

After Action Report K2 OP Task Vic Chora 31 May 06 – 02 June 06

On the 30th May 06 K2 departed FOB Davis as part of BK3 to be inserted for a Dismounted OP task focusing on TAI's in vicinity of the Chora Valley, at approximately 1730 on the 31st of May K2 was dropped off by K3 at the valley floor to the SE of the Chora Valley. K2 commenced a foot move to the OP sight with enough equipment for a seven-day OP task due to the restrictive terrain and weights (around 70kg per man) K2 spent the night moving to the OP arriving at around 0100z on the 1st of June. Due to the duration of the infil K2 decided to lay up for a few hours prior to commencing OP routine for this duration one pl member was tasked with security till 0400z when the OP would commence although at this time the security piquet would also maintain eyes on the Chora valley.

At around 0300z the Dutch SOF commenced their move into the Chora Pass as directed by KA at around this time KA contacted K2 to ask if we had established our OP on the Chora Valley at this point he was informed we had not yet commenced OP routine [The OP was to observe for 24hrs to identify patterns of normalcy prior to the vehicle mounted FE probing into the Chora pass], at this point we stood to the OP and identified NASA 20 to our NE on the valley floor on the Western side of the Chora Pass. Once we had eyes on K2 identified significant suspect movement to the N, NW and West of NASA 20 Shortly after this the remainder of the B3K call sign moved into the Chora Pass. NASA 20's FAC windmill 61 then requested the Dutch Apache to support on, arrival the Apache's flew through the Chora Pass from the South East directly over the Suspect compound they received ground fire the Apaches immediately deployed flares, they then fired rockets onto the ACM compound with little effect at this point the ACM withdrew into various locations, after this the Vehicle Mounted Troops came under heavy fire from 180° this included small arms, RPG's, LMG/HMG and 107mm rockets.

This was going for about 10 minutes during this time our JTAC (Jaguar 12) was trying to aid Windmill 61 with accurate targeting of the numerous ACM identified from our position due to Communications difficulties, language barriers and inexperienced Pilots numerous targets were not engaged. At around the 10 minute mark Jag 12 raised tombstone on AC-1 and asked if any Aussie or Dutch Call sign had declared TIC he replied negative and Jag 12 asked for immediate air and told Tombstone that the B3K and NASA 20 were in contact and receiving heavy fire from everything including 107mm recoilless rifle. Tombstone then pushed a B1 to Jag 12 once on station Jag 12 had the B1 drop his first bomb onto the Identified C2 which was the initial position the Dutch Apache's had fired rocket's onto the second run was onto the Identified 107mm position. The next run was to be onto 20 ACM but had to be aborted due to communications problems with the Dutch Apache's. The next run was in vicinity of the cemetery where there was 12 ACM. During this time B3K and NASA 20 had withdrawn to the South of Chora Pass due to the heavy fire and B3K3 sustaining a casualty. During the rest of the day K2 continued with OP routine and Jag 12 Controlled two A10's and an AC130.

On the morning of the 2nd K2 continued with OP routine, early that morning B3K identified a Spotter approximately 800m East of our OP and engaged this target with mortars and A10 unknown BDA shortly after they moved away to the South East. At around 0300z our OP identified 3 ACM moving to the NTH of the OP at the Base of the mountain shortly after we lost visibility of them. At around 0420z K23 and K24 were on

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NSD 1485, 1486, 1487 of 2018

Date: 10 June 2021

Ben Roberts-Smith v Fairfax Media Publications Pty Ltd & Ors

Exhibit No: A12
Assoc: Alice O'Connell

MFI No: _____

OP and identified 1 ACM approximately 100m NE of the OP as he moved East the OP lost sight of him the information was immediately passed to the rest of the patrol. At this point a decision was made to pursue and neutralize this threat K22 and K25 stalked approximately 80m and identified the ACM K22 then engaged the spotter at around 80m with suppressed M4 followed By K25 who engaged with Suppressed SR25 the ACM was Neutralized as he dropped to the ground a smoke grenade was deployed it is unconfirmed whether he released this or whether it was hit by small arms shortly after hitting the ground he burst into flames, the burn was very similar to a red Phosphorous. At this point K22 decided they would not exploit the Enemy KIA due to their possible exposure to the Chora Valley they then returned to the OP location. (It was assessed that the ACM had not compromised the OP but was looking for the spotter which was engaged that morning by B3K, however due to the terrain and our location we did not want this ACM to position himself on high ground with the ability to create casualties on our force)

Following this incident it was assessed the OP had not been compromised and OP routine continued, Jag 12 requested continuing overhead cover to clear possible spotter locations vicinity OP with no luck.

