

Chapter 13 - Civil Military Affairs

G29 Balibo

The role of the Civil Military Affairs (CMA) Section was to establish and foster relationships with the key players in UNTAET (United Nations Transitional Administration East Timor) and the East Timorese people within the Bobonaro District. To achieve this, the CMA Section of the 4th Battalion Group, made up from soldiers of the 16th Air Defence Regiment and the 4th Battalion, had teams based in each of the Bobonaro District's sub-districts. These CMA Teams were commanded from CMA House in Balibo, the headquarters of our Officer Commanding, Major Paul McKay. This headquarters directed the activities of the teams, each located at Batugade, Maliana, Bobonaro, Aidabaleten and Marko. The civil military affairs crew at the CMA headquarters in Balibo, consisted of Major Paul McKay, Captain Edward Jackson, Warrant Officer Sherm Potter, Sergeant Tony Heller and Sergeant Jeff McLauchlan.

Aside from the day to day running of the civil military affairs section, G29 busied itself with helping the people of Balibo and the Bobonaro District with a series of activities and projects. A regular in Balibo was each Saturday evening, where Captain Jackson conducted public information and movie nights for the townsfolk in the Balibo town square. The movie screen was placed on the Indonesian monument in the centre of the square, and children and adults would come out of their homes in their hundreds to pack themselves around the screen. For the next three hours, the people of Balibo (who did not have mains electricity, let alone televisions), would watch UNTAET news and children's cartoons, followed by a feature length film.

Owing to the generosity of private families and businesses in South Australia, and the resourcefulness of Captain Jackson's father who found willing donors, nine Gestetner printing presses were donated to the people of the Bobonaro District. With most high schools and churches in the District without power and modern paper reproduction facilities, the Gestetner printing presses (after being serviced by our own Gestetner technician Sherm Potter) provided a much needed reproduction facility to the people of the Bobonaro District. Thanks must also go to the efforts of Major McKay's mother in South Australia, who coordinated the donation of literally tens of thousands of sheets of paper from high schools in Adelaide and the University of SA, to school children in the Bobonaro District. Every week, CMA teams were able to collect a vehicle load of paper and distribute it throughout the district to needy students and schools.

Another much needed G29 initiated project, was the construction of furniture by local Balibo tradesmen for the local girls and boys dormitories in Balibo. Warrant Officer Sherm Potter organised for 10 cupboards, four large dining tables and eight accompanying benches to be made and paid for on behalf of Balibo's boys and girls' dormitories, by CMA Balibo.

In a typical week for G29, the team would attend the busy Balibo markets on Monday mornings and distribute the *Working Together* Australian Battalion (AUSBATT) Bobonaro District newspaper, and other Military Information Support Team (MIST) products. One of the most pleasurable weekly activities of G29 was to attend the Sunday mass at the Balibo Saint Antonio Catholic Church, which was always followed by games with the children. Father John and Father Sipri always conducted the masses in Tetun, and Sunday mornings were always a great opportunity for G29 to interact with the local Balibo people.

G21

The CMA Team at Batugade started with a five-man group from a variety of trades and backgrounds. Arriving at the end of the wet season we quickly became familiar with self-recovery of our two Landrovers as we explored our Area of Operations (AO) and visited the Nureps and villages in our area. We quickly became familiar with our area and the general population.

By May, the roads had sufficiently dried out and with a little help from the engineers, we could access all the villages in our area, albeit with some difficult cross-country driving. As time went by the team gelled together surprisingly quickly, considering the differing backgrounds of all members. The first few weeks went very quickly and almost before we knew it, Danny Cole was off on Recreational Out of Country Leave (ROCL) – his infamous Thailand trip. This started the ROCL rotations, and then one by one the team members enjoyed their leave. During this period the team was lucky enough to have another soldier from Alpha Company transferred to the team. Corporal Michael Rosier became the sixth member of the team.

