

MTF-2 AFGHANISTAN 2010-11

On the 17th of May 2010, under the pseudonym Battle Group Tiger, personnel from 27 different units and headquarters across all three services of the Australian Defence Force concentrated in Darwin for operational service in Afghanistan. On the 5th of June the 5 RAR led Battle Group started its Mission Specific Training and between the 1st and 10th of September it completed a Mission Rehearsal Exercise as its final preparation for combat. In the space of four months the 5 RAR Battle Group completed three collective field activities; 19 individual courses or training activities; had up to three weeks of leave (if lucky), and prepared approximately 1,200 personnel for potential service in the Middle East.

The 5 RAR Battle Group deployed on Operation Slipper as a Task Group of the Australian Middle East Joint Task Force 633 and was assigned under NATO operational control to Combined Team Uruzgan; a newly established coalition headquarters commanded by a U.S. Army 06 – Colonel Jim Crieghton. The Battle Group officially commenced its mission as the second Australian Mentoring Task Force (MTF-2) on the 21st of October 2010 – taking over in Uruzgan Province from the 6 RAR Battle Group.

MTF-2 operated in three major regions within Uruzgan: Combat Team Delta (CTD), patrolled the Dorafshan bowl, the Baluchi Valley and journeyed to all reaches of the Chora district. Combat Team Bravo, initially conducted operations in the Dorafshan bowl but then settled down to the good life in the Mirabad Valley. Combat Team Charlie (CTC), roamed the Deh Rawud district and forayed into the lively Tangi and Tagaw Valley as often as they could.

Between the 21st of October 2010 and the 25th of June 2011, MTF-2 conducted 12 major operations in



conjunction with its coalition and Afghan partners. It designed and assisted in the construction of five company sized patrol bases and provided oversight for the Afghan National Army's construction of an additional two bases. It re-supplied up to nine Australian bases every month by ground convoy and almost everyday by air, and administered, equipped and commanded in excess of 1,000 personnel at the height of operational activity.

The photograph left shows OC CTD, MAJ Roy Henry and the CO of MTF-2, LTCOL Darren Huxley visiting D Coy HQ at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Mirwais in the Chorah Valley. D Coy's position was part of

an Afghan, Australian and United States patrol base in the Chorah Valley, southern Afghanistan.

The Chorah district was the site of a major Dutch contact and Taliban offensive that took place over four days from 15th June 2007 (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Chora) and that is why a permanent coy-level base was built there. It was also home to the 2nd Kandak (Battalion) of the ANA 4th Brigade.

The photo shown also has two interesting items; MAJ Henry is in ADF desert camo while the CO is in the normal Australian camo. MTF-2 was issued desert camo within Australia as part of the standard equipment issue for the Middle East Area of Operations. Whenever they entered the green zone (the area immediately around the waterways in Uruzgan where the locals lived and farmed) they found the Australian uniforms much more appropriate for patrolling amongst the vegetation. Hence you will often see a mix of pale desert and khaki Australian cams in photos from Afghanistan.

The other item of interest in the photo is the two vertical poles on the front of the Australian Light Armoured Vehicle-Personnel Carrier (ASLAV-PC), these are anti-IED activation devices. Essentially they are radio towers that disrupt the signals from remote detonators.

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