

# Wellington District SAREX

25-26<sup>th</sup> February 2017

## Evaluation

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## Background

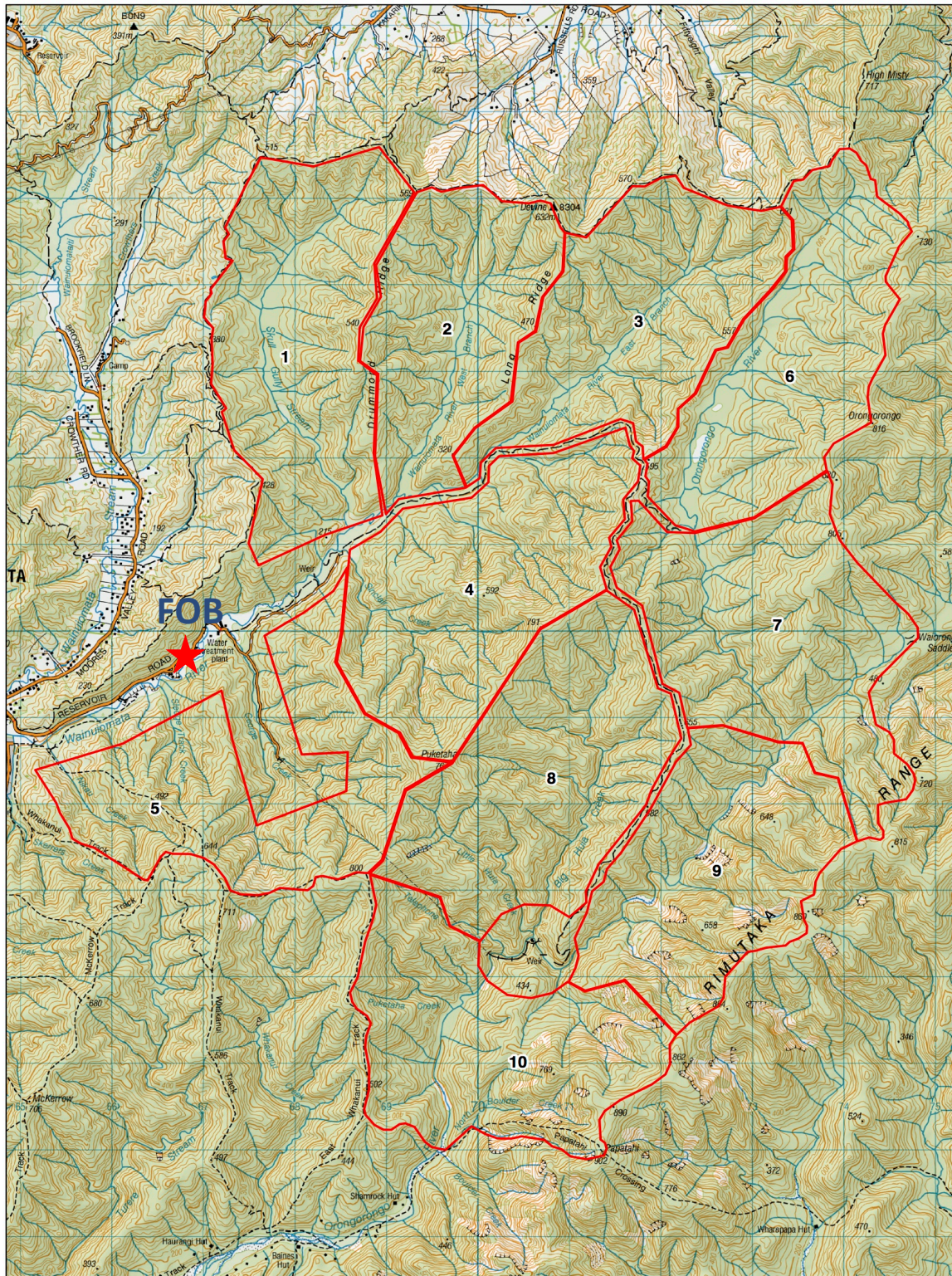
The same scenario will be run over each of the blocks depending on how many teams enter. The missing party's (MP) will be delivered into the block on the Friday night prior to field teams deploying for the SAREX with the briefing that they are to act like a hunter trying to make minimal sound and leave minimal sign. The scenario will be that the MP takes a stumble late in the day, hitting their head and accidentally discharging their firearm. As a result, they are mildly concussed and have a wounded forearm from the discharged rifle. The teams will be expected to demonstrate their SAR skills in an effort to find the MP. Upon finding them the SAR team will be directed that they are to make camp for the night, care for the MP, and lead them out for extraction the following morning.