Some of the amusing things that happened during the tour:

- Lieutenant Ben Hennessy made himself very much a part of the village of Weklese. As we drove through a large crowd of people in a usually quiet village, Ben took the opportunity to greet the crowd at the top of his lungs with a very loud and warm “*Bon Dia*” (Good Morning). Moments after announcing his presence, Ben saw the body of the man whose funeral it was, sitting up in his coffin, oops!!!
- One day Bombardier Danny Cole sat in silence pondering life, as he often did, then asked this question to a stunned team, “Hey, do monkey’s sh\$#?”.
- Sergeant Brett Woodward became known as the ‘dive master’ because when he was gracefully exiting the water after conducting a water patrol (snorkelling), he got dumped by a freak set of waves that saw all the snorkelling equipment he was once wearing, irretrievably lost. A little battered and beaten, (his pride more than anything) Brett went to sit high up on a rocky outcrop. When it came time to leave the beach, Brett our rock climbing instructor, took another fall as the rock he was holding onto gave way. Not a good day for Woody.
- G21 had an urgent call out to give assistance to CIVPOL, apparently there had been a murder attempt and the victim needed help. So G21 proceeded with CIVPOL to the scene of the alleged crime only to find a nominee, or quite possibly the winner, of the 2001 Darwin Awards. A man had fallen from a coconut tree whilst carrying a machete, landing on it thus killing himself by cutting his own throat. Another day in the exciting life of G21.
- Lieutenant Ben Hennessy again endeared himself to the local population when he saw a local man that had suffered an injury as a child, which had caused his foot to be disfigured and swell to the size of a small watermelon. Ben then proclaimed to the gathered crowd, “well, if nothing else that foot would be good for soccer”.
- Warrant Officer Robert Swann finally convinced Bombardier Danny Cole to trust him enough to let him treat his skin irritation in his armpit. Swanny decided that the best treatment would be Isocol, an alcohol based skin treatment. Shortly after the application of Isocol the whole of Batugade could hear, “OOOOWWW! What kind of F&^#ING medic are you!”.
- The whole team will never forget the silent nights that were shattered by the cries resulting from Lieutenant Ben Hennessy’s Larium dreams.
- The weekly physical training battles with A Company headquarters for the Batugade horn (a local ad hoc sporting trophy).
- The Brazilian Military Police and their karaoke machine that played at all hours of the night. Someone must have made the mistake of telling them they could sing!!!!
- B Company burning down a house in Fauk, and then leaving the ashes for G21 to deal with. Always fun standing there explaining to the owner of the house what had happened just after he had returned from the funeral of a family member.

Well, all members of G21 during this tour had a great time. We have had our ups and downs – but the team has more than upheld its reputation as the premiere Golf call sign. We hope that the work we did here will make a difference and help this fledgling country.

G22/G23

Initially, our call sign had responsibility for CMA operations in the Maliana and Cailaco Sub-Districts. After the initial “finding our feet” period, it was clear we had to have a permanent footprint in Marko. So, we speared Lieutenant Christian Hamilton, Sergeant Sven Mlikota and Bombardier Roy Harrison off to raise the G26 out-station. In addition to these responsibilities, we also manned the District Operations Centre (DOC).

Now that the Emergency Phase has finished in East Timor, the hardest part of CMA operations is working out exactly what you should be doing. When Australian troops first stomped into Timor, CMA had a clear mandate – run around distributing as much humanitarian aid as possible to as many people as possible. Consequently, CMA and PKF were seen as Santa Claus, and are more popular amongst Timorese folk than roosters and betel nut! Nowadays things are a little more difficult for CMA. People have rice, a roof of some description, and are beginning to find their feet again. CMA could continue to go handing out bundles of goodies donated from abroad, but as attractive an option as this is in the short term, in the long term it may have disastrous affects. Already we have started to see the “bon bon Mister” phenomenon, whereby kids are brought to tears any time a soldier passes them by without receiving a hand-full of lollies and chocolate. So in an effort to curb this trend, G23 have attempted to look at alternative methods of assisting the community whilst still maintaining popular support from the people, but aiming for sustainable rather than short sighted objectives.

