

*'The Army needs to be balanced internally as well as within the ADF more generally; that it must possess a structure suitable to contest, should it be required, against an adversary who is either a peer in terms of military capability, or who is intellectually our equal in the conduct of war...the Australian Army must possess the ability to commit successfully to joint land combat, and win.'*

Lieutenant General David Morrison, Chief of Army

The Australian Army's 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade recently completed a Combined Arms Training Activity (CATA) at the Townsville Field Training Area, with the aim to enhance the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade's ability to prosecute foundation warfighting – that is, to operate, fight and win as a potent and versatile combined-arms formation executing joint land combat against a near-peer threat.

3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade's CATA represented the most recent significant step in Army's reorientation from its commitment to counter-insurgency operations in Afghanistan and peace-support

commitments in Timor Leste and The Solomon Islands towards being an Army 'that can fight, manoeuvre and defeat a credible enemy'.

CATA was the first time Army's future Multi-role Combat Brigade (MCB) deployed, operated and fought against a near-peer threat in a high-intensity-conflict scenario. Furthermore, CATA witnessed the first time that the Armoured Cavalry Regiment (ACR) component of Army's Plan Beersheba/MCB force modernisation program was exercised.

CATA saw the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade force concentrate in Mounting Base Townsville for a rapid deployment to a fictitious nation to expel foreign enemy forces that had usurped the legitimate national authority.

Following force concentration and final mission-specific training, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade deployed from Townsville via simulated air and sea assets to an air point of entry.



Following the build-up of sufficient combat power, it undertook combined-arms battlegroup missions to destroy enemy forces that had occupied key urban terrain.

These missions saw the integration of infantry, tank, armoured reconnaissance, armoured lift, engineer, M777 artillery, armed reconnaissance and attack by Tiger helicopters, the rapid insertion and redeployment of forces by Multi-Role Helicopter, Blackhawk and Chinook by day and night, the exercising of a robust logistics support, recovery, detention and medical evacuation, command and control exercised by a light and robust Brigade HQ and simulated UAV and strategic intelligence support.

CATA culminated with the execution of a live-fire Multi-role Combat Brigade deliberate attack to destroy a near-peer mechanised battlegroup threat.

Concurrent to the formation's battle procedure, intelligence on the enemy's disposition and composition was gathered by clandestine cavalry, Armed Reconnaissance Helicopter (ARH Tiger) and infantry reconnaissance and surveillance assets.

In addition, during this phase of the battle, ARH destroyed enemy high-value targets via Hellfire missile.

This screening force subsequently cleared the avenues of approach to the formation's assembly area.

As a preliminary action to the assault, an infantry combat team was inserted by a live-fire air-mobile operation (AMO) by night.

This AMO saw the first insertion attempt compromised, which resulted in the rotary-wing assets having to fight their way out of the compromised landing zone.

Following their insertion, the infantry combat team seized key terrain for the ACR's assault. This seizure involved the live-fire destruction of an enemy security outpost by night.

The MCB attack was spearheaded by the 1<sup>st</sup> Armoured Cavalry Regiment's advance-to-contact by night and rapid, comprehensive destruction of enemy from dawn.

Following the completion of its mission, the ACR rapidly regrouped its armoured vehicles to the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion that completed the destruction and pursuit of the mechanised enemy battlegroup.

Throughout the assault, M777 artillery and mortars were employed as danger-close fire to advancing infantry. Tiger helicopters augmented this maelstrom of suppressing fire by destroying high-value enemy targets with Hellfire missiles and suppressing enemy battle positions with a constant stream of rocket and 30mm gunfire.



# CATA

## COMBINED ARMS TRAINING ACTIVITY

WORDS CAPTAIN DAVID COWAN PICS LEADING AIRCRAFTMAN OLIVER CARTER







Other aviation lift assets were employed to facilitate air command and control and the rapid evacuation of simulated battle casualties.

Engineers supported the execution of multiple battlegroup and combat team explosive obstacle breaches.

The formation's logistics assets were arrayed to facilitate immediate casualty and PW evacuation, recovery and resupply of the fighting echelon.

Command and control of the attack was exercised forward by Commander 3 Bde. This command and control was facilitated by the Formation HQ located some 30km south (outside of enemy artillery range) of the enemy objective.

In summary, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bde CATA achieved:

- Another significant step forward in Army becoming expert in foundation warfighting.
- Validated the combat power, utility, agility, flexibility, responsiveness, resilience and robustness of the MCB and the MCB against a near-peer threat.
- Validated the capacity and responsiveness of the MCB's logistics elements.
- Achieved the first MCB live-fire exercise executing danger-close artillery and rotary-wing attack fires, explosive breaching of battlegroup and combat-team obstacles.
- Proved the ability of Army to integrate the capabilities of multiple brigades when executing foundation warfighting. During CATA this manifested in the integration of the 5<sup>th</sup> Aviation Regiment's lift and armed-reconnaissance platforms into the manoeuvre and logistics plan. Throughout the activity lift assets supported the insertion of reconnaissance assets, oftentimes via airborne rappel. In addition, during CATA, 5<sup>th</sup> Aviation



executed no less than four battlegroup air-mobile operations (AMO), one by night, to position 1RAR for the live-fire formation attack – and eight combat-team AMO, inclusive of live-fire and the rapid insertion of combat teams to support the pursuit of enemy forces. MRH platforms were integral to this lift effort.

- Lift platforms were also employed for the AMO of equipment across the battlefield.
- Throughout CATA, 5<sup>th</sup> Aviation Regiment's rate of effort was equal to that during the first weeks of INTERFET.
- Finally, CATA saw the ARH Tiger employed for the first time in intimate support (with live ammunition) to advancing troops assaulting enemy objectives.
- CATA saw 5<sup>th</sup> Aviation Regiment deploying to and operating from austere field environments for the first time in 17 years.

**CATA SAW THE ARH TIGER EMPLOYED FOR THE FIRST TIME IN INTIMATE SUPPORT [WITH LIVE AMMUNITION] TO ADVANCING TROOPS ASSAULTING ENEMY OBJECTIVES.**

- It also proved the Army's only explosive breaching weapon system – the Personnel Explosive Lane Clearance Charge (PELCC). This system was employed for the first time outside of a training institution to breach enemy minefields as part of each battlegroup's assault.