

The Pipes and Drums  
Defence 2020 Challenge Task – Are Australia’s Peacekeepers  
Responsible Citizens?

5<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment

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## Introduction

The 5<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> Battalion, formally known as the Pipes and Drums were my chosen group for the 20-20 challenge task. I spent some time looking through the war memorial archives until I came across this battalion. They seemed really interesting being a mechanized battalion, plus they had been on 3 deployments! So I decided to do it on this group.

The Royal Australian Army Regiments 5<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> battalion was a mechanized infantry battalion. It was formed in 1973, by linking the two smaller battalions the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 7<sup>th</sup> of the Australian Regiments together.

The battalion was based in the Northern Territory at Robertson Barracks in Palmerstone.

The battalion didn't become mechanized until the introduction of the M113 Armored personal carriers. These were dubbed a great success when they helped during the 1973 Hilton bombing by guarding their route between Holesworthy and the Commonwealth heads of government meeting at Bowral.

## Deployments

In 1999 the battalion made its first operational deployment, deploying to East Timor. The deployment was very successful, the battalion providing a powerful and highly mobile force. After seven months they returned home to Australia.

In late 2002 they served a second deployment in East Timor where they served as a light infantry battalion.

In 2004 they would serve their last deployment when they were deployed to IRAQ. They would provide a rifle company for security duties in Baghdad. They were later mounted in ASLAV's from another regiment as they suited the Iraq conditions better than the 5<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup>'s M113's.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 2006 the 5<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> was delinked into antecedent units.

## Interview: Sergeant Andrew B Smith

I was unable to get in contact with a member from the 5<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> battalion (refer to Journal below) but I was lucky enough to be able to interview a recent peacekeeper Sergeant Andrew B Smith who I met through one of our school teachers introducing me (refer to Journal below). He answered all my questions which was great. Below is the interview and my comments on the answers.

*G'day Aiden,*

*My name is Sergeant Andrew B Smith I am currently serving in the Army Reserve as a Section Commander in the Military Police. In 1999 I was asked to go to East Timor as part of the INTERFET mission. I was posted to a unit called HQFLSG (Headquarters Forward Logistics Support Group). Please find the answers to your questions in red below:*

*I want to know more about Australia's Role in peacekeeping,*

\* *How long did the battalion serve there?*

*(Andrew) I am unsure how long the unit stayed in East Timor but it was several years after I left in March 2000.*

\* *The kind of operations undergone whilst there?*

*(Andrew) There were many different units and organizations in East Timor in 1999-2000 all of which had different roles and responsibilities. My unit's role was to provide support to the INTERFET task force as well as the Timorese people. My role specifically was to control the entry and departure of soldiers at the airport and port of Dili (the capital of East Timor). I would describe the role as like the immigration agents at Australia's ports and airports. My daily tasks included getting the soldiers to fill out appropriate paperwork so that the defense force knew who was in the country. My tasks also included briefing these soldiers on the current tactical situation and security concerns. My tasks also included liaising with other support units to determine when troops were arriving and departing the Island.*

**(Me)** It sounded that this job was quite important, and involved a lot of responsibility which I think is one of the major tasks the defense force undertakes in learning to its personal.

\* *Reactions of the people?*

*(Andrew) The reaction from the Timorese people was being best described as grateful. They were so happy that we were there to bring stability to the country and to stop their loved ones from being murdered. I literally felt like a rock star.*

**(Me)** It would be a totally different experience serving to these affected countries, I suppose you feel so good because you can see the difference your making so quickly.

\* *Whilst there do you believe you were responsible citizens?*

*(Andrew) Definitely yes – the Australian Defense force is a very professional military organization with all the appropriate standards that a civilian organization would have. Our soldiers also reflected values of the Australian people – things like mate ship, support in tough times and a good sense of humor. I spent most of my free time travelling to orphanages to hand out lollies and goods to children. This is the Australian Army way where we are always well liked by the people we protect, it's called winning the hearts and minds and we are good at it.*

**(Me)** It would have been really great to see the difference the Australians were making; I think that is why Australia's peacekeepers are so good at what they do because they show exceptional citizenship.

\* *How the Battalion reflected desirable qualities in the Army?*

*(Andrew) My unit reflected all the good qualities of the Army whilst I was serving. The most obvious quality was to provide a service to the defense force whilst being exposed to difficult security and environmental conditions. I look at it like this, in Australia the average worker spends 98% of their day doing the job they have been asked to do and only 2 percent or lower trying to survive the elements and to keep safe. On operations in Timor we were spending 85% of our day just trying to survive let alone perform our primary task. Even going to the toilet was difficult. So therefore I think that for us to do our job under these conditions clearly reflected the types of qualities the Army expects.*

**(Me)** I think that's amazing the qualities that are taught in the defense force to make sure the soldiers are ready is great, it was amazing how you managed to stay focused on the mission at hand while trying to stay alive.

