



THE STAR

Issue 4, Aug 2013

Since the last newsletter the Unit Warrant Officer, Graham Schilling, and I have been able to do the rounds and visit each of the FCU sites. Everywhere we went I was proud to see the members of FCU-9 making a difference to the communications support while still remembering to make the most of their deployed opportunity. In this edition you'll see again that many of the articles contain the lighter side of life in the MEAO.

One of our 'firsts' was the trip to Bahrain. CPO Rick Maude was a great host and looked after us well. His articles pretty clearly explain the situation there. Rick's hospitality included a quick trip to the Navy Exchange (NEX) which was heavily stocked with lots of goodies given the pending arrival of the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz the following day. Graham considered buying out the entire stock of hard drives but restricted himself to three. For me, the new Bose noise cancelling headphones are just great.

It was entertaining to hear so many stories from people's leave and listen to the plans of those eagerly awaiting theirs. I think the award for best story goes to Ben Cumerford in Qatar. It's his to tell but does involve a witchdoctor and air travel. I hope he manages to tell it in a family friendly way for a future edition.

After 3 months of trying we achieved another 'first' when I finally got to Kabul. Travel to Kabul took 12 hours just to have 14 hours on the ground and we were asleep for half of that. The time was valuable because it helped me understand just how difficult it can be to achieve quite simple things in this part of the world. Next time we'll try for 2 nights at least.

The Kabul team are very close knit and are obviously having a good time. I was told what a great job they were doing by several senior members of the HQ. I enjoyed the company and the banter at dinner that evening and was left with a great impression of a professional yet relaxed group of people.

Space is at a premium in Kabul and even waste treatment is done uncomfortably close to the FCU working area. So close in fact that I now have a better appreciation of a recent quote of the day from SIG Ty Brewster, 'The shog is so thick today I can taste it through my eyes.' And if you're not sure what 'shog' is ... I'll just say it's like smog, but worse.

Our next stop was a night at Kandahar. It was good to see how the Afghanistan Signal Squadron Headquarters are settling in to their new location. I think FSGT Danny Waldron is managing fine. Danny, was that really your third visit to T.G.I. FRIDAYS for beef ribs in just a week?

We completed the tripping at Tarin Kowt. This is the focus of change for us at the moment. With the removal of all Australian's from the location by late this year there is a lot to do to pull everything out. Members here have to work incredibly hard to get the job done in the time left. As time goes on any creature comforts on site will need to be packed up and sent home. This will further add to the challenges our members face.



I'd like to finish by again thanking the families who keep the home fires burning in our absence. I appreciate the support you continue to provide to my outstanding team and I look forward to returning them safely to you in the not too distant future. Take care and all the best, until next time.

Gordon

Wing Commander Gordon Pert
Commanding Officer FCU-9

AFGHANISTAN SIGNAL SQUADRON

OFFICER COMMANDING



HQ AFG SIG SQN staff before the move from TK to KAF

From Right: WO2 Phill Prosser, MAJ Jeremy Mikus, CPL Justin Hanney, WO2 Brandt Grollmus, SGT Mark McGavin, WO2 Pete Sharman, LCPL Courtney Bratton, FSGT Danny Waldron, CAPT Phillip Ellsmore

With every tick of the SSM's article for the Star comes a tock for mine, and so it is Jeremy Mikus writing to you again. Another busy month passes, with the members of the Squadron in each location working hard to complete the tasks that we have been set, tasks that we have set ourselves, and normal day to day issues and maintenance.

We are in the middle of the leave period now, which means a good break for everyone in the Squadron staggered throughout this time. Some of us are taking this opportunity to see other parts of the world, while some are using the time to get back home. Whatever the choice, the leave is well deserved for the members of the Squadron and should be used to recharge the batteries and see family and friends before coming back for a very busy second half of the deployment.

The Squadron Headquarters has moved location, as part of the drawdown in Tarin Kowt. We find ourselves located at Kandahar Airfield. The move went smoothly, with all of our equipment arriving in quick time and in good repair. Thanks go to the Kandahar Flight and Alpha Squadron personnel who did much of the preparation work.



The real winners with the move are the Tarin Kowt Troop, who are now liberated from having their headquarters in location with them. I'm sure they send their condolences to Kandahar Flight who are at the other end of that exchange.

Each of the locations has had major tasks underway in addition to their normal daily duties, and it is a measure of the success of the Squadron so far that milestones have been met throughout. The Australian Force as a whole is undergoing change that will see enduring support provided to Afghanistan from 2014 onwards. This has required significant communications planning and network changes that have seen all members of the Squadron very busy during the deployment thus far.



