

Chapter 7 – Delta Company

13 platoon arrived in country about two weeks before the remainder of the company and were tasked with the provision of security for the Blackhawks at Balibo. They settled in quite quickly and were only too happy to tell everyone that they were the veterans of Operation TANAGER. The remainder of the company arrived over a two-week period with Major Anthony Thomas leading the big push. Delta Company was transported to Dili by the HMAS Jervis Bay and then moved along the coast for five hours to arrive at Maliana. The training mentality was soon lost, as the amount of destruction caused by the Militia became a visible testament to their ruthlessness.

On the morning of 25 April, with bowed heads to remember the Anzac legend, Delta Company commenced its operational service. The relief with 1RAR went smoothly. By lunchtime they were gone and we were left with the daunting prospect of providing security along the border area between East and West Timor. Within two days of the relief being conducted, reports of up to 12 Militia had been passed to the Company and the OC was keen to exert his dominance. Captain Jeremy Hargreave's platoon, with Corporal's Pete Cafe and Dusty Lovett, quickly established an aggressive harbour on the likely Militia infiltration routes into Nunura. By the following morning, the half platoon patrol was tired but still on the operational high that comes from knowing that the threats were active. Although no Militia were sighted, this incident was a barometer for the tempo that was to follow for the next six months.

12 platoon was sent to the Junction Points (JP) that guard the approaches into the Maliana Zona along an area known as the 'Horses Neck'. Sergeant Darryl Miller was kept busy providing the niceties that everyone required and driving daily between Fort Maliana and the JPs. Security patrols were sent out by the patrol's platoon, into the Positive Control Zone (PCZ), and within a week Pete Cafe and Jaysen Whitbread had extended their patrols into uncharted territory, with interesting results. This problem with 'mapping' was soon rectified and the patrolling pace was increased by the OC. The heat soon took its toll and Staff Sergeant Davies took a well-earned rest in the Maliana aid post. Mick Mahoney, Sergeant Wayne Champion and the boys from 13 platoon continued to guard the Blackhawks at Balibo. They had their own little piece of Timor to patrol, and soon became the favourites of the locals at the Balibo Markets. They had to be prised from the comforts of the tents on the hill when the time came for them to rotate back into the rigours of the front line.

All of the soldiers were anxious for the chance to get out there and teach a valuable lesson to the militia. None were more so than the soldiers from 10 platoon. Timmy "I was here with INTERFET" Warner had to be put on a leash and had to be reminded on several occasions that we could no longer kick in the doors of locals who were selling over priced noodles. 10 platoon picked up the static task of defending the Fort and providing the ready reaction force for the company. Sergeant Ron Lange kept the pressure on his section commanders and any spare time was used to full advantage. All of the junction point accommodation was gradually upgraded from tent lines to blast proof shelters during the first couple of months. This was to prove to be an exceptional effort by the engineers and would make the soldiers that bit more comfortable during the long, hot periods that followed.

Things were continually busy at the Command Post (CP). Captain Dave Savvas and the Intelligence Sergeant, Tim Featonby, rearranged the Command Post so that it was battle ready. Corporal Dominic Thompson, the hardest working Combat Clerk in Fort Maliana, was not seen during most of the tour but he was to come into his own during the final departure phase. The two signallers, Dan Hodgson

and Nick Barboutis, ensured that continuous communications were maintained. They were to be kept very busy over the next six months. Although the first two weeks allowed for a steady increase in operational tempo and weren't too arduous, many found that they would be challenged over the next six months and more than a few felt the first pangs of homesickness.

As the rain continued through the supposed dry season, Delta Company had another report of Militia activity in the Maliana Area of Operations (AO). Reports had filtered to the United Nations Military Observers (UNMO) of 17 Militia moving toward Maliana. This was the chance that the soldiers of the 'Everywhere' company had been waiting for. Platoons were mounted in Armoured Personnel Carriers (APCs) and Nunura, a village with a violent history, was swamped in an attempt to stop the infiltrators. Corporal Scott Case led his section through Nunura and established vehicle checkpoints and observation positions to cover the border. No militia were discovered, but it was a good opportunity to reinforce the point that operations had commenced and training was over. The sections explored the whole of Maliana and within the first months many firm friendships had been established with the local Timorese people.

