



THE STAR

Issue 6, Final 2013

Welcome to the final edition of The Star.

Our return to Australia is literally just round the corner. By the time you read this our replacements will be on site and handovers will be well under way. Our grins are getting wider and our replacements seem to have boundless energy and enthusiasm. I suspect we were like that six months ago!

Right at the start of our time together I asked the FCU members to be: safe always; look out for their mates; be open minded; and to be professional. I'm delighted that we have managed to achieve this across the MEAO. I still receive comments on the excellent service that FCU is providing to its customers. Those comments are testament to the attitude and approach each and every one of you has taken on this deployment. I told you all that I could not do this job without your help. You have not let me down and I'm immensely proud of the outcomes you have achieved. I'm confident we leave the MEAO a better place than when we arrived. That is the result of our teamwork. Well done and thank you.

To all our family and friends we thank you for the support you have provided whether it's been through the regular Skype calls or the food parcels of goodies that kept us going. Please accept my thanks for the contribution you have made that has allowed my team to concentrate on the job at hand. We are looking forward to some well-earned leave and the chance to be back in your lives again.

And finally, as this is our last edition, I want to extend my grateful thanks to our editor, Sonia Crozier. Her willingness to help, constructive suggestions and all round brilliance to turn our articles into a professional newsletter have been fantastic and very much appreciated. Thank you, Sonia.

That's all folks!



Regards,

Wing Commander Gordon Pert
Commanding Officer FCU-9

AFGHANISTAN SIGNAL SQUADRON

OC

It is surprising, on reflection, how fast this deployment has gone. I understand completely that this perception will differ from person to person, and certainly this may not be the feeling for many back at home, but for me the time has passed quickly.

I think this has a lot to do with the fact that the Squadron has been so busy throughout the deployment. As I said very early on in the Email that I send to all Squadron members each month (and I'm sure everyone reads), this deployment is not about simply keeping the network running and our users happy. The FCU-9 deployment has been marked by constant change to the network in all of our locations. In order to effect change correctly a number of things must happen;

- 1) You have to know everything about what you are supporting right now for you to be able to plan the changes required.
- 2) You have to understand and plan for the future, which given the uncertainty in many of the organisations we support, is no small task.
- 3) You need to maintain services for all users as they expect as normal and react to issues that they identify in a timely and friendly fashion.
- 4) When making changes you need to keep the time that the services are not available to a minimum, which often requires a doubling of services in old and new locations, or having to work in the pre-dawn hours when the user requirement is lowest.



These steps have been mantra for the Squadron throughout our deployment. They have made each individual work a number of roles and conduct a number of tasks that they would not normally be asked to do. It has also meant, for me at least, that time has passed quickly.

As the deployment draws to a close and the focus of the Squadron moves toward the preparation for our replacements, a period of introspection begins. This involves a summary of the big ticket tasks that the Squadron has done to project to the world in our post deployment and achievement briefs. For each location that the Squadron is deployed to, a brief summary may look like (but is certainly not limited to):

Multi National Base – Tarin Kowt:

- Movement of all staff to concentrate in one area in preparation for drawdown.
- Flyaway node created and raised, and reduced equipment and manning.
- Supporting Tarin Kowt to the last day.



Kandahar:

- Movement of the 205 Corps Advisory Team and ongoing support.
- Planning for the future of Kandahar Airfield Australian communications support.

Kabul:

- Getting photos of the Troop Commander and Second in Command into as many magazines and newspapers as possible.
- The raising of the Afghanistan National Army Officer Academy.
- Planning and implementing a complete refresh of all laptops in that location, from which the Squadron then followed suit.

In addition to these big bullet points are the countless improvements and displays of initiative that Squadron members have conducted throughout the tour.

It has been a privilege and an honour to serve with all of the members of Afghanistan Signal Squadron. In all honesty every member of the Squadron can hold their head high that they made a real difference in their time in Afghanistan, and that they left the network in a better state than they found it. The positive comments I have received in each location from the users that we support has been constant throughout the deployment. This paints a clear picture that the attitude, professionalism and esprit of the Squadron was where it needed to be from the start. I know that the handover will be conducted successfully, and we will leave Afghanistan with the knowledge that our replacements have been empowered to continue the good work.

To the Squadron HQ that has worked with me to steer the ship, many thanks as well. The achievements of the Squadron are in no small part the result of your efforts and planning.

Finally, and most importantly, a sincere thank you to all of the families and loved ones that have enabled each member of the Squadron to perform their roles. There is no difference in measure of the sacrifice that you have made with those of us who are deployed. Enjoy having your loved ones back, and make the most of the post-deployment leave and this year's festive season.

Major Jeremy Mikus



GULF STATES SQUADRON

OC

From our time up in Darwin conducting Force Prep to our arrival to the Middle East Area of Operations, the past 9 months have been a busy and a stressful time for the men and women of Gulf States Squadron. There have been many memories created over the past year. Some of them have been good whilst others have been bad; through it all we have worked together as a team and left our indelible mark. By the time we handover to FCU 10, the Squadron will have processed over 25,000 helpdesk jobs, moved over 30,000kgs of safehand mail and left the communications systems we are responsible for in a better state than when we took over in May.

McGoo, Colin and I have had our work cut out for us in managing the operations and affairs of the Squadron. With Colin acting as the Cerberus to the Hades that is the Squadron office, we have been guarded against the evils of personnel administration issues and he has kept us all entertained with his now world-infamous dry sense of humour. He has always been there to listen, offer advice or support us in our sporting endeavours. McGoo's ability to juggle chainsaws in between cigarette breaks has kept the Squadron's daily operations running smoothly. His ability to dumb down and explain the more technical aspects of issues has enabled me to at least look like I know what I am talking about when I have had to brief the CO.

To everyone in the Squadron, I would like to express my eternal gratitude. Your professionalism and candour throughout the deployment have ensured that I will be able to look back on this deployment and proudly say that I was a member of FCU-9. Be proud of what we have achieved, we have succeeded where other rotations failed; we did it all in style and with our infectious, and often unique, sense of humour intact.

Enjoy your leave, take some time to relax and reconnect with the friends and family who are eagerly awaiting our return. We have certainly earned it! Without your support this circus would not have operated as smoothly as it has and I would probably have ended up as a permanent resident at a funny farm.



I look forward to catching up for a drink (or three) with as many of you who are in Sydney for ANZAC day next year.

Leut James Gowling
Royal Australian Navy

*Leut Gowling adding Navy
decoration to his building entry*



FCU CIS Det 1

Afghanistan National Army Officer Academy

Editor's note: To assist with the reading pleasure of all non-military folk, acronyms have been expanded in this article! They're new, they didn't know...☺

NO NODE LIKE ANAOA NODE

There are many words that you could use to describe the FCU Communication Information Systems Detachment (CIS Det) at Afghanistan National Army Officer Academy (ANAOA). Professional. Efficient. Handsome. Yes, you certainly *could* use those words.

But you would not.

Because they would be lies.

Hello! I'm SIG Carroll, and I'm the local technician at FCU's newest little sub-node that could, the Afghan National Army Officer Academy CIS detachment. Abandoned back in Darwin like a box full of adorable puppies when FCU-9 left in April, SIG Maslo, SIG Dobe, SIG Ritchie, SIG Campbell and I had resigned ourselves to a year spent in the sunny embrace of the dry season and all its attendant backpackers with loose morals. Though maybe not Maslo, Dobe and Ritchie (all in happy relationships).

But alas! Our dreams of kicking back at 1CSR and indulging in the delights of rear details and another RBG MRE (Readiness Battle Group Mission Rehearsal Exercise) were soon to be dashed. WO1 Tara Duffy approached us all individually, carefully guarding a secret document. Our curiosity was piqued. What could it be? Guaranteed winning lottery numbers? A secret family recipe for haggis? A stack of stock take discrepancies that needed correction? Crossing our fingers for the latter, we were disappointed again when informed we were being nominated for a trip to establish a new node at ANAOA. Wiping away the tears that were now streaming down our faces, we steeled ourselves for the journey ahead, like medieval warriors who were all steely and stuff.