Within the Squadron headquarters the competitiveness of each of us is displayed in the darts competition that has been ongoing from the start. Every member of the group has seen significant improvement in their game, with the exception of me (I've either stayed the same or regressed) as I now seem to get beaten by everyone. In the professional game of darts each of the competitors has a nickname, and as serious dart connoisseurs we are no different... It is important to note that no one has selected their own nickname.

OPSO – Phil 'The Pressure Cooker' Ellsmore. Phil has an uncanny ability to throw the right dart at exactly the right time, as the pressure builds he seems to get better.

SQMS – Pete 'The SHARMINATOR' Sharman. Completely aside from taking the opportunity to add 'INATOR' to anything that sounds remotely workable, if there was a most improved award it would go to Pete. From dubious beginnings, Pete now more than holds his own, collecting big wins and upsets regularly.

ISM – Mark 'Tourettes' McGavin. 'Shooter' being completely off the cards from the start... Well. Let's say it's appropriate, in that, he often isn't.

In closing I wish all Squadron members, their families and loved ones a relaxing break. As I have said before it is the support received from home that makes a long deployment possible.

A special final note to Chris Megyeri and Tin Wai who are currently waiting on the birth of their child together in Darwin: your Squadron and your Flight wish you the very best.

Editor's note: Since this article was written, Chris and Tin have welcomed their new baby boy, Hugo, into the world 😊 Congratulations!



GULF STATES SQUADRON

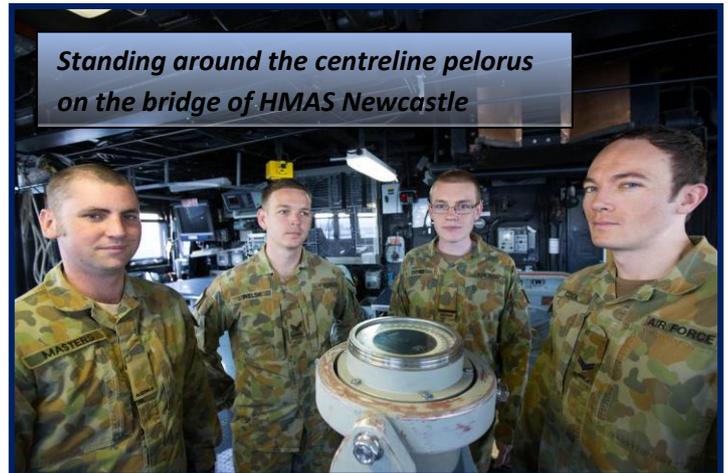
AL MINHAD AIR BASE

HMAS NEWCASTLE VISIT

HMAS Newcastle is the current force assigned Major Fleet Unit (MFU) conducting maritime security operations in the MEAO as part of a multi-national task force.

FCU provides communications support to their operations. On Wednesday 31st of July, I led a small contingent of RAAF and Army personnel from the AMAB node for a visit to HMAS Newcastle while she was alongside in Dubai. FLGOFF Michael Dowd, WO1 Greg Elliot, SGT Joel Graham, CPL Donald Welsh, CPL Craig Martyn, LAC Daniel Neu and SIG Bryan Masters used the visit to gain a unique insight into how the senior service operates.

The group learnt the true meaning of communal living when they were given a tour of the Junior Sailor's Mess deck, where up to 65 personnel are accommodated whilst the ship is at sea. Afterwards we were shown through the Communications Centre, the Operations Room and the Bridge where the group was briefed on how all three areas are required to work together as a team in order to get the ship from point A to B and to effectively fight the battle.



Standing around the centreline pelorus on the bridge of HMAS Newcastle



POCIS "Frankie" Spencer explaining the ship's propulsion plant

After viewing the upper decks, it was time to delve into the very bowels of the ship and have a look at the engineering spaces. With temperatures quickly climbing above 40 degrees, POCIS Spencer explained the ship's propulsion plant, which FLGOFF Dowd particularly enjoyed, especially after getting a look at one of the two LM2500 gas turbines.



With shoulders squeezing through hatches between decks and heads constantly ducking to avoid fittings and coamings, everyone soon learnt that warships are “built to accommodate the function and fighting capabilities of the ship, and the crew seem to be squeezed in around what is left,” observed WO1 Elliot.



Reflecting on the successful visit, CPL Welsh said that he thought ‘it was very enlightening to see how the Navy does business in such tight spaces and difficult conditions.’ I afterwards told them all I would be more than happy to assist anyone looking to take a service transfer to the Navy, but no one has taken me up on the offer... yet. I guess life on board a ship is not for everyone.

