

EAST TIMOR

- 3.1 On 16 July 2003, the Parliamentary delegation was met at Comoro, East Timor, by Australian Consul Mr John Michell and accompanied by Third Secretary Sophia Cason. Also present was Colonel Mark Webb, the Defence Attache with the tour escort Lieutenant Colonel Michael Schlatter, CSC, the Chief of Staff of the Australian National Command Element – East Timor (ASNCE-EM).
- 3.2 The sub-committee was flown by Helicopter to forward operating base (FOB) Moleana and put down at Landing Zone (LZ) Wallaby where they were met by Lieutenant Colonel Stuart Smith, Commanding Officer of the Australian Battalion Group Rotation Eight (AUSBATT VIII). The sub-committee was subsequently provided with a comprehensive brief on AUSTBAT VIII operations including a description of its roles, responsibilities and current area of operations, (AO), the level of internal security needed, and the patrol areas of other international peacekeeping forces. The brief was followed by a tour of the Moleana facilities where the members had an opportunity to meet and talk with the ADF personnel serving there.
- 3.3 From Moleana, the sub-committee was driven to FOB Maliana where they received a short introduction on the roles and current operations of ‘C’ Company and had an opportunity to meet and talk with the ADF staff serving there.
- 3.4 The sub-committee was driven from FOB Maliana to the border patrol and crossing point ‘Junction Post Charlie’ (JP-C) where they received an overview on role and function of the ADF members situated there and had an opportunity to view the amenities and talk with the personnel.

- 3.5 Following the inspection of JP-C, the sub-committee was flown by helicopter to FOB Gleno where they received a brief on the role, functions and current operations being conducted by 'D' Company. The sub-committee also had an opportunity to meet and talk with the ADF personnel deployed at Gleno, including members of the UN Police. The committee was also provided with the opportunity to inspect the local Gleno Market enroute to Gleno sports field to meet their air transport. From Gleno, the sub-committee was transported to Comoro for departure.

The Australian National Command Element - East Timor

- 3.6 ASNCE-EM is located in Dili, the capital of East Timor, and is staffed by members from all three Services. It is located in a former Indonesian Regional Labour Department building, and is one of the better buildings in Dili, having escaped the widespread destruction and looting. All working areas are air-conditioned and renovations and improvements are taking place regularly.

Figure 3.1 ASNCE-EM Headquarters



3.7 The principal roll of ASNCE-EM is to provide support to the Commander Australian Contingent (COMASC). The responsibilities of COMASC include:

- the provision of national support to all Australian Force Elements in East Timor;
- ensuring the safety of all Australian Force Elements in East Timor; and
- informing higher headquarters in Australia of developments that affect Australia's contribution to United Nations Mission In Support to East Timor (UNMISET).

AUSBATT VIII

3.8 AUSBATT VIII is the eighth rotation of Australian Service personnel and is based primarily on the 1st Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment, but includes strong representation from specialist members of the Navy and Air Force.

Figure 3.2 Members of the committee entering AUSBATT VIII Headquarters



3.9 Contributing Army Units include:

- 4th Field Regiment,
- B Squadron 3/4th Cavalry Regiment,
- 3rd Combat Engineer Regiment,
- 5th Aviation Regiment,
- 1st Military Police Battalion,
- 3rd Combat Service Support Battalion, and
- AUSBATT VIII had been allocated one Fijian Rifle Company under operational control for a short duration.

3.10 As indicated, Headquarters AUSBATT VIII is based at FOB Moleana in the Bobonaro District. This is a purpose built base and contains facilities for all combat and service support elements for AUSBATT VIII (up to 400 personnel).

3.11 AUSBATT VIII facilities include: communications, accommodation, repair workshops and supply warehouses, helicopter landing sites, and a level three aeromedical medical evacuation infrastructure.

3.12 One rifle company group is based at Batugade. This group comprises 120 personnel and is responsible for providing security in the Bobonaro North District. Their responsibilities include supervising the border crossing point at 'Junction Post Alpha' (JP-A) and protecting radio retransmission locations. The group usually commits one platoon to securing their base, one platoon to patrolling the District, and one platoon to supervising the border crossing. The group is equipped with 4WD troop carrying vehicles and Armoured Personnel Carriers (APC) to move around the District.

Figure 3.3 Typical patrol by foot and armoured personnel carrier



- 3.13 A second rifle company group is based at Maliana. Similarly, this group comprises 120 personnel and is responsible for providing security in the Bobonaro Sought District.
- 3.14 Their responsibilities include supervising the border crossing point at JP-C and protecting radio retransmission locations.

Figure 3.4 Parliamentary members at Junction Post 'Charlie'



- 3.15 The group usually commits one platoon to secure their base, one platoon to patrolling the District, and one platoon to supervising the border crossing. The group is equipped with 4WD troop carrying vehicles and Armoured Personnel Carriers (APC) to move around the District.

Figure 3.5 ADF personnel at Forward Operating Base Maliana



- 3.16 A third rifle company group is based at Gleno. As with the other rifle company's, this group comprises 120 personnel and is responsible for providing security in the Ermera District.

Figure 3.6 Parliamentary members with local children at Gleno

- 3.17 The group also commits one platoon to securing their base, one platoon to patrolling the District, and one platoon to supervising the border crossing. The group is only equipped with 4WD troop carrying vehicles to move around their District.

Figure 3.7 Parliamentary members with ADF personnel at Gleno

- 3.18 In addition, a logistics base exists in DILI with approximately 100 personnel and provides additional repair, recovery, supply, medical and transport support to AUSBATT VIII.

- 3.19 The following two major issues were discussed with the sub-committee during this inspection:

- AUSBATT VIII relies on an extensive civil liaison network to conduct its operations. To facilitate this liaison six man detachments are distributed throughout each District to establish and maintain rapport with the locals. Much of the work conducted by these detachments relates to both training and advising local administrators and security groups on law and order matters.
- AUSBATT VIII will soon conduct a significant back loading of equipment in order to make way for the proposed smaller AUSBATT IX. This activity will need to be carried in addition to AUSBATT VIII's current operations and responsibilities.

- 3.20 During the tour, the sub-committee discussed a number of issues including:

- the austere nature of the working environment, particularly for the soldiers who undertake patrols;
- the generally 'Spartan' lifestyle the ADF members experience during their tour of duty, particularly those at the more remote FOBs;

- the conspicuous poverty and poor living standards of those in rural areas; and
- the apparent lack of organised agriculture.