We began with a first-aid course which aimed at not only to teach people how to treat basic injuries, but more importantly how to recognise when someone is seriously ill and can therefore tell them to commence the long journey to hospital. The main difference between this course and other first-aid courses attempted by previous battalions was that our course was actually conducted each week out in the village locations. This made it easier for participants to sustain their interest in the course. After six weeks of training, all of the participants were able pass the practical tests and were awarded certificates and a small box of medical supplies. An agreement was also arranged with the district health staff to ensure that trained participants could obtain further first aid supplies if required.

Another G23 success story was the discovery of the Lontama returnees and assistance in Operation RIVERTON, which was the Battalion's first arrest of a Category One (Cat 1) militia. Following this, CMA was then renamed Cat 1 Militia Apprehenders.

Life in the DOC was one long command post radio piquet. Long periods of inactivity were interspersed with times of mass chaos and confusion. CMA on a daily basis dealt with the United Nations Military Observer Group (UNMOG), Civilian Police (CIVPOL), the UNTAET and non-government organisations (NGOs). While the job was often frustrating, it proved to be an interesting challenge and was ultimately a rewarding one. No one will forget the flamboyant characters of the District Administrator, Gianni the Italian or the Senior UNMO, Lieutenant Colonel Kiddie from the UK and his swagger stick. Nevertheless, we were always astounded by the nature of the various requests received for PKF action, and who could forget the time the African UNMO tried to do a heave and dislocated both his shoulders!

Despite the hectic schedule maintained for the duration of the tour, there were a few things that were able to drive the team through to the finish line. Not the least of these were President noodles and Tango bars, the desire to eat satay dog sticks, and striving to devise new methods of counting down the days to go, such as “only two more toenail clippings to go”. There were the odd heated moments, such as a few tense exchanges over the radio, and the odd stand-off around the Fort, but working in a confined environment for long periods without the odd personality clash is like a Timorese youth without a WWF Smack-Down T-shirt – it's just missing something.

The most published member of the team was Troy with credits in The Sydney Morning Herald, CNN Internet news and CNN Asia TV as well as multiple appearances live on Radio Maliana. Webby gets the award for the biggest tantrum after getting sick of being bumped around in the cupola of our trusted Land Rover 6x6 by Sergeant Andy Jackson's driving. Sergeant Bill Gaythwaite executed the best practical joke, and Captain Pat Murray gets the award for the best reaction to a practical joke after being told by the Postmaster (Bill) that he had exceeded his free mail quota. Bombardier Nathan 'Groover' Price for the sheer quantity of Shocko Milk drunk, and Bombardier Nev Eastley for the most number of brews owed to the rest of the team.

G24 Bobonaro

Bon Dia. In writing an article worthy of inclusion in the 4th Battalion Group 2001 East Timor tour, I must firstly introduce you to the team. The people and personalities synonymous with the name G24 are as diversified and as funny as their names. We will start from the bottom and work our way up.

Lance Bombardier David 'Snowy' Sturtevant. The youngest and also the smallest member of our team comes from the town of Woodside in South Australia. An Air Defender by trade and reputation, Snowy can best be remembered for his quick wit and his way with the ladies.

Corporal Dale 'Kempy' Kemp. A mum's boy through and through. Kempy spent his time either on the phone or on the Internet keeping in touch with his wife and kids.

Warrant Officer John 'The Italian Stallion' Gallarello. John was the wise old man placed amongst us to ensure the young Subbies didn't stray too far from the pack.

Lieutenant Steve 'Skip' Glatz. The 'Gobonaro' from Bobonaro. Constantly mistaken for his younger brother Snowy, the two of them, whom are not at all related, look almost identical and are both Air Defenders.

Captain Chris 'I'm a Racing Car' Thrupp, our illustrious leader. Captain Thrupp as he liked to say, was often in the Red, but deep down he knew that the team was always on top of things and he need not have worried.