LEUT J. GOWLING

There are 15 differences between the two pictures see if you can spot them?



AFGHANISTAN SIGNAL SQUADRON

KABUL TROOP



Hi all, another update from Kabul Troop. My name is CPL Benjamin Sharpe and I'm the only lucky RAAF CETECH to get a position here in Kabul on FCU-9.



You may ask why I feel so lucky. Well, it starts with the small team I get to work with here every day. We have a close working environment in our office and friendships are building more as we open up and get to know each other. The office is never short of laughs as well. For example, one morning the boss (LT Ng) laid a well-planned ambush with his newly delivered Nerf mini-gun. The unsuspecting victim was none other than our 2IC Chris Hirst who usually has her first coffee and cigarette heavily in mind at that time of the morning. Instead though, she was welcomed to the office with a barrage of Nerf!

I am also lucky enough to be a member of the Kabul Moe Bro's. Rob Edwards, Ty Brewster and I had the great idea of growing moustaches for the entirety of the trip. The first delivery of moustache wax came in by mail a few days ago and I'm enjoying training the "stache" into all the glory that it will become. I'm sure you are looking forward to attacking us with shavers on Day 1 of our return to Australia.



Laughs aside though, there is an important job for the CIS team to do here in Kabul. The importance of it makes it all the more rewarding when we kick goals and get the job done. Our eight member troop not only supplies all the CIS to the headquarters here but also to other critical users in locations all over Kabul. These multiple locations



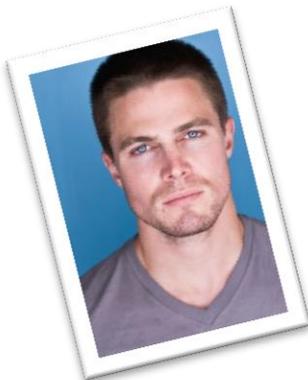
give us the opportunity to tactically drive through and around the city. It's a pretty amazing site. One minute you are getting cut off by a local in an expensive SUV and the next minute there is a young Afghan teenager trying to manoeuvre a donkey and cart through a busy intersection. It's a truly stark contrast here between the old and the new.

We are also all working hard on our "prison bodies", hitting the gym daily. The first month wasn't easy though. We are living at high altitude and you feel like a fish trying to breathe out of water at times. The high altitude also comes with beautiful views of jagged snow-capped mountains, some of which are still peppered with evidence of the Soviet presence years ago. Walking home towards these mountains with the sun setting behind them is a small reward at the end of a hard day's work.



I hope to have given you a small taste of what your loved ones are experiencing over here and why your sacrifice is so important.

EDITOR'S QUESTION: Is tv hunkalicious Stephen Amell, aka Oliver Queen "The Arrow" really in the MEAO?



Who does this
armour
belong to???

Answer: p21



THE BAHRAIN LIFE

Greetings from the Kingdom of Bahrain

CPOCIS Rick Maude



Greetings to one and all. It has been busy times up here in Bahrain, and although most wouldn't think so I've been pretty busy at work too! So let's talk about work stuff... We have had a number of the CMF staff change out, which has required new accounts to be created. I have also re-designed the RANLO Residence Internet network (pictured in the May Newsletter [Editor's note: This article was ... well ... misplaced somewhere between Bahrain and the UAE. We've included it later in this edition for your enjoyment. Sorry Rick.]) At first this seemed a fairly straight forward exercise, however as with every 'handyman' project became a little larger than initially thought. Anyway, after a trip to Bunnings, I managed to get the bits and pieces I needed (and no there is no Bunnings in Bahrain). After re-wiring the entire house internet network, now it is performing much better, so we can spend more time surfing the net or Facetiming family! There have been many other work related jobs and significant achievements, but I'm not going to bore you all with the details.

Being in Bahrain and working at the US Navy base, the 4th July celebrations were well worth attending. Morale, Welfare and Recreation organised a "bunch load" (as the Americans say) of family activities including jumping castles, BBQs, stalls, fete, sporting competitions, watermelon and hot dog eating competitions, and a fun run, to name a few. Flown in were three NFL players who did a meet and greet. They were Mike Karney (St Louis Rams #44), R.W. McQuarters (New York Giants #25) and Tony Parish (San Francisco 49ers #33).



