

BRAVO COMPANY REPORT

December 2017

The second half of the Calendar year saw a shift in focus for Bravo. Two major Exercises greeted the Company at the start of the long-awaited reset phase after six months of Ready Combat Team (RCT) duties. The first was Exercise Talisman Sabre North (EXTS(N)), a BDE-led offensive operation which comprised of an Air Point of Departure (APOD) seizure and north-south clearance of the Mount Bunday Training area to the Urban Operations Training Facility (UOTF).

For this Exercise, 5 PL was exchanged to the Marine Rotational Force-Darwin (MRF-D) Company, while LT Hunter Dixon and his platoon were attached. The Exercise allowed members of B Coy to intimately work with the Marines, to compare strengths and weaknesses and to solidify the Unit's ongoing relationship with the USMC.

This Exercise was also the first time Bravo was operating as a completely motorised Company. New Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTP) were developed prior to departing, and refined on the ground. Our increased mobility forced the Enemy onto the back foot from the start and resulted in them changing their TTPs to rely solely on roadway ambushes.

The Company operated as independent Platoons for the majority of the Exercise, but consolidated for a night-time dismounted insertion through an extensive creek system for a Company assault. With an Australian platoon forward left, and the MRF-D platoon forward right – it was easy to see from my position the difference in the individual soldiers each country produces. The Marines are without question tough and resilient – but individual skills and soldier discipline is where the Australian digger shines through. We would later use this to our advantage when we faced off with them in Exercise Koolendong.



B Coy Sect completes the Obstacle Course.

The conclusion of EXTS(N) saw a Battalion seizure of the UOTF, with Bravo assaulting the southern side of the town. Interoperability with the MRF-D platoon was tested during the final phase, with the Marine platoon showing their aggression and speed in the close assault.

With the conclusion of the Field Training Exercise (FTX), the Battalion transitioned into the Live Fire Exercise (LFX) component of Talisman Sabre. Sections and platoons were tasked to construct and be tested in complex field ranges by day and by night. The conclusion of the LFX saw the rest of the Battalion return to barracks – while

Bravo Company remained to take part in Exercise Koolendong.

EX Koolendong was an Exercise unlike any members of Bravo had ever experienced. Under the Command and Control (C2) of the MRF-D, a movement box was drawn on a map. Bravo Company 5 RAR, Kilo Company and India Company from MRF-D were told to enter the box, and seek out and destroy the opposing Companies. A small element of SPT Company remained behind to support Bravo: a sniper pair, recon patrol, section of mortars and a Direct Fire Support Weapons (DFSW) section.

Joining the fray was a platoon of French Foreign Legion soldiers who joined with Kilo Company. The already larger USMC Companies were getting even bigger.

The first step was to find the enemy. Recon and snipers were given their Notifiable Area of Interest (NAI), and the rifle platoons were cut their Area of Operations (AO). With four and five platoon exploiting far into enemy territory with no resistance or sign of the enemy, it was mortars and six platoon on Rear Area Security Operation (RASO) tasks that were hit first. Not long after, recon were compromised and subsequently destroyed on the other side of the AO. It appeared that we had just started a fight on two fronts. With the USMC using their thermal enabled drone, they immediately started searching for our surfaces and gaps, looking to end the fight before it could even begin.

The first major contact occurred on the third day, when Four platoon lit a campfire and threw MRE

heaters into the scrub to attract the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV). A few hours later, and the French platoon conducted an assault onto the empty camp grounds, and were ambushed in the open. The rest of the platoon conducted a flanking assault on the withdrawing enemy – the added protection and mobility of the Protected Mobility Vehicles (PMVs), and with the lack of Anti-Tank (AT) weapon systems from the French allowed the platoon to rapidly pursue the French for a kilometre before going firm on a feature overlooking Kilo Company's position.

During this time, six platoon was hardening the UOTF in preparation for an expected attack, while five platoon continued to ambush all vehicles trying to use the roadways.