The SAREX is designed to allow members of varying skill levels from Probationary to Team Leader to perform their skills in an environment that can be assessed. Assessment will be by way of observation, recording, and team debrief. The SAREX will also give the trainee assessors the opportunity to complete their portfolio of evidence and provide members with information on any areas that require further evidence for assessment. This evidence will also allow Training Coordinators to formulate a training plan that addresses areas of need over the coming year.

## Objectives

- 1. To assess participating SAR members against National LSAR competencies.**
- 2. To allow newly trained assessors the opportunity to assess and gather evidence towards their accreditation.**
- 3. To familiarize more field members with the Wainuiomata Water Treatment catchment prior to the Roar in case they are needed for a search.**
- 4. To exercise the new Wellington Land Search and Rescue Operations room.**
- 5. To run a safe but realistic and enjoyable SAREX.**

# Location Map



Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Hunting Ballot Blocks

Date printed: 9/02/2017

0 220 440 880 1,320  
Meters



greater WELLINGTON  
REGULATED COUNCILS  
To Preserve Nature Values



## Key Findings

The exercise was based upon a scenario that has a moderate probability of occurring. The ballot blocks have a high frequency of use by hunters, not to mention the roar is about to begin. This SARex is a great opportunity for field teams to become familiar with a likely search area, and for the IMT to streamline planning processes to search for the lost missing and injured. The advantage of this area for a February exercise, is the isolation for search members from the public thus creating a controlled learning environment.

5 different search areas, with 5 missing persons, based on one scenario. Meaning that each search team has the opportunity to find a missing person creating more involvement, and as a result more value in active search and rescue components of the exercise.

The area consisted of very steep terrain, and dense vegetation with higher rain than other areas of Wellington. The shape of the geography made communication a challenge. Portable repeater systems were initially tasked to be set up. Permanent repeaters are also in the area. There were also pre-plans already prepared based on this scenario on the police SAR server.

LandSAR volunteers arrived before the message went out. The IMT initially consisted of 7 LSAR members, and 4 police. Initially there was some uncertainty regarding the scenario and the CIMS roles people were to undertake within the IMT. (See recommendation 1)

Communication with the 5 missing persons was available throughout the SARex with the organiser through phone, via txt. Each MP also had PLB's and VHF comms as a backup. There was significant consideration put into Safety throughout the SARex.

Laminated wall charts were eventually used to illustrate the Incident Action Plan, Timeline and IMT structure. Search team compositions were created, maintained and displayed with T-cards at the IMT. The T-card system was later moved to the forward operating base. IMT was based at the Lower Hut police station, with the forward operating base (FOB) inside the ranger station in Wainuiomata water catchment area. (See recommendation 2)

Iman software was used as the information management tool. An analogue /paper based planning and presentation system was used to plan the search.

(see recommendation 3)

Field teams arrived early on Saturday morning at the FOB. Field teams signed in and completed their T-cards. An initial speech to communicate when the briefing would happen was conducted early by the FOB manager, a police officer. Quite a bit of time later the scenario was then briefed to all field team operatives. Team compositions were identified to the field personal.

(see recommendation 4)

During the GSMEAC briefing a scenario pack, including taskings was given to each team leader. Some TL's and others stopped listening to brief. One TL then asked a question regarding points already illustrated.