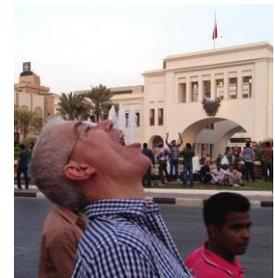
Another important event on the calendar was the holy month of Ramadan. The word Ramadan comes from the Arabic word *ramida* or *ar-ramad*, which means scorching heat or dryness, which is appropriate when the average daily temperature in Bahrain during Ramadan was 42 degrees C. Muslims are obliged to fast between dawn and sunset, meaning they are not allowed to consume food, drink, smoke or have intimate relations (Mummy and Daddy time). Ramadan usually lasts for 29-30 days and finishes with the new crescent moon, which was sighted in Bahrain on the evening of Wed 7th Aug.





Last week WGCDR Pert (FCU CO) and WOFF Schilling (FCU RSM) visited Bahrain to conduct a few mandatory checks for work and to check up on the welfare of FCU personnel in Bahrain, namely me! It was a quick 24hr visit with a busy schedule. There were diligence checks, audits, a tour around NAVCENT and a meeting with Combined Maritime Forces CAPT Slaven (Navy). With all the meetings and important work tasks completed it was time to show my visitors some of the delights of Bahrain.

During the afternoon we visited the Bahrain Fort which is some 2300 years old and still being restored, then off to the Manama Souq and markets. Now the 'Boss' though that a couple of funny photos would be good, don't really think he thought I would put them in the newsletter though!...



Boss drinking from the world's biggest drinking fountain



After a tour of the city we had the traditional Arabic mixed grill for dinner in a back alley of the Manama Markets. On the menu was Homus with dipping bread, Tiki Chicken, Tiki Camel, Minted Beef and the specialty.... Mystery meat! (don't ask because we haven't worked it out yet). Not quite full we managed to squeeze in coffee before returning home. A very enjoyable evening and a change of scenery for all.

Photo bombed by a local!

That's about all from me for this issue, stay safe..... "Bahrain Out!



AFGHANISTAN SIGNAL SQUADRON

KANDAHAR

This month has seen the boys starting to take leave:

Costa and Justin were enjoying the sights of Italy, whilst Jesse flew back home to Aus and then on to NZ. From all reports they had a great time sampling the fine food and drinks. Not having to eat with plastic knives and folks was also an added bonus;

Luke also flew home and then took his girlfriend to Bali for a relaxing romantic holiday on the beach with vendors selling genuine fake Rolex's;

SIG Khut finally made it to Korea after several questions from airline staff at the airport. Apparently the name on your ticket has to match the name on your passport. His trip is going well from what we can see on Facebook except for an altercation with a treadmill. The treadmill won and we are hoping to get the footage from the security camera at the hotel;

Ben has also taken a holiday to Italy with his girlfriend. It seems like the place to win points with the girlfriends;

Chris has returned home to Darwin to await the arrival of his first born. We wish Chris and his family all the best;

Rabs has taken leave back home too;

Rob, who is our friendly Comsec Sergeant and adopted Aussie, has flown into Portugal to catch up with friends and then fly on to England to visit family;

Kliney, who is our Troop Sergeant, has flown back home to do some hunting and fishing, and to see his girlfriend at some stage. It's ironic that Kliney takes leave just as the Squadron Sergeant Major is due to come back;

Luca has his leave to look forward to next week. He is off to Europe. We hope he doesn't break any hearts while he is over there or break the hearts of any of his girlfriends here at KAF;

Jacob and Lips are off to Europe also, I'm surprised their leave was approved. Have fun boys;

Martin, who is our engineering liaison with the coalition and second adopted Aussie, also has leave to look forward to next week. I think we are looking forward to it just as much as he is as The Aussies are losing the cricket to the Poms at the moment and Martin likes reminding us about it.

Whilst half the node is gallivanting around the world, the rest of us have been fighting the war on terror back here at Kandahar Air Field. The boss is keeping everything running smoothly, but still throws darts like a girl. Blue (Junior) is currently winning the darts comp. The first person to score 180 wins. Blue is the closest so far with 120.

