

1. Look at this interview with an Australian soldier in East Timor, and decide:
 - what qualities the soldiers show
 - the importance of training and discipline
 - what are the best and worst features of their task in East Timor.

2. Do you think they should be proud of what they are doing?



Patrolling is the key to keeping an area secure - by being constantly around, the militias and their supporters don't have a chance to re-gather and re-assert themselves.

A patrol is normally a routine thing - you walk, keep alert, note what's happening, interact with the locals. It's 'hearts and minds' stuff as well as showing your strength to any potential 'nasty'.

We rarely have contacts, but on one patrol near the border we had just stopped for a break. We saw some suspicious characters with weapons, so the scout went ahead to report. Suddenly there were shots. Well the training really came to the fore so we deployed into a defensive position. I can tell you that the adrenalin was running now - I felt alert and excited, but still calm at the same time.

We saw a couple of groups, and there were occasional shots coming in at us from several different places.

I requested permission to engage, got it, and aimed at a bloke with an AK 47 rifle I could see about 1500 metres away. I tried to take wind and distance and everything into account, but the shot fell about a metre short. The unfriendlies quickly disappeared.

How did I feel? I remember thinking 'What if I get him?' But also 'What if I miss?' I have to say that I'm disappointed to have missed him. There's been all the training, all the preparation, all the frustration of having got here too late to save some of the killing and the destruction, and there's also the feeling that it would have 'closed the circle', been the logical completion of what we have been prepared for.

We have been shown to be well-trained, well-armed and disciplined. I think we have really made a difference to the locals, inspired them with confidence, and have shared a real affection and like. I feel very proud of the Australian effort here.

Interview with a member of B Company 3 RAR in East Timor, February 2000