(see recommendation 5)

GSMEAC briefing was conducted by the FOB manager followed by a safety brief by the safety officer. The park ranger followed with an additional safety briefing based on his local knowledge of the area.

Teams were tasked to test their HF radios. No teams managed to successfully contact SAR base using the HF sets. Two teams were tasked to set up portable repeaters to increase comm coverage for the search areas.

It was identified that an additional portable repeater was needed and available assets were used to retrieve this from Wellington central station. These portable repeaters were setup but would not work correctly. Channel ESB58 was used throughout the SARex with a satisfactory level of success. Other back-up channels were identified on the comms. plan.

(see recommendation 6)

All but one team deployed into field by 1000hr, by transport in the form of 4WD vehicles. One team remained behind to wait for a different portable repeater to arrive before deployment. There was no battery with the one in the SAR trailer.

IMT taskings gave some of the field teams their own scope to search their segments. Some other teams were given specific taskings to search their segments. Some field teams and their proficiency with operating in the field and conducting the search and rescue functions were observed. Discussion was had with the team leader(s) regarding their member's capabilities and to clarify their groups ability and considerations given for searching. (see recommendation 7)

Communications from field teams throughout the exercise ranged in length and quality. (see recommendation 8)

The FOB was discovered locked part way through the first day. A comm base unit was plugged into vehicle 12v. One team had a significant amount of down time prior to their first tasking. (see recommendation 9)

The first MP was found in late afternoon and the search team was re-tasked to assist the MP overnight for an early morning recovery. The first field team back was debriefed when forms arrived from IMT base. Additional Teams were debriefed in succession. Appropriate form used for debrief, with a police officer conducting the interview. Police officer probed deeper than the form had scope for. This identified greater level of intel than otherwise would have happened. (see recommendation 10)

During the team(s) debrief, some identified comms as an issue. (see recommendation 6)

All teams out, Sunday 26<sup>th</sup>, 1300hr. SARex conclusion voiced by organiser followed by spot prizes then handed over to IC. IC gave very quick debrief and thank you, with the idea that a more formal one to follow at the next LSAR meeting. Lessons learned are to be identified and applied for future operations during this meeting when time permits.

GPS downloads were performed at the IMT. (See fig 6, pg. 20)

## Improvement Opportunities

### Recommendation 1

- Set CIMS structure and identify function leaders/ managers early and put the bibs on asap. This will ensure all know who to speak to for the various functions.
- Collaborative approach to develop the IAP *(fig 1)*
- Each function leader /manager be established and written on the operation chart quickly. *(fig 2)*

### Recommendation 2

- Once the IAP is produced, complete on wall chart for all to see. P&I can then work on their plan to perform the actions of the IAP. Ops can then start to prepare taskings based on P&I scenarios.
- New members of IMT with very little experience would have benefited with a document outlining roles and responsibilities within the CIMS and the functions of an IMT. Members new to IMT will need training. CIMS, MTIR or in-house.

### Recommendation 3

- Digital presentation tools and information management software would save time  
i.e. Projector showing search teams live through management software, , (live tracking) and administer resources / logistics.  
(I understand that this has/ is being discussed at committee level)

***Further information: Some management software that other groups use: Mission Manager, SARtrak.***

*Mission Manager is very good, however is cloud based which limits its use in a lot of areas, and has a subscription cost each month. It also does not offer live tracking of field teams. I believe SARtrack is currently the best contender I have seen. Is New Zealand based (Bart).*

*Other than the free software, there is a cost with live tracking in for from of added hardware for each field team and the base unit.*

#### Recommendation 4

- Team briefing to be conducted and taskings to be enacted as quickly as possible.
- Some field teams wanted descriptive taskings, illustrating the technique needed. To address this, once the GSMEAC briefing was completed, a team leader meeting could have occurred to include a brief on the MP profile, and questions directed at members regarding appropriate techniques to locate the MP.

#### Recommendation 5

- Prior to GSMEAC briefing, mention to teams that a pack will be given out at the end including all information necessary.
- Hand out team packs **after** the briefing. This will ensure people are not writing notes, and full attention is held throughout the GSMEAC process.