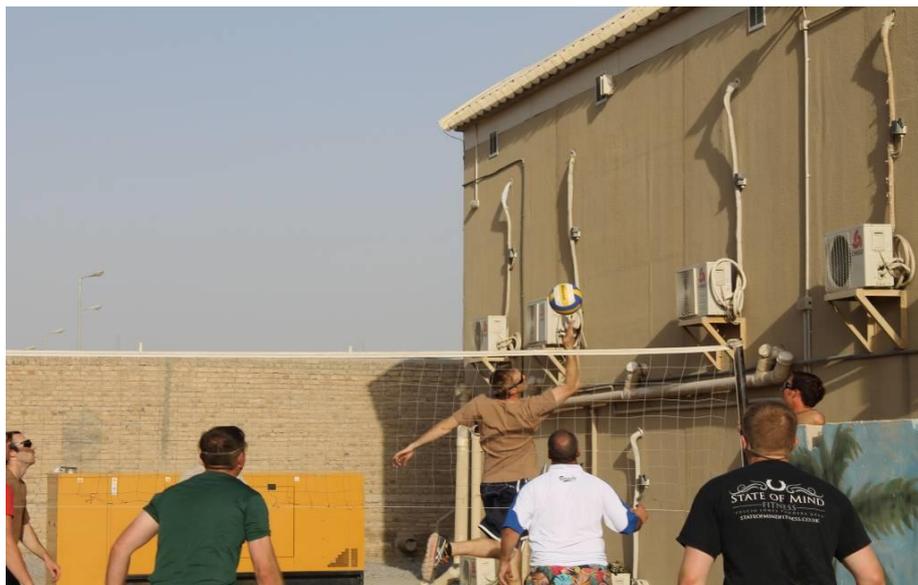


Blue (Senior) is the acting Troop Sergeant whilst Kliney is away. From all reports he is an inspirational leader who excels in all aspects of professionalism and military bearing and is really, *really* good looking.

Darren and Blue (Senior) were lucky enough to get an invite from the USA to check out their Predator UAV's and F16 Fighter Jets. Seeing these aircraft up close was just amazing. The boys had ideas of taking one for a ride but besides not knowing how to start them up (let alone fly one!), they only have one seat in them. Being great wingmen, they wouldn't leave the other behind.



Blue and Darren checking out the cockpit of an F16



Jacob wins a great point against the Poms

We would also like to thank Blue's girlfriend for sending over a Justin Bieber toothbrush for Darren, it goes well with Blue's One Direction toothbrush which plays music.

Well that sums up this month at KAF. Everyone is in high spirits and we all look forward to seeing our family and friends in November.

Cheers

CPL Blue Kildea - Acting 2IC KAF Flight



AFGHANISTAN SIGNAL SQUADRON

HQ – ~~TARIN KOWT~~ KANDAHAR

Our move to Kandahar...

How exciting... moving from Tarin Kowt to Kandahar. Well, I was excited! Finally, to add to my 'bulking' phase, I can now eat Pizza Hut, burgers, but most importantly, the Oreo Milk Shakes. Within a week of being here I had already drunk four of them from the boardwalk.

Settling into a new office, a new room and having new people to work with was a little challenging as we had to break the routine we had going from our 3 months in TK. The move for us has definitely broken the trip up... now to look forward to ROCTFA; I'm off to the US in 3 weeks.

We had a lovely visit from Chief Vredengbret, he would take me on dates to the mess. And does he love shopping or what!

Some of the differences from KAF to TK: we have to do our own laundry here, the mess isn't as good but there is a fish and chip bar which I eat at most days, unless you drive/walk to another mess or go to the boardwalk; it's a lot hotter here; it's dustier here so you can't see any of the beautiful mountains; there is heaps more shopping here (the boardwalk); more variety of places to eat from; and no chocolates!!!! So far, I'm having a ball. KAF FLT have been very welcoming. I missed the boys a lot, it's been good to all hang out again.

So.....while the SSM has been away on ROCL, I enjoy taking some time off to 'hang out' in his office.

*Still smiling ☺
Courtney, AFG SIG SQN CLK*



Have a quick nap, from my hard day's work.

**And even play dress ups.*



ALPHA SQUADRON

TARIN KOWT

Hi everyone at home and other spots in the MEAO. My name is Kat and I'm one of the few FCU RAAFies in TK. My main job as a CISCON is to manage and maintain IT servers. Though for the last 5 months I've been doing a bit of everything.

In March this year, a few others and I were deployed as part of OP Nostos. I am part of Alpha Squadron (A SQN), here to assist in the drawdown of services in Afghanistan.

The nature of A SQN's work is to do what needs to be done to move people around and pack equipment up. During this trip I had the unique opportunity to experience life as a Communicator/Clerk/Geek/Liney/Tech and for a brief moment even a Q'y (or in RAAF terms Loggy)

From March till the start of June, I worked briefly in AMAB and Kabul, though have spent most of my time in TK installing/de-installing cables and services where ever they were needed (or no longer needed).

For this time I worked with the A SQN and the Theatre Line Detachment boys, as their token CISCON (yup, surrounded by a bunch Techs). You'd think I'd have felt a little out of place, not having much of my normal work to do. But they accepted me in to the group, passed me some tools and a hard hat and put me to work.... It was great, I felt a bit like a builder on occasion, sawing bits of pipe, moving cabinets, running out cable. I'd do it again in a heartbeat.

