

Chapter 8- Logistic Support Company

The following articles have been contributed by the various elements of the Logistic Support Company (LSC). As you will see, the roles of LSC's platoons are many and varied and the deployment has been a very busy time for all. The support tasks carried out by these organisations continue relentlessly day after day, whether other activity was occurring or not. LSC was tasked with maintaining the supply of equipment, water, fuel and rations, and to provide medical and repair support 24 hours a day. In addition to these tasks, the company also had to provide security for their base and the local area around Balibo and a plethora of other duties and responsibilities, many of which are mentioned below.

Catering Platoon

Our first elements to East Timor docked at about 1700hrs on 16 April and the heat and humidity was a real shock to our systems. I looked across at a building on the other side of the wharf and saw lots of smiling faces of 1RAR members about to go home. At that moment I would have almost given anything to swap with one of them. Once we sorted out the huge mess of everyone's gear at the wharf the Platoon was then split into 2 groups, those staying at Dili and those staying in Hera. We climbed aboard and headed off towards our night location. Along the way I was appalled by the living conditions of the East Timorese people. Their housing was no better than a run down old garden shed and not much bigger. Also, to my surprise there were tip trucks travelling around full of people. They seemed to use them as a taxi service where each person pays about 10000 rupiah. There were also children running up calling for Aqua, which later I found out, was Indonesian for water. After a very uncomfortable night's sleep we once again got on the trucks for our 4-hour journey. I could only imagine after seeing the capital what the surrounding villages would look like. The trip to Maliana was very uncomfortable as the roads are in terrible condition and my back was aching by the time we arrived.

Warrant Officer James Evans, Sergeant David Senner, Sergeant Geoffrey Brindley, Corporals Benjamin Roberts and William French, and Privates John Hadden and Rian Hull started their tour at Balibo. Balibo was and is the busiest kitchen in the Australian Battalion Area of Operations (AUSBATT AO) where they feed fluctuating numbers from 400-550, which is determined day to day by looking into our crystal ball. This happens from Sunday to Friday and on Saturdays we strip the kitchen for our weekly hygiene and maintenance. This occurs at all the kitchens. The atmosphere at Fort Balibo has by far the most stress and tension due to the high number of Officers and Senior Non-Commissioned Officers (SNCO's) who reside there. I have found that most people are too afraid to stuff up, as there are eyes and ears everywhere. The locals are very nice to us and treat us with respect. The locally employed civilians (LECs) are a blessing as they do washing, vegetable preparation, and all other types of cleaning. They probably save us about 50% of our overall workload. The gun piquets at Balibo are 1-day piquet and 1 night piquet in a 24-hour period ranging between 45-70mins per day and 90-140mins nightly. Whilst on piquet you have a few tasks such as checking identity cards and most of all providing security to the perimeter. Some of the senior members of the platoon such as the Caterer have been given worthy tasks as the rubbish truck run. Besides what I have already mentioned there are Rules of Engagement (ROE) lessons, work parties for the Company Sergeant-Major (CSM) and almost anything else you could think of.

Sergeant Ian Abel, Corporal Glenn Howard, and Privates Gerald Avery, Steven Gentile, Mathew Hardy and Mathew McDonnell started at Maliana. Our first 2 weeks at Maliana was almost unbearable with the roof of the kitchen being thatch and lined with plastic sheeting, the gas burners inside causing the kitchen to become an out of control sauna. About two weeks later the humidity and temperature dropped off slightly and it became workable. I do not know if this was due to the dry season approaching or that we had acclimatized. D coy is at Maliana but we were also supplying hot box meals to B coy at Marko and Bobonaro and the Engineering personnel at Tonabibi. This made our numbers at some meals jump as high as 330.

We shared our gun position between the medics, Civil Military Affairs (CMA) and Catering. This gave us 1 piquet of about 2 hours every second night. Bobonaro eventually won the fight to have a cook at their location which in turn relieved some pressures on rations and feeding strengths at Maliana. My first week up at Bobonaro was great as I was feeding small numbers and the climate was perfect. It was about 20°C by day and about 6°C at night, which was great for rugging up for a good night's sleep. It was also a relief from the soil and toil of Maliana.