During the month of May, the pace for the company increased. With all of 1 RAR gone, the company had to rely on its training to sort out all manner of situations. But we were more than ready for any eventuality. The JPs along the border were slowly being rebuilt and at the market areas trade steadily increased. The platoon at Balibo started patrolling to secure the Blackhawk helicopters. The people of Maliana were treated to a rather ordinary game of soccer between the Aussies and the local soccer team. The medics at the Fort started to really earn their pay with the steady increase in casualties and Private Carlos Antonio, whose parents are both Timorese, met up with some long lost relatives. The headquarters was also kept busy. Visitors arrived from all around Australia and the OC was constantly on the move showing the VIPs the JPs and the Fort. It seems that everyone was keen to be seen or photographed as close to the border as possible and in one of the busiest areas in East Timor.

The focus for the patrols and platoons during May and June was to deny any Militia infiltration and to continue with mapping and security tasks. The border markets became an area of concern and 11 and 12 platoons became expert in the search techniques required, and employed the highest level of tact to gain and maintain the confidence and trust of the locals. The locals soon realised that if they didn't pose a security concern they would be left to re-establish their lives. Due to the efforts of the soldiers, D Coy established a strong rapport throughout the community. Corporal Griffiths even had the school children doing homework for him and by the time his section left the Maliana Radio Tower, the walls were covered with children's drawings.

Another big event that occurred during June was the visit by the Army Band on 'Tour de Force II'. This concert was originally designed for the soldiers but it ended up as a musical spectacular for the people of Maliana. The night was good for everyone and provided another opportunity for interaction with the East Timorese. Lieutenant Parkes provided security and although the night was wet, all that attended had an enjoyable time.

July was also busy for 13 platoon. The platoon, with Corporals Mick Lobb, Garth Snaidero and Rob Gasson, together with APCs, Light Armoured Vehicles (LAVs) and Civilian Police (CIVPOL) provided the security for the Timorese family reunion day that occurred early in the month. Over 3000 persons lined the border between East and West Timor and as the temperature climbed, the potential for the locals to become aggravated became very real. However, the success of the family reunion day typified the detailed planning by 13 Platoon Headquarters and the professional mature attitude of the young soldiers. As a result, families, some who hadn't seen each other since the 1999 'incident' were reunited, a sense of achievement swept through all of Delta Company.

The remainder of the company was kept busy throughout July locating and securing the new election sites. Corporal Scott Case and his section escorted the Electoral Commission through the Australian Battalion's (AUSBATT's) AO and distinguished themselves by their professional manner. The OC was also keeping the remainder of the fighting force busy on an operation in the PCZ on the border. This

was designed to provide a show of force to any possible Militia threat that may be using the border around Maliana as a means of infiltration. Corporal Mitch Beresford was moved around all of the towns under the Company's influence and his section checked vehicles and searched thousands of people for weapons and grenades.

The mapping of the border area also played a big part of the Company's operational focus. Contentious areas were checked and rechecked. The armoured assets continually patrolled the border and at times had to be recovered from their over zealous attempts to enter water that was too deep for APC's. The platoon operational pace was now at zenith and towards the end of July all was ready for the election period in August. Opposite JP-Bravo, at the Indonesian mirror site, a beast was slaughtered and Captain Dave Savvas and Lieutenant Mick Mahoney were treated to the chilli delights of what was believed to be a cow. The meetings between the TNI (Indonesian Army) and Delta Company were to continue unabated during the tour and phone links were established between the junction points and the TNI posts. Many a conversation was held during the midnight hours between both pickets and some of the problems of the world were inevitably solved.

