

# Welcome to Camp Guilfoyle



**It wasn't quite Army boot camp, but it was as close as the Australia Federal Police gets; rows of tents, portable shower blocks, backpacks and rations.**

The distinctive smell of insect repellent hung in the hot, humid air of North Queensland, but it wasn't mosquitoes that proved to be one of the most annoying challenges, it was spiders, snakes and, believe it or not, possums.

Welcome to Camp Guilfoyle where the AFP carried out intensive pre-deployment training near Townsville for the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI).

“It was actually surprising how few mosquitoes there were and it was only a concern between dusk and dawn,” Peace Operations team leader Mick Jarratt said.

“As long as you had your sleeves down and had smothered yourself in insect repellent you were OK.

“But there were lots of spiders and snakes — big ones too — and when we went out on our navigation exercises people were treading very heavily. Being police we're not stealthy like soldiers, which was probably a good thing.



## Although there were lectures, the classrooms were anything but traditional.

“We saw one snake that stretched across the width of the road; one student was bitten by a spider.”

While an encounter with a snake or spider can be unpleasant, the most tenacious critters proved to be possums.

“We had to be acutely aware that if we left food out it was going to be raided by possums and scraps and rubbish would end up scattered all over camp.”

It was the first time a CivPol Peace Operations Pre-Deployment Training Program (CPOPTP) had been conducted outside Canberra.

“The idea was to do the training as close as possible to the mounting base, which was Townsville. So the AFP negotiated with the Australian Defence Force to use the High Range Training Area near Townsville,” Federal Agent Jarratt said.

Although there were lectures, the classrooms were anything but traditional. Instead of an air-conditioned theatre there were large tents, with a portable power supply to run powerpoint presentations.

The training team also included Keith White, Craig Sheehan, Steve Walsh, Stuart Bonner, Geoff Turner, Greg Bardwell and Hans Popp, who was overseeing driver training.

The standard CPOPTP course was adapted to suit the Solomon Islands deployment.

“The CPOPTP course usually runs with a good deal of volunteer support to get the numbers we need for some of the activities, so we had to make some changes to suit the working environment we had up there,” Federal Agent Jarratt said.

Key training areas covered living in the field, four wheel driving skills, remote first aid, navigation, bush cooking and use of general issue equipment.

There were four back-to-back courses, each running for six days.

“The instructors were split into two teams, with one team running a course, whilst the other team helped out in role play situations — acting as injured victims during exercises and things like that. Then the teams would swap over.”

Participants came from the AFP, Australian Protective Service (APS) and members from Pacific Island Countries (PICs).

“Each group of around 30 was split into three teams. They were bused out to us for six days then bused back into Townsville for their medical and mission specific information including cultural briefings, which were done by the Malunggang Indigenous Officers Network.”

Participants were highly motivated and willing to learn as much as they could before they deployed to the Solomon Islands.

“They all bonded very quickly in their teams,” Federal Agent Jarratt said.

“It became members versus the elements — and the instructors.”



We had injured role players out in the field and the students would practice their navigation skills by getting to the wounded then giving them first aid treatment.

The training provided great insight into living in a base camp with basic facilities.

“Personal hygiene is critical. As we say to the students, it’s easy to be dirty for a week, but a lot harder for six months and more dangerous to your health.

Good hygiene is also critical in the close living conditions. Even though each person has their own tent, they are usually pitched at team sites.

The only contentious matter regarding living arrangements during the training arose from the large tent which housed some of the instructors.

“There was one bloke in particular in that tent, who’ll remain nameless, who had a major snoring problem and was lucky to survive the four weeks; there was almost a mutiny.”

The snoring was allegedly so loud it forced some of the instructors to sleep out in their hoochies!

It was important to get a good night’s sleep to meet the challenges of each day, which usually began at around 6.30am.

“Often the days started with some amazing singing when we had the Pacific Island guys on camp,

particularly the Fijians and Samoans,” Federal Agent Jarratt said.

“They could all sing and we would be treated to their dulcet tones fairly early in the mornings. They put us Australians to shame.”

After breakfast, lectures or activities began at 8am and continued until around 4pm with night activities most evenings.

