

CQ BRAVO – MIA in South Johnston

The year was 1991 and 2/4 RAR was out on exercise at South Johnston which is around the Tully area. Not the most ideal location but then working in a jungle environment was what we were practicing at the time.

The A Echelon was set up in a herring bone formation along a track heading up along some high ground. There was myself, John Mark and Greg Williams as part of the CQMS B Coy party.

The exercise was going well and the resupplies were a bit of fun navigating the sloppy, muddy tracks with the self-made above head juke box console playing when we were out as a bit of background music. Of course it was only on low so as not to rock up to the platoon or company locs looking like a pack of rappers in a pimp mobile.

LTCOL Mike Smith was the CO and we had MAJ Patterson as OC Admin Coy. The story would not be complete without a couple of nicknames: the CO was the winner and the OC was the grinner.

One of the funniest things happened during this ex. Myself as CQ had to conduct a resup by chopper to the company one afternoon. No problems as we had done these before. Marksy and Willy did not come out as the room on the chopper was limited.

All good; was travelling with SSGT Tony Sherlock from the RAP and we were chatting away. Got to the resup point and was lowered down followed by a cargo net full of rats and water. On landing I was told that B Coy had a prisoner and also a NODUFF casualty.

The priority was the NODUFF who was loaded on and the chopper went away to deliver the NODUFF to Innisfail and then would return for myself and the prisoner.

B Coy finished their resup and then headed back into the bush leaving me and the prisoner with a cargo net full of rubbish and empty water jerries. It was meant to be a short resup mission so I was dressed in just my patrol order of webbing and rifle. The prisoner also only had his patrol order as he was never meant to get caught,

It was not to be a short resup mission. Later that day when it became dark the prisoner and I resigned ourselves to the fact that we were there for the night. Neither of us had rations and it was wet and cold. We were hungry and proceeded to go through the rubbish bags looking for any rats that had been discarded as the blokes never used the full ration pack due to weight.

Score... we got enough to at least settle down the bellies.

Meanwhile back in the echelon ... Marksy and Willy had gone down the 95 CP to find out where their leader was. After numerous radio calls by the CP it was discovered that CQ B Coy was happy as a pig in poo at Innisfail for the night. Lucky bastard they thought, hot meals and maybe a nice farter for the night...prick!!!!

But then the word came back that the SSGT at Innisfail was actually Tony Sherlock and not the CQ...where the fuck was he????

The realisation set in that I was still out in the bush, no farter gear, no wet weather gear and just out there somewhere. Nothing could be done until the morning.

Meanwhile back at the rubbish point the prisoner and I fashioned a rough farter and slept close to each other around a small fire we had started. I didn't really sleep well as I thought *"this is it, I'll get bitten by a snake during the night and fucking die out here."*

Morning arrived and I was alive as was the prisoner. Had some more left over rats for breakfast and waited. After a few hours I told the prisoner to wait near the rubbish and I would head out a few hundred meters and then return and then take another direction out to see if there was a track....there wasn't.

A bit after mid morning we were resting and then we heard some talking and here through the bush comes a B Coy patrol. They had been sent to find us and as this was our last known location they found us pretty easy.

CSM Peter Orth headed up the group. They were a bit of a sight for sore eyes and we got our shit on and after radioing in that they had found us, they took us out to a track where we were going to be picked up by a vehicle. Peter Orth gave us the direction that the vehicle would be coming from and then they headed back into the bush to continue with their task.

Prisoner and I waited there for a while and then thought fuck this let's go and headed off in the direction the vehicle was supposed to come from.

The track was a slippery fucking bog and the boots just became chockers with mud...we were pissed. We walked for some kilometres until we heard a vehicle approaching. Thank fuck ... we were shagged.

Get our asses in the back and then back to the echelon. Well bugger me we get to just across the river from the ech: can see the smoke from the cooks choofers and the bloody bridge is mined or something. Screwed again...

We get across "out of EX" and here comes Patterson walking down the road with a big grin on his face...me thinking I hope your smiling because you are happy to see us and not because you thinks it's funny....FARK!!!

Pass the prisoner off to CSM Admin and I'm back to my farter to get some food in my belly and have a chuckle and find out the other side of what was said in the echelon when they thought I was in Innisfail.

Looking back...it was an experience and really, I find it funny when I think about it. Thank goodness that Marksy had the CDF to go and tell some fucker "Hey the boss isn't back yet!!"...otherwise I would have still been out there...all good and a great yarn to relive.