Corporal Asveen Chand and Private Jason Dawes were the first to get the relaxing position at Dili where they were feeding from between 50-100 personnel. From the words of Private Dawes, "Life was pleasurable at first until people thought that the cooks working from 0500hrs to 1800hrs was not long enough so they had us begin piquets. This started off slow from a two hour front gate piquet and a two hour roving piquet two times a month to every second night once they found out we were members of 4RAR." He continued, "This meant I had very little spare time as it was then they introduced compulsory night games like night volley ball, quoits, charades and non stop eight-ball and it was so much fun, not. The one highlight of the trip was to see the Army band."

Sergeant Christopher Carter, and Privates Paul Bushell and Lucas Hicks arrived at beachville, Aidabaleten. This is where C Coy is situated. "It is a hot dry place but at least the beach is close by so we can go swimming if we want, in our spare time. We were feeding about 60 personnel most of the time and it is quite a relaxing atmosphere here," stated Private Gentile who recently spent a small amount of time there. "They still have gun piquets there like all the other kitchens as well as other taskings though" he said.

One of the funniest moments was the discovery of a large aluminium cooking pot that had a large hole melted through the bottom and to my surprise it belonged to Private Hadden. On the other scale people found it quite amusing that I cut two of my fingers very deep and required stitches, whilst sharpening my cooks knife, ouch!

Overall East Timor has been a great learning experience for most of the Platoon especially those members who have not been on overseas operations before. It has also made me even more aware of how blessed we are to live in Australia.

Company Headquarters

For the first 48 hours after arrival in Balibo, the advance party of Company headquarters (CHQ) toured the AO and became familiar with the routines and procedures that the company would adopt for the first few weeks of our deployment. The entire company was complete on the ground by 20 April 2001. We integrated ourselves into the 1 RAR routine and at 0001 h on 21 Apr, LSC CHQ took command of the echelon and for the security of TAOR Balibo.

For the first couple of months, the pace was hectic. There was a lot of defensive work that was required around the echelon as well as patrols and sentries, not to mention the normal support to a battalion on operations. Through these initial stages the company's morale was high and only waned occasionally. CHQ attempted to maintain cohesiveness between the specialist platoons and the Rifle Companies as different strains and stresses were experienced by them. Every day was a busy day until the routine was established. But, even after the routine was established, members of CHQ still participated in patrols, co-driver tasks and piquets.

The members of CHQ will take with them both the good and bad times, the friendships forged, the experience gained and the memories of locals from Balibo village. These memories will remain etched in our hearts and minds for many years to come.

Quartermaster Platoon

The deployment to East Timor came around quickly, and all the hard work during preparation was about to be put into practice. Some of the members of the platoon had waited up to 20 years for the chance to deploy on operations, whereas others have barely had to wait a year. The overall mission of the platoon was "to provide the best possible logistic service to the Battalion Group (Bn Gp)." Initially, our knowledge of the computerised equipment accounting system, the Standard Defence Supply System (SDSS), was quite limited and caused some headaches as very few of our members had used it previously. However, the platoon was focused on meeting the mission and in a short time adjusted to the new system and set about meeting the needs of the Bn Gp.

The platoon was split to provide a service in both Dili, and the Unit's Area of Operations called Matilda (AO Matilda). The three members (The Forgotten Ones) at Fort Dili were kept quite busy with care packs and clearances for members going on Relief Out of Country Leave (ROCL). Not only did they provide service to the Bn Gp, but also to the Australian National Command Element (ASNCE), the Headquarters of the Peacekeeping Force (HQPKF) and any other organisations which Australian Defence Force personnel were serving with.

The rest of the platoon, located at Balibo, provided logistic support to over 1000 Peacekeepers of the Bn Gp. The level of the support provided was outstanding considering the fact that logistics was just a part of our job which also included patrols, building of defences, security of the echelon area, work parties and numerous other tasks.