While the days were long for participants, they were even longer for the instructors who had to plan for the next day.

“It’s amazing what you can do if you have to. You can actually put in much longer days than you think. That’s one of the things courses like this show you. You can adjust fairly quickly.”

First aid is also a critical part of the training.

“It’s important that those going on deployment can deal with illness, injuries and situations that could be life threatening,” Federal Agent Jarratt said.

“Not only do you need to be able to look after yourself, but your mates as well.”

After lectures first aid skills were tested during a casevac (casualty evacuation) exercise.

“We had injured role players out in the field and the students would practice their navigation skills by getting to the wounded then giving them first aid treatment.

“They had to deal with broken legs with bones sticking out, chest and gunshot wounds and head injuries.”

Students had to treat the injuries and move patients to a location designated for an aeromedical evacuation.

“Most of our patients managed to survive.”

United Nations research shows that motor vehicle accidents represent a major risk in such missions, so four wheel drive training was a must.

“Generally the roads in the places we visit are not like Australian roads and you need a high degree of skill to be able to get around without getting into serious trouble.”

Navigation is a key component in any deployment whether in a vehicle or on foot and the course included a couple of day and night navigation exercises.

“No-one managed to get lost and we always had an instructor with them to point them in the right direction, plus they all had radio communications,” Federal Agent Jarratt said.

Adding an unplanned element to one of the navigation exercises was a large controlled burn.

“The burn was within 200m of our base camp area and ran along a strip of six or seven kilometers long and a kilometre wide; it was a big burn that smouldered for weeks.”

A short pack march followed lectures on patrol planning with students given a scenario and asked to work out what they would take on a three-day patrol.

“We get them to prepare their packs and walk for around three-and-a-half kilometres to show how a manageable weight early in the piece can become quite a burden fairly quickly when you have your house on your back.”

The average pack weighs 15-20kg, depending on whether you need to carry water, which is one of the heaviest items needed in a hot environment.

The pack is standard issue for deployments and includes a tent, sleeping bag, bedroll, stove, first aid kit, tools and insect repellent.

“We give students an introduction to all the tools and use them during exercises, so they become familiar with all the equipment.”

Of course, being physically fit helps and the instructors always try to lead by example.

“We undertake all the activities with the students,” Federal Agent Jarratt said.

“On one level this is important so we can act as safety officers, but on a more macro level it’s important because we want to show students we’re not asking





them to do anything that's impossible or something we're not prepared to do ourselves."

The lectures and training culminate in a major exercise where the new skills from medical to negotiation and navigation are put to the test.

Despite the intense schedule, there was downtime factored into the training.

"One of the objects of the training is to get people used to living outside the urban environment, so free time was planned.

"A big problem on missions can be boredom. People have downtime, but there are no televisions, videos or computer games.

"They have to learn to fill their time, be self-reliant and find ways to amuse themselves that don't require modern technology."

Australians often spend their downtime overseas doing things for local communities.

"They really get involved and work with the locals, building things, coaching sporting teams; getting in touch with the real meaning of community."

While the Townsville training program has been rated a resounding success, future CPOPTPs will be moved back to Canberra.

"Logistically it is so much easier for us to run a program from here with all the facilities we have available, including the driver training through TISC (Transport Industry Skills Centre) in Sutton."

The successful training elements developed for the Solomon Islands deployment will now be integrated into next year's CPOPTP courses.

The standard program will take into account UN and regional commitments with 500 people expected to go through the courses next year.

# Success through dedication and partnerships

**The quality of the people within the Australian Federal Police and the strong partnerships they have developed were critical to the success of the Solomon Islands training, despite the logistical challenges of running the course, according to Director, Learning and Development, Julie Drew.**

“The sense of partnership, the sense of pride and that real sense of mateship were what brought it all together for the Townsville training,” Ms Drew said. “That common purpose is the glue that brings teams like this together.”

There is no questioning the challenges in organising a program so far away from the normal training base in Canberra, particularly within a short time frame.

“The ability of the AFP to be able to put something together like this so quickly was a reflection on the quality of people we have, the resources that they can draw on and their ability to be very responsive and innovative.”