Fast-forward three months. The scene is Canberra in winter. ANAOA CIS 1, consisting of Dobe, Maslo and I, had just met our new leader, operator SGT Cosgrove, commanding his first CIS detachment and doing a spot-on impersonation of a deer in the headlights. After a quick introductory brief we were ushered into a dingy back room of DNOC (Defence Network Operation Centre) where we were either about to be chained up and murdered, or begin conducting our MRE (Mission Rehearsal Exercise). After examining the state of our DLAN (Deployable Local Area Network) equipment, the former began to look much more appealing. (Who needs a keyboard or a screen on your laptop, after all?) But we persevered and after a one-week extension, we had something that vaguely resembled a working node.

After Canberra, it was straight off to Adelaide for a new round of exciting force concentration admin. Here we were sized up for sexy new multi-cam and TBAS (Tactical Body Armour System), and issued our new weapons, complete with ACOG (Advanced Combat Optical Gunsight) we had no idea how to use. But the important development was our new CD



(Cosgrove Directive): “Don’t Do What Dobe Don’t Does”. CD 001/13 was developed in response to SIG Dobe’s... how shall we say... absent-mindedness.

Fast-forward another two months. Our crack team has arrived in theatre, ready to set up in our temporary home: an office shared with the UK J6 team. (You’ve never heard an IT helpdesk person swear like a British IT helpdesk person.) Did we let the fact there was no furniture stop us? Hell no! We hunkered down on the floor like the creepiest members of a schoolgirls’ slumber party you’ve ever seen and got to work. Two weeks, some “borrowed” desks and some tense negotiations over chair pricing between SGT Cosgrove and the local shopkeepers later, and we’d built the sparkling CIS office/MUF (Multi User Facility) that I’m currently writing this scintillating article in.

We’ve been here over a month now and the work has not stopped since we hit the ground. Establishing a brand-new node is not a simple task - especially not in an ongoing construction zone like Camp Qargha - and ANAOA CIS has been fighting for comms in the best tradition of RASIGS (Regular Army Signallers) since our arrival. Our enemies are numerous: temperamental BGANs (Broadband Global Area Network Satellite system), experimental ILOBS (Internet Protocol Liaison Officers Briefcase System) and simple metal bunk beds that collapse like a ballet dancer in a boxing match should you even think about them (as SIG Maslo discovered getting out of bed this morning). Although the going gets tough, the tough will not be going. (The “tough” I refer to is us. We’re tough.)

With the recent arrival of SGT Duncan, SIG King and LAC Taylor of the Theatre Line Det we’ve finally started to expand our scope outside the little office that’s been our entire world so far. When it comes time to hand over to FCU-10 at the end of the month, ANAOA CIS will be completely unrecognizable from the blank slate we started with.

But there's still a long way to go till we get there! We still have new routers to configure, new laptops to roll out, a billion ILOBS bugs to squash, and a jumping castle to inflate. Above all, we must never let the UK sigs control the music. That way lies ruin. And Pitch Perfect.

Thus concludes ANAOA CIS DET 1’s first and only contribution to The STAR. Our trip may have been short, but it has certainly been sweet...to a point. Ever had one of those Sour Warheads? The kind where your face squishes up like a cat’s back door and you go, “Yuck, that’s disgusting”, before immediately unwrapping another one and doing it again? That’s ANAOA: the Sour Warhead of FCU.

Pass me another one.



AFGHANISTAN SIGNAL SQUADRON

KABUL

It wasn't that long ago that we were in Darwin completing the Certification Exercise, taking leave and saying our goodbyes at the airport. Now we are eagerly counting down the days until our replacements arrive, we fly back to AMAB and then finally back to you, our loved ones.

As we watch the countdown get lower and lower, we begin to think about the amazing time we have spent here in Kabul and what we are going to do once we get back onto Australian soil. There will be certain aspects of this place that we will not miss such as the smell of Shog; the horrible smelling fog that descends upon us as we do PT in the morning, creeps up on us whilst we have afternoon tea and fills the hallways of the building we work in. I personally will not miss walking into the bathroom of a morning and seeing a group of naked Europeans having a chat in the middle of the showers. I also know everyone here (except maybe Chris), will definitely not miss the lack of courtesy shorts used by the other nations whilst doing PT.

We have had rather a good time here in Kabul, and although we have lived and worked in each other's back pockets for the last six months, we have not killed each other... yet. There are still a few weeks left and a long flight home to go.

Over our time here we have faced a whole range of challenges that have pushed the Troop to their limits. Every time we have pushed through, seen the lighter side, made a few jokes and come out the other end stronger and closer as a Troop.

I have been very grateful for the Troop that I have had the privilege to lead over the last six months. Chris has been a great 2IC who has had the difficult task of keeping me in line and dealing with all my rubbish. Kubes, our giant vault critter, has kept the morale up across FCU with his quote of the day, despite the rest of us not knowing what he does or even if he does any work in the vault. Sharpe has been the wariest member of Troop, and has racked up the most trips outside the wire. He has also been the manliest, being the only one to retain his moustache for the entire deployment. Usher, our walking encyclopaedia, has kept us entertained with his vast knowledge of pretty much everything, although we are a little sceptical of how much is true and how much is pure confidence after being told a Chinook can lift 50 tons. Flemo, the baby of the group (although only 3 months younger than I) can always be relied upon to provide his input into a conversation two minutes too late due to the rave that is going on at his desk. Edwardo (Eduard "Del" Delacroix to Chris and just Eddie to the rest of us), has provided us with constant and thrilling updates on his new, bright green Moke for most of the deployment. Ty has provided endless entertainment by scooting down the road back from dinner and growing a very lush moustache in such an unnaturally short period of time.

Although we have had a great time here in Kabul over the last six months we are keen to get back home and we will see you all very soon.

LT T. Ng



AFGHANISTAN SIGNAL SQUADRON

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD

Greetings from KAF! Well, what a trip! By the time you are all reading this, no doubt we will be in the midst of introducing the new FCU members to where they will be living and working. Right now every member of KAF FLT is busy preparing the node for Hand Over/Take Over (HOTO). This includes updating all of our documents, cleaning and auditing so that FCU 10 gets the best start possible.

With everyone working so hard we can't help looking forward to returning home to our families and loved ones. As a result, we are moving through a list of "lasts". We recently had our last range shoot for the trip. There was a twist to our usual drills. We practised our accuracy by shooting a dart board, shooting out our best poker hand from a picture of playing cards, and shooting our service number from a grid. We had the best ammunition Sergeant to date, FSGT Danny Waldron. He even brought an extra 20 rounds, in case anyone was short.



Left: Blue wears his sunglasses at night, demonstrating you are never too cool for correct weapon handling

Below: Costa and Rob demonstrate the correct response when someone takes the last piece of dessert



Overall, this has been a fantastic trip and a great experience. The whole team has been consistently hard working, keen and focused. They have constantly found ways to do a better job and always looked for new challenges. Above all, they kept a good sense of humour and remained easily amused.

The helpdesk ensures that our users are well looked after, and even at the latest hours and after the longest days they are cheerful and pleasant to deal with. Rabs (CPL Burow) has done a fantastic job of running the helpdesk after moving across from Heron. Being very modest, any suggestion that he has done a great job will likely be met with something along the lines of, "Aw, it was alright". A new addition to the team has been Sam Bevan, from AMAB. He quickly got into the KAF FLT spirit and it feels like he has been here the whole time. He has joined in the antics of Darren (SIG Pocock) and Burnsy (LAC Burns). These two are always quick with a funny comment and are often the reason the Sergeants are shaking their heads in disbelief. Khut has taught us more than we need to know about Asian pop music and TV shows. While Dutchy has been a really quiet member, every time he does say something it has the whole room in stitches.

Because they are full of energy, like to work with their hands and have an endless stream of "great" ideas, the technicians have been unable to keep still. Costa (CPL Costantini) has been in charge of the technical detachment and done an excellent job of keeping the techs occupied, ensuring any idle hands are used constructively. His moustache has been the envy of the whole base. Benjamin (LAC Wiencke) has been the easiest tech to spot, being the tallest in the node by a long way and always walking around with a smile on his face. Because he is such a great tech, on multiple occasions Benjamin was requested, by name, to "fix the TV reception" for certain members at FOB LINDSEY. Luca (LAC Lucarelli) has been by far the most enthusiastic and outspoken tech from my point of view whether it comes to PT, routers or logistics paperwork. He was always on hand and ready to help out, whatever the job. Whilst Blue Junior (SIG Bowen) was a fantastic tech and an indispensable member of the team, the main thing that comes to mind when I consider his time here, is he and Burnsy signalling to each other with duck calls.