#### Recommendation 6

- High frequency search preplans to include comms functionality and reception for search area(s).  
This may take some time, but will provide opportunities for training GPS, Nav and Comm use when recording this information.
- Explore use of Floppy Jim's to increase reception
- Mark repeater(s) positions on team map. Teams can then look at line of sight to gain coverage.
- Educate personal on procedure for operating under duplex.  
How conditions (topography/weather) effects signal, and where to go to attempt a comm. message if having difficulty.



#### Recommendation 7

- Continue in-house trainings and refresher trainings regarding search techniques, bush and navigation skills.  
Once competencies have been completed, and then continue for all members there will be consistency.

#### Recommendation 8

- Teams to pre-write the comms messages down. Serves several functions:
  - Shorter and more concise.
  - Evidential recorded in team's notebook.
  - If asked to 'say again' message, it ensures consistency
  - Shorter transmission time saves battery/time/com chatter

#### Recommendation 9

- General communications and updates to external agencies (Ranger) and with teams during their 'hurry up and wait' time would have eliminated locked doors, gates, etc.

#### Recommendation 10

- IMT to have forms and processes prepared in advance to streamline process. (Debrief)

## Commended

- ICP was established and IC shared scenario with all policing staff. IC Immediately stood down 2 police for rest, and an early roll over the following day.
- IMT was established. IMT members separated to plan within their scope.
- CIMS positions appointed
- IAP was written for first Operational Period
- GSMEAC briefing format used at FOB (forward operating base)
- Excellent focus on Safety.

Risk Management Plan, No Duff, safety briefings, the appointment of a dedicated Safety Officer. Comprehensive briefings to staff by IC at IMT, by safety officer at FOB and by SME at FOB.

- LandSAR SMS forms were used including Take5, digital tasking sheet
- Field teams showed good level of competence with techniques and bush skills. Few will need upskilling.
- Assessors did an excellent job of observing team members and verifying their ability and areas for development.
- IMT knew where each team was at all times;
- 6 out of 7 of teams were deployed within a good time-frame;
- Comms plan was adapted when issues became apparent.
- All teams tested HF comm sets, teams were all required to carry HF sets.
- Technical (comms and digital tech) experts in wellington group are a huge asset.
- ESB 58 worked well considering topography;

- Good questioning demonstrated by the Team Leaders in the GSMEAC briefing, promoting a positive and transparent culture.
- Team Leaders broke down their taskings for their team, went over safety again and further illustrated points they felt may be an issue.
- Personal morale, engagement and general welfare were excellent.
- Good use of police and civ 4WD vehicles for quick access to search areas.
- Field teams stopped regularly to discuss 'coverage' and how their search 'POD' were going. Excellent team inclusion and mentoring.
- Networking with other groups; Wairarapa. Additional groups would have attended if their SARex wasn't on the calendar shortly afterwards.

## Summary

The opportunities for improvement identified through this report are provided to address the objectives of the exercise in an effort to increase operational performance and continuous improvement. As this is a training event there were a number of Police and LandSAR members performing new roles, or roles outside of their normal operating capability. The improvements listed here may have already been identified or addressed, but have also been illustrated here for the benefit of the group.

The Wainuoiomata hunting area is highly frequented by hunters. This was a SARex illustrating a scenario which has a moderate probability of occurring. The scenario presented to the IMT involved a significant search element, introduced restrictions during the rescue process by posing risk elements for field teams to consider, followed by a comprehensive recovery by most teams.

The SAREX was well planned and executed with clearly defined objectives, all of which were met. It was an excellent opportunity for team leaders to attest to their team member's competency and give the LandSAR assessors opportunity to complete their qualifications.

The ICP / operations room was well resourced with both police and LandSAR equipment. All members of the IMT seemed familiar with the layout and operated with increasing capability as the exercise progressed. By the end of day one the IMT were performing very well.