From June onward I have been part of TK Troop, doing the job I know and helping out in whatever way I can (i.e. assisting to stop the gremlins from escaping and breaking the internet as they like to do from time to time).



*Dodge Ball Comp, Team
FCU second place*

Throughout the trip I've had a lot of fun and many laughs, and the people I've worked and lived with have been unreal. Between the work, we've competed in a Dodge Ball comp, I've tortured myself and others with Insanity workouts, had a couple of card nights and generally had a good time.

I've also enjoyed the banter and conversations. In particular, the regular occasions where my name "Kat" is modelled into other words. For example: Kat-nap, Katatonic, Torna-Kat, Kat-astrophy, Kat-apillar and Kitty-Kat to name a few.



I'm not sure at what point a "Meow" became an official way to say hello or good morning, but it's these little things that have made me laugh and kept me smiling. It really has been a great experience.

By the end of this month I will be home in Australia, playing with my dog Molly and visiting my family who have supported me so well while I've been away. I will be happy to sleep in my own bed and shower for as long as I like, though there is still part of me that will be sad to go.

On that note, I need to make a few special mentions:
Thank you Smiley (LAC McNair) for your ability to defy gravity, Westy (CPL Weston) for your persistence in getting me to plan battle ships, Wilco (SIG Wilkinson) for keeping us all entertained in the absence of a TV or radio, Macca (CPL McKenzie) for the educational (and often inappropriate) lunch conversations, my Roomies for the many chit chats over hot chocolates, and all of the FCU'ers at TK for, well... just being a bunch of Cool Cats! I'll miss all you guys in A SQN and TK Troop, it has been an absolute pleasure to be part of both teams ☺



LCPL Bratton & me: Instant Service Transfer (Promotion & Demotion)

Peace out (Meow)

Kat

CPL Katrina Schulz – A SQN & TK Troop



SIG Martin, SIG Wilkinson & I, before Origin 3



More adventures in TK...



CPL Donnelly & SIG Wilkinson, rubbing shoulders with the PM (Prime Time News)



TK SIG's Unite!



Amusing and informative sign. You have been warned...



SGT Dunn, the only one around here

LAC McNeair, WOFF Greenwood & SGT Dunn, before Origin Game 2



CPL McKenzie, possible new trend?..

LAC McNeair, Pottering along in TK



AFGHANISTAN SIGNAL SQUADRON

TARIN KOWT

Treasured Times in TK

‘Treasure!!! You must get a lot of S^%\$ for that name!!!’ PM Kevin Rudd said as he gazed upon the name on my shirt. I’m SIG Treasure, part of Afghan SIG Squadron over here in TK.

A lot has happened here in recent months, mainly the pack up and withdrawal of services in TK. It has been a long and arduous process so far. As soon as we arrived, we got our handover from the amazing FCU-8, and were thrown into a world that was unbeknownst to us all. Eleven Geeks, some just out of the school, were immediately doing jobs and tasks that would carry on throughout the day and into the night on many occasions. We had our first big project ahead of us, moving a lot of people and all their IS equipment from one area to another. This would last at least 2 months; on average we completed about 1 move every 3 days. There were annoyed Officers, cables, laptops, monitors wandering everywhere around TK. Once this was complete, we all sighed in relief, thinking we were done... little did we know of the things we had lurking in the near future.

Then came my first big break. I had bought a bass guitar from an American soldier. I got talking to one of the Australian civilians who was working here, Fred Smith, and found out he played music. He has about 7-8 albums out, and played his music all around the world. Now, I’m normally a massive metalhead; I love bands like Rush, Iron Maiden and Metallica. As soon as we started jamming I was thrown into a world of music I had never ventured into before. Bluegrass, folk, country music was the stuff that Fred played. We jammed every night for a week, and soon had a full setlist and a gig lined up at Green Beans, the coffee shop.

Next jam I went to, the guys from the ABC were there filming for Australian Story. Lucky I’d had a haircut (like WO2 Prosser kept on telling me to get) otherwise I could have been the untidiest looking SIG ever to be on TV. It was gig time. Australian Story was filming. There was a small crowd of people gathered, but the numbers slowly kept growing. I looked over and saw the gleaming faces of my amazing peers. It all went by so quickly. This was my first time playing in front of people sober.



Next day, it was straight back to work on the Helpdesk. The Helpdesk is a thrilling place of business: people ringing to get their password reset, people bringing in their hard drives, march-ins, march-outs, and a lot of people complaining about their TAB key not working. Ahh, the magic of it all...



