

Northern Territory

RAAF Base *Tindal*

- 1.1 The first Defence establishment to be visited by the Defence Sub-Committee was RAAF Tindal located some 17 km from Katherine and 320 km, by road, south east of Darwin. On arrival at RAAF Base Tindal the Sub-Committee was met by the Officer Commanding No. 322 Combat Support Wing, Group Captain Brent Crowhurst; and the Executive Officer, Wing Commander Mark King, AM. The Sub-Committee was briefed by Group Captain Crowhurst on the role, capabilities and current operations at RAAF Tindal. The briefing was followed by a tour of the base and a static demonstration of an FA-18.
- 1.2 Originally known as Carson's Field, Tindal was built during World War II as one of a number of airfields in the Northern Territory to support allied bomber operations. The base was extensively redeveloped in the 1980s and has been operational since 1989. RAAF Tindal is permanently staffed and operated by 322 Combat Support Wing and is home to No. 75 Squadron which is equipped with F/A-18 Hornet aircraft. RAAF Tindal is also intended as a forward base for deployed forces and offers a secure point of entry to the region. In this role RAAF Tindal provides a strategic airhead for the logistic support of deployed forces.
- 1.3 At some 30,000 acres RAAF Tindal is easily Australia's largest air base. In close proximity to the Base is the Delamere Air Weapons Range which provides an impressive training facility and is one of only a few ranges in the world able to accommodate all conventional weapons. The Sub-Committee noted that Bradshaw Range and Delamere Air Weapons Range are only about 100km apart and that future land acquisition joining these

ranges may provide a facility capable of handling all Defence range requirements in northwestern Australia.

- 1.4 The Sub-Committee was briefed on the continuing development of the base facilities. During the tour of the base Members were provided an opportunity to inspect one of the new accommodation bunkers and a command bunker. Both of these bunkers were in use by a United States Marine Corps force at the time of the visit. The Sub-Committee noted future plans for more accommodation bunkers, a tarmac extension and a new air movements facility.
- 1.5 During the briefing and tour of the base, the Sub-Committee discussed a number of issues including:
- The possible use of military assets to defend Australia against transnational crime activities.
 - The use of RAAF Tindal (including Delamere Air Weapons Range) by foreign forces for training.
 - Capabilities of the FA-18 Hornet.
 - The impact of the environment on the ability to conduct operations from RAAF Tindal.

Northern Command

- 1.6 The Sub-Committee moved from RAAF Tindal to Headquarters Northern Command (HQ NORCOM) located at Larrakeyah Barracks, Darwin. On arrival at HQ NORCOM the Sub-Committee were met by the Deputy Commander – Colonel Ross Boyd. The visit comprised a briefing by Colonel Boyd, on the role and capabilities of NORCOM and a tour of the Operations Centre for the Headquarters. The Sub-Committee was also briefed on current operations.
- 1.7 HQ NORCOM was established in 1988 as an operational level joint Australian Defence Force (ADF) Headquarters. The Commander NORCOM reports directly to the Commander Australian Theatre (COMAST) and is responsible for the planning, practice and conduct of surveillance, reconnaissance, protection and civil support operations within the Command's Area of Operations (AO). That AO covers Queensland and the Northern Territory above 19° south and the Kimberley and Pilbara Districts of Western Australia.

- 1.8 The NORCOM AO is vast and includes terrain of extraordinary diversity, ranging from semi-arid desert, mangrove swamps and tropical jungle to open woodland and savanna. The Sub-Committee acknowledged the difficulties presented by the environment to activities within the AO particularly applicable during the wet season.
- 1.9 The Sub-Committee noted the role of the Headquarters in the coordination of the surveillance effort in northern Australia and the involvement of Defence assets in the prevention of illegal activities relating to fisheries, immigration and customs. The Sub-Committee also noted the efforts of the headquarters in regional engagement and civil military cooperation. The Sub-Committee was most interested that during the period 1989 – 1999 a large number of unidentified flights had been detected into and out of Australian territory.
- 1.10 During the briefing and tour of the Operations Centre, the Sub-Committee discussed a number of issues including:
- The possible use of military assets to defend Australia against transnational crime activities.
 - Current surveillance operations across northern Australia.
 - Coordination of the surveillance effort in northern Australia.
 - The role of the Headquarters in regional engagement and civil military cooperation.