In such a resource-intensive exercise at a remote location, one of the first challenges was getting equipment to Townsville.

Driver Training team member Hans Popp worked with John Hebron of the Transport Industry Skills Centre (TISC) to ensure the right expertise.

“TISC turned themselves inside out. It is a great example of an AFP partner doing everything they could to support us.”

“Everybody did everything they could to make sure things worked and worked well. The level of cooperation was superb.”

Peace Operations Team Leader Mick Jarratt was on the ground in Townsville.

“We had incredible support in Townsville, particularly from the Joint Logistics Unit North Queensland (JLUNQ),” Federal Agent Jarratt said.

“The Army provided us with equipment, tents and food for the duration of our stay; the food alone consisted of around 2000 army ration packs.”

“We couldn’t have done it without the help of the Army, particularly Lieutenant Colonel David Stevens and Warrant Officer 2 Mick Smith.”

Federal Agent Jarratt also has plenty of praise for the efforts of Keith White and his team from Learning and Development.

“Keith White arranged the syllabus, coordinated the movement of all the guest lecturers and arranged extra staff from Learning and Development for the duration of the training,” Federal Agent Jarratt said.

“He and his team also arranged for the transport of all equipment used in the training from Canberra to Townsville; without their efforts the training wouldn’t have been possible.

“From a management perspective it showed we’ve got some exceptionally good people out there as team leaders and team members who are able to respond to everything we throw their way.

“There didn’t seem to be anything that was too much or too hard — people just rose to the challenge and had fun doing it.”



# Taming the beast



Like the terrain of the Solomon Islands, the terrain of north Australia can be unforgiving.

**One wrong manoeuvre and the dust can suck you in; fine dust that lies metres thick ready to claim the unsuspecting driver.**

Like the terrain of the Solomon Islands, the terrain of north Australia can be unforgiving. Sometimes dry and dusty, sometimes gravelly with soft edges, shaley, or boggy after a sudden tropical downpour.

With such a range of conditions facing members of the Solomons mission, an intensive four wheel drive coaching session was an important part of the pre-deployment training.

The Transport Industry Skills Centre (TISC) provides the training in partnership with the AFP at the Sutton Road driver training complex in Canberra, but taking it to the tropics in Townsville was logistically challenging.

Driver Training team member Hans Popp worked with Keith White from Learning and Development and TISC's John Hebron to quickly put things in place.

"We got the equipment we needed and then took a core of four instructors up to Townsville to carry out the training," Mr Popp said.

"We also brought in an extra person each week, so in essence we had five experts at any one time who all worked hard to get the students ready.

“Our brief was to skill them in driving a four wheel drive, plus familiarise them with the components of four wheel drive vehicles and how they actually work as opposed to standard motor vehicles.”

The instructors quickly discovered they were dealing with a wide range of skills.

The first day of driver training was spent on theory, with an overview of how the vehicles work.

“We needed the participants to understand you have to drive a four wheel drive vehicle differently to a standard car, especially when you are in mountainous conditions.

“So we had to explain where the vehicle can actually go, what it is that makes the front wheels drive and that every wheel drives looking for the best grip.

“They also needed to understand if they were to drive a vehicle on bitumen in four wheel drive they would get what’s called ‘wind up’.”

In simplistic terms this means that when a car turns a corner all the wheels are turning at different rates and the car is designed to compensate. But if a vehicle is being driven through a corner in four wheel drive on a bitumen surface the front wheels will be turning at different speeds to the back wheels and it puts excessive pressure on the mechanics of the vehicle.

“Even though we showed a video, had lots of discussion in the classroom and gave lots of facts and figures it wasn’t until we stood everybody in a circle and drove around them in the dirt in a circle that they could actually see what wind up did.

“You could almost see the penny drop.”

Another important aspect covered was how to negotiate various types of terrain.

“We spent quite a bit of time in relation to reading the terrain and placing the footprint of the vehicle,” Mr Popp said.

“We also looked extensively at recovery techniques, which we considered very important considering the wet, boggy, mountainous terrain they could encounter in the Solomon Islands.