Lieutenant Sean Parkes led a half platoon patrol with Corporal Andrew 'Rock' Ormerod onto, and over, the highest hill in the area, the Everest Feature. This was to be one of the Company's longest fighting patrols and at the end of it the boys were happy to return to the hot tent lines at Maliana. Sergeant Dale Jenssen and Private Richard Harrington led the lads from Heavy Weapons on a vehicle mounted patrol and visited all of the villages around Maliana providing medical assistance and lollies to all who required treatment and a sugar fix. Corporal Garth Snaidero moved his section down onto the Tactical Co-ordination Line (TCL) and recommenced searching the markets at JP-Charlie. His methods were thorough and a homemade pistol was found hidden inside a tyre on a truck. This was a major find and the weapon was an indication that the locals were still hiding weapons and moving them across the border. After an investigation by the Force Protection Element (FPE) it was discovered that the pistol was hidden due to the AUSBATT policy of not allowing any weapons in AO Matilda. Although there were no Militia connections, it was good to know that the training was paying dividends and that diligence was being maintained.

All this hard work was part of the security measures required during the lead up to the election period. August was occupied with battalion shaping operations. Delta Company became home for another one hundred soldiers as the Battalion stacked its assets for the possible election threat. The OC continually toured the area with the CSM, and section strength patrols ensured that nobody crossed the border. The junction points increased their local patrolling programs and the armoured vehicles established vehicle checkpoints with Callsign 64D on all the approaches into Maliana.

On election day, all appeared to be quiet until Lance Corporal Noel Petersen radioed the command post to report some trouble at one of the election sites. The section was shocked to see an old woman throwing stones at the polling centre. Noel provided advice to CIVPOL, who duly removed her and everyone breathed a sigh of relief that a minor catastrophe had been averted. Although this incident brought a smile to most of the company's faces, the fact that the election occurred very smoothly was indicative of the confidence of the locals in the security provided by Delta Company.

Delta Company had maintained the busiest AO throughout the 4 RAR Battalion Group tour and the pace didn't let up until the company went on leave in early November. The company played a part in all major battalion operations during its tour. When 34 ex-militia, including a militia company commander, were identified to the South East of AO Maliana, the Company was tasked to provide the security and mobility component. Corporal's Lovett and Snaidero moved their sections into position around Lontama and after 36 hours without food or sleep returned to the fort with stories of the largest single capture of militia since 1999.

Following the election period, the company then went through a well earned but brief period of rest and consolidation. Platoons were tasked to utilise the armoured vehicles along the border region and daily TCL patrols were conducted. The border markets appeared to close down during the first

week of September and the TNI were keen to take most of the credit for this. Small groups of traders were found between the junction points but there were never enough to cause any concern. The month of September also brought visits by soldiers from the incoming battalion. As September moved into October, we were kept busy with preparation for the handover with the incoming battalion. Importantly, Delta Company maintained a strong patrolling focus until the end of the tour.

Delta Company has had a very successful tour. From the high tempo pre deployment training, to the pressures of TCL patrolling and maintaining a positive influence within the busiest AUSBATT AO, the dedication shown by soldiers and commanders alike has been outstanding. In particular, it has been pleasing to see soldiers drawn straight from Initial Employment Training at Singleton display a high level of maturity and professionalism, a direct reflection on the junior commanders in the Company. Well done.

Delta Company, The Fourth Battalion Raised for War, Disbanded in Peace



The lads from 41B guard the Radio Tower at Maliana



Captain Jeremy "Dutchy" Hargreaves discusses options with the Chief of Army, Lieutenant General Cosgrove



Callsign 43 guard the approaches to Fort Maliana



*Patrolling around Fobo Leolaco
with callsign 44*

*Direct Fire Support Weapons (64D)
patrolling through Maliana
Fm Left: Private Hamburger, Sergeant Jensen,
Private McLean, Private McGough,
Private Harrington, Private Hurley
(in turret)*



*Corporal "Dusty" Lovett (centre rear) and
Corporal "Springers" Springhetti (far right)
hold a counsel for war*