

EX SPARTAN SAPPER 14

Ex SPARTAN SAPPER 14, 15-28 October, was an exciting fall exercise that allowed 2 Combat Engineer Regiment (2 CER) to reinforce lessons learned in the spring during Ex MAPLE REOLVE 14 in Wainwright. The exercise was a two week deployment into the Petawawa Training Area and focused on fundamental engineer skills like constructing battlefield defences, and crossing our local rivers. The first four days were focused on the planning and construction of a large defensive area that, in theory, would allow an infantry battalion to trap and destroy an opposing mechanised brigade. In the remaining days the field squadrons rotated through a series of stands that practiced their floating bridge, aerial ropeway and minefield breaching skills.

If you had seen an aerial photograph of the Mattawa Plains on the 19th of October you would have seen evidence of over 1200 anti-tank mines, 3 kilometers of wire fences and 1.2 kilometers of anti-tank ditch that had been built or laid by the sappers of 2 CER. This battlefield was planned and tested through the discussion of tactics by a joint group of infantry and engineers from the brigade.

Since the Commanding Officer of 2 CER, LCol Gasparotto, wanted this to be a learning exercise the construction was broken down into; lectures to refresh the sappers' knowledge, daytime construction to practice drills, and nighttime construction to confirm our understanding in a demanding and realistic scenario. Once it was finished, representatives from the RCD and the infantry battalions came out to view the defensive area, as it is something rarely built to completion in our training area.



The classic 2-rope bridge that proved to be less effective than an aerial ropeway built from modern mountaineering equipment.

But the exercise wasn't finished yet. Ex SPARTAN SAPPER was also to be a stepping stone to the upcoming Brigade exercise, SPARTAN BEAR, which included Company Level river crossing operations. Field squadrons rehearsed this vital task by tactically securing and traversing the Crooked Rapids of the Petawawa River. One troop, whose soldiers are specifically trained for mountain operations, used advanced rigging equipment to establish two zip lines, one for personnel and one for equipment. Their advanced training and special gear enabled both the field squadron and an infantry company to soar

above the water obstacle and carry on with their advance. Their rehearsal had better prepared the sappers of 2 CER for crossing obstacles in difficult terrain and has provided invaluable planning data to the Battalion and Regimental Headquarters.



The finished bridge at Mount Batten.

In addition to flinging soldiers across the Petawawa River by aerial zip lines, a 40 meter floating bridge was constructed to allow armoured vehicles the ability to get to places previously unreachable. Building these floating bridges requires careful analysis of the river and its approaches as well as an understanding of the enemy's capabilities as these bridges can easily be destroyed by bombarding artillery or raiding fighter aircraft. Once again this construction took the form of practice before execution as the construction was rehearsed in Brennan Lake at the 2 CER Compound before it was constructed at Mount Batten Bridge.

But that was not all, 26 Counter Improvised Explosive Device (C-IED) Squadron, a specialist squadron focused on defeating an IED threat, deployed but trained separately from the regiment to conduct specialist C-IED training. Their exercise commenced with Expedient Route Opening Capability (EROC) Troop training new drivers on their specialized search and detection vehicles while Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Troop began refreshing their operators on responding to a series of IED scenarios. Once the new drivers were trained, EROC Troop began route search and clearance operations to ensure that convoys could safely travel within the area. Over the course of the exercise, the squadron faced a complex threat from IEDs and ambushes. The range of calls covered everything from suspect parcels to insurgent weapons caches to complex devices placed along the roads. Overall the exercise was excellent training for the members of 2 CER who proved their worth supporting 2 CMBG a few weeks later on Exercise SPARTAN BEAR. CHIMO!

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