

SUPPORT COMPANY REPORT – JULY 2020

The beginning of 2020 was a challenging start for Support Company with many members being deployed overseas at the outbreak of COVID-19. The Company managed the difficult task of supporting the Ready Battle Group with Heavy Weapons, Snipers, Signallers, Mortars and a Recon Patrol whilst contributing personnel and equipment to support OP COVID-19 ASSIST in Alice Springs.

Members from Support Company returned from deployment on Operation OKRA in Iraq and Operation HIGHROAD in Afghanistan to find themselves redeploying to Alice Springs shortly after. The Battalion tested the soldiers of the Unit with a rehearsal callout of the Ready Combat Team to support a potential Non-Combatant Evacuation Operation (NEO) task. The flexibility and dedication of putting duty first has been amply demonstrated through the efforts of Support Company members.

The month of March and June saw a changeover of Command, with Major Matt Breckenridge handing over Command to Major Brett Edmonds. The Company Sergeant Major also handed over from Sergeant Paul Jones to Warrant Officer Class 2 Daniel Sharpe. All Support Platoons have adapted their training to ensure a continued development of their specialist skills whilst complying with all Covid-19 restrictions.

Support Company has recently completed the Sniper Pre-Selection Course with a promising panel of trainees and is poised to commence the Sniper and Recon Basic Courses later in the year. The Company is eager to get back to work and continues to support the Rifle Companies within the Battalion.

MAJ Brett Edmonds, OC

DFSW PL

The second quarter of 2020 has proven to be quite busy for the Soldiers of Direct Fire Support Weapons Platoon (DFSW PL).

The majority of the Platoon remained aligned to Combat Team Bravo for Ready Battle Group commitments and the Individual Readiness of each soldier was tested as a part of Ex Ready Tiger. Ex Ready Tiger saw the Platoon go through an early morning recall, mount and then deploy onto a NEO activity.

LT Bill Tilly took command of the Platoon in May and a number of personnel were welcomed back to the Platoon from OP OKRA where they were deployed as a part of Task Group Taji X.

With the Platoon now reconsolidated, training over the month of June has focussed on further developing the Platoon's Anti-Armour Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTP) for Javelin and the 84mm as well as continuing to maintain the Platoon's proficiency in the Sustained Fire Machine Gun (SFMG) role.

The Platoon is going strong and looking forward to Ex TIGERS RUN and to letting off a few rounds on Sustained Fire Machine Gun (SFMG) gun lines.

LT Tilly

Mortar PL

This year has provided some interesting situations and challenges for Mortars and all of us this year. Upon returning from Christmas leave, over half the platoon was deployed or preparing to deploy to Afghanistan, including 86 overseas and 89 acting as SPT Coy 2IC. During the first few months of the year the platoon focused on individual mortaring skills up to section level including practicing night drills along with all arms call for fire at the dome facility. Unfortunately due to the COVID-19 pandemic our training was halted as we went onto a schedule of one week working from home followed by one week at the barracks which lasted over a month. Over this period 5 RAR raised a Ready Combat Team (RCT) with B Coy the main effort and Mortars providing its one section as an



Mortars conduct a fire mission at Mount Bundy Training Area in 2019. Something not yet possible this year thanks to COVID-19.

indirect asset along with a Mobile Fire Controller (MFC). As the pandemic situation calmed, work began to return to normal and members returned from overseas.

The platoon has once again continued its training for the year and has a lot to look forward to. In the upcoming weeks, members within the platoon and Mortar qualified persons throughout the battalion will be upskilled on the new Light-Weight Handheld Mortar Ballistic Computers (LWHMBC). August will see the platoon qualifying JNCOs on OFFR/NCO Mortars and a MFC course finishing with the conduct of live fire training alongside 8/12 Regiment RAA out at Mount Bundy. After this, the platoon will be looking to provide indirect support to Live Fire assaults during Exercise Koolendong.

LT Ede-Jones



LCPL Cunningham on FPE-12.

Recon and Sniper PL

The year started out with a lot of potential to conduct some sound training until the war on COVID-19 struck us. It commenced well with numerous boys on courses gaining qualifications in the small unmanned aircraft systems, namely the Black Hornet and Wasp, combat first aid courses, driver courses and licensing in watercraft vessels.

The Platoon aimed to conduct a live fire exercise but COVID-19 got the better of everyone and sent the Platoon into a work from home on a week on week off basis. It is here the soldiers would practice their ability to fire and move on their guts in the backyard and communicate as loud as possible. They knew they were doing a good job if the neighbours were chiming in on their training.

Also during the working from home period, it appeared several members within the battalion thought they could outperform RS PI in what they do best. However, this didn't end well for them as they were compromised and failed to have an alternate plan. Good try fellas!!!!

The Platoon was eventually reunited within the battalion after a couple of months alternating working from home, where it saw Snipers run a pre-selection for members to attend the Basic Course. For some participants a bit of reality set in and only a select few persevered to complete the pre-selection course.

The Platoon is set to run a basic course in order to qualify suitable members and to sustain the capability within the battalion. Concurrent to the Basic Recon Course the Platoon will see several members re-attempt selection.

Lastly, LT Taylor Mychael, the newly appointed PL COMD took the reins off LT, (now CAPT) Pullinen, in which he was awarded his 5 RAR recon shirt from the Platoon at the battalion boozier parade. Although forever probing about whether he was ever going to be presented the shirt, it has been presented by the soldiers of the Platoon signifying he has earned the privilege to wear it.

SGT Leuken

SIG PL

For Signals Platoon, a disjointed year provided its own challenges, however, flexibility and patience proved to be invaluable to success. COVID-19 saw some members of the platoon sent to Alice Springs to support OP COVID-19 with JTG 629.7. The Platoon continued its support to international deployments as well in Afghanistan and Iraq. Lastly, the platoon also focused on its ongoing support to the Battalion within Darwin, providing communication detachments to BHQ and the Coys in barracks training and the field environment.



Members from the Sig Det with British comrades during FPE-12.

OP COVID-19 ASSIST saw an opportunity for Army to deploy soldiers in an unprecedented task group formation to vulnerable communities in NT. Two members of Sig PI provided essential communications support to the task group and represented the Battalion in a whole-of-government task group over the early months of 2020. CPL Joshua Taylor deployed in early April as a detachment commander and as the Regimental Signals Sergeant for JTG 629.7 for just over a month. LCPL Kade Farrugia deployed in a similar fashion in early May as a communications specialist.

The ongoing commitment to the Middle East Region (MER) saw continued requirements for communications detachments. Currently, five members from the Platoon are deployed in Afghanistan on Force Protection Element 13 (FPE-13), supporting C Coy. This deployment replaces three current members of the platoon who returned from FPE-12 at the beginning of the year.

The focus and main effort for the platoon who remain with the Battalion has been the lead up and preparation for Tigers Run. In this exercise the platoon will deploy five separate detachments to support BHQ, B Coy, and D Coy. After the conduct of Tigers Run, the platoon will send a section to compete in the Kennedy Cup, which will bring an opportunity for selected members to return solely to the core role of an infantry section in arduous conditions.

LT Farrands