\* *How you think the role of peacekeeping could be commemorated by the Australian people?*

**(Andrew)** *By supporting the great institutions we have in the RSL, ANZAC Day, Legacy, Reserve Forces Day etc, and by providing support for our soldiers when they are deployed or at home.*

**(Me)** I agree with Andrew the Australian peacekeeper should be highly commemorated as some of the things they go through are just horrendous, and the difference they make is fantastic and I feel proud that our peacekeepers make so much of a difference. Things like putting statues in in cities, attending Anzac day, Army reserve Day. I think it would be good to have a day like Anzac Day just to commemorate the peacekeepers. Even more civilians and students turning out and ADF Days such as Air shows and Naval Visits, and just saying thank you to their personal.

\* *What were the highlights while serving to these places?*

**(Andrew)** *My biggest highlight on my deployment to East Timor was to see that the work we were doing made a massive difference to the everyday lives of the Timorese people. These people had nothing when we turned up and by the end they had freedom and peace. You will never get this type of experience in Australia.*

\* *What were the difficulties' while serving to these places?*

**(Andrew)** *The list is massive so I will not list them all but like I said above every little thing we take for granted in Australia was difficult. Things like going to the toilet, going for a run, privacy, dealing with the very hot tropical temperature, dealing with other environmental threats like Malaria, asbestos, etc and on top of all that we are in a war like area so we always have to carry our weapons and ammunition. However the most difficult thing to deal with is being away from all your family and friends.*

\* *Any other possible information you think could be useful to a student and a possible future ADF Officer?*

**(Andrew)** *My best advice to you and I hope I don't sound like all the other grownups is to really work hard at school but also keep up other activities like sport etc. A good officer is well rounded and needs to be well educated, fit and can work under great pressure.*

*(End Interview)*

**(Me)**

Peacekeeping is usually defined as a man or a woman who is a keeper of peace, but in our century there is so much more to it. Missions may only involve being in the presence of peace depressed civilians, some may involve using force to keep peace, some even involve helping rebuilt cities and governments.

Some people argue that Australia shouldn't be involved in peacekeeping but I must argue that I feel proud that our peacekeeping men and woman are so good at what they do, and are respected by the civilians when the keep in affected areas.

This Assignment/Task had helped me to know more and respect more the men and woman who peace keep to countries sometimes far from home and in treacherous conditions. The Ryebuck event in Hobart was an excellent day, I learnt a lot about peacekeeping and would have found this task a lot more difficult if I hadn't had attended. I met some great people some were students some were ADF personal it was a great day.

## Conclusion

The conclusion of my Assignment rests the case that Australia's peacekeepers are exceptional people that are responsible citizens by far, and very good at what they do. The qualities that are shown involve being a quick and responsible thinker, being able to handle all conditions and being all round nice people and responsible citizens.

## Bibliography

- <http://www.57rar.asn.au/index.html>
- <http://www.etan.org/et2003/february/01-08/05aupeace.htm>
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/7th\\_Battalion\\_Royal\\_Australian\\_Regiment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/7th_Battalion_Royal_Australian_Regiment)
- Interview with Sergeant Andrew B Smith of the Royal Australian Army
- Information learnt from the Ryebuck conference day

## Diary

I begun the assignment as soon as I could knowing it would take some time, and I didn't have long to finish it. I spent the first half hour finding a section in the defense force to do it on then once I had a peacekeeping battalion I found some information to break down and put into my assignment

The weeks working up to the due date I completed my cover page and added the quick over view of who I was doing it on, their deployments and their specialty.

I sent out numerous emails to their battalion asking for information or maybe an interview, with no success I moved onto the defense force and asked them, with the due date coming ever so close I still hadn't an email back.

The assignment was due soon and I still had no emails back, on a walk with our music teacher while doing a task for him I just happened to ask him if he knew any peacekeepers. He did and within five minutes was able to get me in touch with him. I sent an email out to him with the questions and he sent me a reply back the same night with all his answers. It was so great that it all came together and Andrew was so happy to help me with the questions, as he served in Timor not to long ago it was also very interesting to read his answers.

The Sunday before the last week I went fishing with my mate and took my assignment along to proof read. It was a very silly thing to do as two of the papers blew out onto the water. I jumped into the very cold water to get them but had to get out or die of hypothermia. I'm lucky I kept copies on the computer and numerous printed out.

On the final day I finalised my work. It was a fun assignment not only did I learn things I hadn't known about peacekeeping before, I met an extraordinary peacekeeper who loved his job and that's what I think is a major factor while on a deployment if you don't like what you are doing then why are you there.

Aiden Bowerman