We arrived in East Timor in late April 2001, a few days before ANZAC Day. We weren't really sure what to expect. All we knew was that Bobonaro was high up in the mountains, no one was quite sure of exactly where it was as many never dared to stray that far from Balibo. The terrain of Bobonaro sub-district is typically rugged, cut by deep valleys and topped by steep peaks. Upon arrival in the Bobonaro sub-district we were overwhelmed by the reception that we received from the local community with smiles and handshakes from the children who kept begging us for bon bon. After a whirlwind tour of the AO and a handover from 1 RAR and the outgoing team from the 4th Field Regt, the 4 RAR G24 team took control.

Our role entailed everything and anything that involved working with the community. Our first priority was to get to know our way around our little town which, by the way, had 18 suburbs and 119 villages in an area of some 400 sq km with a total population somewhere around 20,000 people. Four weeks later, having driven and walked just about the entire length and breadth of the Bobonaro sub-district, the team started to understand the ways, customs, and traditions of the East Timorese.

In our spare time, G24 assisted the World Vision health organisation to conduct mobile health clinics in remote areas within the Bobonaro sub-district. Using vehicles and air insertions into some of the more remote villages, we were able to provide the community with a level of health care hitherto only accessible by several days walk.

The lead up to the constitutional elections on 30 August saw G24 working closely with UN agencies and the International Electoral Commission (IEC) to ensure the election ran smoothly. This was not an easy task considering in early 2001, the Bobonaro sub-district was plagued with politically motivated violence as new parties formed in the lead up to the August elections (this was compounded by each party believing that their party was the real Fretilin!).

The team embarked on several ambitious community development projects during our time, including the refurbishment of a building for use as a dormitory for the sub-District's secondary school. G24

also assisted NGOs in the delivery of aid and the development of infrastructure including power generation, and water delivery systems.

The East Timorese are wonderful people, inviting us into their homes and into their lives. We became as much a part of their lives, as they did ours. We were there to help them with the births of their children, participated in the marriage of their loved ones, watched them grow and live without fear of repression in the newest nation in the world. We shared their joys of a newborn child, and felt their pain and sorrow that came with death. Our time in East Timor was both professionally rewarding and a time that we will never forget. The future of East Timor lies with the children of the newest nation in the world. Our thoughts and best wishes go with them.

Ba ho Maromak....

ADEUS

Golf 25 - The 'Can Do' Team

Following the extensive pre-deployment lead up training, our team deployed with five members; Lieutenant Glenn Mathews (team leader), Corporals Troy Park and Andrew Burns from 4 RAR, Sergeant Jamie Roberts (team second in charge (2IC)) and Bombardier David Worcester from 16 Air Defence Regiment.

The first week in country proved to be a mixed affair as there was no established CMA team in Aidabaleten, and therefore no accommodation or equipment had been designated to our team. Fortunately Lieutenant Mathews was in the advance party and was able to gather enough equipment to enable our team to function. As time wore on, more and more equipment was added to the team's inventory. However, disaster struck in the first week of the deployment when Sergeant Roberts sustained a serious hand injury, which necessitated an aeromedical evacuation to Dili. Sergeant Roberts' injury proved to be so severe that he was forced to undergo a protracted convalescence in Australia, and was unable to return to East Timor for the remainder of the tour. The team was then reduced to four with Troy becoming the team 2IC.

G25 operated in the Atabai Zona located within the Charlie Company AO and was comprised of approximately 50 villages of varying size and populations. Most were accessible by vehicle, however some required foot patrols to reach them. We conducted several foot patrols to the more remote villages, and vehicle patrols were a regular occurrence throughout the Zona. Luckily it was the dry season during our deployment, otherwise vehicle movement within the Zona would have been very hard to achieve.

The team carried out several projects for the East Timorese community with the commissioning of the SS Bobonaro being a tour highlight. The team carried on a project originally started by 6 RAR to fit an engine to the boat that was donated by various Australian companies. We towed the boat with two Zodiacs to Port Hera, approximately 100 kilometres from Atabai, whereupon the engine was fitted by civilian mechanics. The boat was then sailed to the village of Baicau, where after a brief ceremony it was given back to the people of the Baicau fishing cooperative.