Throughout the entire deployment morale within the platoon remained quite high. The exception to this was the time our platoon mascot Bergerka (the red rooster), was expelled from the confines of the Balibo Fort for going Absent Without Leave (AWOL) in the vicinity of the Regimental Aid Post (RAP), just prior to the Governor General walking through.

As the platoon moved closer to the end of the deployment, the support provided by families and friends could not go unnoticed. It is everyone's sincere hope that our presence in East Timor, has in some way, assisted the people to find lasting peace and a bright future.

Regimental Aid Post

The Regimental Aid Post (RAP) at Balibo was not your everyday infantry RAP. It was comprised of a conglomerate of 4 RAR medics and Combat Service Support Team (CSST) personnel. In fact, if we were feeling corporate, we could have been called the AUSBATT medical clinic. The RAP had an environmental section, diagnostic section, a Low Dependency Ward (LDW) and can't forget the omnipresence of Army Malaria Institute (AMI), who were always on the take for delectable donations of blood! The new contingent members began to move in on 16 April 2001, and so the stories and adventures were set in motion.

One of the first things noted about the place was the fantastic sunsets. The sunrises were also awesome for those who were up at that hour - well - everyone got a glimpse on ANZAC Day anyway!

Everyone was keen to keep fit, but found it hard to get into the gym, which was often full, at nearly all hours of the day. But there were the stairs to the 5 Aviation Regiment detachment, and the Maliana and the Batugade 1 km tracks for running. For the uninitiated the Maliana run was a good start because it's not steep, then we would work up to the Batugade track. A mixture of steepness and high altitude soon had us puffing. To keep up the tempo many supplies of enhancing agents began to arrive - WOW! You should see us now! For a few of us the fitness theme died somewhere along the way (probably due to piquet fatigue and work parties).

Incidents and Quotes

"It seems that they don't make coconut trees as they used to" (or at least they don't make the coconut tree climbers like they used to). One young lad was unfortunate enough to come and visit us with two nasty fractures to both of his legs. Obviously an apprentice coconut farmer, perhaps more lessons from the local monkey could be in-order. In a few months he'll be as good as new, and at it again.

"This is not a F@#\$%^ clotheshorse, it's a weapons rack!" Statement referring to the clotheshorse disguised as a newly installed weapons rack in the RAP low dependency ward.

CAPT Scalzo always producing and creating the fog of war!

Perhaps one of our first major workouts was the grenade attack, which had occurred in a border market. We received the injured as Priority two's. All were fragmentation wounds with varying degrees of seriousness. One fellow in particular was lucky not to have had his head detached. He had a fragment lodge in his neck, as shown by the X-ray. It was only about 1 cm from the main artery, and if it had penetrated the artery he would most likely have died in a few minutes. The rest were X-rayed, poked and prodded to clean out the wounds. Although traumatic for the victims, we had the opportunity to display our medical skills. Even the Q-store became involved, reviewing X-rays and offering advice – "NO, you can't have that dressing, we may need it later for someone else!" All help was honestly appreciated. The locals, once patched up, were sent to the local health clinic for further dressings.

The AMI presence, when they were here, was always noted for the Lariam resupplies, data collection for the trial and the alfresco dining, candles included, on the weekends (if you were fortunate enough to get an invite).

Sergeant Wilsen and Staff Sergeant Slattery often did the Dili run to pick up stores direct from the United Nations Military Hospital (UNHOSP). It was a good overnight break, until the usual thing that happens to all good things. Nevertheless, the Dili run continued. It also enabled the transport of patients to and from the UNHOSP, as well as the extras, which sometimes turned the cruiser into a 'vengabus', not unlike the local ones, except that ours had a UN sticker.

Transport Platoon

Par-oneri (Equal to the Task) is the Corp of Transport motto and that is exactly what the men of the Transport Platoon (Tpt Pl) proved. Time has come around quickly and continues to roll forward at a blistering pace. Members of Tpt Pl know only too well the meaning of the term 'flat out' after completing 12 months of rigorous pre-deployment training.

