

5 RAR CO'S REPORT – DEC 2019

G'day Tigers,

I'd like to start my first Commanding Officers update to the 5 RAR Association with two heartfelt thanks. Firstly, to the Association President COL Roger Wainwright (Ret'd) and David French for taking the time to meet with me in Canberra and introduce me to the association. It is a strong relationship which I hope to maintain and develop in my tenure. Secondly, to LTCOL Travis Gordon, CSM, for his outstanding leadership of the Battalion over the last two years. Trav will not want me to make a fuss, however his personal drive and professionalism will leave an indelible mark on the Battalion for years to come. On behalf of the Battalion I would like to thank him, Belinda, Griffin, and Gracyn for their commitment and sacrifices over the last two years. By the time of publication LTCOL Gordon will be deployed with Task Group Taji, OP OKRA and we wish him and the team well.

In this update I will outline the Battalions achievements since the August Tiger Tales and a preview of our activities in 2020. In the last update Maj Cameron Ellis, the Battalion 2IC, highlighted that the majority of the Battalion was committed to improving the Battalion's foundation warfighting skills on the Joint Warfare Series (JWS), C Company was preparing for a rotation to the Joint Readiness Training Centre in the United States, International Engagement activities were afoot, and we were preparing groups for known operations.

Firstly to the JWS. The JWS was an opportunity for the Tiger Battalion to develop the RAR and Army's understanding of mounted operations by a motorised infantry battle group. The Battalions investment in the 1st Armoured Regiment Warfighter Exercise (WFX) and Ex TALISMAN SABRE (TS) 19 was an evolutionary step in the development of 5 RAR's motorised capability. B and C Companies, with Support Company, engineer and artillery attachments, were allocated to Battle Group (BG) LION for the WFX, forming two separate motorised combat teams. C Company reprised long neglected riverine insertion techniques, inserting by small boat behind the enemy forward line of troops, dislocating the enemy forces and undermining the enemy commander's design for battle. Both companies brought the lessons from the WFX to BG TIGER during Ex TS 19, establishing new standard operating procedures that became the bedrock of BG TIGER's manoeuvre.

The 1st Brigade concept of operations for Ex TS 19 created an excellent opportunity for BG TIGER to partner with Task Group (TG) BLACK from the New Zealand Army and Task Force (TF) WOLFHOUD from the United States Army. Operating with two different nations across differing communications systems and employing different methods of movement highlighted the complex nature of coalition operations. This tested the Battalion's command, communications, and logistics systems, however, overcoming these challenges is exactly why we undertake such large training activities.

Onto International Engagement Activities. C Company with force elements from 1 CER and 8/12 Regt, was the first Australian Army combat team to participate in a US Army Brigade Combat Team rotation at the Joint Readiness Training Centre (JRTC). The company partnered with elements from the 25th Infantry Division for blank and live fire activities. Observer trainers and live fire range appointments were provided by Australia's Combat Training Centre, enabling the company to continue the refinement of foundation warfighting skills established during the JWS. This activity enhanced the Battalion's ability to deploy a sub-unit offshore, integrate with coalition partners, and enhance combined arms relationships within the 1st Brigade. C Company returned to Australia with praise from our US Partners for their field craft, field discipline, and tactical manoeuvre. Well done C Company.

The maintenance and enhancement of 5 RAR's relationship with the Tentara Nasional Indonesia (TNI – Indonesian Armed Forces) was, and will remain, a critical focus for the Battalion. Ex's RHINO AUSINDO (RA) and WIRRA JAYA (WJ) are at the centre of this relationship, with Ex RA focused on mentoring and Ex WJ as a sub-unit exchange activity. The aim for both exercises has evolved from previous rifle company based activities to more combined arms capabilities led by Support Company in 2019. The evolution of these exercises demonstrates the importance of our ongoing and personal relationship with the Indonesian military.



LTCOL Matthew Dirago

Lastly, the Battalion has and continues to support operations as our Main Effort. D Company is deployed in support of Australia's contribution to the NATO mission in Afghanistan. D Company, with a platoon from 2 RAR attached, formed the nucleus of Force Protection Element – 12 (FPE-12), tasked with providing intimate security to Australians mentoring and advising Afghan security force counterparts. The maturity shown by some of the Battalion's junior soldiers illustrates the effectiveness of the training delivered and the quality of people in the unit. At the time of writing C Company are preparing to deploy on FPE-13, rotating in theatre with D Coy and providing yet another opportunity to demonstrate 5 RAR's operational capabilities.

Elements of B Company, after completing JWS commitments, switched to focus on building specific capabilities for deployment to the Middle East to support the Iraqi Security Forces. By the time of publication advanced parties will have deployed into theatre.

So what for 2020? The Tiger Battalion has now commenced the READY year of the Force Generation Cycle. We will rotate D and C Companies through Force Protection Element rotations, deploy elements of B Coy and BHQ on Task Group Taji, and reinforce 7 RAR, Army's Ready Battle Group (RBG) for short notice deployments. The Battalion will reform in December 2019 as a single Rifle Company (Bravo), Log, and Support Company to ensure our training in 2020 is relevant and focussed. We will conduct training activities with the Japanese Ground Self Defence Force (JGSDF), United States Marine Corps (USMC) and the Tentara Nasional Indonesia (TNI – Indonesian Armed Forces). The Battalion will conduct activities to commemorate our shared history around the anniversary Binh Ba with the RSM eagerly pursuing options for a parade. Reintegrating forces returning from operations is an important part of our responsibility, as is recording their achievements in the Battalion's collective history and we look forward to welcoming back D, then C, and finally force elements attached to Task Group Taji. By October 2020 the Battalion will have completed our operational rotation in the READY year, have reintegrated all personnel, and will be deep into our support and specialist courses period. The Tigers have another busy and productive year ahead.

As a new Tiger to the fold I am proud to join a Battalion with such a strong legacy and look forward to working with the Association over the next two years. I look forward to seeing you all, either here in Darwin, at your reunion on the Gold Coast, or in Canberra for the national commemoration of the Battle of Binh Ba.

Duty First

Matthew Dirago