Not satisfied with the current selection of tables and shelves, Benjamin builds his own.

CPL Duff and LAC Mowat have spent the most time of KAF FLT supporting Heron (we try not to hold that against them). CPL Duff hasn't stopped being endlessly positive the entire trip. He claims his best accomplishment at Heron was unlocking the 6 coffees in one day achievement, but really it's the outstanding on-hand support he has given all Heron rotations. LAC Mowat has come such a long way. Starting out as a member of the helpdesk, he picked up new skills in such a short amount of time which was a fantastic help for the team. He now runs all the systems at Heron by himself on shift.



Rob (SGT Cann), our vault Sergeant, has made sure everyone's manners have been of a civilised standard. He has been enforcing this with a trick or two he picked up from an SBS TV series. When not doing that he has been busy replacing words (something which the whole of KAF FLT has picked up) and talking about our Joint User Room. Blue (CPL Kildea) is as straight talking as they come. With both Sergeants on leave he was my go-to guy and he stepped up and ran KAF FLT with me. Finally, Kliney (SGT Kline). He kept everyone in line and knew what to say and what to do in any situation. He kept me honest and would always remind me of the bigger picture. Everyone at KAF FLT got a little bit more out of this deployment with Kliney here. He had a knack for inspiring everyone to pursue one venture or another.

I would also like to thank all the friends and family back home for the support you have given KAF FLT, whether with letters, packages, phone calls or whatever else. You kept everybody sane for the whole trip, me included.

I hope our FCU-10 colleges have a safe trip over and we look forward to seeing them really soon.



Aerial view of where we have lived and worked since May



AFGHANISTAN SIGNAL SQUADRON

TARIN KOWT

OPERATORS IN TK

By CPL R. Mills

The operators of FCU 9 consist of CPL Polly Cooper (AKA Mother Duck), CPL Benjamin Biggins, CPL Aidan Kristen, SIG Benjamin Kirwood, SIG Ellen Aston, SIG Elloise Alcorn and myself. Most of us have worked in various positions in the TK Vault and some of us have had the chance to work in other areas of the MEAO (Middle East Area of Operations).

CPL Polly Cooper is affectionately known as 'Mother Duck' by SGT Brennan. Polly is the vault NCO (supervisor) and the glue that holds the vault together. She is always the first operator to work, passing on points from the boss and updating 'us' on everything to do with FCU 9 and the vault. She works hard and plays harder; she is the FCU 9 Netball Captain in the TK netball comp.



CPL Cooper & SIG Robinson at the Range



CPL Biggins at the Range

CPL Benjamin Biggins started out as the Vault NCO until Polly moved into that position. After that he became the SAFEHAND NCO in charge of sending and receiving large amounts of equipment in and out of TK (for all Australian units in TK). He has fulfilled the Mercury Administrator/VTC role and is now the Ledger Keeper, helping Polly with the day to day running of the vault.

CPL Aidan Kristen was in TK for about a month before going to 205 CAT in FOB Lindsay where he provided communication information system support and electronic counter measure support. He is now back in TK helping with SAFEHAND and other FCU 9 tasks.



SIG Benjamin Kirwood is the Mercury Administrator. Basically, he makes sure the DFMS (Defence Formal Messaging Service) is running correctly and messages coming in and out of TK are reaching the correct addresses and within the allocated time. He processes user accounts (creating, deleting and editing) and is also the VTC (Video Teleconferencing) Liaison in charge of booking the 'VTC' facility, setting up the VTC equipment and link re-establishment if the connection drops.

SIG Ellen Ashton and SIG Elloise Alcorn have worked in TK and at 205 CAT in FOB Lindsay. For the first half of her deployment, SIG Ashton stayed in TK and worked with the SAFEHAND NCO, where she assisted sending and receiving several tons of equipment within the MEAO and back to Australia. She liaised with the movers to book flights and brief SAFEHAND couriers. SIG Alcorn went to 205 CAT for the first half of her deployment and provided extra manning in CP and worked on radio's logging and passing on information to the required person. Then in the second half, SIG Ashton and SIG Alcorn swapped roles and locations.

I took over the SAFEHAND NCO role from CPL Biggins and have been assisted by SIG Ashton and SIG Alcorn. I have been in charge of sending and receiving several tons of equipment within the MEAO and back to Australia. I liaised with the movers to book flights and brief SAFEHAND couriers. I have also worked in the FCU 9 vault in Kabul and assisted WO2 Hirst with the day to day running of the vault, Mercury Administration and managing electronic counter measure equipment.

CPL Cooper, CPL Biggins, CPL Kristen and I have also conducted weapon training tests and have been safety supervisors during FCU 9 range day practises.



Range Photo - LT Pitt as Officer-In-Charge and CPL Mills as Safety Supervisor

As the deployment at TK draws to a close all the operators continue in their job roles while trying to decrease the equipment holdings of TK Troop and assist other Australian units in their draw down processes.



GULF STATES SQUADRON

BAHRAIN



THE END IS NEAR

Greetings from the Kingdom of Bahrain

CPOCIS Rick Maude

Hello again from the Kingdom of Bahrain. This edition of our newsletter brings some welcome news on a couple of fronts. Firstly, the weather here has started to cool down finally after a blistering summer of 45 degree on most days. The sun is setting considerably earlier in the evening which is heralding the Bahrain winter is on its way.... and I use the word winter very loosely! Secondly, my relief has been identified, completed his training and is now preparing to make the long trek to Bahrain in another couple of weeks.

Life here continues to be quite busy, with ongoing regular work and fixing computer issues as they arrive, but more importantly getting my handover ready for a smooth transition. There are nine Navy personnel based here in Bahrain, all of whom will be rotated out by the end of November: some of their reliefs have already arrived in country. This means creating their computer accounts, ensuring their email works and that they have the relevant access they need prior to the old team leaving. There will be a complete turnaround of the Navy personnel here over the next month, of which I will be one of the last to leave.

WOW! What a ride it has been over the past six months. I have learnt a lot of new skills, including a bit of the Arabic language. I have seen some things that have astounded me, from the 2300 year old Bahrain Fort, to the Tree of Life in the middle of the desert and more recently a tour of the Grand Mosque here in Manamah.

My Grand Mosque guide was a wonderful old native Bahraini gentleman, who was just as fascinated in Australia as I was in the mosque. The highlight of the tour was when he stood in the middle of the mosque and proceeded to sing the three verses of "Call to Prayer" then went into great detail to explain the history and meaning behind each verse. Truly a tour well worth doing.



Grand Mosque



Grand Mosque Main Hall





So what is next for me??? On my return to Australia I will be Senior Instructor at Defence Force School of Signals, Maritime Wing and based in HMAS STIRLING, WA. This is a great posting as my family remained in Perth hoping for a WA posting. From there who knows, I could be coaxed to go back to sea on a WA based ship... but my crystal ball is still a bit cloudy and I'm in no hurry to go away again. I'm just hoping that my new office is as comfortable as my office up here in Bahrain!!!

As my time in Bahrain comes to a rapid close, I sit and look back on what I have achieved and hope that the great work we do up here will continue. To all my FCU-9 "team-mates" I hope you too have enjoyed your time, wherever you have been. I have made some fantastic new friends within FCU and hope we can keep in touch in the future. To all who were deployed with FCU-9, your efforts, time, and dedication to duty has been exemplary and in the finest traditions of the Australian Defence Force.

So to sign off for the last time, in true Navy tradition.....



"I wish you all Fair Winds and Following Seas!"



*Random photo courtesy of WOFF
Benjamin Wright*

*LT Nathan Dove: "I don't care
what you do with this photo, my
arms look **awesome!**"*



GULF STATES SQUADRON

QATAR

As our time in Qatar is very quickly drawing to a close, it's a good opportunity for us to take stock of what we've achieved. The first surprise is how quickly the time has gone and how much we've actually achieved over this period.

