

Exercise Matador

23 Artillery Group (V)



The Lower Control Team from 209 AD Bry hard at it — 'If you can keep your head when all about you . . .'

The whole of the volunteer air defence world seemed to be at Chester on Saturday 17/Sunday 18 March for 23 Artillery Group (V)'s Exercise Matador — the annual Command Post Exercise. The three regiments — 102 from Scotland/Ulster, 103 from Lancashire and 104 from the Midlands and South Wales — brought with them over 200 soldiers and manned 30 Command Posts. This increase in the number of Command Post shows how the deployment of the Group's Blowpipe Air Defence Missiles has changed the tactics of Air Defence, for it is now the Troop that is the fire unit, undertaking tasks of its own.

In freezing weather, and with snow on the Command Post shelters, the exercise, set by the Group Staff, ran for 24 hours and was set in a simulated operational area 'somewhere in Germany'.



Comd 23 Arty Gp (V), Brig J R Rigby (right), talks with (from left) Lt J Ryland, Bdr L Rydings, Gnr C Griffiths and Gnr N Heat during the exercise.

Commander of 23 Artillery Group (V), Brig J R Rigby, visited all the command posts and told us 'I'm very pleased at the number of volunteers who have turned out — considering the inclement weather, and the distances travelled — from Ulster, Scotland and South Wales. We are breaking new ground with Matador 79, for it's the first time that I have been able to exercise all three regiments in their Blowpipe role, and the TAVR Air Defence Units with Blowpipe have a development pattern quite different from the Blowpipe equipped troops of the Regular Army. Later in the year, we shall see Blowpipe units of the TAVR in Germany — this exercise has been a very valuable test of their skills'.

Col R Squires, Deputy Commander of the Group, also visited the units taking part. Control staff came from the Group, HQ Troop, 23 Artillery Group and from CVHQ RA, as well as from the regiments.