

LTCOL PAUL SHIELDS, MBE and WOI SEAN RANSOME REPORT December 2017

Tiger Battalion has continued to maintain Army's high readiness footing over the last 12 months leading the Ready Battle Group (RBG) whilst also completing numerous sub-unit commitments, inclusive the successful deployment of C Company to Iraq as part of Task Group Taji 4. The Battalion has now effectively transitioned the RBG role to 1 RAR, and has entered a busy period of 'Reset' with our focus shifting quickly to operations with the short notice preparation and pending deployment of A Company (composite group) to Iraq as part of Task Group Taji 6. The Battalion has remained very active across our international engagement efforts with the Marine Rotational Force Darwin (MRF-D), the Indonesian Army on Exercise WIRRA JAYA and AUSINDO RHINO, as well as leading Exercise SOUTHERN JACKAROO with Companies attached from the US Army, USMC and Japanese Ground Self Defence Force. While 2017 has been a very challenging year for the Battalion, the focus on readiness, deployments and the prospects of consolidation over 2017-18 are very welcomed.



5 RAR conducting airmobile operations with MRH90s.

2017 commenced again at pace with B Company and Battalion Headquarters forward command elements being deployed to Townsville and attached to the Deployable Joint Force Headquarters (DJFHQ) and 3 Brigade during the Ready Combat Team (RCT) certification activity. The B Company RCT commenced the exercise by lodging into Townsville for a subsequent Airmobile operation to seize an enemy held airfield as part of the joint force entry operations under command DJFHQ. BGHQ and the RCT then supported a 3 Brigade link up, digital regrouping and forward passage of lines. This was a significant milestone, demonstrating the increasing maturity, tactical and

technical ability of the digital Tiger Battlegroup. The 5 RAR Signals Platoon has certainly grown significantly in capability and were central to integrating and regrouping digital communications on the march, from strategic networks to DJFHQ in Brisbane to tactical connections with 3Bde in the field. The RCT was then re-deployed to Darwin just before Tropical Cyclone Debbie made landfall with 3 Bde reorientating for domestic disaster support.

The Battalion supported four significant international engagement activities this year. The first was Exercise SOUTHERN JACKAROO, a tri-lateral exercise conducted at Mt Bunday in May. This saw the Battalion working closely with Japanese Ground Self Defence Force, US Army and US Marine Corps elements. This was a great opportunity to improve cultural and tactical integration with regional allies in the tough terrain and demanding environment that Mt Bunday has to offer. This exercise culminated with a Battle Group Defensive Live Fire, supported by M1A1 Tank, Mortars, Defence Fire Support Weapons (DFSW), Medium artillery and Cobra Gunship support by day and night.

The Battalion re-deployed in quick time back to Mount Bunday Training Area (MBTA) for Exercise TALISMAN SABRE (North) through June and July. 5 RAR was attached to a Special Purpose Marine Amphibious Task Group, based on USMC 4th Regiment and tasked to expel enemy forces from 'Kortabodor'. This exercise saw implementation of the now familiar integration with USMC, with D Company completing an air assault operation using Marine MV-22 Ospreys and C-130 Hercules to secure the Mt Bundy airfield as part of the joint force entry operation. The Battalion then conducted a Relief in Place with MRF-D V3/4, call-sign Darkside, testing our ability to conduct coalition enabling actions in a contested battle space before clearing Mt Bunday within boundaries.

Battlegroup Tiger operated as a flanking Unit to V3/4 Darkside which provided an excellent opportunity to test the interoperability of coalition communications through a series of complex airmobile operations and urban clearances at the Regimental level. Exchanges at Platoon level were conducted between the Battalions and both enjoyed the experience, however, after the novelty wore off from eating US MREs, all 5 RAR soldiers were heard to be praising the humble Combat Ration One Man (CR1M) – 'jack rations', with the lucky few locating the Battalion's CR1M reserve for consumption.

