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BATTLE IN RAIN**Troops Well Tested In
Rough Weather****MANOEUVRES FINISH****Dawn Attack Covered By
Barrage**(FROM THE DOMINION CORRESPONDENT
WITH CENTRAL FIELD FORCE.)

May 11.

After standing to over overnight in steady, soaking rain, thousands of infantry and mounted rifles moved forward at dawn today to battle positions under the cover of a heavy artillery barrage, the roar of which reverberated through the hills and valleys in the neighbourhood of Titahi Bay and Plimmerton. This was the concluding phase of the week's manoeuvres, the weekend battle concluding at 11 a.m. today. The exercises have been under active service conditions and the weather for the concluding phase made operations a real test for all participating. Conditions last night and this morning were bad, but the Territorial troops stuck it out like veterans. Returned men experienced again the field discomforts of 1914-18.

The week just concluded has seen military operations on a modern scale and of a size not previously attempted in New Zealand. Some of the roads and tracks used in the back country had been constructed or improved by army engineers and works companies.

Territorial infantry, artillery, a mechanized regiment, mounted rifles, and all supporting divisional units as well as National Military Reserve and Home Guard units were engaged. The manoeuvres started with heavy floods in the Manawatu further wet conditions were met with in midweek and the final phase yesterday and today was held in rain. Though this was unfortunate it brought fresh tests of the ability of commanders and officers to direct operations under hard conditions, while the men were given a thorough try-out. Cold and soaking as many of the men were, they went through the whole show as cheerfully and resolutely as any New Zealand troops do in the "real thing."

The 1st Battalion, Wellington Regiment, for instance, went through the wet night and early morning in country which had negligible natural shelter. Men of this battalion had also done preliminary construction work in their area the previous weekend, when conditions were equally unpleasant.

R.N.Z.A.F. planes co-operated with the defending forces, spotting enemy positions and photographing them. Prints were issued to the field force headquarters.

Late last night heavy artillery guns using blank charges were firing from emplacements on the heights overlooking the bays, the roar of the guns like the echo of thunder in the hills. It was the same at dawn today, when an artillery barrage was set up to cover the advance of the infantry who moved forward to push the invaders back into the sea. The roar of the field guns was heard as far back as the rear headquarters in the field—Trentham racecourse. This was the most realistic part of the whole exercise.

Transport Trials.

The heavy rain created transport difficulties on other than first-class roads. This misfortune gave the men another test for their mettle as, wet and tired from lack of sleep, they struggled today in the rain and slush to move some of their vehicles. Heavy tow trucks were pressed into service; big vehicles capable of extricating anything on

wheels from the toughest spot.

Infantry trudged down sodden hills and valleys this morning, grateful for stout army boots, to pick up transport at their bases.

The basis of the exercise was again the presumed landing of an enemy force on the beaches of the Plimmerton-Titahi Bay area. The enemy was provided by the 1st Battalion, Wellington Regiment (C.W.O.), and the Manawatu Mounted Rifles (Mechanized). It was a new role for the Wellington Regiment, attacking as an enemy over territory it is its job in the national defence scheme to defend. It did a particularly good job, while the mechanized regiment from the Manawatu played its part well. A feature of the mechanized regiment's work has been the capability of the Bren carrier drivers and crews.

Wartime Scenes.

From the time the first messages of the enemy landing were received at divisional headquarters on Saturday morning, it was a familiar wartime scene. Hundreds of vehicles moved forward from the Hutt Valley, filled with troops, across the hill roads to the west coast. Field artillery, camouflaged for road travel, supply wagons, field kitchens, and all the other mechanical equipment made an increasing flow on main and secondary roads between the Hutt Valley and the western bays.

There was a full war-scale organization with regimental aid posts, base hospitals, supply and fuel depots, and every other provision of an active service operation.

The infantry had settled in their positions by late afternoon yesterday, while artillery, for exercise purposes, moved up to their positions under cover of darkness.

Though thousands of men were engaged in the exercises, they were swallowed up in the hill country, and to main highway observers the only thing out of the ordinary was the presence of supply trucks speeding to and from unit bases. It afforded a practical demonstration of the utilization of the natural features of the country for defence purposes. A heavy mist had settled on the hills late yesterday afternoon, completely hiding troops from sight once they were 100 feet or so from the level of the valleys.

Besides the 2nd Mounted Rifles Brigade, small units of mounted Home Guard men participated, many riding over country familiar to them through long residence in the exercise locality.

Good Work by Home Guard.

Home Guard men, lacking the heavy clothing of the regular troops, stood by their posts continually during a trying night and morning. Besides smaller district units, a full Hutt battalion was engaged.

Offsetting the discomfort of exposure to the wet weather, the feeding arrangements worked splendidly. Every man engaged had a good hot meal last night. Today they had hot breakfast and further supplies of tea were rushed out later this morning.

Men Well Cared For.

Everything possible was done for the men on their return. There were hot showers for all, changes of clothing for all requiring this, and a hot meal. All the men will sleep under cover tonight, some in the leger stand of the racecourse. One regiment is being accommodated at the mobilization camp, Trentham, in vacant hutments. There were blankets sent out to the 2nd Mounted Rifles Brigade at Waikanae and, the battle being over, to the Manawatu Mounted Rifles section of the enemy. The 1st Battalion, Wellington Regiment, National Military Reserve and Home Guard units, who came into the exercises only for the weekend, were transported home expeditiously.

The Y.M.C.A. work was first-class. Mobile canteens moved among the various units providing hot tea all last night.

Regiments and units, outside of Wellington troops participating for the weekend only, will return to the initial concentration areas at Palmerston North tomorrow for dispersal to their own districts. This should be completed by Wednesday. One of the big tasks will be the railing back to owners in the various districts of approximately 1500 horses from Foxton.

The provost company had a big res-

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possibility throughout, patrolling roads and directing traffic, while dispatch riders had the worst conditions day and night. The signallers played an important role, maintaining communications without a break and keeping contact between all units of the widespread forces.

At the least, every man engaged in the manoeuvres has moved over 200 miles this week. This has enabled the men, from operations in the various areas, to familiarize themselves with the country in the Manawatu, Wairarapa, Hutt Valley and with the west coast bays. By the time they return to their camp at Foxton early this week, the 2nd Mounted Rifles Brigade will have covered 150 miles on horseback in five days' actual riding.

The officer commanding the Central Field Force directed operations which were witnessed by the Inspector-General of the N.Z. Forces and the officer commanding the Central Military District.