

REPORT ON EXERCISE NORTHERN EXPLORER 15 - 20 SEP 88BYPATROL 9AA SQN 8/13 VMR

Ptl Comd. 3109990 CAPT C J CARRINGTON

2IC 356820 SGT J C KOSCHEL

SIG 3204074 L/CPL C R VAN DE VELDE

Scout 3204104 TPR D J PRATT



L to R. Sgt Koschel, Capt Carrington, Tpr Pratt  
and L/Cpl Van De Velde.

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1. Ptl Comdrs Report.
2. Foot Ptl Report - 16 Sep 88.
3. APC Ptl Report - 17 Sep 88.
4. APC Ptl Report - 18 Sep 88.
5. Report by Tpr Pratt on "A Veh Ops in the Tindal AO".
6. Report by L/Cpl Van De Velde on "Operational Efficiency of AFV Vehs and Crew in Katherine/Tindal AO".

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REPORT ON A SQN 8/13 VMR's PARTICIPATION IN EXERCISE NORTHERN EXPLORER 1988

References:

A. HQ 3 DIV R909-1-6 Exercise Northern Explorer 1988 General Instruction dated 30 AUG 88

General

1. In accordance with para 16 a. of Ref A, I am pleased to submit my report on the exercise.

Aim

2. The aim of this comprehensive report is to ensure that the experiences and successes of our unit ptl, "9A" are recorded in detail so that the rank and file of A Sqn 8/13 VMR may be better informed and thus prepared for ops in the Katherine/Tindal AO.

3. Additionally it is the ptls aim that our ptl be chosen to prepare a presentation for Comd 3 Div and his principal staff officers.

Selection of Unit Pers

4. The following unit pers were selected for the exercise:

- a. Ptl Comd. 3109990 CAPT C J Carrington
- b. 2IC 356820 SGT J C Koschel
- c. SIG 3204074 L/CPL C R Van De Velde
- d. Scout 3204104 TPR D J Pratt
- e. Reserve 3145028 CPL R J Butler

5. Due to the first 4 members meeting all pre ex requirements the reserve member was not required.

6. The selection provided a mixture of youth and experience, in addition to achieving a balanced group of:

- a. 2 x Crew Comdr
- b. 2 x Dvr/Sig

7. The sharing of driving and crew commanding tasks helped in limiting crew fatigue and ensured maximum operation of the APC during

/ptls

ptls 2 and 3.

Preparation

8. Unit trg in med/first aid and wpn TOET's were conducted over the w/end 12-14 Aug 88. PTT's were conducted on 14 Aug 88.
9. Capt Carrington and L/Cpl Van De Velde attended the HF radio trg sessiens.conducted by 103 Sig Sqn on Sunday 21 Aug 88.
10. All members made conscious efforts to improve their physical fitness and toughen their feet.

Medical

11. Delays were experienced in having the SMB's processed through DMS. Only 1 of the 4 ptl members med files had been returned to SHQ by 14 Sep 88. If the requirements for SMB's will apply to K89 pers, then it is recommended that this action should commence 3 months prior and DMS be advised accordingly.

Survival

12. All pers carried the minimum requirements for a Personal Medical Kit and Survival Kit, as detailed in Reference A. No items were required from these kits during the ex.

Pers Involvement

13. To ensure all 4 unit pers achieved maximum benefit from participation in the ex, appreciations, and planning; ie; prep of nav data sheet for foot ptl were a combined effort. All pers maintained note books in addition to the Ptl Diary.

14. The 3 detailed Ptl Reports which appear in Sections 2 to 4, were largely prepared by Capt Carrington and Sgt Koschel. However, all pers provided input.

15. At the conclusion of the ex L/Cpl Van De Velde and Tpr Pratt were tasked to prepare some draft notes on A veh ops in the NT. It was my intention that portions of their notes would be used in this report. However upon reading their reports I considered them to be relatively "self standing" and worthy of being included as part of this overall report. Refer to:

- a. Section 5. - Report by Tpr Pratt on "A Veh Ops in the Tindal AO"
- b. Section 6. - Report by L/Cpl Van De Velde on "Operational Efficiency of AFV Vehs and Crews in Katherine/Tindal AO"

16. The quality of both reports are, in my opinion, indicative of the high standard of education and report writing achievable by a junior NCO and Tpr from A Sqn 8/13 VMR.

