

## KANGAROO '89

### A CIVIL/MILITARY EXERCISE

During July-September 1989 the Australian Defence Force conducted Exercise Kangaroo '89 across the Top End of Australia. This was the largest exercise ever conducted by the military in peacetime and involved approximately 25,000 military personnel from Australia and the United States of America.

The focus of the exercise was to test the potential effects of 'low level conflict', particularly on land and to examine and test a wide range of civil/military co-operation arrangements.

The military role in low level conflict is to provide support to civil powers in an effort to maintain law and order. It is important that there is a continuing function of business and local infrastructure activities within a threatened area.

The Northern Territory Disaster Act provides for Regional Counter Disaster Committees. During Kangaroo '89 these committees became Regional Security Committees. These provided the formal machinery to co-ordinate policy direction, effort and planning during these low level operations in order to avoid disruption of essential services.

Military Police and Northern Territory Police formed combined patrols during the entire period of operations. Additionally, police liaison teams were formed as intermediaries between the defence forces and the various police stations. The function of the joint patrol system was to maintain law and order throughout Northern Territory communities as part of the exercise.

The exercise brought with it a substantial population increase in the Northern Territory. There was also a major increase in both road and air traffic. Despite these increases there were very few incidents requiring police response. Minimum disruption occurred to the civil population. In the majority of communities where a military presence was established the general public benefited considerably. Besides the financial benefit that flowed to these communities, many service personnel donated their time to upgrade or in some cases build community facilities.