

C COY 2/4 RAR TOUR OF AIR BASE BUTTERWORTH

14 FEB.-23 MAY '79

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Air Base Butterworth is a Royal Malaysian Air Force Base situated on the Malaysian mainland, six miles north east of Penang Island. In accordance with the terms of the Five power Defence arrangements entered into by the Australian and Malaysian Governments, an Australian Army Rifle Company is deployed on a 3 monthly rotational basis from Australia to Air Base Butterworth to provide an opportunity for training and to develop further co-operation between the Malaysian Armed Forces and the Australian Defence Force. The rotational plan accords with Australian National Policy of deploying troops overseas for training exercises.

C Coy 2/4 RAR conducted a tour of duty at Air Base Butterworth between 14 Feb and 23 May '79.

The Company group consisted of 132 members, comprised of 5 Officers and 78 other Ranks from C Coy with the remainder from Support Coy, Logistics Company and other units within the 3 Task Force Area.

Movement to Butterworth from Townsville was completed in two stages. The Company group was moved to Sydney on 14 Feb '79 by TAA 727 aircraft and then from Sydney to Butterworth by a Qantas 747, arriving Butterworth at 2000 hours. The return movement from Butterworth to Townsville was completed on a Federal Government B707, leaving Penang on the evening 23 May '79 and arriving Townsville 0530 hours 24 May '79.

In addition to providing the security requirements required by OC RAAF Butterworth the Company conducted a training programme in accordance with the training directive issued by CO 2/4 RAR. The nature of training was influenced by the limitations of the training areas and facilities which existed. Despite these limitations a constructive programme was co-ordinated.

Training at the Air Base was limited to revision on individual skills, classroom instruction on Company tactics, conduct of a signals course for each platoon, use of a 25 metre firing range and maintenance of a high standard of physical fitness. An inter platoon military skills competition was held towards the end of tour which included competitions in drill, a nine mile force march and shoot, an obstacle course, a two mile run, rifle shooting and a military quiz. A clear victory was gained by 7 platoon in the overall competition.



A machine gun course was conducted with the GPMG on tripod, over a period of seven days at the Gurun field firing range, which is approximately 40 miles north of Butterworth. All members of the course qualified. Ranges used for rifle shooting were located at Penang Island, Sungei Petani and Kulim.



The Malaysian Army Combat Training Centre (known as PULADA) is located in the state of Johre Bahru and is approximately 500 miles south of Butterworth. Each Company to tour Butterworth is allotted five days of platoon training at PALUDA for



each of its platoons. This training is arranged by the Australian Defence Adviser in Kuala Lumpur with the Malaysian authorities. C Company rotated its three platoons through PULADA during the period 5-31 Mar '79 and conducted training on the various field firing ranges and a navigation exercise in a close training area.



Langkawi is an island 60 miles north west of Butterworth and provides the only facility in which a Company can conduct a field exercise whilst on tour of duty. The administrative planning and implementation of the plans for the conduct of an exercise proved to be an interesting, frustrating and in some instances, a comical task.

Each platoon was rotated through a patrolling and navigation exercise which was given an appropriate nickname of "PIRATES PILLAGE" as a result of many incidents of piracy near the island. The platoons were exercised over a period of five days which required a control and administrative organization to remain on the island between 28 Apr '79 and 18 May '79. Despite the many set backs which were encountered, the exercise proved to be a success and will provide a topic of conversation with many of the soldiers for quite some time.

The Company participated in many sports during the tour of which Rugby League was the most popular. Company spirit and morale was built around the Rugby League competition. It provided entertainment on a Saturday afternoon and an incentive to many to keep in top physical condition. C Company commenced the League competition as the under dogs in an association of six teams. At the end of the final round the Company side had played ten matches of which they had won eight, drawn one and lost one. They became the minor premiers, lost the first semi final, fought back to win on their second chance and defeated the RAAF Panthers 10-8 in the grand final. 2,000 spectators watched the grand final, which provided an atmosphere far exceeding any service match played in Australia. Victory by the team will be remembered as a great achievement as it is the first time an Army team has won the Rugby League competition at Butterworth since its inception in 1974. Special mention must be made of players such as Gary Cooper who tied for best and



fairest player in the league, Toby Tim who scored the most tries in the league, Rob Crispin who was awarded a prize for best back in the League and to Mick Sullivan who Captained and Coached the team to victory.

C Company provided a four man pistol shooting team in a Pistol Shooting Competition held on Penang Island. Teams competed from the RAAF, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand. The Company team won the falling plate competition and set a new time record in knocking down the plates. Members of the team were Lt Don Thompson, Cpl John Grasby, Pte Joe Nemeth and Pte Wayne McConachy.



The Company played the RAAF in two Australian Rules matches and were victors on both occasions.

All soldiers had the opportunity of spending at least five days in Bangkok and Singapore and as much time as they wished in Penang during their time off. The soldiers who availed themselves of this opportunity could only wish they had more finance and more leave time. Without exception, the members who spend some time in Bangkok returned to Butterworth refreshed, relaxed and eager to return.

Each location allowed the soldiers to familiarize themselves with local culture, appreciate different racial customs and feel a deeper appreciation for the standard of living which exists in Australia.

The 3½ months spent on tour in Butterworth could only be described as well worth while. It was an ideal opportunity for the Company to train without the interruptions which often occur in a training programme in Australia, and to build Company spirit and morale to a level which gave a feeling of achievement to everyone who was a member of the Company Group.