A Veh Ops

17. APC M113A1 ARN 134561 was allocated to our ptl for ops on 17 and 18 Sep 88. The odometer on this veh had not been converted to

/kilometres



kilometres, causing some minor inconvenience and at times frustration with the many conversions required as a consequence of us working with metric maps.

18. Apart from the APC engine running at a temperature of 200° F, which restricted the maximum speed to approx 30 kph, surprisingly no major problems were experienced with the veh. The only matters requiring attention was topping up of the radiator and tightening of one track pin nut that was working loose.

19. A high priority was accorded to veh servicing by all ptl members at all times. (We were determined not to be relegated to foot ptling again!!).

#### A Veh Spare Parts

20. Of great concern was the inadequate supply of spare parts and limited POL on APC ARN 134561. This appeared to be consistent with the other APC which had also been provided by 4/19th PWLH.

21. Only 1 track link, minus track pin, was on each veh. No spare track pins, nuts, road wheel nuts or any belts were on our veh. Although the veh had recently had a complete track change, one broken track pin could have resulted in the veh becoming untaskworthy. An ample supply of various filters had been provided.

22. The matter of minimum requirements for spare parts on A vehs despatched for such an op as this ex has been addressed by Tpr Pratt in his report. Refer to Annex A to Section 5 of this file.

#### Track Kilometreage

23. Track kilometreage by A Sqn 8/13 VMR was:

a.	17 Sep 88	101 klms	(63 miles)
b.	18 Sep 88	34 klms	(21 miles)
c.	Totals	135 klms	(84 miles)

#### Pers Equipment

24. All pers equipment carried by the ptl members remained serviceable. No L & D's were required to be completed by our ptl.

25. It seemed ludicrous that I had to go to an Army Disposal store to purchase an entrenching tool, due to our unit not having an entitlement to hold any of these items. Similarly I had to purchase water purifying tablets (Puritabs) from a chemist to complete our pers survival kits. These items not being available through our RAP or Q, nor at 6 Camp Hospital. (A packet of these tablets was issued at Tindal, but we had been warned that we should have our own items and rely on nothing personal being issued there).

#### Communications

26. The F2 HF radio issued to our ptl at Tindal provided additional challenges, as it could not be mounted into the top compartment of a large field pack, due to the side mounted antenna tuning base.

27. Tpr Pratt displayed tremendous fitness and strength by carrying the F2 radio, in its harness, on his chest and shoulders for 7½ klms of the foot ptl. The radio was then carried by 2 pers using a stick through the harness straps, for the remainder of the foot ptl.

28. Ideally foot ptls should be issued F1 HF radios to enable them to be back packed. Of course we have equipment shortfalls to contend with and a F2 is better than no HF radio at all. (It was a little frustrating at the issue point on day 1, to see our 2 unit F1 radios being issued to inf ptls and us being finally issued with an F2, after it had appeared that our ptl was going to miss out on being issued a radio).

29. Only 1 battery was initially issued. This proved adequate for us on ptls 1 and 2 due to sensible usage. As a result of our Sitrep on the conclusion of ptl 2, we received a re charged battery prior to commencing ptl 3. Sufficient spares should be available initially, to ensure comms can be maintained for safety.

30. It seemed obvious to us that some ptls did not seem to have any idea of how to use HF radios and were reluctant to go to the trouble of erecting a di pole antenna to establish comms.

31. Despite the physical problems of carrying the F2 on foot, our ptl consistently maintained comms with OA for all skeds. L/Cpl Van De Velde proved to be an extremely efficient sig. On only 1 occasion were we not able to achieve workable comms with the first attempt at a dipole antenna. Despite the darkness and tiredness of all members on this occasion, we disassembled the dipole, walked several hundred metres to an alternative site with higher trees, re erected the dipole and were rewarded with instant comms.

32. A Sqn 8/13 VMR earnt a reputation for consistently establishing and maintaining comms, particularly in areas where ptls from other units had failed.