I would have liked to see other agencies involved. Possibly LandSAR dogs? (It would have been essential to restrict their search area due to the effectiveness they most likely would have had). This would have been a good opportunity to further develop the 'one team' approach and create networks between LandSAR and other agencies as well as educate the field teams on how other agencies operate and their capabilities.

Although this SAREX has identified a number of areas where improvements can be made, I was impressed with the very effective relationship between the Police and the LandSAR volunteers. Both IMT and Field teams conducted themselves very well performing their duties with a high level of competency. It was also great to see another group (Wairarapa) attend the SARex, further solidifying the inter-group relationship clearly already established.

The GSMEAC board in the IMT was not used as a briefing tool, but as a planning tool. I have not seen it used in this fashion before. The FOB manager conducted the GSMEAC briefing in good detail and clarity, as a result few questions were asked.

It is important to note, that it was viewed by many during the SARex that there were a number of communication issues (Comms sometimes unable to contact the IMT). I believe that these issues were created by overthinking both the scenario and topography location, and as a result applying more backup communication systems than were necessary. One team waiting for three hours for a repeater system, and field teams with 4 channels to choose from to contact IMT. During an operation, haste is important and I believe this over thinking would not have occurred. However, it provides an opportunity to address the issues discovered with the portable repeater systems. This should also lead to the revision of the pre-plan to include area communications coverage (if not already).

Thank you for the opportunity to work with the Wellington Police SAR squad and LandSAR group. It has been an honour to be asked to assist in your group development and I hope that my feedback is of benefit.

*Evaluation conducted by:*

Hamish McLean,  
Training & Development Advisor

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. McLean', with a long, sweeping underline.