While the main body of the Battalion returned home, B Company pushed on to conduct Exercise Koolendong. This Battalion level exercise was hosted by the MRF-D at Mt Bunday and saw B Company manoeuvring against their USMC and French Land Army from New Caledonia counterparts in a dynamic "Hunger Games" style activity where every move was overseen from the MRF-D Battalion CP – unfortunately this was not broadcast on ESPN by our US allies. MAJ Bernsmann and his Company performed very well, laying some adept ambushes and maintaining strong defences. MRF-D CO, Lieutenant Colonel Middleton did not award a public victor, however confided that B Company had performed excellently and was his intuitive pick for best on ground.

September saw our last two major international engagements with B and D Companies both providing soldiers to deploy to Bandung Indonesia and operate with 201 Mechanised Battalion TNI. This saw the completion of Exercise AUSINDO RHINO and Exercise WIRRA JAYA with 5 RAR representing Army and the ADF exceptionally well. The activities have continued to strengthen the Battalion's established relationships with the TNI, and have provided a great opportunity for our soldiers to develop their cultural and 'man-dancing' capabilities.



SGT Jansz pushes his Platoon forward on Ex Talisman Sabre.

Brigadier Ellwood represented the Army and participated in the final exercise and cultural activities, and after his third observation of Exercise WIRRA JAYA, reported this was the best yet with 'unprecedented levels of engagement and integration,' all ably led by D Company HQ. The conditions were set for this activity with 5 RAR building integral tactical and strategic Indonesian language skills, however, the success of the exercise all came down to the great attitude and approach of our soldiers in working with other nations.

C Company returned from Task Group Taji IV in August after a very successful deployment. As many of you may have seen Iraqi Forces have recently liberated Mosul from ISIS control. C Company's excellent work throughout their deployment in training and mentoring the Iraqis, no doubt contributed to this victory. Our Iraq contingent certainly greatly appreciated the support packages from the 5 RAR Association while they were deployed. C Company has now returned to Binh Ba Lines and have effectively reintegrated into the Battalion after a very successful operation, making a big impact by winning the Battalion Blood Week inter-Company sports competition. Clearly C Company has been working hard during their deployment to Iraq.



5 RAR Soldier conducting urban clearance on Ex Southern Jackaroo.

At short notice in September, 5 RAR stood up the force protection and training element for deployment to Iraq as part of Task Force Taji VI. This grouping was made up from a Platoon from B, D and Support Companies, led by the newly promoted ADJT, MAJ R.D. Dale, and placed under the flag of A Company 5 RAR. A Company have completed over seven weeks training with the 2nd Cavalry Regiment in Townsville and will commence their deployment to Iraq from November. We wish them well on what will most certainly be another successful deployment.

As many of you are aware May 2017 was a very tragic and difficult time for the Battalion. We tragically lost two members, PTE Bryce Muscat and PTE Jason Challis. We remain deeply saddened by the losses of PTE Muscat and PTE Challis and continue to extend our condolences and support to their families and friends. On behalf of the Battalion, I would

like to thank the 5th Battalion Association and its members for all the support that has been provided throughout this period, in particular the members who were able to attend the funerals in Perth and Geelong. I remain incredibly proud of the manner in which our soldiers and veterans have supported the Muscat family, Brandich and Challis families in their time of loss. The Battalion will always remember those who have served and those that have lost their lives in training and on operations.

After a very busy Ready year for the Battalion, our Reset period will provide a great opportunity for consolidation and some well earned leave over the Christmas stand down. We wish our A Company 5 RAR Tigers the very best for their deployment to Iraq, and a safe return. The 5th Battalion will transition command to Lieutenant Colonel Travis Gordon on 24 November 2017. It has been an absolute honour and privilege to serve in the Tiger Battalion as a Platoon, Company and Battalion Commander. The Tiger Battalion will line up for 2018 with a new team and a focus on our continued transition to Motorised Infantry Battalion under PLAN KEOGH, with our soldiers engaged in strengthening their individual, section and platoon level capabilities.

Duty First

LTCOL PB Shields, MBE
Commanding Officer

WO1 S Ransome
Regimental Sergeant Major