Some of us have used this fantastic opportunity to gain a greater understanding and experience of the numerous cultures that are living and working around the base. We have been more fortunate than most to be able to interact with both military and civilian personnel from several countries including Dubai, Qatar, Belgium, Italy, US, Canada, Britain, France, Sri Lanka, and Nepal on both a personal and professional level which has given us an appreciation for our conditions both here and especially at home.

It has been refreshing for me to see over the last 6 months the professional manner in which everyone has conducted themselves whilst dealing with a variety of personnel. Everyone has used the deployment as a great training and development opportunity from both a personal and professional perspective, and I'm happy to say I've witnessed significant growth in our junior members, who've stepped up and taken on the responsibility of NCO's throughout the deployment..... excellent job guys.



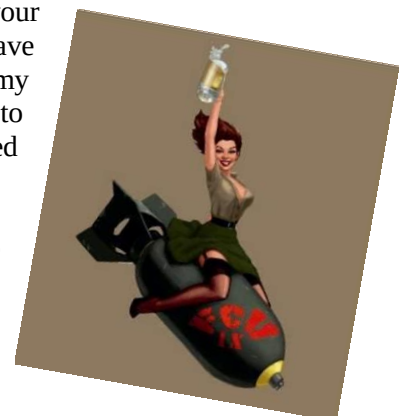
Some of our personal highlights include the B1 tours, numerous fun runs, weight lifting competitions, fat Saturday, 4WD adventures through the sand dunes and of course everyone's favourite, the spirit lifting "all you can eat chicken wing Thursday". That's not to say there aren't others, in fact there's probably too many to mention, but overall it's been an interesting 9 month journey from Force Prep through to the home straight. Everyone here is looking forward to getting home to our normal family lives as mums, dads, sons and daughters etc again.

We are all very proud of what we have been able to achieve here, knowing that we've built on what the previous rotation achieved and handing over a system in a better state than we inherited it. For those of us who deployed for the first time, it's been a steep learning curve, especially when we hit the ground running, but I've no doubt we've all come out a little wiser from the experience.

For our loved ones I would like to express our thanks to you for your thoughts, support and continual supply of care packages from home that have made our time away that little bit easier. I would finally like to thank my guys for their efforts over the last 9 months, with their continual drive to always improve the systems and services that was being delivered throughout the node.

We hope our family and friends have enjoyed what we have been able to share with them and we look forward to seeing you soon.

With our final sign off,
Thanks **Rany & the Qatards, out!**



AFGHANISTAN SIGNAL SQUADRON

COMMUNICATIONS CONTROL GROUP (CCG)

AFGHAN CCG – Bringing the Class



Well hello! Let me introduce myself, my name is FSGT Danny Waldron. I am the Air Force infiltrator into the CCG, which has been mentioned in a few past editions of this newsletter.

So I will take this opportunity to clear up a few a few things from some of the previous editions, firstly I brought the class to this OPS group, and secondly I had three serves of ribs at TGI's in two weeks, not in one week, and was forced into it each time (ok, that bit may not be true).

This trip has been an interesting experience, I have been getting out and about and have managed a trip to Bagram, Kabul and the Afghan National Army Officer Academy, all of which have been excellent, and more than I can say for most of my Army colleagues who have been busy guarding the office, and generating unwanted work for all the Afghan Nodes.

So we are now in month six, and all our ROCL or ROCTFA is over and our thoughts turn to home in mid-November, and plans of what we all want to do when we get back (although there seems to be a common theme and it involves beer). Now that I have mentioned ROCL, I will say just this; don't ever under any circumstances take this period of leave early. I did and my good friends have kindly and happily, to their sick enjoyment, reminded me of it ever since. Anyway, we are on wind down now and the time is approaching that we get to hand over to FCU 10. As I write this we have the countdown written on the board, 10 days til our replacements arrive in theatre, 14 days til they get to our location, 23 days til we leave our location and 31 days we will be home, but who's counting hey?

So in closing off this article I thought I would give a quick rundown on each of the CCG members that I have had the pleasure of working with:

Maj Jeremy Mikus – our OC has been in the MEAO for FCU 8 and 9 and obviously had a birthday whilst he was here, his 34th, so officially has spent 1/34 of his life deployed, something that would send most people insane, but he seems to have taken this in his stride and holds it as a badge of honour. On a side note, he received the Kabul special birthday cake at the Thai restaurant. I would include the photo but it is probably not appropriate for this forum, suffice to say it was two round scoops of ice cream and a strategically placed banana.

Capt Phil Ellsmore – Talking about honour, this man has none. In the darts game we play here if you hit a triple, double, and then a single all of the same number you win outright, it's called a Shang. He has an uncanny ability to do this, and he will Shang everyone, even me with the darts ability of a three year old – no honour, hence his darts nick name, 'No Honour Ellsmore'.



Brandt Grollmus – I had to sleep on the top bunk above Brandt for about 3 months. I found ear plugs the most efficient means to block out the snoring. If Brandt's wife ever woke and found herself holding a pillow over his head, I would totally understand.

Phil Prosser – Apparently Phil had a job; if anyone finds out what it was can you let me know, I would be interested. Anyway, Phil bought another Harley when he was on leave and I think he is going home to make love to it. Just spend at least five minutes with your wife, mate.

Mark McGavin – or 'Shooter' as he is generally known: this bloke is the walking, talking Wikipedia of random ****, if he doesn't know something he will Google it so he can add it to his repertoire of useless knowledge and facts.

Pete Sharman – Dad jokes, but we wonder what made it worse, that there is a Dad Jokes Facebook page or that Pete would recite the jokes from it? Pete was sick quite a few times and his temper would get short when he was unwell. Try as we would, we could not quite get him to "lose it" entirely, sorry Pete we have no morals.

Martin Arundel – Marty worked with the Americans, so we never saw much of him, maybe for five minutes in the afternoon. But working with the Yanks has its advantages; the job came with a US postal address. I think Amazon had an increase in its share price from this rotation, and Marty was every one's best friend.

Courtney Bratton – All I can say about Courtney is she laughs at everything, even when it's not funny, e.g. Pete's Dad jokes. She has also drunk more Oreo milkshakes from the Kandahar Boardwalk than is humanly possible.

Justin Hanney – The bloke that will tell it how it is, there is no mixing of words from him, and Justin, thanks for the laughs. Also we think Justin may have actually purchased a WRX completely in parts since he arrived.

And me – well that's already been said, I brought the class.

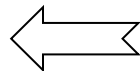
Cheers,
Danny.



GULF STATES SQUADRON

QATAR

Hey all, Jacko here the LAC “Geek” of the glorious Qatar Graveyard shift. I have “volunteered” my services, to give you this, the latest update of Qatar news. We all now find ourselves around two thirds of the way through our deployment with the light at the end of the tunnel growing ever so brighter. As I write this article, I think of home and the mischief I will be getting up to once I return for leave. I now glance to my right and notice that there is only 69 days to go on our countdown calendar. Not only is this a hilarious number for someone as easily amused as myself but it is also not that long until aforementioned mischief can be undertaken. To put this number into perspective we only spent around 77 days completing force preparation in lovely Darwin. Force Prep for me felt like it was over before it even started. Maybe that’s just me or maybe it’s due to the large amounts of fun and learning I had, on such a well organised and well ran force preparation.

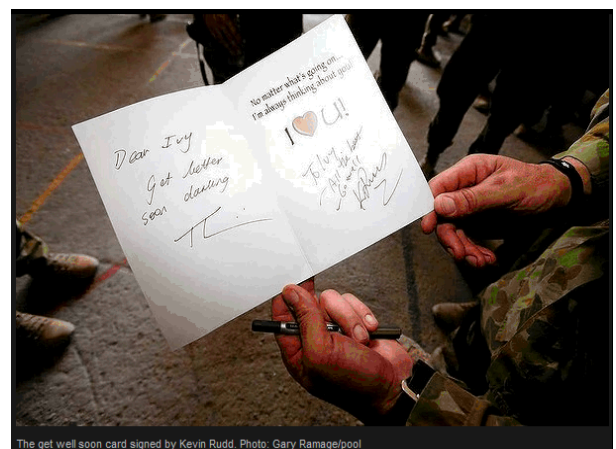


To my right, I also see my fearless Graveyard shift leader CPL Paul (The Hurricane) Angus.