“These conditions make it really dangerous and it can be easy to lose a vehicle in a hole.”

Basic vehicle maintenance was also part of the course where participants’ knowledge varied, although Mr Popp did concede that “at least most people knew where the engine was”.

“We actually jacked up a car and got them to have a bit of a look underneath so they could see differentials and things like that in operation,” he said.

“But we mainly concentrated on the vital fluids in the vehicle — what to look for, how to top them up — and



also wheel size and tyre pressure, which are critical to four wheel driving.”

Then it was down to the nitty-gritty of driving with the first real test being to reverse in a straight line for a kilometre.

“A good measure of someone’s driving skills is how they manipulate a vehicle in reverse gear. If they can keep it in a straight line we then get them to steer from side to side. We don’t allow them to use their rear view mirror because once they’re on a steep mountainside with a fully loaded vehicle they won’t be able to use it. This takes practice.

“One particular participant managed to turn the vehicle in the wrong direction, which is quite an achievement if you’re supposed to be going in a straight line.

“But what they lacked in skills, they certainly made up for in enthusiasm.”

Hills were another challenge.

“It was quite an eye-opener for many of the Pacific Islanders and they were keen to develop good techniques that they could take back home with them,” Mr Popp said.

“There were a lot of thanks, which is reward enough for an instructor, but several were so grateful they gave us big bear hugs; some of these guys are huge so they’d end up nearly crushing us.

“Another thing we found interesting was the way they sometimes sat back and observed a situation instead of jumping in and doing something about it.

“While on the face of it this seemed to show a lack of urgency, sometimes it meant they came up with a sensible solution, instead of rushing into a risky situation.”





This was highlighted during an exercise that involved pulling a vehicle out of a hole.

“There was some debate about what knot to tie in the rope and some people wanted to go for a particular fancy knot that is incredibly difficult to undo. Their solution was just to cut the knot off when they were finished.

“The secret here was to ensure that everyone understood that we were not dealing with mistakes but great learning opportunities that would prevent mistakes with serious consequences in the real world.”

The training was designed to culminate with the final exercise which brought driving skills together with the other skills learnt during the six-day camp.

“This was crunch time and it was so pleasing to see most rise to the challenge.

“Of the 120 participants we only had eight who didn’t quite reach the benchmark; that’s a good outcome.”



“After much debate one of the Islanders stepped forward and tied a bowline, which is perfect for the job and can be undone no matter how much weight has been put on it. He got a good cheer from the rest of the group.”

This sense of camaraderie was strong throughout all the courses, particularly among the Pacific Islanders and it wasn’t unusual to have a carload of them singing at the top of their lungs.

“They had great voices and would be belting out songs — mostly national anthems from the Rugby Union — and we’d have to yell out instructions to get heard.”

The different cultural approaches threw up a few other challenges for instructors.

“During one of the major scenarios one of the navigators managed to get the group way off track and there was an issue with him losing face in front of his peers,” Mr Popp said.

“As much as I can sympathise, during an exercise where timing is critical, and I had to point out the fact that we weren’t where we were supposed to be.

# Food for thought



The daily combat ration packs came in five menus, with no shortage of food:

## Combat Ration A

Beef and vegetables  
 Beef and spaghetti,  
 Powered sports drink (lemon/lime and orange)  
 Biscuits (Jam Sandwich/Shortbread)  
 Chewing Gum  
 Curry Powder  
 Freeze dried rice  
 Fruit grains (apricot)  
 Fruit (peaches)  
 Muesli Bar (ANZAC/apricot and coconut)  
 Tomato sauce  
 Soup powder (chicken)

## Additional foods in all menus

Drinking chocolate  
 Coffee  
 Tea bags  
 Biscuits/crispbread  
 Chocolate  
 Candy  
 Cheddar cheese  
 Chocolate  
 Condensed milk  
 Muesli bar  
 Salt and Pepper  
 Tabasco Sauce  
 Sugar  
 Vegetable extract

## Non food items

Plastic bag  
 Can opener  
 Safety matches  
 Soaped scoring pad  
 Rubber bands  
 Toilet paper