

# EXERCISE MANGROVE JACK

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Exercise MANGROVE JACK was an officer training exercise conducted in the Far North Queensland during the period 26-30 April 80.

The Exercise was designed to provide an opportunity for officers from the three Services to examine:

- a. the logistic limitations imposed by the geographic and climatic conditions prevailing in the area, and
- b. the capacity of the existing lines of communications to sustain operations.

The populated centres visited during the exercise were:

- a. COOKTOWN,
- b. COEN,
- c. BAMAGA,
- d. THURSDAY ISLAND,
- e. WEIPA, and
- f. MT. ISA.

The party, consisting of officers from the 1st Division, the Air Force and the Navy, flew to the various centres by Caribou. The trip was pleasant and the hospitality overwhelming, but most important the aims of the exercise were achieved.

The area was visited after the wet season, which must be considered good planning, because during the 'wet' the viability of landing at all the centres would be suspect.

Although centres north of Cooktown are linked by road, they are unuseable during the wet season. Depending on the amount of damage done it can take up to six weeks to re-open the roads. (The main bridge at Cooktown was washed away last wet season and is yet to be repaired). It would not be unusual for roads to be closed for six months of the year.

All roads throughout the area would require massive engineer effort to allow them to support a force operating north of Cooktown. In other words great reliance would have to be placed on the use of air.

The only airfields capable of accepting C130 aircraft are those at Mt Isa, Bamaga and Weipa. There are numerous other airfields throughout the gulf that are suitable for use by Caribou but they couldnot be used all year round. Reliance would therefore need to be placed on rotary wing aircraft.

In summary, to sustain a force in the gulf country using existing roads would be virtually impossible and by air, difficult. The gulf country is spectacular and an interesting place to visit, but to conduct continuous operations north of Cooktown would be a logistic nightmare.