IS Det hard at work

Then it was time for leave. I met my amazing girlfriend, Olivia, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. After drinking a pub dry of Captain Morgan Rum and eating the best ribs I have ever had (they were Captain Morgan Rum flavour), we headed for Vietnam. It was a blast. The food was extraordinary, apart from the plate of fried chicken bones, including a chicken foot (which I did *not* order). We saw a lot of stuff, went to a lot of places, ate a lot, and drank too many cocktails. Then it was time to go back. I was dreading this moment and so was Liv. We said our goodbyes as she hopped onto the plane back to Australia.

I got back into country, and it was straight back to work. The next week, we all had to go to the gym at lunchtime. Little did I know I was about to meet the big man himself, Kevin Rudd. Being a big fan of Rudd, after watching the Kevin Rudd Files on Rove Live as a teenager, I was hoping he would fly in, bearing a jetpack and 2 M4's in his arms. No, he arrived in a vehicle with a lot of his mates and his wife. Not the entrance I was hoping for but it was still the Kevin07. Everyone I spoke to could tell I was way too excited for my own good. I saw the techs from A SQN near him. I decided to join them. I finally had my chance and swooped in and met him. As soon as he saw my last name he laughed, we talked for a



minute, and I got my picture taken. It was thrilling, meeting the PM in all his infinite glory and wisdom. Something to become legend in the future.

We are all still working very hard, maintaining as well as packing down services. It has been quite an experience so far, and something that will stay in the solid state drive that is my brain for a very long time. Keep headbangin' everyone and hope to see all your smiling faces back home.

SIG Treasure
Bass Efficienato



TK TP Members relaxing at the concert



GULF STATES SQUADRON

QATAR

Hello from Qatar, it's Dinger (also known as LAC Daniel Bell). Besides from work, my time here has been quiet. I have only left Al Udeid Air Base twice now, both on forced occasions (I mean, work purposes).

The first time was to complete my off-base driver's authorisation, which turned into WOFF Ranasinghe's (Rany) gold shopping spree across town, mostly on foot. Made worse was that CPL Cumerford and LAC Jackson introduced me to the Gym and what is called leg day. It took 15 minutes to get my legs and body into a semi straight upright position and I still couldn't get my heels to the ground without falling over backwards. This meant I was walking around Doha in bulk pain on my tippy toes looking like I went for a long bike ride without a seat.

The second time was just the other day when the CO and UWOFF came for a visit. We went into Doha for dinner and it was the first time I had seen the city lights at night. It was pretty impressive.



We went to an Indian restaurant at the Souq, which is their traditional market place, where I was made to experience new food. I am not one to leave my comfort zone, especially when it comes to food. Bring on steak or chicken nuggets any day of the week! That being said, the food was nice and I didn't die, so great success.

I am happy to say we are officially over the half-way point of the trip. Time has flown, and with a ROCFA trip still up my sleeve, I'm hoping the second half will feel just as quick. I am looking forward to seeing everyone in AMAB, for some decompression fun.



GULF STATES SQUADRON

BAHRAIN

A NEW CHAPTER *(JUST A LITTLE LATE ☺)*

Greetings from the Kingdom of Bahrain

CPOCIS Rick Maude



Me!

Yes that's right, I have finally made it up to my own little kingdom... Now I do remember during Force Prep there were quite a lot of people within FCU-9 who didn't even know there was a node established at Bahrain. So much so that the Bahrain Node was pretty much left out of most of the briefs, and much of the planning. "Aww," I hear you cry, but it's OK because eventually I got the Bahrain node so well known that at RSO&I the node was mentioned a dozen times in the first day. Aims Achieved!

"So what do you actually do up there Rick?" I hear you ask... Well let me tell you it's not all sitting by the pool sunbathing and drinking cocktails! The Bahrain Node provides Communication Information Systems (CIS) Support (DRN/DSN) to ADF assets located in Bahrain. I provide support to the Royal Australian Navy Logistics Officer (RANLO) and staff, Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) Bahrain Commander Task Force 150 when under Australian Navy Command, Maritime Operations Support Group Bahrain and any CIS assistance the deployed Major Fleet Unit may require.

RANLO provides logistical support to deployed Major Fleet Unit during port visits throughout the area. RANLO and his team consist of five personnel who specialise in logistical support that operates out of the RANLO residence (affectionately known as the "Pink Palace" in Tubli, Bahrain.)



Front Gate of NSA Bahrain

Combined Maritime Forces are part of a multinational force operating maritime assets within the MEAO. The CMF team consists of five Navy personnel under the Command of CAPT Slaven (RAN). CMF staff operates out of NAVCENT at US Naval Support Activity (NSA) and utilise DRN/DSN as well as US IT Services.