As per usual he is busy making Para-cord bracelets. Gus, upon arriving to Qatar, picked up the hobby of making Para-cord bracelets. He has slowly got his artwork perfected and now all members of Qatar, plus the units that we are supporting, are wearing his weave on a daily basis. I have been led to believe that if you have a close look at our CO’s wrist you shall find a sneakily camouflaged Para-cord attachment. Gus has recently learnt of the plight of young Ivy Steel. Ivy is the daughter of a friend of SGT David Mickel, a medic supporting the Initial Screening Area (ISA) in Tarin Kowt. Ivy is only 5 years old and has been diagnosed with a rare form of leukaemia. SGT Mickel is leading a push for deployed members to help out any way we can. When Gus got wind of this venture he took it upon himself to craft a bracelet for young Ivy. All here at Qatar send our best wishes to Ivy and her family during this emotional and arduous time and Gus hopes she enjoys the bracelet (and that it fits ☺).



Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, with his wife Theresa Rein, signs a get well soon card for an Australian soldier. Photo: Gary Ramage/pool



The get well soon card signed by Kevin Rudd. Photo: Gary Ramage/pool



When I “volunteered” to write this article I was a bit stumped on what to write. I gave a quick look over previous issues for some kind of common theme or idea that I could somehow plagiarise and claim as my own. ROCL\ROCTFA seems to fit the trend but writing about my travels throughout Bali brings a few problems to light for myself. First and most obvious would be the admission of guilt which would come about by telling said stories and second would be the breaking of the rule “What happens in Bali, Stays in Bali”. I have been informed by close to half of my node here that apparently this rule is not quite so true. It has become quite apparent that the “Bali AIDS”** that I contracted on my travels has come back with me and I have successfully passed it on to numerous members here at the node. *(**Editor’s note: No need for concern here, it’s not what you might be thinking!!! The AIDS mentioned in this article is a tongue-in-cheek local reference to a range of illnesses, and possibly in this instance stands for “Bali Belly” or some foreign respiratory bug.)* While it seems that it only takes about 3 days to a week to get rid of this disease for most, I have somehow managed to stay infected to this day (My ROCTFA was over a month ago).



Me, enjoying ROCTFA in Bali.

There isn't much else to really report on here in Qatar. Ground hog day continues the same as ever as I'm sure it does for all my other fellow FCU members where ever they find themselves at this present time. I would just like to give a shout out and thank all the friends and family back home for their continued love and support. See you all soon.

Good Afternoon, Good Evening and Good Night. XOXOX



GULF STATES SQUADRON

AL MINHAD AIR BASE

Closing Time

by FLGOFF Andrew Spear

“Holy balls it’s almost over!” is the thought that runs through my head (and I assume the rest of the team here at AMAB node, maybe without the word balls) as we begin to anticipate the arrival of FCU-10 in a couple of weeks’ time. It has now been a little over 5 months since we arrived here and there is finally a light at the end of the tunnel. This deployment has seen everyone develop both personally and professionally and I am pleased to say that everyone has played a critical role in the effective delivery of Communications and Information Systems (CIS) to all users at AMAB.

The guys (and gal!) in COMSEC have successfully taken over the TK COMSEC account, implemented a new training package for the C-130 personnel, and taken over support for the C-17 detachment. COMSEC personnel have also faced and resolved several equipment related issues and survived a DCCA audit. The SAFEHAND guys (an often forgotten area of the node) have successfully moved over 20 tonnes of cargo, an impressive feat for a team of only two!

The ‘geeks’ have also had their fair share of achievements for the deployment. They fixed “slow logon Friday”, successfully rebuilt nine servers (including Lotus Notes), completely baselined the IT systems at AMAB, resolved all issues with the ISSRs on both systems, facilitated the installation of SharePoint and assisted the Information Managers with the implementation. The helpdesk have processed approximately 1000 jobs per week consistently since we took over back in May; another impressive feat by a small team.

Finally, the techs have conducted a large amount of testing on the CMST (unfortunately to no avail), aided in the installation of a network at Qatar, conducted numerous new installs at AMAB, developed a more efficient method of tracking equipment movement and reports and aided with the movement of several key ticket items to key places.

This is by no means an exhaustive list of everything that has been done by the team here, merely a short summary. In all honesty, everyone has worked extremely hard to achieve what they have and it has been a pleasure to be a part of it. Having said that, it has not all been blood, sweat and tears; there has been a fair amount of shenanigans around the place. Nerf gun shootings occur almost on a daily basis (mainly by me), cables are unplugged (thanks OC!) and just general menacery (yep, I made that word up).

To sign off I leave you with photos of the more pleasant parts of the deployment to demonstrate that you can still have fun whilst doing a good job. It would also be remiss of me if I didn’t take this opportunity to say a final thank you to all of those family and friends back in Australia. It is the support and comfort you have provided to everyone here that has



led to the maintenance of their sanity (for the most part, at least) and I'm sure everyone here cannot wait to make their way home to you all. To finish, well done to everyone at the AMAB node, and have a safe trip home!



SGT Michael "Lips" Phillips new work cubicle



CPL Daniel "Lorry (aka like a truck)" Lawrence trying to mail himself home in a trunk.



Me (FLGOFF Spear) being packaged against my will to be sent home. Thanks guys!



THEATRE LINE DETACHMENT

TARIN KOWT

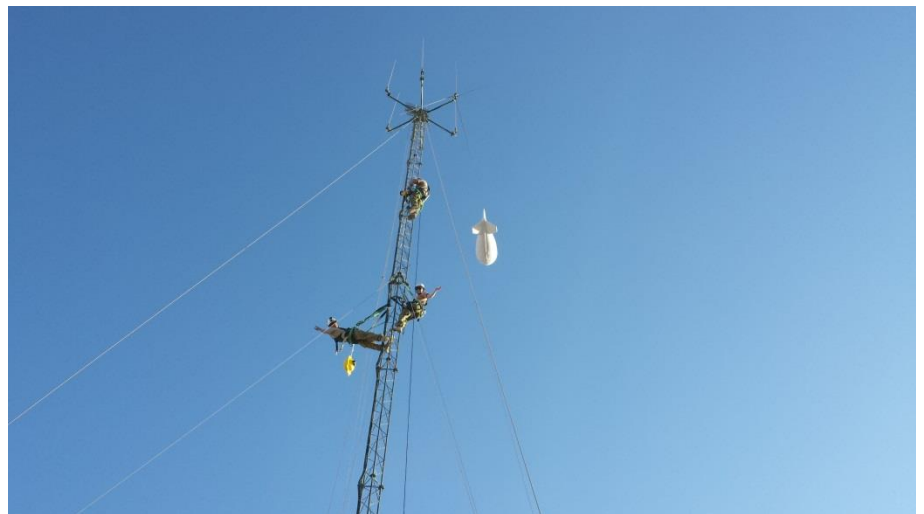
This month in Theatre Line Detachment (TLD) we have experienced a busy period with the de-installation of the Initial Screening Area (prison), multiple communications rigging tasks and farewelled back to Australia our beloved OC Major Campbell with half our team. We have also been busy with organisation of an installation at the Afghanistan Army Officer School in Kabul where three TLD members will be heading in the near future. Another major task this month has been running fibre optical cable throughout Tarin Kowt to ensure the much reduced fly away communications set up is ready to come online.

Throughout our time here we have helped the Americans with numerous rigging, cabling and fibre optic splicing tasks. To thank us all, they threw a BBQ with American style hamburgers, near beers and an American football throwing competition at which I made them look like amateurs. It was a good afternoon and we look forward to keeping our relationship strong with the American Communication team.



All of our members have now completed their ROCL or ROCTFA holidays just in time with half our detachment returning home to their family and friends in Australia. LAC Fraser was our last and attended Oktoberfest in Munich and maybe had a few to many steins.

As a sort of farewell gesture, we took our OC Major Campbell for a climb up a 120 foot mast. It can be quite a daunting experience for a first timer but Major Campbell surprised us all as she was extremely confident and really enjoyed the view and experience.



