

UNTAC

BY PTE P. ARBUCKLE

On the 9th of June 1992 I, along with 11 other soldiers from the Battalion were deployed to Cambodia with the Force Communications Unit as a part of the United Nations sponsored plan to bring peace to the country and to stage free and fair elections.

My deployment to Cambodia not only gave me an understanding of life in a Third World Country, but it was also an eye opener towards how the Australian Defence Force operates when all of the services - the Army, Airforce and Navy - interact and work together. I was also able to work with people from other countries and get an insight into their tactics and training - which proved to be below the standard required of Australian soldiers.

The majority of my time was spent at the Check Points on the Laos and Thai borders providing comms for Military Observers, Civilian Police and Electoral Teams. I also gained experience working in a Comms centre and a Base Radio Station using equipment that is not normally held within the Battalion. Everyday tasks included medevacs for both UN soldiers and the local people, as well as erecting defences around the houses we lived in.

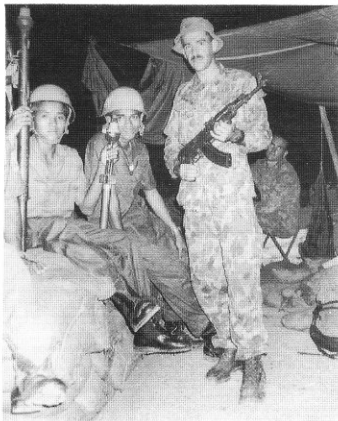
Spare time was much needed and well earned as just the heat in Cambodia can take everything out of you. Much of the spare time was used writing letters home and showing other corps how to dig pits and fill sand bags in order to construct defences. Also, not to forget the sinking of a few VB ales that somehow managed to find their way to Cambodia.

The highlight of the trip was not doing patrols or getting shot at (one went hand in hand with the other), but beating the pogues at their own job. All Regimental sigs that were in Cambodia were thought of as useless and incompetent by other corps until things became hard and they needed someone who could do the job well and without complaint. In my opinion the Infantry soldiers were better at signalling than the RASigs were!

All in all it was a very good year, I learnt a lot, saw some of the world, and would not hesitate in going back.



'Stumpy and Spanner' having a good time!



LCPL Carmichael with two U.N. peacekeepers.