At around 021330z K24 was providing rear sentry to the OP and Heard Voices to the NE K22 and K25 moved to the rear of the OP to support K23 and K24, K22 Identified the ACM to the NE and engaged with suppressed M4 dropping the enemy approximately 100m away shortly after the OP started to receive AK fire from another unobserved ACM to the NE as the fire fight ensued K25 Occupied a position near the OP sight providing security to the Nth K24 and K23 maintained rear security K22 provided security to the NE and K21 raised communications to B3O to Declare TIC and request immediate CAS at the same time Jag 12 was working his means through to Tombstone to push air to our location at this point B3O informed K21 that it would be at least 40mins for air due to another TIC, K21 informed the patrol and requested Jag 12 push Tombstone for support Jag 12 informed Tombstone we were an isolated force who would be overrun if we didn't receive CAS. During this time K22 had a persistent one on one fight with the ACM to the NE and E who continued to fire accurate harassing fire on his position to the E of the OP, at this point K25 was suppressing a massing enemy to the N which had seen the build up of up to 16 ACM crossing the open ground pushing to the base of the mountain the first group which was patrolling in a Open file formation carrying RPG and Small arms. In the course of this suppression K21 moved K23 to reinforce this position once in position K23 had a weapon failure. K23 continually cocked his weapon without identifying the fault K25 identified K23's rounds were soft struck K25 told him to move back into more cover and rectify the problem, K23 thought the problem was a faulty firing pin after he stripped his weapon he Identified that he had incorrectly assembled the bolt, K25 effectively suppressed the Enemy to the Nth and K22 continued to suppress the ACM to the E/NE K21 continued to work options through B3O and Jag 12.

At this time Jag 12 had two A10's coming online K25 had 1 ACM KIA and 1 WIA, the ACM had managed to fire a RPG which dropped well short of the OP, K23 was back on line supporting K25 who had effectively held the ACM at the base of the mountain, K22 warned out K25 and K23 to keep an eye on their right flank as the ACM K22 was suppressing was believed to be moving positions trying to put fire onto their position this was confirmed shortly after when rounds struck the rock K25 and K23 were behind.

As the A10's came on line Jag12 had them do a gun run and drop Proximity onto the valley floor effectively suppressing the ACM following this he had them carry out a gun run to the east of the OP to clear the ACM from that location as day transitioned to night the A10's were off line for around 7 minutes as they changed to NVG's, K21 coordinated the patrol to co-locate their packs for destruction if required and to prepare their grab bags to bug out (The packs were to be marked by IR strobe and OAS would destroy them once K2 were clear of the OP). At around this point K24 said he thought he still had movement from the ACM K22 had engaged at the onset of the TIC K23 was told by K21 to engage this position during his initial burst K24 had a stoppage followed by multiple stoppages K22 asked K24 to indicate from his fall of shot the ACM position, he could not effectively indicate the position K24 was told to get his gun working and suppress this area if he saw any movement, he could not do this effectively due to the fact he had a dry gun and no oil to rectify this problem. Shortly after this Jag 12 had control of the A10's and completed his gun runs just after dark the A10's went off station due to Bingo fuel as they moved out of range and all was thought to be quiet the patrol received DSHK fire from the North which struck the north face of the OP as well as passing through the LUP/OP. During this TIC B3K, NASA 20 and B82 had returned to a position to the S of the OP. Following the HMG fire K22 coordinated a fire mission onto known PKM position and withdrawal routes of the ACM.

K21 had coordinated with B30 to hold the position to support the lodgment of a Coy of the 2/4th infantry into Chora Jag 12 Coordinated air with other Jag Call signs on the ground during this lodgment there was very little ACM action. Following the lodgment K2 held position till 2200z then withdrew S to the valley floor to MU with B3K the MU was complete by around 0115z 3 June 06.

For the short duration of the Patrol K2 had 3 confirmed Enemy KIA with Small arms 3 confirmed KIA with the A10's and unconfirmed Enemy WIA, Nil friendly Casualties however K23 had the fragments of a copper jacket embedded into his vew-tewee which was located in his LFT breast Pocket this was assessed to be from the ACM who was located to the NE.

The enemy Observed during this TIC appeared to be well trained as the constantly broke their fire positions and maintained effective fire on to the OP, the two groups Identified crossing the open ground were moving in a open file formation with what appeared to be a command group to the rear of the formation. It was assessed the Enemy were determined to close with and clear our position until effective air support forced them to retreat it is believed if we had not withdrawn that position in the hours of darkness and the subsequent lodgment of the 2/4th infantry company in Chora the ACM would have more than likely tried to make a approach and isolate us in position in the early hours of the following day.

Main Lessons Learnt for the patrol is:

If possible conduct a test fire in the field, due to high heat and dust you also need to confirm that at minimum junior members of the patrol have at least conducted a test after assembly and have a cleaning kit and oil to ensure they can operate their weapons.

5.56mm ball is not effective unless multiple hits are achieved.

40mm/M203 is a very effective weapon to achieve shock against an enemy at close range.

The SR25 provided a great standoff capability although not getting first round hits at 1200m it was invaluable in halting the enemy advance.

The A10 was the most effective OAS for close air support in this situation.

Prior to this patrol K2 prepared for emergency extraction and briefed all available assets and likely LO's should this situation arise although the patrol held position and did not use these means we had confidence that this preparation was vital and would have worked if called for.