



2/2 Commando
Association of Australia Inc.

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The Editor
Commando News
(By email only)

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Dear Editor

FIRST LAND-BASED STRIKE AGAINST JAPANESE FORCES IN WWII

I am the President of the 2/2 Commando Association of Australia (Inc) and have just read your "Commando News" Edition 4 dated December 2014. There is an article on page 19 titled "First Strike" "The Salamaua Raid", which contains some inaccuracies.

The first part states that "during the first half of 1942, there was little good news for Australia. In six months, Japan had attacked and won everywhere, had swept aside all resistance and was on our doorstep."

In fact, the No 2 Independent Company, later known as 2/2 Commando Squadron, was undefeated and fighting a guerrilla campaign against a much larger number of Japanese troops (approx. 450 Australian against approx. 8-10,000 Japanese) from the night of 19/20 February 1942 until 17 December 1942 on Portuguese Timor, now known as Timor-Leste.

Your article states that, at 0315 hrs on 29 June 1942, 2/5th Independent Company carried out a raid on Salamaua in New Guinea and "*They should be remembered for the First Strike.*"

The No 2 Independent Company had already carried out a successful raid right into the middle of the Japanese garrison compound in Dili on 15 May 1942. Australia had by this time, been contacted by the unit using "Winnie the War Winner" on 20 April 1942, so Australia knew about the raid shortly after it happened.

The raid on Dili was carried out by No 4 Section, of which there were 15 in the attack party and six in the diversion party. The plan was for the attacking party to penetrate the main Japanese compound, create mayhem, throw grenades into buildings that had been previously identified by reconnaissance, as Japanese barracks and, if possible, to rescue the two members of the unit who had been captured on the first day the Japanese landed. They would then withdraw along the same route. A small rear party would cover the retreat, while the diversion party would harass the enemy and create the diversion by firing into the compound from the flank. Most of the weapons carried by both parties were Thompsons, Brens and a few .303s.

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As it happened, the Japanese were totally confused at being attacked from within their own guarded perimeter. They finally manned their weapons, opening sporadic and ineffectual fire at anything that moved. Grenades were thrown and machine gun and rifle fire was rattled off without so much as a scratch being inflicted on the Australian raiders.

The number of Japanese casualties is unknown and No 4 Section suffered no casualties at all.

The following day, 400 enemy troops launched a full-scale attack on the village of Remexio, supported by a barrage of heavy artillery. The Australians, however, were not there, and it was with some amusement that they watched the Japanese troops move in and systematically search the town for their elusive enemy.

I sincerely commend the 2/5th Independent Company on its very daring and successful raid on Salamaua, but, as pointed out above, it was not the first strike. That honour belongs to the No 2 Independent Company.

Further information about the exploits of the 2/2 can be seen at our website, the address of which is above.

Yours sincerely



Peter Epps
President