Eventually, after a full day, four platoon was pushed off its position and withdrew back to the UOTF – but not before resupplying Kilo Company with much needed water; another advantage of the PMVs.

The Company reconsolidated at the UOTF for the evening, but at stand-to, India Company launched an impressive assault on the town. With six platoon holding the UOTF thanks to their significant obstacle belt and preparations, and four and five platoon defending the Forward Operating Base (FOB), the assaulting forces were effectively neutralised. After a quick reset, the Company was back on the offense with the capture of three recon patrols and minor contacts for the remainder of the two days.

This ended the first phase of the Exercise, with a switch to Def Ops seeing the Company being allocated a Main Defensive Position (MDP). With two days to prepare, and engineer support, the Bravo MDP was formidable. Notional pre-H (prior to commencement of the Operation) fires awoke the Company in the early hours of the third day and allowed us to prepare for the anticipated assault. The Coy Offensive Support (OS) fire plan was enacted and effectively decimated the advancing forces. The battle broke down as adjudicators couldn't keep up with the multiple manoeuvre elements on the feature, however with an effective withdraw from five platoon, a counter-penetration into their position from four platoon, and six platoon sweeping around the bottom of the feature into the enemy HQ elements in their FUP – the OC was very happy with how well the Company performed.

With the rest of the day to recover and plan for our assault on the Enemy MDP, we stepped off at last light and dropped several kilometres short of our Form Up Position (FUP). A long dismounted approach and silent insertion into our Assembly Area (AA) enabled the recon patrol and the OC to conduct a close target reconnaissance of the Enemy position. The recon party were able to walk straight into the position and identify ideal axis of assault, obstacles and the terrain we were to encounter.

While our clandestine approach had worked up until this point, the occupation of the FUP must have drawn the attention of the Enemy; as we crossed the Line of Departure (LD) just before dawn, a dozen Night Aiming Devices (NAD) turned on and two 50. Cal machine guns begin to fire down onto our approach. A hard fought battle saw the sections exploit to the top of the feature, but due to the MRF-D having significantly more manpower, we culminated there.



B Coy's LCPL Barbera.

Koolendong played host to a plethora of opportunities for commanders at all levels to exercise initiative, be creative, and deal with a real, evolving enemy.

After six months of Ready Combat Team (RCT), and two major field exercises, Bravo Company was granted a well-deserved period of leave through August before returning in September for a swathe of international engagement opportunities.

After a last minute shuffle from Army HQ with 2 Cav, 5 RAR was granted Task Group Taji 6 (TGT-6) rotation. Under the leadership of LT Wright and SGT Ashley, a platoon of Bravo's best were selected to detach under Major Dale for the Iraq trip.

Simultaneously, the Company Command group was deployed to Jakarta for EX AUSINDO RHINO, a training contingent to prepare the TNI for the start of EX WIRRA JAYA. A Platoon, led by LT Pullinen, was deployed with Delta Company to take part in the international Exercise. The experience was a worthwhile look at one of our closest geographical partners and their military.

Back home, and the remainder of the Company was conducting significant motorisation training and fulfilling enemy party roles for Junior Leadership Course (JLC) and Subject 2 Corporal Course (SUBJ 2 CPL). Preparations had begun for EX TIGERS CHALLENGE with the Company's champion section training and rehearsing on the obstacle course, and blood week teams being organised. The rehearsing was not in vain, as CPL Dinon and his section came first in the competition, putting Bravo in a good position for success in the 2017 Champion Company race.

The second half of 2017 was a good chance for Bravo Company to realign after a fairly tumultuous start to the year. It saw the company get back to good training and achieving milestones for the Battalion in the international engagement space. We spearheaded the motorised capability for the Battalion, and are looking to set the bench-mark for motorisation TTPs with our NCOs returning from the PMV crew commander's course.

LT SJ Cross
OC 4PL, Bravo Coy