

Good neighbours Operation Astute

WORDS SERGEANT BRIAN HARTIGAN AND LIEUTENANT JESSE PLATZ COURTESY ARMY NEWSPAPER
PICS LEADING AIRCRAFTSMAN LEIGH CAMERON AND SERGEANT HARTIGAN

Advanced weapon course

Advanced infantry training delivered by and for 8/9RAR's Direct Fire Support Weapons (DPSW) Platoon in the days before Anzac Day also benefited East Timorese and New Zealand soldiers.

An eight-day urban-operations course, conducted at a small range near Liquica, west of Dili, introduced the soldiers to Australian weapon systems and assault tactics in urban environments.

The aim was to build on urban-shooting skills and confidence with two- and four-man

room-entry drills as well as static firing and on-the-move shooting from ranges of up to 25m a feature of the course.

DPSW platoon commander Lieutenant Adam Williams said that although the three East Timor Defence Force (F-FDTL) members on the course lacked experience in this type of training and were using unfamiliar weapons and night-fire equipment, they had performed well.

"Despite the extra learning involved in the weapons' conversion, these three soldiers have already assimilated the skills we were teaching here," Lieutenant Williams said.

"This course builds up to a more advanced

course in coming months and, after that, they will be ready to go back to their own units as qualified instructors, to pass on their skills to the wider F-FDTL."

Colonel Filomeno Paixao, F-FDTL Operations Command, visited his troops on the course to gauge their progress and was impressed by what he saw.

He thanked the International Stabilisation Force (ISF) for their expertise, enthusiasm and dedication to their task and congratulated his own troops for their obvious improvement on course and encouraged them to maintain their enthusiasm for learning from the ISF.



Health delivery

The International Stabilisation Force (ISF) continues to work with the East Timor Defence Force (F-FDTL) and the East Timorese Ministry of Health to deliver critical medical support to remote villages.

ADF troops deployed on Operation Astute assist with monthly Medical Civil Action Programs (MEDCAP) across East Timor in support of nurses, midwives and doctors operating under the F-FDTL and Ministry of Health programs.

Deputy Commander ISF Colonel Garry Brosnan said the rugged Covalima district was the focus of the April program and villagers of Ucecal have received individual medical assessments, antibiotics and primary health-care education.

"This village is very remote and there is no road access here, so access to government services around the country can be challenging," Colonel Brosnan said.

"The response today has been extremely positive and it is important East Timor builds on efforts to provide infrastructure and basic health care throughout the country."

ADF Medical Officer Captain Carl Bryant said nearly 100 villagers received treatment – in some cases, life-saving treatment.

"We are trying to help the local community help themselves, as well as providing logistics capability to bring medical support to isolated areas and overcome problems such as contaminated water, malnourishment and poor sanitation and storage," Captain Bryant said.

"The most common complaints we see in these villages are skin, eye and ear infections and cough and cold symptoms.

"Being in a tropical area without control measures for mosquitoes, means dengue fever and malaria are prevalent. Tuberculosis is also a problem."

The ISF aims to gradually hand over the lead role in MEDCAP to the F-FDTL and the Ministry of Health.

