

2 R ANGLIAN NOVEMBER REGIMENTAL NEWSLETTER SUBMISSION

The Poachers have had an active and rewarding October, forming 2 R ANGLIAN Battle-group on Exercise GRAND PRIX in Kenya. To form a Battle-group the Poachers were bolstered by J Battery of 3 Royal Horse Artillery and 2 Squadron, 32 Engineer Regiment along with many other individual augmentees. In Kenya the Battalion was also joined by a 4th rifle company in the form of C Company, 7 Kenyan Rifles. The exercise marked a major development in the Battalions' preparation to be the Afghanistan Theatre Reserve Battalion.

The advance party deployed in late September to set the conditions for the deployment of the major sub-units in the first weeks of October. On deployment the Companies and attached arms moved straight to their first exercise locations and into the field. During the first 10 days of the Exercise the Battle-group was split into roughly direct fire and indirect fire groupings; the rifle companies deployed to Mpala Farm training area whilst the J Battery group (including the



Mortar Platoon) moved to the warmer environs of Archers' Post to pepper the arid landscape with high explosive.

During this first phase the rifle companies were given a large amount of space, time and resources to continue developing basic individual skills, building on previous training whilst

beginning to operate in a Battle-group environment with Engineers, Fire Support Groups (FSGs) and Fire Support Teams (FSTs). The company commanders initially put their companies' through their paces on low level live firing, building up to platoon live firing. The first period also saw the Companies run through a 4 day DTES package to begin to introduce force on force, complex human and physical terrain and simulate the realities of casualty evacuation (Casevac) to test the full skills of the Companies. Indeed at many times the Casevac chain was tested for real with Elephant charges, snake bites and the effects of the uncompromising heat.

After the first 10 days the centre of mass of the Battle-group moved to the northern Archers' Post training area to focus on Combined-Arms live firing. The companies were put through a testing live firing package by the excellent 4 SCOTS permanent range team. The package included a number of Company attacks in varied terrain, with the Mortars and 105mm Light Gun in support throughout. Most memorable for the majority of soldiers was the new Forward Operating Base (FOB) defence shoot in the far east of the area. The recently completed

Afghanistan style FOB was easily big enough for a company in defence, indeed could have held far more. The mortars and 105mm fired in the support role from inside the FOB replicating practice in Afghanistan and allowing the soldiers of the companies to see indirect fire in action. The 360 degree arcs of fire provided by the huge Kenyan training area were a new experience for the majority of the Battalion; the memory will not be one to fade quickly. The final part of this phase was the first Battle-group level activity; the Battle-group live attack onto a complicated compound and trench system. The attack provided the headquarters with the first opportunity to conduct battle procedure, and gave the light step-up headquarters its first run out. The attack was a great success with the complexity of combined arms (including guns and aviation) well integrated, all with Commander 7 Armoured Brigade looking on.



After a day of vital maintenance on well worn kit and equipment the Battle-group began its build up to the Collective Training level 4 event with a Battle-group FTX. The Commanding Officer took the opportunity to exercise his companies around the massive OI Kanjo (Big Elephant) feature, giving the Regimental Signals Officer something of a challenge at the same time. The three day run out provided the headquarters with its first challenge which saw the Battalion 2IC, Major Mick Aston, stretching his staff officers to their full potential. A busy time ensued with conventional attacks, an element of counter-insurgency operations and concluded with a Strike Operation by C (Northamptonshire) Company.



The final phase of the exercise was, after more maintenance and a 150km Battle-group move, the deployment onto the test exercise, the Brigade FTX run by Commander 7 Armoured Brigade. The exercise scenario saw a complicated enemy picture with both conventional forces and an element of insurgency, though the conventional aspect came to dominate the exercise. During the first day of the Exercise the Battle-group deployed completely on foot (courtesy of a 'blown' vehicle bridge) onto the scenic Lolldaiga training area in the Kenyan highlands. The rifle companies inserted onto the area under cover of darkness and quickly cleared their areas of Operations, proving the Battalion to be swift and agile in its approach.

The following 5 days contained a series of ever more arduous attacks onto the elusive enemy (5RRF and 4 SCOTS) as they retreated to the north. Throughout the ever present 360 degree insurgent threat reminded all of the ultimate Afghan training goal. The final attack of an arduous and testing week involved a long Battle-group move prior to a classic dawn attack onto an enemy headquarters location. Whilst challenging both in terms of the harsh terrain, distances and thinking enemy the Poachers rose to the challenge to a man. The ultimate reward for the Battle-group came in the final after-action review where the Brigade Commander applauded the Poachers in their performance and awarded the sought after Collective Training level 4 on the Battalion. In his assessment the Poachers has been particularly strong at the junior command level where many Battalions falter; surely a aspect that bodes well for the future.

After the hardships of a month on Exercise the Battle-group spent the final few days in Kenya handing over equipment to 2 PARA and enjoying adventure training across Kenya with A (Lincolnshire) Company enjoying an African experience in the Kenyan highlands, B (Leicestershire) Company and D (Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire) Company enjoying the sun, sea and sand of Mombassa whilst C (Northamptonshire) Company enjoyed the activities on offer at Lake Naivasha. After a few days relaxing all members of the Battalion can now reflect on a job well done in Kenya and look forward to Christmas in the knowledge that the Battalion is thoroughly well prepared for Pre-Deployment Training after Easter.

