

SUSTAINED FIRE MACHINE GUNNERS

This year has been one of change for the Sustained Fire Machine Gun Platoon. In February, a new weapon was selected for us, and we saw the last of our 106mm Recoilless Self-Loading Rifles. The change to the SFMG heralded a period of intense work and lengthy trials to develop operating procedures and refine roles.

The first occasion worthy of note in 1980 was our visit to the Joint Tropical Trials and Research Establishment. The purpose here was to determine the characteristics of SFMG fire in close country. For most, the results achieved were pleasantly surprising. The work done at Cowley Beach gave us vital information in the use of the SFMG. The task was difficult and at times tedious, however this was offset by having a lunch that would deliver itself. (Remember the steamboat that could walk).

On return to Lavarack Barracks we found the SFMG Platoon had made a name for itself. To this day I am not sure whether the blame rests on the vicious and entirely untrue rumours of a gunboat off the South Barnard Island group, or offshore confrontations with illegal fishing vessels. Either way the SFMG Platoon had come under the distant but respectful scrutiny of the Government of the Muzorian Republic. Before long we were contracted by the Muzorians to eliminate our own unit in the vicinity of Cooktown.

This task was made relatively easy by a telegram to 1 Divisional Headquarters informing them of a landing in the Cooktown area. Hence, when 2/4 RAR were deployed, our Muzorian Masters did not even have to worry about transportation for us. What service we offer! Exercise OVERLORD II can be accurately described in one word — SWAMP! We found, however, that our business principles were not really sound, for when we returned to Townsville the Australian Army billed us \$25,000,000 for the loss of a battalion.

Whilst the rest of the battalion were reforming and drying off, SFMG Platoon took a short trip to Tully. Although not as successful as the trial at Cowley Beach, the jungle at Tully will never be the same again. In the event that this article is being read by the wrong person (who might that be?), this author will deny all knowledge of any activity, at any time, at any location closer than 300 kilometres from you know where. We now offer a defoliation package at very competitive prices.

After we had come out of hiding we received another communique from the Muzorian High Commissioner at Ravenswood. For the destruction of a new 2/4 RAR at Hidden Valley, we would receive another \$25,000,000. This proved a more difficult task than the Cooktown expedition as at the same time CO 2/4 RAR threatened to withdraw our uniform maintenance allowance if we attempted to fulfil the contract. A compromise was reached. If SFMG Platoon pretended to let 2/4 RAR win the war,



yet take enough casualties, Muzoria would pay for our annual leave and CO 2/4 RAR would let us keep our uniform maintenance allowance.

Well, we blew it. We wiped out 2/4 RAR again. SFMG Platoon will appear for breach of contract with 21C 2/4 RAR in court next week.

The year was completed by our attendance at the Infantry Centre to participate in the SFMG trial. This was a most important task and we are awaiting the results of this trial to be analysed so a new weapon can be chosen for us in 1981. Do you have the feeling this has all happened before!