Advance party elements, numbering seven in total arrived in Balibo on 16 April 2001, and undertook a full hand over and relief in place with the remaining elements of 1 RAR Tpt Pl. The remainder of the 4 RAR truckies arrived a week later bringing the total strength to 17 members. Primarily, the bulk of this number remained in the unit's echelon area to conduct support in the form of permanent tasking such as water re-supply, rubbish disposal, troop lifting and fuel re-supply. When not allocated to tasking, members conducted vehicle maintenance, security piquets and patrolling of the AO.

Security of the area took priority and did at times prove to be a nightmare for tasking allocation as up to seven members could be away at any one time conducting Vehicle Check-Points, Listening Posts or Fighting Patrols.

An additional line of support was provided via the CSST Transport Node at Tonobibi. A total of six drivers were co-located with Engineer and Cavalry elements at that location and provided direct re-supply of water and fuel to the seven patrol bases and forts within the AO. Hours were long and the

driving challenging but, like their counterparts in Balibo, the days went quickly as there was minimal time for rest and relaxation. In all it can be stated quite adamantly that all the truckies over here earned their dollars and eventually, a well-earned rest.

Driving conditions in EM proved to be the biggest issue, from not only transport's point of view but also all road users including Military, UN elements, and the local population. The vehicles had been in country for almost 2 years and were showing their age, requiring increased levels of driver maintenance and repairs in order to keep them taskworthy.

The narrow roads with winding mountain paths and varying levels of gradient resulted in the drivers being involved in one of the most dangerous and demanding jobs within the AO. Not to take anything away from the Infantry or other Corp's but the likelihood of an accident seemed to be far greater for the truckies who encountered these conditions on a day to day basis. It further emphasises the dedication and professional nature of all Transport Corp Drivers in the Battalion Group.

Technical Support Platoon

Automotive Engineering (AE) Section

For the mechanics deployed to OP Tanager, it was a case of hit the ground running. Our first priority was to get the Forward Repair Team (FRT) on the way and down the road to Tonobibi. The first of the FRTs was commanded by Corporal Rowan Jones, and accompanying him in the greaser wagon was Craftsman "Timmy" Sheaves, who for the first couple of months provided the RACQ/NRMA style of repairs, and call-in service, to the Companies.

For the Boys left at Balibo, although 1 RAR didn't leave us with any major backlog, it didn't take long for the endless flow of Repair Requests (EMEFIX's) to start pouring in. What at first seemed to be a case of creative accounting on 1 RAR's part turned out to be the terrain, and in some cases the drivers, taking their toll on the vehicles and equipment.

Although heavily committed to a rigorous patrolling and gun piquet regime, the boys of Balibo still managed to replace a record number of transmissions and axle assemblies and before we knew it, mid-June was near and so began the Relief Out of Country Leave (ROCL). As people returned from leave, they were rotated through the FRT.

July saw the revamp of the workshop floor, replacing the existing flooring with aircraft matting. Production ceased for the day in an all-hands-in work party that completed the job on schedule and under budget. August brought about the season of change; for Sergeant Peter (Handsome Pete) Weiss a 30th birthday, and to everyone's delight the introduction of the SDSS. SDSS replaced an older system, and is a much more complex, un-user friendly, baffling matrix for accounting for things such as labour and parts. Shortly after it was up and running, the FRT returned to Balibo, and handed over to Craftsman Chris (Muppet Arms) Lach and Craftsman Scott (The Wedge) Hewat.

For the couple of weeks leading up to the Election, most of AE Section were tasked with the defence of other PKF facilities at Bobonaro (Bob's Monaro) and on the Everest feature. After the election came the final rotation through the FRT, being Craftsman Chris (Billy-Ray) Dare who was detached from 7 Combat Service Support Battalion (CSSB) based in Brisbane.

Electronic, Instrument and Radio (EIR) Section

On arrival in country we were also lucky enough to be blessed with the presence of GJ Jones (Electrician from the Battalion Support Group). We were prepared for him though because we saw his action at Tenant Creek! We are almost certain that GJ is scared of the dark because he keeps putting up flood lights anywhere he can fit them (or he hasn't worked out how to turn his Night Vision Goggles (NVG) on!). He has also taken out the 'Fattest Man In The Section' competition by a narrow margin. Witnesses at the Regimental Aid Post (RAP), the location of the scales, commented that during the weigh in one member had his Steyr Rifle slung and was eating a Picnic chocolate bar and still didn't come anywhere near GJ's weight, which will remain unknown. All slugging aside, we appreciated his

efforts and we'd have been in trouble if we didn't have his expertise available to call on. "What's that, the power has gone down at the Fort, Jonesyyyy".

