

KANGAROO '81

By MAJOR R.H. CREVILLE

A wave of excitement crept across the battalion as the big day approached. This excitement manifested itself in a number of ways. The most notable being a spate of 'king-hitting' outside the OR's boozier. (Ed. this activity being a well documented outlet for the warrior class to dispell pent-up emotions).

The Battalion, having not spent much time in the bush this year, was buzzing with the thought of those wonderful nights under the stars at Shoalwater Bay.

As the first soldiers danced out to the Battalion parade ground (the concentration area) at 0100 hrs you could see by the sparke in every man's eyes that he was looking forward to the exercise of the year. There was not a mumble about timings or about our friends in blue, who everyone knew were still in bed and had no intention of getting out for several hours - as every soldier is aware if you fly an aeroplane, you need more sleep.

The manifesting began and as each soldier was personally greeted by a cheerful UEO who smiled at everyone and said "ID card please sir". At that stage everyone knew - they were off!

The flight down to "the bay" was as pleasant as usual with the renowned courteous service of RAAF Airlines. The loadmaster moved amongst the

passengers ensuring that all were comfortable and he tried not to show any favoritism as he trod on each soldier at least twice. Everyman had been briefed on the importance of disembarking promptly as this magnificent beast, in which they were flying, was going to do an "ops stop" (Ed. an 'ops stop' for those uninformed means that the pilot wants to have a brew when he gets down on the ground so he won't bother turning the engines off).

The landing at 'the bay' was something else - the skill with which those loadmasters landed those planes speaks well for the recent cross training programme undertaken by RAAF airlines. No man was in two minds as to when he had actually reached his destination.

The soldiers of the Regiments priority battalion moved smartly off the airfield and instantly blended into the countryside like the veritable chameleons they are only to show themselves again at the sound of the bugle, or the bagpipe, or the sound of the OC's voice, or the

The first big operation of the exercise was to deploy the battalion from the JFCA to the FAA. (Ed. nobody really understood what the abbreviations meant or why it was done but one section commander was





Soldiers of the United States Army in a "Gamma Goat" vehicle — Shoalwater Bay K 81.

heard to say during his orders "we have to f.... get out of here because 1RAR is coming in soon, so we are going somewhere so we can get on some helicopters to go somewhere else". This particularly astute NCO will soon be promoted as he obviously has the ability to grip the essential elements of any situation.) This operation was conducted with precision and skill - the precision element; at precisely the time of the only contact the C & C ship had to return to be refueled: the skill element; we got there, however the ops officer in a classic statement said "Thankyou OC D Coy. for laying out the position, not one organization is in the right place and BHQ is on private property."

The next excitement came with the big 'air display'. This of course was a demonstration of the ODF capability to put a large force on the ground in a very short space of time and it was to be viewed by none less than the Prime Minister himself.

The rehearsal went like clockwork except for one or two small hiccups like -

a. The ever cheerful ÚEO (a different one) had his LZ magnificently layed out with guides, marker panels, packs etc so the helicopters would know exactly where to go when they flew in facing East. Unfortunately a rare magnetic force field was in

effect that day and all helicopters flew in facing west and not wanting to blow away any marker panels they did not land anywhere near them.

b. No helicopter landed in the right place at Williamson field - at least this time the RAAF played right into our hands the whole show would have been caos if they had.

c. The Engineers; in an attempt to add realism started a bush fire which forced C Coy. to withdraw onto the airstrip just in time to take a LAPES drop right onto CHQ.

d. Meanwhile D Coy. had flown in and the RAAF not wanting to leave any witnesses decided to get their door gunners to 'brass-up' those members of C Coy not burnt or squashed. This process was repeated when B Coy flew in, just in case a wounded C Coy soldier had told any D Coy soldier of the 'excitement'.

e. B Company were caught 'picking their noses' and Lucy Ross got a mention in dispatches for the gusto with which he got off his Andover.

