

From the time we returned from Canungra until the MRE we set about trying to finalise the Troop's administration while squeezing in some training on the new water purification units we would find in Timor, and capping off individual qualifications that we required.

With the deployment day drawing closer, we set off for the MRE. For us, the MRE had two phases, with the first phase being the preparation of the Battalion Area of Operations for the MRE. Here we were tasked to construct make-shift villages, strong points to simulate the junction points, set up and operate the Battalion's water-point, and conduct training for the Battalion in the areas of unexploded ordnance awareness, search, and the construction of field defences. Once phase one was complete, we moved into the MRE proper and provided support to the Battalion as we would in country. Overall, the MRE was extremely valuable in that it provided us with an insight into how the Battalion operated, and gave us yet another opportunity to round off our skills prior to deployment. It also gave the Battalion the opportunity to see what we could do, and what we couldn't.

With the MRE behind us we had just four weeks in which to finalise administration, pack trunks, check personal kit, attend DFSU training, have some leave and get on a boat. Much to everyone's surprise we did it! In the wee hours of 23 April 2001, 13 Troop climbed aboard buses for the move to Dili, and on to Tonibibi. We had made it, but this was only the beginning!

2 Cavalry Regiment

January – February

During the early months, operational administration, DP1 documentation and personal requirements were met, and Post Christmas 'Shake-Out' exercises were conducted. Some time was spent in various luxurious locations to carry out a variety of activities. Embus/Debus drills, vehicle hide routine and patrol drill training was held at MacDonald Airstrip, and Gunnery training at Mount Bundy. Generally, the ASLAV's have not been seen much in the eastern parts of Australia and were well received.

An ASLAV Drivers/Crew Commanders course was conducted 4 – 14 February, Company rotation through Wide Bay Training Area was conducted during 15 February – 3 March, during which we included a few days to carry out Public Relations (PR) work around various areas of the Sunshine Coast. Visits to Rainbow Beach, a Hinterland mountain drive, and a short beach visit at Caloundra, were eye openers for many of the locals. People everywhere were waving to us and speaking to us when we stopped for meal breaks. Throughout this time we discussed the important tasks that lay ahead, the ongoing provision of a 'secure environment' for locals and UN workers to rebuild a Nation.

March – April

4 – 17 March meant a move to Shoalwater Bay Training Area with the culmination of the Battalion Group preparation. On the 8 March we went to Yepoon on another PR visit. Lieutenant O'Hare's mother is the school principal there and we believe that all that participated in the display that was provided were impressed. Training for Peace Keeping Operations concentrated on troop lifts and mobilising a Ready Reaction Force capability, followed by BHQ level training.

Once the 'War' was over, re-deployment to Darwin via Rockhampton on 19 March was quite smooth. Most members were flown back and Private Christian Oswald and Trooper Phil Rodukoff escorted the vehicles back with the civilian road transporters. This was a real buzz for 'Ozzy' because he got a turn behind the wheel of one of the 'Big Rigs'.

Pre-embarkation leave 31 March – 15 April was great and definitely appreciated by the families that we were to soon leave behind. Last minute admin loose ends were tied up and 'crisis management' was put to the test. The 'Advance Party' deployed on 20 April with the 'Main Body' departing from Darwin wharf on 24 April, the last Dili voyage of the HMAS Jervis Bay prior to her decommissioning. In the early morning, even the Jervis Bay, sailing on its final run to Timor, looked as if it too was keen to go. For many, the tearful scenes with loved ones had either occurred long before or were put aside in the kid's interests.

Battalion Communications Team (BCT)

The soldiers of the Team received pre-deployment training through a dedicated training squadron that consisted of senior non-commissioned officers and support staff, most of whom had recently served in East Timor. This experience enabled an excellent training package to be developed, ensuring that each soldier in the Team had the necessary skill-sets for their deployment. British exchange Warrant Officer, Al 'Q' Sutherland managed key aspects of trade training, leaving Warrant Officer Gavin Pearce to co-ordinate all-Corps skills. This pre-deployment training prepared us for our participation in the Battalion readiness exercises, Timor Dawn and Timor Dusk. The Team's performance during all of these exercises indicated that a professional team had been drawn together in a short period of time, and were now ready to relieve those members of the BCT who had served during for the majority of the 1 RAR Battalion Group's tour of East Timor.

The first members of the Team to deploy, arrived 'in-country' on the 22 February 2001. Their main task was to assimilate as much information as possible in a short period of time to ensure that the relief in place was as seamless as possible with the arrival of the remainder of the Team. It was clearly evident that they were well on the way to being veterans by the time the remainder of the Team stepped off HMAS Jervis Bay on the 5 April 2001.



Gunner Ben Street conducting observation post night drills.



Range shoot in Brisbane January 2001 (Right to left Gunner Mat Jones and Captain Joe Ellul)



Gunner Graeme Jones and Lance Bombardier Hodggets conducting a recon for an Observation Post on the Mission Rehearsal Exercise, Shoalwater QLD, March 2001



Yeppoon Primary School receives a visit by the ASLAW Troop prior to the final exercise conducted at Shoalwater Bay Training Area. Lieutenant O'Hare's mother is the principal of the school



*A service conducted in the grounds of Tobrak Lines, 4 RAR,
for members and their families prior to the deployment*