The Ready Reaction Force, commanded by Andy, was called out on a few occasions. Their tasks included security for a medical team and a vehicle escort for dodgy trucks from Atambua. Over the election period, Craftsmen Lindsay Clark and 'Ned' Kelly were deployed out to Bobonaro and Mt Everest respectively, for a two-week change of scenery. However, we received reports that a short man, with a moustache, a cigarette and a can of coke, was spotted speeding towards the TCL in an ERV full of empty trunks, and carrying a large amount of US currency!

General Engineering (GE) Section

Suspicion was first aroused on the hand-over. "Where are all your outstanding jobs?", it was asked. "Mate, all jobs have been completed except for this one 'parts only' job." He gives a sly nod to the two crafties in the corner by the desk; they look at each other, then at the job jacket. All attention is immediately drawn to a job jacket 10 centimetres thick and bursting at the seams! F#*k!! This job had been open since the first week of their arrival in-country six months earlier!

Everything you need to know, he yells back from the truck en-route to Dili, is in that job jacket. But before the dust had even settled, he was gone, and so to any real hope of finding out if 1 RAR really did anything at all. Suspicion was confirmed when not two days later, the flood of EMEFIX's came streaming in.

After the initial "I'm in a third world country" depression had passed, we got on with the jobs at hand. It was lucky we brought Craftsman McLaren, our resident welder with us, as the amount of broken M113's, plant equipment and fabrication work that we did was amazing! (Mainly shelving; where they have been storing all their equipment for the past two years, was not passed on to 4 RAR).

Metalsmiths are a dying breed in the Australian Army and it takes a deployment like Timor to emphasise the need for this specialist trade. Full credit also goes to Corporal Beale and his engineering excellence, which got us out of many an engineering bind.

But all has not been beer and skittles for the GE boys. In between supporting the 4 RAR Bn Gp, there have been many patrols, Vehicle Check Points (VCP), Observation Posts (OP) and not to mention gun piquet (that's 772Hrs of our lives that we will never get back!) to be done. And dare I not forget our 'fitter' brothers whose efforts in the Rifle Companies made our life a bit easier. Thanks to Corporal 'Jacko' Jackson, and Craftsmen 'Eldo' Eldridge, 'Crofty' Crofts and 'Stotty' Stott. Well done lads.

Repair Parts Store (RPS)

Well the East Timor experience has been a roller coaster ride of ups, downs, in between and going to the edge of insanity and back. Vern Andrews and Paul Nuernberg's excellent adventure began with the hand over from 1 RAR RPS staff and the ironclad guarantee of "If we didn't like it we could return it within 30 days and still keep the steak knives". And like buying a cheap used car from some old mate in a shopping centre car park, that fell through so it was ours to keep. We made a few minor changes to the store, for example we outscaled all the stock that hadn't been used for the last million years and tried to rationalise the stock that remained. Along with a 100% stocktake, we also upgraded the DICVAS (RPS computer system) and fixed it so it could be used properly, and went about setting replenishment figures. Our stocktake also included a revamp of the stock so you could find it without a tracker team, cut lunch and satellite surveillance. So that was week one down and only 25 to go. After that we in-scaled the class 9 stores for the Australian Light Armoured Vehicles (ASLAV), Night Fighting Equipment, and brought on the lost RPS stores of 2/14 (Queensland Mounted Infantry (QMI) Armoured Personnel Carrier Troop (APC Tp). We continued to out-scale unneeded parts, implemented SDSS and brought the account in line with the rest of the world. We also managed to do a couple of patrols, Observation Posts and VCP's just for the hell of it. I think we even issued and receipted some stores occasionally. We now support every man and his dog for class 9 stores in East Timor.