HMAS ANZAC

- 1.11 On arrival at HMAS ANZAC the Sub-Committee was met the Maritime Commander, Rear Admiral John Lord, AM RAN and the Captain of HMAS ANZAC, Captain Matt Tripovich, CSC RAN. The Sub-Committee was provided with a briefing and tour of HMAS ANZAC at Stokes Hill Wharf by the Captain of HMAS ANZAC, Captain Matt Tripovich, CSC RAN.
- 1.12 HMAS ANZAC is the lead ship of eight Anzac Class frigates being constructed in Australia as part of the overall plan to upgrade the Royal Australian Navy and to replacement the remaining River Class destroyer escorts. The design, selected in 1989, is based on the German Meko 200 frigate design. The ship was constructed using modular construction methods with sections fabricated in three locations - Williamstown in Victoria, Newcastle in New South Wales and Whangarei in New Zealand -

prior to final assembly by Tenix Defence Systems at Williamstown, Victoria.

- 1.13 HMAS ANZAC is powered by a "combined diesel or gas" (CODOG) propulsion plant that, in conjunction with two controllable pitch propellers, enables the ship to sustain speeds of 27 knots and allows an operational range in excess of 6,000 nautical miles. The ship is fitted with an advanced package of air surveillance radars, omni-directional hull mounted sonar and electronic support systems which interface with a state-of-the-art combat data system.
- 1.14 In terms of main armament, HMAS ANZAC is equipped with one 5 inch Mk 45 Mod 2 automatic rapid fire gun, the Sea Sparrow anti-air missile system, the Vulcan Phalanx close in weapons system, two Mk 32 triple-mounted anti-submarine torpedo tubes and two 0.50 inch machine guns. In addition, a helicopter is embarked to enhance anti-submarine and anti-surface warfare capabilities. Currently that helicopter is a S-70B-2 Seahawk however this is scheduled to be replaced in due course by a new type of intermediate helicopter equipped for surveillance and maritime strike.
- 1.15 HMAS ANZAC entered service in 1996 with follow-on vessels scheduled to be delivered at the rate of approximately one per year. HMAS Arunta was commissioned in December 1998 while other ships of this class will be Warramunga, Stuart, Parramatta, Ballarat, Toowoomba and Perth.
- 1.16 The briefing and tour provided the Sub-Committee with an appreciation of the capabilities of HMAS ANZAC and the living conditions of the some 160 officers and sailors that comprise the crew. During the briefing and tour of HMAS ANZAC, the Sub-Committee discussed a number of issues including:
 - The possible use of military assets to defend Australia against transnational crime activities.
 - The aims and proposed activities for HMAS ANZAC as part of Exercise KAKADU IV.
 - Personnel issues including Navy's ship to shore ratio for officers' and sailors' billets and conditions of service.

North West Mobile Force

- 1.17 Day two of the tour commenced with a visit to the Headquarters of the North West Mobile Force (NORFORCE) located at Larrakeyah Barracks, Darwin. On arrival the Sub-Committee was met by the Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel Tim Simkin. The Sub-Committee was then briefed on the role, characteristics and capabilities of the NORFORCE and provided with a demonstration of some of the equipment used by the unit.
- 1.18 NORFORCE was raised in 1981 as the first of three Regional Force Surveillance Units (RFSU) in northern Australia.¹ The unit draws its traditions from the 2nd/1st North Australia Observer Unit, a bush commando unit, which operated in a surveillance role in northern Australia during World War II. NORFORCE is a high readiness unit that is not intended to deploy from its current Area of Responsibility. While it remains a direct command unit of the Land Commander – Australia (LCAUST), NORFORCE may be placed under Operational Command of Commander NORCOM for specific operations.
- 1.19 NORFORCE recruits, trains and operates in local areas. The majority of the Regiment's some 550 personnel are Reservists drawn from local communities in the Area of Responsibility. Although headquartered in Darwin, most of NORFORCE's full-time staff are located in over 30 different locations throughout the Area of Responsibility (AR). The Regiment maintains squadrons in the Pilbara, Alice Springs and Gove.
- 1.20 NORFORCE conducts surveillance and reconnaissance operations in northern Australia within the AR that covers over 1.8 million square kilometres and stretches from the Gulf of Carpentaria in the east to the Kimberley in the west. As a regional force the unit provides a permanent surveillance presence enhanced by a Civil Reporting Network which is widely supported by local communities. The regional nature of the unit allows access to closed communities, engenders strong community support and facilitates unparalleled local knowledge.
- 1.21 NORFORCE has the capacity to field 48 patrols, each of six personnel, and is capable of conducting wide area land surveillance for the operational level. Patrols are deployable by air, land and sea and are equipped with high technology based surveillance and communications equipment. The Sub-Committee noted that although the unit currently has an integral

1 In the mid 1980's two other Regional Force Surveillance Units were raised (51st Far North Queensland Regiment and the Pilbara Regiment).

intelligence capability this function is to transfer to the soon to be formed 1st Intelligence Battalion in January of 2000.

