

EXERCISE BEFORE YET ADVENTURE TRAINING IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

CAPTAIN I.J. ROBINSON



Captain Robinson giving the historical account of the action that occurred during World War II at the But airstrip.

Members from 2/4 RAR, 3 Task Force Headquarters and B Squadron 3 Cavalry Regiment undertook a 10 day training exercise in PNG over the period 13-23 May 80. The exercise was conducted in the vicinity of Wewak, which is situated on the north coast of PNG, and hosted by the 2nd Battalion Pacific Islands Regiment (PIR).

The exercise was designed to:

- obtain first hand experience in operating in a tropical jungle environment.
- appreciate the practical problems of conducting limited warfare in the jungle,
- understand the tactical and environmental problems encountered by a military force advancing to contact,
- assess the affect that modern weapons, equipment and technology would have on such campaigns,

- study portions of the New Guinea campaigns, and
- foster an association with 2 PIR.

The first three days in PNG were spent with 2 PIR during which time data research and limited reconnaissance was conducted in areas relevant to assigned tasks. Areas of interest were Aitape, But, Dagua, Boikin and Wewak. Because of time restrictions it was only possible to study the area between But and Boikin, a distance of 35 kilometres. The study was conducted by foot over five days.

Many World War II relics were still visible in World War II battle areas. They consisted of rusty rifles, helmets, radios, wrecked aircraft which varied from zero fighters to four engine bombers. We visited the complex system of tunnels on Wom Peninsula, Wewak, which housed the headquarters of Lieutenant General Adachi. It is now closed to prevent the curious from becoming lost. We also managed to locate the Japanese gun position on the lower slopes of Mission Hill that had harassed the Australian attack on Wewak. There were six guns, most in remarkable condition considering they had been exposed to the climatic conditions for over 35 years.



Corporal Thompson examines aircraft wreckage at But airstrip.



One of the six 75mm Japanese field guns found on the lower slopes of Mission Hill.

Time spent with 2 PIR was entertaining and enjoyable. Our hosts spoil us with their hospitality. During our short stay at Moem Barracks we attended a variety of functions. These included a PNG style dining-in night in honour of the visiting PNG Minister

for Defence, inter battalion sport, mess games and a dinner in a PNG 'Wind Hut'.

In retrospect the activity was well worthwhile and should be programmed into future training programmes.



Post exercise relaxation.

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