NSA Bahrain is approximately 10Km from the Pink Palace.





The Pink Palace

Tubli is a waterfront suburb of the capital city of Manama. Now I use the phrase waterfront suburb with a bit of poetic license. Let's just say, yes it's on the water, but not waterfront as we would have back home. The Pink Palace is the primary residence for RANLO Staff, CIS Support Bahrain Staff and some members of CMF Staff. It is a privately rented three storey building. Each floor in the complex is a self-contained house with a general makeup of lounge room, dining room, four bedrooms with ensuites, full kitchen and laundry.

We have converted two of the bedrooms on the middle floor into office spaces for RANLO Staff; the CIS Support Facility (COMCEN) is also on the second floor in what used to be the laundry. The ground floor has the gymnasium, a small pool out the back and roof access if you need to work on your tan! It's a home away from home!

Pink Palace is approximately 10Km from NSA, which means driving in Bahrain. Let's just say that driving on the wrong side of the road to Australia is a challenge in itself, but when you factor in that the use of indicators, staying in your own lane and driving at the speed limit are all optional extras in the Bahrain Driving Handbook, it can make for some very interesting times on the roads. Fortunately there are not many accidents here, which is testament to all Bahraini drivers being on the same wavelength on the roads.

Bahrain is an interesting place with lots of history, which I intend to share with you over the coming months.

Well that's about all from me for this issue, stay safe..... "Bahrain Out!"

Answer from p7:

The armour belongs to none other than
SGT Damien Kline!!!



AFGHANISTAN SIGNAL SQUADRON

TARIN KOWT

TK NETBALL

IT'S HERE... The official start to the Tarin Kowt Netball Season has begun.

Thanks to a couple of keen netballers, TK has managed to put together some teams to face off against each other. The teams are loosely based on your force assigned unit. The matches are held on Saturday nights and consist of 4 x 10 minutes quarters.

FCU, with the help of A SQN, have managed to put together quiet a good team. Let me introduce the team:

LACW Amy Anderson - GA/GS (Captain),
SIG Ben Murphy - GA/C,
CPL Justin Hanney - C/WA,
CPL Polly Cooper GK/GD,
SIG Jacob Wilkinson - WD,
CPL Ben Donnelly - C/WD,
SGT Warren Dunn - WD/GD,
CPL Graham Spackman - GA/GS,
CPL Ryan Mills - WD/WA
LAC Carl Taylor - WD and
LT Ryan Pitt - GD/GK.



The season started off pretty badly for FCU, with two straight loses against FSU Workshops (21-19) and CTU (29-23). However, we regrouped after a bye and regained our confidence to thrash CRAM (24-8) in the 4th round, and demolished FSU (26-12) in the 5th round. With a bye ahead and a few hard matches coming up against 2 Cav and FSU Workshops, FCU has proven to be one of the teams to beat.

For the first few rounds the team was still finding its feet and mixing up positions. But now after four games we have all found and locked in our positions.

There have been a few highlights, brain farts and outstanding play from the guys and girls. Firstly our amazing captain, Amy, is ruthless in the circle. She doesn't miss a shot, she *owns* that baseline. Murph is quick on his feet and shoots anywhere in the circle, hard one to predict. Hanney is quick and is always in the right place at the right time, very passionate when it comes to bad calls by the umpires. Polly might not be the tallest player in the circle but she has 'go go gadget hands' and it's a struggle to get the ball past her. Jacob, our newest player, has proven to be quite a good netballer. His best skill is definitely putting the other players off by rubbing up against them. Good work, Jacob! BD is a nifty defender all over the court, picking up intercepts every game. Dunny is an awesome all-rounder, but dominates at



the GD position due to his agility and fitness. Spanky's height aides him greatly in the ring, we all know when he's scored a goal as there are proud high fives all round. Millsy is always a keen player on the court and is improving his skills weekly. Carl, usually too busy lifting weights at the gym, has joined us for a few games bringing his good defending skills. Lastly, Pitty has recently changed from centre court to defence; this change confused him a little with 3 calls in a row from the umpire for running onto the wrong third of the court....we think he's got the point now....we hope.

Since this was first written, FCU has managed to defeat the top team, who were undefeated. Score was 27-22!

CPL Polly Cooper & LACW Amy Anderson



From Left: CPL Hanney, SIG Murphy, LACW Anderson, SIG Wilkinson, CPL Cooper, CPL Donnelly, CPL Spackman, LT Pitt.

