



DEFENCE MEDIA RELEASE

CPA Hometown 035/07

Wednesday 7 March 2007

SOLOMONS TOUR FOR LOCAL CITIZEN SOLDIER

In a normal month, Peachester's Rob McIntyre will be happy to install a garage door or fix your gate. But now he's 4000 kilometres away across the Coral Sea, leading a foot patrol on the streets of Honiara in the Solomon Islands.

Rob is now part of Operation Anode. It's the name for the Australian Defence Forces' part in the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI).

Australian soldiers - along with soldiers from three other Pacific nations - are supporting police from a total of 16 Pacific nations (including Australian Federal Police) as they back up the Solomon Islands Police Force in its task of restoring law and order. RAMSI began in 2003 at the request of the Solomon Islands Government.

"I went to Caloundra High School and spent the rest of my time surfing at Kawana Waters," said Rob. "Then I joined the Reserves in 1995."

Rob has already been a Regular and now holds the rank of Corporal in the Army Reserves. "I've already served overseas - I was in East Timor serving with the 6th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment. But now I'm over here with Diggers from my own Reserve unit, the 9th Battalion Royal Queensland Regiment (9RQR). Apart from four regular Army officers we are all Reservists. Recruits come from the coast and inland from Logan right up to Maryborough.

'As a Corporal I'm a section commander, which means I'm responsible for eight men. Here at our forward operating base in Honiara we are on a three day rotation. On the first day we do street patrols in support of the police. On the second day the section becomes the Quick Reaction Force - it means we're ready to go within ten minutes if any of the other patrols hit trouble. On the third day we look after base security, guarding the gate and the perimeter fence. It means we never get too stale, plus we get a break from patrolling.

"Then we will rotate to a new job every few weeks - which could be guarding the main jail in Honiara, or supporting a police outpost on another island. It means we don't get stale.

"It's been 12 years now since I joined 9RQR, but I'm still in - I enjoy being a Digger and I reckon I'd miss it too much if I left. I just enjoy being in the bush, the sense of belonging, and the feeling of achievement that comes with it.

"We've been here a couple of months so I'll be back home pretty soon. But we won't be having a fancy holiday. I told you I love the bush, so to celebrate I'll be taking my wife and son for a week's camping.

"Come ANZAC Day I'll be back with the boys though. I've already got the Australian Active Service Medal and the UN Medal for my time in East Timor, but this year I'll also be wearing

the Australian Service Medal for this tour of duty in the Solomon Islands. Marching with my mates through the centre of Brisbane – that will be a good day.”

Rob is one of Australia’s 41,500 Reservists, who make up about 42 per cent of the ADF strength. They bring their own civilian skills and experience and in return get the opportunity to gain new skills as part of their Reserve training.

Although Reservists may be “called out” by the Governor-General for serious security threats, all Reservists currently serving on operations, or elsewhere in the Defence Force, are volunteers. In recent years Australian Reservists have provided humanitarian relief to tsunami and earthquake victims in our region, and operations in the Solomon Islands, the Middle East and elsewhere. They have served alongside their full-time counterparts in peace missions to Timor Leste and Bougainville and a Reserve rifle company is regularly deployed to Malaysia as part of Australia's commitment to the Five Power Defence Arrangement.

Reservists have assisted civilian police in roles such as venue search and vehicle checkpoints at the Commonwealth Games in Melbourne, Sydney Olympic and Paralympic Games, the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting and the 2003 Rugby World Cup. They also provide much-needed assistance in times of natural disasters such as floods, droughts and fires and in emergency rescue operations.

***Caption:** Peachester’s Reserve soldier Corporal Rob McIntyre has time for a social chat on patrol in the Solomon Islands*

***Media Contact:** Steve Ridgway on 0438 012 107*