

TELEPHONE

From: Maj R.D. MUDD

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AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES

1 DIV INT  
8 NOV 83  
MR

Quote in Reply

10/7/66

ADDRESS

103 Sig Sqn  
AFPO 3  
GPO SYDNEY

Aug 66

6

Lt Col K.J. TAYLOR  
1 Signal Regiment  
MILPO INGLEBURN  
NSW

*Dear Colonel Taylor,*

Operations

You will undoubtedly have read in the papers of the major activities of the month and the few reports I have seen in the Australian papers of the 6 RAR action have been substantially accurate.

The series of actions began with the mortaring of the base camp at about 0300 hours with 82 mm mortars and, it is thought, with 75 mm RCLs. About 60 rounds were received. They landed in the units located in the semi-circle around the southern perimeter of the base camp. None landed in our area and we suffered no damage except for one line being cut by a piece of shrapnel.

That day company sized patrols of 6 RAR searched the area and found signs that the counter-mortar fire from the artillery had been effective. They continued patrolling and searching in the general area that day and the next and it was the following evening that the major contact occurred. Final estimates were that there was a VC battalion and a North Vietnamese battalion actually in the fire fight with D Coy 6 RAR and another VC battalion was nearly but not able to get into the fight. It is believed that D Coy probably bumped into the force on its way to put in an attack on the base camp. Final count of enemy dead was 245 and our casualties were 18 dead and 25 wounded. Throughout the battle communications on the task force, 6 RAR and artillery nets were good, though I understand they had some troubles within D Coy. Because the communications were good, the artillery was able to give very close fire support and there was good control over the despatching and movement of the re-inforcements for D Coy. I believe this had a fairly important role in the successful outcome of the battle.

Radio

We received our AN/GRC 106's during the month and all our operators have been instructed in their use. We are only waiting now for the clearance of some of our frequencies for the necessary power output and we will put one into operation as the control station on the telegraph net and probably one as the sub-station at 161 Recce Flight for experience in using them.

Again the ranges over which we have been operating have not been sufficient to cause any radio worries. The AN/PRC - 25s have been performing well and very reliably.

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RJR

Because we have provision for three battalions and the flank detachment, the radio operators are the only ones in the squadron who are not employed full time in their trade. I use them to try to make up for what I believe are some of the other shortcomings in the establishment and for other necessary tasks in the construction of the camp. To share the jobs equally, we have a rotation of crews between here and the sub-stations at regular intervals, though crew commanders, or in the case of battalions and the recce flight section commanders, remain fixed for continuity and the knowledge of the way of working of the unit. they are with. I think I will probably make one change of these people at about the 6 month mark to try to provide a balanced distribution of the work for them.

#### Squadron establishment

I find there are some aspects of the squadron establishment which are not adequate for our commitments. Because of this I have submitted a request for a theatre increment to our establishment. The basic argument in the request for an increment is the need for the ability to operate with the headquarters separated from the base or maintenance area. However, I believe that some aspects of the establishment are not adequate even when we are operating in one location only.

Sigcen. The sigcen is provided with an establishment of a sgt, cpl and 4 sig OKs. Even if the sgt is put on one of the shifts, this allows only three shifts of two men each. I believe this is not satisfactory because;

- a. If the sgt is committed to a shift he is unable to perform the necessary supervisory duties.
- b. Two men are needed on shift and with only three shifts;
  - (1) The men work 8 hours every day without any break, plus all the other miscellaneous duties required of them.
  - (2) There is no ability to cope with absences due to illness, R and C or any other cause.

Because we are not fully committed in radio work, I have been able to overcome the problem to some extent by allotting 3 OR/OKRs to the sigcen, to free the sgt and provide a fourth shift. This is not completely satisfactory, particularly in the case of op radios as they are unable to operate a teleprinter, but it does help.

Cipher. The cipher establishment is adequate for the situation where the headquarters is co-located with the maintenance area and the on-line cipher systems to the rear are working. If either of these conditions ceases to exist then the present establishment would be unable to meet the requirement.

SDS. The two DRs are barely adequate to serve the base camp and must, of course, be supplemented if either is absent for any reason. They would be unable to handle the duplicated requirement if the headquarters was separated from the base.

Switchboard. The switchboard crew is adequate, but is able to handle only one switchboard, not the two that would be necessary when the headquarters moves.

I trust this does not just sound like a recital of woes. In fact we are coping quite adequately at present, but I must say that the thought of deploying the HQ away from the base causes some concern.

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Transport. I mentioned in my last letter that transport was at a premium. I am finding now that keeping transport on the road and in a servicable condition is a major problem. In this regard, the lack of a transport NCO is a real worry. I have put one of the signalman drivers in charge of the transport and he is working hard at it and doing a good job. However the lack of authority makes it difficult for him to really control the transport and ensure that it is properly maintained.

Miscellaneous

We have just received our first groups of re-inforcements, one group of four and another one by himself. All were op radios, so we are still feeling our deficiencies in other fields. We are currently deficient nine and are to lose Cpl GRAINGER back to Australia within the week because of some trouble, apparently an allergy which cannot be identified or cleared up.

If I seem to be looking on the less bright side in this letter it is only because things have settled down to so much of a routine that I am unable to find much to write about our activities and have to turn to other things. I suppose this leads naturally to problem areas.

Best wishes,

Peter Muddy