# Appendix

## Sample Images

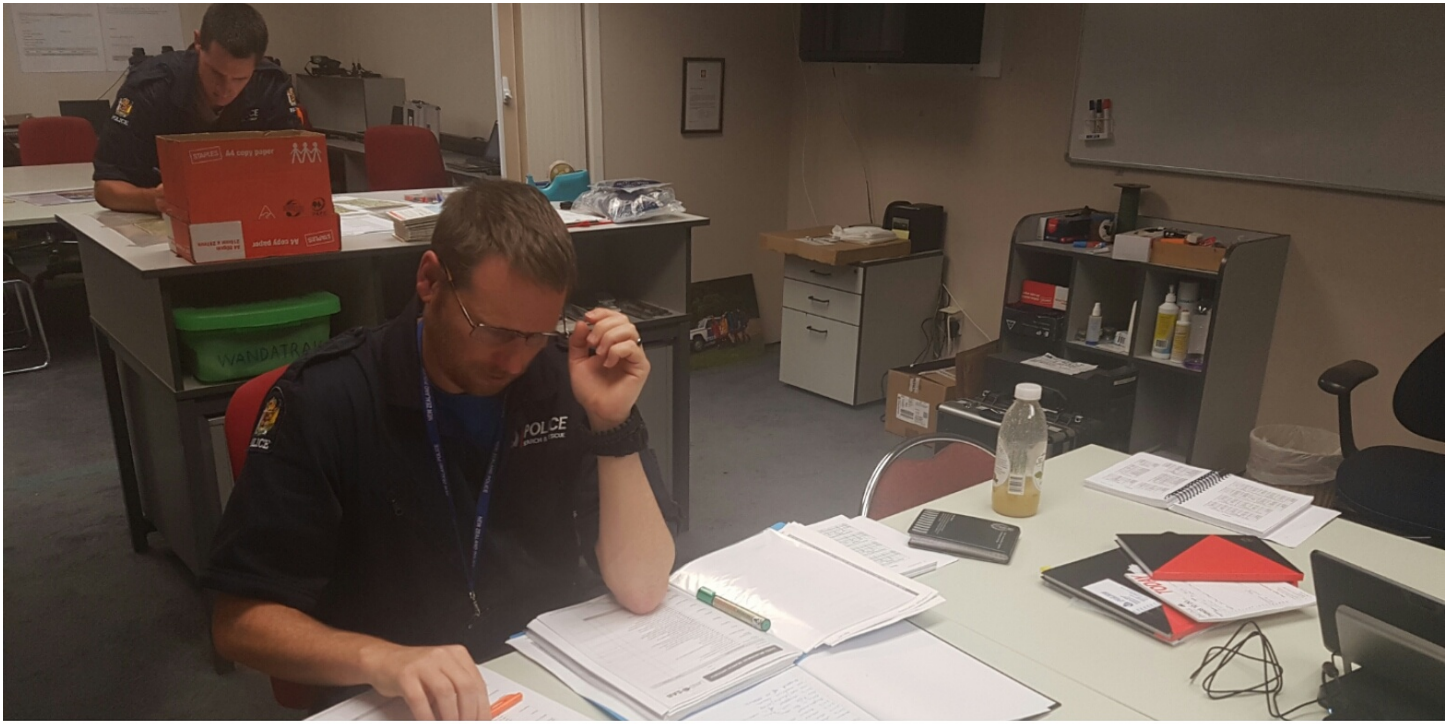








Fig 1 (IAP)


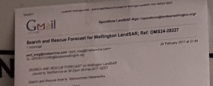
INCIDENT ACTION PLAN		OP: SAREX 2017.	
<b>SITUATION</b> MP chopped off in Wainuiomata water treatment area @ 0510hrs on 24/12/17. In the area to hunt deer & due out at 1600hrs 29/12/17 to travel. Hunting in blocks 6-10		<b>MISSION</b> : To Locate the Missing Persons	
<b>TIME/DATE MISSING</b> 24/12/17 0530hrs	<b>LKP</b> Wainuiomata water treatment area Reservoir Rd/Whitaker Grove.	<b>TFFS</b>	<b>PHASE</b> - Initial / search. 0700 - 2100
<b>MP DETAILS</b> - Dan - Dave - Cam - Tony - Paul Rifle - Brown Boots  - Experienced Hunter - No medical issues  10 - Radio - CBRS - Cell	<b>OBJECTIVES FOR OPERATIONAL PERIOD</b> - Determine search area (Blocks 6-10) - Define search area - Establish containment - Establish communications - Establish staging area	<b>STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE OBJECTIVES</b> - Linear features - Search techniques - Vehicles - Staging point - Comms plan - Place repeaters  - 1766629/5429529 : Manager Simon COBB	<b>TO DO</b> - Investigation - Planning - IUT - Comms Plan - Establish teams - Test Comms - Establish IUT/radio poster
<b>NOK/CONTACT PERSON(S)</b> SMITH/Sally - 045666238 unavailable overseas in uk.	<b>RESCUE PLAN</b>		<b>WEATHER</b>
<b>WEATHER</b>	<b>COMMS PLAN</b>	<b>COMMAND</b> Ik Matt whole Phony Intel ops Logs Safety Henry 2 I/c → Schweg Paul C Strong F	<b>MEDIA UPDATE</b>
<b>TIMELIN</b>			

Fig 2 (CIMS structure)