At top: LAC Taylor On left: SGT Dunn On right: Major Campbell

As our time in Afghanistan comes to an end, the eagerness can easily be seen and I think everyone in TLD has some sort of countdown clock on their phone or computer. Whether it is until they arrive in Australia, TLD 10 arrives in Tarin Kowt to take over, or until we arrive in AMAB for decompression, we all have one.

LAC Kasapis



Life among the IT Crowd

Hello to all our family and friends back home in Australia! We are seeing the end of our deployment creep closer every day and whilst it is nearing there is still plenty to do.

With all of the guys back from their well-deserved ROCL/ROCFTA breaks spent with family and friends (for those of us with wives and kids) or with ‘potential’ wives in bars and clubs (for those who chose to tour Europe and see what the local beer was like....). The time spent with family and friends went by in a flash and it seemed to have finished just too quickly when we were back on the next flight returning to TK to start our final run home and pack this place up.

The past few weeks have seen us all very busy, well busier than usual; we have definitely got the remediation train up and going. The long days of collecting and gathering up all that we need to send back to Australia or to other nodes is still underway but there seems to be some light at the end of the tunnel, however still a lot to do and the deadline is approaching.

We have seen tasks undertaken that range from smashing and bashing, to dismantling satellite dishes. It’s proved therapeutic to some members and is a well-deserved relief from the arduous help desk duties; dragging us away from our computer screens to smash things seems an opportunity best not missed.

We were fortunate enough to get the opportunity to take our Troop photo with an American Apache. It’s not every day you get to take your picture with an Apache... all bombed up and stuff, what is this... Afghanistan?!? (Oh wait, yeah it is.) Well, some of the boys took the advantage of being around the Apache and snapped some pictures trying their hand in the latest TK TP Calendar ‘Apache edition’.

We are privileged here in TK to have a celebrity within our ranks with one of the geeks, SIG Treasure, making numerous appearances on stage playing the bass for Fred Smith who was recently featured on the ABC’s Australian Story programme. SIG Treasure has notched up 4 gigs whilst deployed here in TK, with another one marked in the calendar.



SIG Treasure all over one of his MAD Bass solos



Overall the last few months have been bitter sweet, seeing the members of A SQN leave, heading homeward bound to their families and loved ones back in Australia. However, with the pack up taking most of our time we often don't realise the weeks sneaking by. We can feel the end of our deployment is near and the reunion with those at home creeping closer with every passing day.

CPL Brady



Editor's note: Thanks go to all those who have given the time to contribute to The Star. Your articles and photos have given readers a real insight and appreciation for your time in the MEAO (not to mention quite a few laughs!), and for that we are grateful. We look forward to catching up with you all very soon! ☺



AFGHANISTAN SIGNAL SQUADRON

KANDAHAR AIR FIELD

The countdown has begun!! The FCU team at KAF are well into their handover preparation and can all but taste the beers soon to be enjoyed.

I am one of the lucky few who have had the opportunity to provide CIS support to TU633.2.7 Heron. Heron is a Remote Piloted Aircraft (RPA) and is used in conjunction with the Special Forces to enhance the intelligence gathering capabilities of the ADF. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time with the Heron team and look forward to seeing how ADF utilises this capability in the future.



*Where does the pilot sit?? **From left:** CPL B. Kildea, CPL J. Duff*

So, what is KAF like for an Aussie? Australians make up a small portion of the population at KAF, which is predominately run by the Brits and US. So much so it's almost like being in a rural town in the USA... but with more dust. Having the different nations on base has its benefits though; I have had the opportunity to see various aircraft not usually exposed to such as Predators, Reapers, Apaches and Tornados – pretty interesting to say the least.

Our accommodation is split between four people per room which requires some getting used to, but is overcome with privacy curtains [read: blanket fort]. The food has a lot to be said for it but I will say, 9 times out of 10 you can't go wrong with Surf n Turf Fridays. As for things to do, the boardwalk is KAF's equivalent to a local 'mall', what it lacks in variety it makes up for in Oreo Protein Smoothies. Delicious.





Another satisfied customer

At this point I'd like to reflect on our time here at KAF, which for the most part has been surprisingly enjoyable. We have achieved the unachievable, battled through PRB (Post ROCTFA/ROCL Blues), learnt more about ourselves and our jobs, but most importantly, shared a few laughs along the way.

To the friends and families back home anxiously awaiting the arrival of their deployed members, from all of us here at KAF, thank you for your continued and extremely valuable support!

CPL Jesse Duff



AFGHANISTAN SIGNAL SQUADRON

KANDAHAR AIR FIELD/ FOB SPIN BOLDAK

A Week in Spin Boldak

After 5 months in Afghanistan spent between Camp Baker and the RC(S) Headquarters compound, the opportunity to visit another site to assist with an installation task would provide a welcome change to routine and an opportunity to see another area of the country. So after 5 seconds to think about it and 10 days of the obligatory paperwork and red tape, I finally received the authority to go out on a task to Forward Operating Base (FOB), Spin Boldak.

A little bit of research told me that “SpinB” is a fairly large town, about 75km to the south east of Kandahar Airfield that sits next to the border of Pakistan in the shadow of the local mountain range. The FOB itself is a few kilometres to the north of the town and is currently home to elements of 3rd Brigade of the 1st US Infantry Division (known as ‘The Big Red One’).

So, after the usual logistic mishaps and operational delays that seem to plague armies of all nations, we were provided with a flight date. On Tues 8 Oct 13, an early start and a walk up to the compound with all my gear later, I met up with my American colleagues, CW2 Donovan Anderson, Sgt Ron Bright and Thomas White, our contractor. A short drive later we were at Stallion ramp waiting for our helicopter. Yet more waiting and 2.5 hours later, we were ready to board what looked like an old Russian HIP. The flight was only around 35mins long and fairly uneventful with not a lot to see; it turns out that between Kandahar and Spin Boldak, there is about 75 kms of sand, rocky outcrops and dry river beds as far as the eye can see, with the occasional small collection of buildings. The FOB itself turned out to be around 2.5km long and less than a km wide, with few buildings and lots and lots of open space, home to around 250 people. After about 2 hours waiting for some transport to pick up our equipment, we found our accommodation for the next few days: a large tent with five bunk beds, lots of space and the most uncomfortable 10 year old mattresses (that didn’t seem to affect sleep too much).

The task started pretty slowly, again logistical issues beset us from all angles, such as no power, lack of cable plans and people who claimed not to be expecting us. This gave me the opportunity to have a walk around the FOB. Thirty minutes later with that done, I was left wondering what had happened to the Pizza Hut and countless coffee shops that seem to appear in any place that the US Army stop for more than 10 minutes. No! This appeared to be the minimal FOB. Aside from the working and living accommodation, there was the single Dining Facility known as ‘Old Bills’, a small PX/Post Office (that I didn’t see open), a Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) Centre and a Barbers Shop. The DFAC itself was small, with limited choice and was the only option for eating in SpinB. FLTSGT Danny



Waldron would have loved it: not a tray in site. Fortunately, the quality of the food was excellent with steaks at least as good as KAF TGI's. The MWR was small and homely, providing around 15 welfare telephones and computers, some TVs and more importantly, somewhere to make a brew. Wireless internet was not available so the waiting list and 30 minute time limit on the computers was strictly enforced but people seemed happy with their opportunity to keep in touch with family and friends.

Back to the task in hand, after 2 days we were still waiting for power to be installed before we could run up our comms equipment, so we moved on to Stage 2, investigating the cabling options that would provide our 3 Courses Of Action. Due to lack of documentation, this turned into a complete audit of the cable infrastructure and required a couple more days tracing fibre optic cables around the whole FOB, giving us ample opportunity for time in the open air. What a nice change from office work, with the added benefit of allowing us to see the network layout with a Mark 1 Eyeball and get a better understanding of the constraints.

So finally, with power, equipment installed, and 3 COAs in our pockets, it was time to leave Spin B and return to the hustle and bustle of KAF. More waiting and an uneventful ride later, the trip was over; it was one more week down till the end of the tour, and back to the daily routine and a pile of mail from Amazon.com under my desk. Welcome Back.

