening is duffucilt, eh bro, "I cen't understand a thung...et leest thiy've got fush and chups, choice eh bro...') and the white ink correction fluid was removed from the computer screens, the training went quite well. On completion of this task the IO joined EXCON (Main) and the ADJT bolstered the EXCON (Tac) CP at Atherton.

Once the IO had returned to EXCON (Main) at Cowley Beach he commenced implementing the enemy serials that had been the entire focus of his existence since arriving at 4RAR. He even participated in a couple of activities which turned out to be very fortuitous, as it enabled him to practise the balaclava wearing skills that he would be called on to demonstrate later in the year.

At Koombaloomba C Company did an excellent job. Their soldiering was professional and serious, resulting in the capture of an SASR patrol amongst other successes.

As a result of this serious, no nonsense attitude, the only mildly amusing anecdote to recite about Company on the exercise was on the occasion of SGT Wear nearly killing himself with a bobbin. Actually a lot of people thought it was quite funny. (SGT Wear was not one of them and neither was I).

In Innisfail, Admin Coy provided consistent, timely and reliable administrative support to all elements of the Battalion involved for the entire exercise. (NOTE: This is not supposed to be funny, I'm being serious).

Events in Atherton were hectic. Coordinating and controlling the enemy along with 200 civilians was a demanding task. However, the task was achieved, providing a realistic scenario for 3 Bde and contributing greatly to the success of the exercise.

As a sideline to running the exercise in Atherton, Boz, Parra and Kiwi provided much entertainment competing for the affections of one Nicky something or other, a GRes soldier (female) belonging to RISTA Regt. (An element of the RISTA Regt was co-located with the EXCON step-up Cp at Atherton). It is believed that Kiwi won the day. Being a cook and all, he was the one that was able to **curry** favour with her. (Ha, Ha, Ha, I'm killing myself).

Also whilst in Atherton the OPSO and ADJT commenced doing a weight circuit and run in the morning for PT. This activity was designed and worse still, led, by SGT Iverach. At 0630 hrs each morning torture began. Commencing with 100 repetitions of arm curl, military press, upright row, tricep extensions, sit-ups and a 1km sprint, this activity would be repeated another 4 times. This morning routine did however provide quite a spectacle for the local girls. As the word began to spread, more of the female townspeople would turn up at the bus stop opposite the CP area each morning. It was pathetic, they would use the lame excuse that they were there to catch the bus, but in fact, it was to catch a glimpse and drool over the three sweat covered warriors with rock hard, Adonis-like physiques.

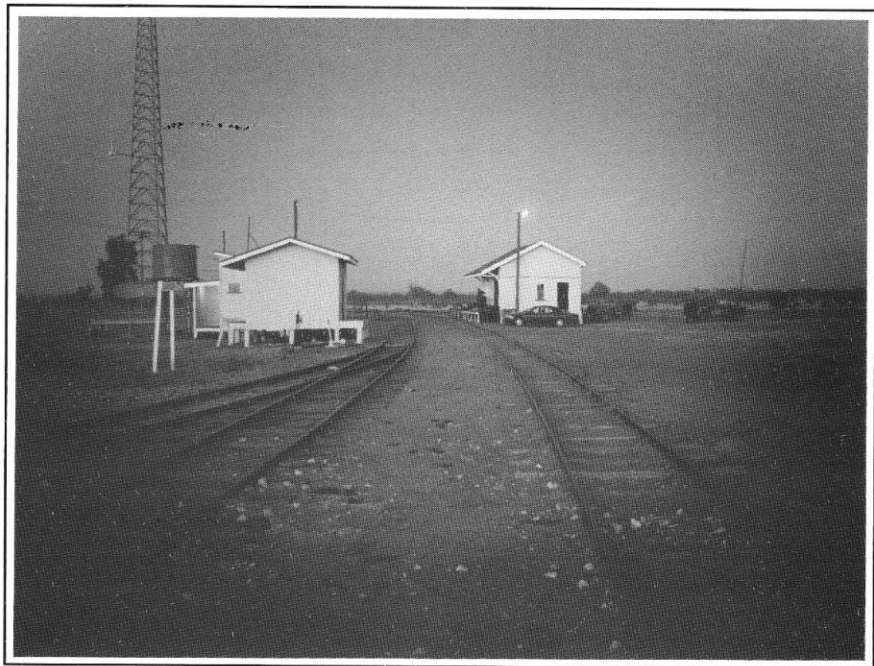
Meanwhile at Cowley Beach PTE Scott received a secret message, 'Eight ball, corner pocket'. A short time later PTE 'Maverick' Scott's vehicle left the road at high speed and smashed through a guide post leaving a trail of smoke spewing from the vehicle. An engine malfunctioned and the vehicle went into a flat spin, 'I can't control it!' Scott screamed through clenched teeth. The haunting memories came back of the way he lost his last passenger and those immortal words flashed through his mind, 'Talk to me Goose!'.....As it turned out it was not GAME OVER. PTE Scott and his passenger, the BN 2nd, walked away from the accident without a scratch. Subsequently, PTE Scott had to give everyone a refund.

Things only went from good to better on this exercise, so it was with great excitement that the various elements of the Battalion (minus Admin Company) regrouped and moved to their new location, Einasleigh. Einasleigh brought with it the kind of delight and enthusiasm you would expect of any place that makes Holsworthy look like the Gold Coast. There is really nothing more to say about the place. It was a good thing that we had the Commander of the 1st Division and his SO1s co-located with us to keep us company. This cheered us right up. Yes, there's no doubt about it, those wild and crazy guys from HQ 1 Div certainly brought smiles to all our faces. You could almost feel the sadness in the air as we flew out of Einasleigh to Townsville 10 days later.

Once in Townsville what exercise would be complete without a 10 hour delay at RAAF Base Garbutt. A few of the good guys in C Company used the time wisely and in a graceful exhibition demonstrated that if they wanted to they could shave the ADJT's head. This proved a real crowd pleaser and everybody wished there could be more delays like this at RAAF Bases.

It was good to finally arrive back in Sydney albeit at some ridiculous hour of the morning. Cleaning of weapons and returning of stores continued throughout the early hours of the morning. Even at this late stage the RAAF continued to impress us by leaving a rifle and pistol mixed up with our baggage, they truly are competency and professionalism personified.

On a more serious note, with the completion of the exercise came many accolades of a job well done, both from COMD 1 Div and COMD 3 Bde. All personnel in 4RAR that took part in Exercise Swift Eagle 96 can take pride in their performance and effort. The work put in and the results achieved by the Battalion let the rest of the Army know that 4RAR was back and is a hard working and professional organisation. WELL DONE to all involved.



'EINASLEIGH'

