

Diamonds & Dollars

7 BRIGADE EXERCISES WARFIGHTING SKILLS – AND PURSE STRINGS

Brisbane's 7th Brigade (7 Bde) conducted its largest exercise for more than a decade in June when about 2000 soldiers trained in a range of combat-simulation environments at Shoalwater Bay Training Area (SWBTA) near Rockhampton.



Exercise Diamond Dollar, last conducted in the 1990s, is a brigade-sized combined-arms activity designed to hone soldier and officer combat skills during three weeks of unit individual training and brigade-led battle-group training.

Around 2000 personnel from 7 Bde, with supporting elements from 1 and 3 Bdes, undertook a series of urban-combat operations, live-fire exercises, bridge building and demolition, aero-medical evacuation drills, as well as infantry, cavalry and armour manoeuvres.

'Danger close' artillery fire-support missions were also conducted. 'Danger close' is a term included in the method of engagement segment of a call for fire, which indicates that friendly forces are within close proximity of the target – the exact distance determined by the weapon and munition fired.

Diamond Dollar activities positioned the brigade well in preparation for Exercise Talisman Saber in the same area in July and August, when 7 Bde played 'blue force' (friendly force) roles during Talisman Saber – the biennial US/Australian exercise involving up to 30,000 personnel across many parts of Australia.

Brigade Chief of Staff Lieutenant Colonel Simon Hardy said the brigade was now well prepared for a range of possible operational environments.

"Diamond Dollar was a critical phase of our preparations," he said.

In 2007, 7 Bde was expanded under the Chief of Army's Hardened and Networked Army (HNA) initiative and became a full-time motorised brigade. Further expansion under the Enhanced Land Force (ELF) initiatives has delivered more units, more personnel and more equipment.

The 8th/9th Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment – one of two Brisbane-based infantry battalions that form the nucleus of 7 Bde – was raised from scratch less than two years ago, tasked to attain operationally deployable status by 2010. The other 7 Bde infantry battalion is 6RAR.

Diamond Dollar also delivered considerable economic benefits to the Rockhampton area with Defence spending up to \$1 million on perishables and other goods and services.

More than 5000kg of fresh meat valued at around \$500,000, 10,000 litres of milk, 8000kg of fresh fruit and vegetables, 3600kg of bread, 144,000 eggs, 3300kg of potatoes and thousands of litres of fuel were top of the shopping list when supply staff and their trucks pulled up outside local businesses.