Reflections:

Six days in Spin Boldak proved to be a welcome break from the office and the crowds of KAF, and allowed me to give 'something back' to the our US allies who provide so much assistance to FCU-9 and Australian forces in general. There are many stark differences between the large bases such as KAF and the smaller FOBs. At Spin Boldak, the 250 or so personnel have limited facilities, one choice of place to eat and even less opportunity to call home. There are no coffee shops, snack bars or shops to buy the things that are taken for granted at KAF. Although the food is good, the MWR staff friendly, and the gym is extremely well used, I suspect that 6 months at SpinB would be far more testing than KAF. A reminder for us that life could be far worse...

WO2 Arundle



AFGHANISTAN SIGNAL SQUADRON

KANDAHAR AIR FIELD

Hi, my names LAC Wiencke. I'm one of the amazing Techs here at KAF and part of the best node in the MEAO (results don't lie.) Many of the guys here are coming and going on ROCL/ROCTFA to see their families or new parts of the world, it's a much appreciated break from the daily routine of work every day. The best part about it is once we have everyone back again there will only be a month before our replacements get here and take over. I've just come back from a great trip to Italy; just being able to breathe air without a pile of dirt floating around in it was the first thing I noticed when hopping off the plane.

There have been quite a few birthdays here lately, SGT Rob Cann, LCPL Courtney Bratton and LAC Jacob Burns all enjoyed an icecream cake and a song for the occasion, followed by a game of volleyball which would have had spectators on the edge of their seat (if we had spectators at the time.)

In the last few weeks many things have changed. We've had a room inspection conducted by WO Prosser (everyone passed with flying colours.) We've discovered that there are roller discos on at the boardwalk Friday nights; we make a game out of watching to see who falls over first.

We went shopping last week and many of us bought goodies. FLGOFF Langbridge basically wiped out the local rabbit population without using calicivirus, buying four rabbit fur rugs. It was quite entertaining watching him walk back to Camp Baker with two full garbage bags. When SGT Kline saw that the True Mass Smoothie shop had closed down he was almost in tears, but as nations clear out of Kandahar this is becoming a more regular occurrence around the boardwalk.

We are beginning to increase our PT intensity lately (it becomes a bit of a shock to the system getting back into it after coming back from the break). Everyone is keen to train hard before going home and it's something a little different to look forward to every week.

CLP Galton and LCPL Passante have been here killin' it and people still don't know what the hell they do.... But we put them to good use sorting out our cables and shipping containers so their help has not gone astray.

Lastly the node would like to say 'hi' to our families back home and we're looking forward to being back soon.

The Techs would like to thank WO Sharman for getting rid of all the disposable equipment that's been cluttering up our workshop (now we can shoot hoops again).

Thanks for reading.



GULF STATES SQUADRON

QATAR



“Qatar COMMS, LAC Wang”. Yes, this is LAC Wang reporting from Qatar. When you read this article, we have not only passed the physical half way point, but also the psychological half way. Old Chinese proverb “A 100 miles journey halves at 90”. I believe we are definitely passed the half way mark. As the weather cools and ongoing issues are soon to be a FCU-10 problems, it’s time to sit down to write a 回忆录

In the past months, sport has taken up most of our spare time. Ben and Dinger have taken to flipping big truck tyres at 3AM in the morning. Gus and Jacko do their workouts to become Arnold Schwarzenegger and Kytie and I do a lot of runs. Running is the most popular sport event on this Base. Every couple of weeks, there would be a fun run. The first run we did was the American Independence Day run. There were more than 400 people at the start line (maybe less at finish line). It took me more than 40 seconds just to pass the start line.



The September 911 5km run was other major event. The success of this event wasn’t gauged on the 430 Americans that participated but the fact we got Rani involved. Looking at the picture, he looked like he quiet enjoyed the run (walk, be honest) and his beautiful T-shirt. The 5km was easy for him too. He did couple of practices for this and used it as warm up for his next big event: the 10km walk. The fourth person in the picture is our local Logistic SGT. He is very nice and helpful.





Three days later was the Marathon, yes 42km. This was a far cry from the Qatari's 3km Super-Marathon as advertised in one of local newspapers. I wanted to complete the full 42km course but the Americans in the end were only offering a half marathon and 10km run due to the hot weather. Jacko, Ben and I completed the half marathon while Rani and Kytie finished 10km. The first 5km was very easy, people talking and laughing. The second 5km was all right with the pace still under control. The third 5km, I started feeling uncomfortable in the legs and by the fourth 5km, most people were struggling to move their legs. Making it to the last km, nothing could stop you but your legs. Anyway, everyone fought through to the end to complete the challenge and were rewarded with a substantial US Air Force Marathon medal. It was very painful but rewarding experience to share with your friends, especially with big shiny evidence.



Kytie and I also joined 500 mile Runners Club. The club provides you a log sheet to record the distances you run and/or cycled. When your total reaches 500 miles, the club gives a T-shirt. Kytie and I have already got our first T-shirt. There was a sad story about my second shirt. When I claim my first 500 miles shirt, the staff told me there were 700 miles shirts. After comparing, I thought 500 miles shirt looks better. I took the 500 miles shirt and started the 700 miles journey. When I went to claim my 700 miles shirt, I was told there was no 700 miles shirt left and they would not restock it. What a day.



We had an “Arabian Night” tour in August. It was really great experience. Our 4WD ran through sand dunes like a roller coaster and travelled faster than 130km/h on the flat land. After the thrill seekers travel, we stopped at a beautiful beach camp. We jumped into the warm sea, played real beach volleyball and had a cold drink with the sea breeze, it was a great relaxation. I feel the pictures are better than words to show how good it was.

Only one thing to complain about: third row seats in a Land Cruiser 100 are a joke. Want a real third row seat? Go with Suburban, Expedition or GL. However, the first two are not available in Australia and I do not think Holden or Ford is going to import them. The third one (GL) costs 150K in Aussie. Though I believe someone could afford a GL after this trip.



Enjoy the rest of the trip. See you at AMAB in Nov.



MARATHON RUNNING FESTIVAL

AL MINHAD AIR BASE

AMAB Marathon Running Festival

12 October 2013

What better way to start your day on a Saturday morning than to get up and take part in a Running Festival? In this case, an early morning relay 'race' with colleagues for a just cause finished off with a bacon and egg butty. Even better, the event was to raise money to support research into an insidious syndrome that you wouldn't wish on your worst enemy: Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

In my opening sentence I use the term 'morning' loosely as the first of the runners were away at 0330. The '5 km relay', the blue ribbon event, started at 0430 so it was really the middle of the night!! Yes, it was cooler at that time (of...night), yes, there was less traffic up and down the main drag at that time (of...night), but it was Saturday! We (FCU) get a lie in on Saturday!!! The turnout from across the base at AMAB was pretty impressive, with 120 runners. On top of that, there were a considerable number of insomniacs who gave up their time (and lie in!) to provide support to the event. FCU-9 put in a cobbled-together team from the CMG, GSS HQ and AMAB Node. The range of youthful FCU-9 athletic prowess was noticeably absent from the team and the event; real athletes know that sleep deprivation can hinder performance and they just couldn't give up their Saturday morning lie in! An early start would have had little impact on the performance of the FCU-9 team runners.

The event was a success and achieved its mission - everybody got back safely with some personal bests and the odd firsts - it's the first time SGT Lacey has run all the way to the boom gate and back, and judging by the blisters she was sporting on both feet after the event, it may be the last!! The collective money raised from the event was circa 30,000 AED. We finished in the pack. A big thank you goes out to Colin Foard in the support team, for providing cups of water for the thirsty or a cooling shower for the overheated as they got to the turnaround point. Well done 'Dutchy' for cajoling runners and organising the team. The atmosphere was great, the breakfast a just reward for the effort, and it was all for a worthy cause.

SQNLDR Martin Gellini

Left to Right MAJ Daniel Lee, LEUT James Gowling, CAPT Julie Appleby, WOFF Graham Schilling, CPO Leo Vredenburg, SGT Juliet Lacey, WOFF Brett Parker, SQNLDR Martin Gellini.