#### Maps

33. Maps issued at the initial ptl orders briefing and during the ex proved adequate. Despite significant numbers of variations/inaccuracies being established. Not only was some information not shown on maps, some information shown on the maps does not appear to exist. Refer to Annex A of each of the 3 ptl reports. Particularly to ptl report of 17 Sep 88 (in Section 3), in regards to the latter.

34. Before any foot ptl is commenced in the Tindal AO it is important that they be aware of the actual location of the Radar Dome. (This appears to resemble a large white golf ball, when viewed from a distance). According to information which I obtained from the RAAF Service Police Officer on 19 Sep 88, the dome is at GR 234906 on the Manbullo map. As this important asset and reference point is not currently marked on any of the maps which we were issued, this should be included in future overprints of existing maps or on updated maps.

35. I consider it imperative that the exact location of the dome be known by all future foot ptls, so as to assist with re-sections to confirm their location. Particularly if they are unfortunate enough to be operating in the high ground area covered by our foot ptl on 16 Sep 88.



### Tindal Special Map Required

36. I am of the opinion that both the Katherine Special 1 : 100,000 and particularly the 1 : 50,000 map are of limited use as "self standing maps" for forces operating to the east of the Tindal airfield and the immediate north and south of the RAAF Base Tindal. I strongly recommend consideration be given to the introduction of a "TINDAL SPECIAL" 1 : 50,000 and 1 : 100,000 map which has the RAAF Base Tindal centrally located, rather than the town of Katherine.

### Administration

37. All administrative arrangements throughout the ex appeared to be satisfactory from our ptls point of view. Perhaps in future similar exercises the pay arrangements need tightening up to avoid the delay which occurred after deplaning at RAAF Laverton. The Pay Corps pers co-operation in acceding to a request to pay country unit members first was appreciated, in view of the distances which some soldiers had to travel to RTU.

### Vital Assets Tour

38. The vital assets tour was most interesting and gave all pers a far greater appreciation of the size of the RAAF base, future development and some of the security problems which could be experienced in defending the base in a low level ops situation. This tour is considered to be a "must" for all service pers when they are initially deployed to the Tindal area.

### Katherine Gorge Tour and Town Discovery

39. Despite most pers being rather weary, the Katherine Gorge tour was an off duty highlight for all members of our ptl in addition to those from other units. Also the 2 hrs in Katherine town and visit to the town swimming pool. These arrangements are considered to be a high priority to ensure maintenance of morale for all service pers after having experienced a period of ops in the area.

### Conclusion

40. Participation of the 4 members from A Sqn 8/13 VMR in Ex Northern Explorer provided an excellent opportunity for a small cross section of junior ranks to experience the difficulties and problems associated with operating in the Katherine/Tindal AO.

41. I feel certain that even the most highly motivated soldiers, irrespective of age, experience, physical fitness and high morale are going to experience considerable difficulty and a drop off in efficiency should they be required to operate in the Katherine/Tindal AO, without being given the luxury of adequate acclimitisation. Under conditions such as we operated, Crew Comdrs, Sect Ldrs, Tp Sgts, and Tp Ldrs are going to have to constantly supervise and check veh and wpn servicing and the pers admin of their soldiers. It is my opinion that even after acclimitising the great majority of soldiers would not be able to maintain the level of productivity and efficiency which we are able to achieve when operating in the southern states.

42. Patrol 9A from A Sqn 8/13 VMR achieved the stated aim of the ex by conducting an operational recon of our likely AO. I am of the opinion that this recon was conducted most professionally in that we completed all tasks allocated and achieved the mission of each of our 3 ptls, despite severe time and space limitations. The will to persevere and succeed which was demonstrated by all ptl members at all times clearly vindicated each individuals selection.

43. The honest and comprehensive patrol reports combined with the two individual reports will provide an important library reference source for all members of A Sqn 8/13 VMR, which should assist them and possibly even members of other units, to prepare themselves and their vehs and equipment for future ops in the Katherine/Tindal AO.



C. J. CARRINGTON  
CAPT  
PTL CMDR

1 OCT 88

Addendum

1. Portion of Ptls 9A and 10B ops in the Fergusson River AO on 18 Sep 88 was video filmed by a member of 15 Tpt Sqn. If upon receipt of this film I consider that it would compliment this report, a copy will be promptly submitted.