The big day was upon us, everything was right, the wind was blowing in a different direction, 2 Kiwi helicopters had crashed and the PM could not make it. However, our friend Ronald R (AAF) outdid

themselves by still landing facing west and put all the helicopters down in the wrong place at Williamson and the show went on.

The battalion having completed its mission impossible was then sent to the 'hot spot' of war as compensation for a job well done at Williamson. There they sat, up to their knees in grenade pins, until the enemy decided to show its face - outside our AO.

Our sister battalion had been having an easy couple of days having had each company wiped out once and two companies wiped out twice, so in a cunning display of flexibility C and D Coy 2/4 were dispatched down south so the TF Comd. could have two, two company battalions to play with. But lo and behold three of 1 RAR's companies had miraculously come to life in time to do the BIG ATTACK.

The attack was filled with incident, once again going like clockwork with the troops crossing the LD

right at H hr (Ed. H hour had been delayed three times). The attack was excitement plus the only thing to dampen spirits was that the dastardly oranglands didn't stay around to play the game - they left the night before - no sense of adventure. Probably the straw that broke the camels back was that the only kills of the whole 1RAR attack were gained by C Coy 2/4 who killed a lame APC and D Coy 2/4 who got 2 enemy killed, 1 POW, a mortar and a MG.

The battalion was again reconstituted and all sat in anticipation of what would happen next, and we didn't have to wait anymore than 48 hours - the war was now really swinging along.

At that time the task force was dispersed to the four winds and it is believed that the Task Force Commander went on a holiday to Great Keppel Island - life is rough at the top.



(Left to Right): Cpl T. N. Fraser, Pte P. M. Amey, Pte A. R. Heys dismounting from an Iroquois helicopters at Raspberry Creek, Shoalwater Bay.



11 PL D Coy deploying from Raspberry Creek by Chinook helicopter on K 81.

The battalion was given to the Allied Brigade for yet another Big Attack. Our involvement included an eight Km march to the FUP by night. A company were nominated as the lead company to navigate to the FUP secured by C company. A company realised the importance of this task and decided that the route layed down was not very secure and the FUP selected by the CO and C company was obviously not large enough. The new route they selected went via Rockhampton and in a demonstration of battle field cunning they also decided to make the marked and secured FUP a dummy one and assault from a different area. This move was so successful that not only did the enemy not know where we were coming from, neither did we.

Having captured Raspberry Creek the battalion was then moved into a blocking position between Mt Alec and Pineapple gap where we successfully blocked the umpire withdrawal to their party at Samuel Hill.

The battalion was finally moved back to Williamson airfield for the move home. This was a cunning tactic in itself as all soldier's mistakenly thought that as they were at an airfield they would fly out. "Biggles you are a silly sausage" of course everyone knows that you go to an airfield to get a truck to another airfield so you can fly home.

At this point D Company realizing the way of the war by this stage (Ed. you may think that that was a bit late, but at least they realized before they left

Shoalwater Bay which was better than anyone else) decided to run their own version of the Melbourne Cup.

This event was without a doubt the high point of the exercise and was won by the three section nomination Napalm, a proven Kiwi stayer, by Mouse out of Hathaway.

Quotable Quotes from the Exercise:-

1. *OC D Company 1 RAR to OC D Company 2/4 RAR*
"Hey mate have you seen the LD"
OC D 2/4 "Yes it is right behind you"
OC D 1 "Shit, I layed the bloody thing out and I couldn't find it."
ED Note - there is no truth in the rumour that OC D Coy. 1 RAR is taking over A Coy. 2/4 next year.
2. *On welfare one notable adviser had a follow up statement to one he mad on Ex Swift Eagle when he was heard to say "Just one more shortbread cookie!"*
3. *After the battalion attack a soldier asked his OC.*
"How far do we have to walk this time".
OC "Only 4 km".
Soldier "Is that standard NATO km or A Coy. flexible km?"
4. *OC B Coy. wrote for the admin. and log paragraph of orders.*
"Everyman for himself".