FCU NETBALL

TARIN KOWT

Since our last submission the FCU Netball team made it to the Grand Final, however, lost to CTU, going down by 12 goals in a hard fought match. A well-deserved 2nd place FCU, GOOD WORK!

Since starting the netball team back in June, we have lost a number of players due to RTA, but gained some interesting talent.

The new and improved FCU team now consists of:

CPL Polly Cooper (GK/GD)	
CPL Ryan Mills (WA/C)	
SIG Ben Murphy (GS/GA)	
SIG Elloise Alcorn (GA/GS)	<i>New</i>
CPL Simon Weston (C/WA)	<i>New</i>
CPL Nathan McKenzie (WA/C)	<i>New</i>
LCPL Shannon Vienna (GS/GA)	<i>New</i>
SIG Benn Glover (GK/WD)	<i>New</i>
SIG Mitchell O'Brien (GD/WD)	<i>New</i>
CPL Tim Ward (GD/GK)	<i>New</i>
CPL Justin Hanney (WA/C)	
SIG Patrick Smith (WD/WA)	<i>New</i>



The guys and girls bring a new, energetic feel to the team, with a vast assortment of talents and experience. With Macca, Joc and Westy bringing the almighty “power play” that no one has yet to see or even know what it is; Wardy brings a new line of defence with his footy style hold on the players; G-Lover has found his spot at GK with his look-away style of defence; Ell is our go-to girl in the shooting circle; Patty is quick on his feet (sometimes too quick!) and OB has fit in well to GD, snatching up those intercepts.

The team has now found set positions and plays as a well-rounded team (most of the time). Each time we set foot on court the guys have fun and make it an interesting game to watch. With look away passes (10% come off, 90% don't), shots outside the circle (for an apparent 2 points) and people falling over their own feet doing backwards summersaults (It's not a kids playground, Macca).

However, in between all the fun the guys and girls have played well and improved so much from the beginning, and I would not be surprised if some go away to the ADF national competition next year.

By: CPL Polly Cooper





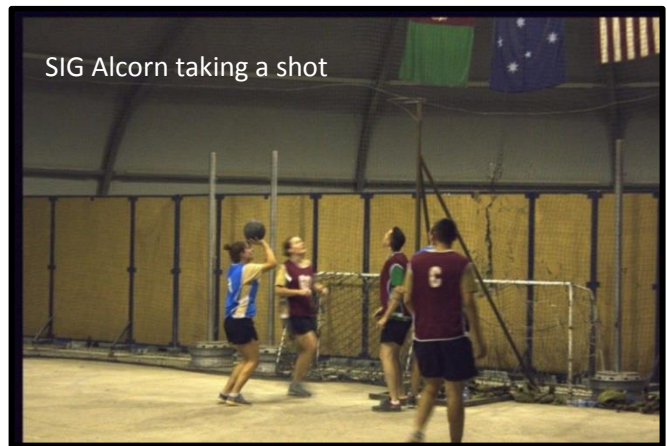
SIG Glover intercepting a pass



SIG Robinson all smiles



SIG Murphy takes a shot



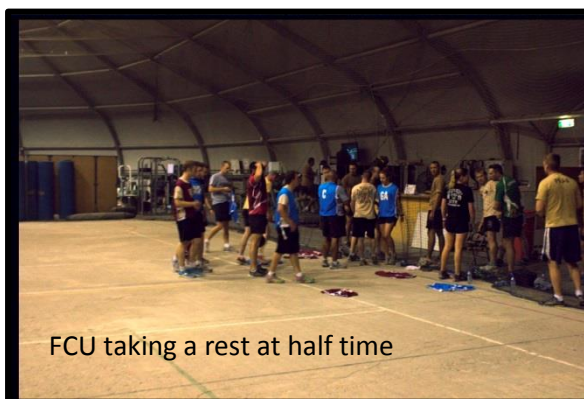
SIG Alcorn taking a shot



CPL Hanney having a laugh



Above: CPL Cooper defending a pass from LCPL Vienna to SIG Alcorn



FCU taking a rest at half time



THE "FUN"NIES

I LOVE TO HAVE A BEER

T.K.(Tarin Kowt) Super Techs

I love to have a beer with the Super Techs
I love to have a beer with Techs.
We drink in moderation
But officially not in Tarin Kowt
We drink at the unit Boozer
Where the atmosphere is compulsory
I love to have a beer with the Super Tech's
'Cause the Tech's 'R' me mates.

I love to have a beer with Brennan
Oh I love to have a beer with Brenno.
We drink in moderation
And it doesn't really matter if he brings his glass jaw
We drink at the unit Boozer
Where the atmosphere is compulsory
I love to have a beer with Brennan
'Cause Brenno's me mate.



I love to have a beer with Weston
Oh I love to have a beer with Westy.
We drink in moderation
And he'll give us a ride in his big new boat
We drink at the unit Boozer
Where the atmosphere is compulsory
I love to have a beer with Weston
'Cause Westy's me mate.



I love to have a beer with Vienna
Oh I love to have a beer with Jock
We drink in moderation
And it doesn't matter that he can't reach most things
We drink at the unit Boozer
Where the atmosphere is compulsory
I love to have a beer with Vienna
'Cause Jock's me mate.



I love to have a beer with Batman
Oh I love to have a beer with The Dark Knight
We drink in moderation
And he completes all jobs down at the Bat Cave



We drink at the unit Boozer
Where the atmosphere is compulsory
I love to have a beer with Batman
'Cause The Dark Knight's me mate.

I love to have a beer with Murphy
Oh I love to have a beer with Murph
We drink in moderation
Just hope his not allergic to that too
We drink at the unit Boozer
Where the atmosphere is compulsory
I love to have a beer with Murphy
'Cause Murph's me mate.



I love to have a beer with Raikkonen
Oh I love to have a beer with Kimmy
We drink in moderation
Just as soon as he finds that Connex
We drink at the unit Boozer
Where the atmosphere is compulsory
I love to have a beer with Raikkonen
'Cause Kimmy's me mate.



I love to have a beer with the Super Techs
Oh I love to have a beer with Techs.
We drink in moderation
But officially not in Tarin Kowt
We drink at the unit Boozer
Where the atmosphere is compulsory
I love to have a beer with the Super Tech's
'Cause the Tech's 'R' me mates.

I love to have a beer with the Super Tech's
'Cause the Tech's 'R' me mates!

MORE "FUN"NIES

We're Coming Home By the TK Super Techs

We're coming home
We're coming home

Tell the World the Techs are coming home
Let the rain wash away all the pain of yesterday
I know Darwin awaits and they've forgiven my mistakes
We're coming home, we're coming home
Tell the World that the Super Techs coming.

Another day, another shift
Another Murphy, nice to meet ya, get the math I'm gone
What am I s'posed to do when the link lights goes down
It's easy to be creepy like Kimi , it's harder to be a Batman
What if Westy and Jock ask where all the non techs have gone?
How do we respond?
Just tell Westy and Jock I did them last month
Another lie that I carry on
We need to get back to the place we belong.

We're coming home
We're coming home

Tell the World were the Super Techs are coming home
Let the rain wash away all the pain of yesterday
I know Darwin awaits and they've forgiven our mistakes
We're coming home, we're coming home
Tell the World that the Super Techs are coming home.

"A House is Not a Home", I hate this song
Is a house really a home when your loved ones are safe at home?
And money can't make up for it or conceal it
But you deal with it and you keep ballin'
Pick up your phone, come on.

We're coming home
We're coming home

Tell the World the Super Techs are coming home
Let the rain wash away all the pain of yesterday

I know Darwin awaits and they've forgiven my mistakes
We're coming home, we're coming home
Tell the World the Techs are coming home.

"Ain't No Stopping Us Now", I love that song
Whenever it comes on it makes us feel strong
I thought I told y'all that we won't stop
We back cruising through Tarin Kowt, Krone blocks
It's what made us, saved us, drove us crazy
Forgave me for all of my shortcomings
Welcome to my homecoming
Yeah it's been a long time coming
Lot of cables, lot of red bulls, lot of fiber
Lot of work, lot of ups, lot of downs
Made it back, and here we stand, SUPER TECHS
Thank you Lord

We're coming home
We're coming home

Tell the World the Super Techs are coming home
(except for Batman and Jock not so much).