Australian Rules Football and cricket clinics were also conducted, with several items of sporting equipment being donated by major sporting clubs from Western Australia. Several children demonstrated a lot of sporting talent and with practise, could be skilled footballers. Playing sport with the locals provided an excellent medium between which our two cultures could effectively interact.

The organisation and distribution of humanitarian aid donated by various aid organisations was another task undertaken by our team. This was done in conjunction with the local priest, UN District Field Officer and school officials.

The six months that we spent in East Timor provided us with many memorable moments and although testing at times, proved to be a worthwhile experience. Though we were only there for a short time, we feel that our small contribution to the country of East Timor will help it become a strong and successful nation with a bright future.

G26 – CAILACO ZONA

Born out of the need to provide a permanent presence in Cailaco Zona, G26 was formed from the Maliana CMA team. Fort Marko (a platoon sized patrol base) was identified as the new team's home. As the main population centre of the Cailaco Zona, Marko housed the UNTAET Administrative Headquarters and Civilian Police (CIVPOL) for the entire Zona.

G26 was made up of three personnel. The original team was Lieutenant Christian Hamilton, Sergeant Sven Mlikota and Bombardier Nathan Price. As of early June Bombardier Price was rotated with Bombardier Roy Harrison, which is how the team remained for the rest of the tour.

Upon arrival in Marko our team commenced an intensive period of patrolling designed to maximise AUSBATT exposure throughout the Cailaco Zona. As a CMA team from the 6 Bn Group had also occupied Marko, the locals quickly understood the role of AUSBATT's newest CMA team.

As with many of the other teams, mobility was often a near impossibility in and around Cailaco. Difficulties in terrain were compounded by the fact that G26 had only one vehicle at its disposal. The roads (or lack of them) were some of the most spine-shattering and car breaking ones imaginable. At last count, our vehicle had had its front end repaired twice, rear suspension assembly replaced entirely, steering arm straightened, differential rebuilt three times, and dust covers destroyed. It is a credit to Landrover that the vehicle kept running and got the team around the AO.

In an effort to increase the longevity of their vehicle and increase mobility, G26 took to the skies. Apart from giving the team members a break from driving, the air provided us with a new perspective of the Cailaco Zona. It would be fair to say though that many of the agencies supporting CMA in Cailaco did not share our love of flying. One IEC member from Japan provided the team with endless hours of amusement with her genuine terror routine.

In fact, IEC members were not safe from G26 even on the ground. One incident in particular saw G26 come to the aid of the IEC to remove their car from a bog. Although a relatively simple task, the degree of difficulty was increased when G26 lost four-wheel-drive on a very steep and slippery piece of road. We were forced to try and pull ourselves up the slope, using the just-rescued IEC vehicle as an anchor. The clay road proved too much for the IEC vehicle, and it was propelled backwards down the hill at a great speed. The comical scene was heightened when the local East Timorese driver had the misguided notion that he could stop the car if he could just get inside it! Luckily, all people and cars present were not harmed.

One of G26s larger community related projects, was the fledgling Marko Carpentry Workshop. Furnished with tools donated from Australia, the workshop will hopefully provide a source of practical learning and income for the community. In addition to providing medical assistance to the people of Marko, G26 were also able to offer medical help to the numerous outlying villages.

Upon reflection on our time in East Timor, the greatest thing about Cailaco was its people whom made all of our collective efforts worthwhile. From our first night in Marko when we provided emergency medical assistance to a lady with birth complications, or to participation in the local Cailaco Soccer Competition, the people of Cailaco made us feel part of the community and never hesitated to come to us for help. When you break CMA down that is what it is all about. CMA existed only to share the concerns of the communities and help wherever possible. As a result we were privy to all matters, whether they were cultural, traditional or even personal. When we arrived in Cailaco our objective was to make our sub-district just a little bit better than when we arrived. Through our work in the local Carpentry Workshop, and our efforts to bring medical support to outlying villages along with the countless distributions of humanitarian aid, G26 can go home with a true sense of a job well done.