- 1.22 During the briefing and demonstration at NORFORCE, the Sub-Committee discussed a number of issues including:
- The possible use of military assets to defend Australia against transnational crime activities.
 - The scope for RFSU to contribute to the prevention of illegal activities relating to fisheries, immigration and customs.
 - The difficulties in conducting surveillance operations during the wet season and the approaches used to overcome such environmental challenges.
 - Liaison between other military units and civil authorities.

1st Brigade

- 1.23 The Sub-Committee moved from NORFORCE to the 1st Brigade at Robertson Barracks, Palmerston, Darwin. On arrival at Headquarters 1st Brigade the Sub-Committee were met by Commander 1st Brigade, Brigadier David Hurley. During the visit the Sub-Committee were provided with a briefing on the role, characteristics and capabilities of the 1st Brigade and a demonstration of some of the equipment used by the units of the formation. On the completion of the demonstration the Sub-Committee was given an opportunity to speak to individual soldiers and to examine, more closely, the equipment of the Brigade. The visit concluded with a tour of the of Robertson Barracks.
- 1.24 The 1st Brigade was raised in Sydney in 1914 as part of the 1st AIF. The Brigade saw service in Gallipoli and France during World War I and as part of the militia force charged with defending the Australian mainland in World War II. Based in Sydney until 1992, the Brigade has been progressively moving to Darwin during the last eight years. By the year 2000, the Brigade will be completely relocated to Darwin.
- 1.25 The mission of the 1st Brigade is to maintain a high readiness mechanised capability in order to conduct mid-intensity conventional operations and peace operations. The Brigade provides Army's mechanised warfare capability; a capability that enables Army to contribute to a range of military response options not able to be satisfied by other high readiness

Army elements (for example 3rd Brigade and the Special Operations Group).

- 1.26 The Brigade is currently organised with seven major units including: an armoured unit equipped with the German designed Leopard Tank and the M113 family of vehicles; a reconnaissance regiment equipped with variants of the Australian Light Armoured Vehicle (ASLAV); and a mechanised infantry battalion equipped with the M113 family of vehicles. In addition, the Brigade incorporates a medium artillery regiment, a combat engineer regiment and a combat service support battalion. The Brigade is also supported by an aviation reconnaissance squadron.
- 1.27 The 1st Brigade is able to conduct tasks across a broad spectrum of military activities ranging from emergency relief and peacekeeping through to mechanised operations in mid-intensity conflict. Subject to strategic lift considerations, the Brigade's high readiness notice makes it available for a wide range of military operations. The Brigade's ground mobility makes it equally well suited to security operations in northern Australia or peace-operations abroad.
- 1.28 Achieving 1st Brigade's increased Readiness Notice is a three-phase operation, with Phase 1, concentrated upon peace support operations, concluding on 1 July 1999. As part of the change in Readiness Notice, the 1st Brigade has commenced a major expansion in personnel, equipment and facilities. The Brigade's current manning is about 2400 and it is anticipated that this will rise to 3000 as current manning shortfalls are addressed and new capabilities added.
- 1.29 During the visit to the 1st Brigade, the Sub-Committee discussed a number of issues including:
- Future upgrades to the Leopard Tank including thermal imaging sights, a climate control system and fin stabilised ammunition.
 - The ability of the ASLAV to self deploy.
 - This planned introduction of the A3 variant of the M113 family of vehicles into service in late 2001. This upgrade is planned to enhance mobility and firepower, and provide an excellent night fighting capability.
 - The raising of an additional battery of 155 mm Howitzers following the move of 8/12th Medium Regiment to Darwin.
 - The introduction of the Battlefield Command Support System (BCSS) to the Brigade.
 - The impact of the Brigade's change to 28 Days Readiness Notice.

- The capability of the Darwin infrastructure to support the Brigade when deployed on exercise in the Northern Territory or on operations within the region.
- The provision of rotation forces in support of the deployed Brigade.