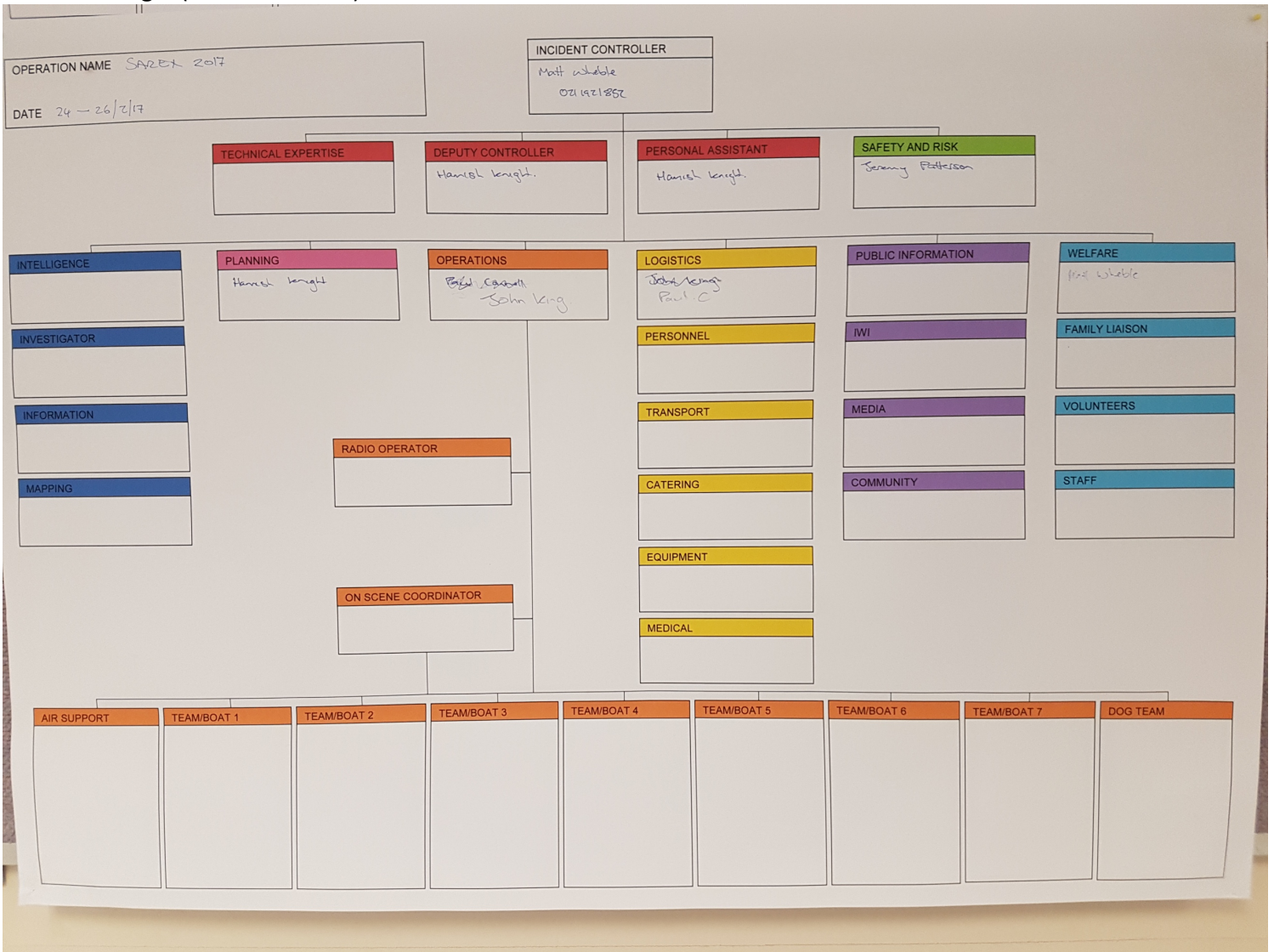


Fig 3 (GSMEAC board used as planning board)

### GROUND

Waikiamata water treatment / Catchment area hunting ballot blocks 6 → 10

Back Country  
Steep terrain  
Water feed  
Dense bush  
N2 Topo 50 map BQ32

### SITUATION

24/2/17 @ 0530hrs MP dropped in Waikiamata to go hunting in blocks 6-10. Experienced hunter targeting deer. 5 MP - one in each block (Scenario). Due out 1600hrs 24/2/17 with last pick up time at 1630 24/2/17. NEVER late. Informant now out of Country.

### MISSION

To locate missing person x 5

Dave - Block 6  
Tom - Block 7  
Cam - Block 8  
Paul - Block 9  
Dan - Block 10

### EXECUTION

Police & LandSd Inv at L/H ops room  
Staging area @ road end Waikiamata water treatment area.  
Each ballot block broken up into smaller segments.  
Search teams tasked with searching segments.


### ADMIN & LOGISTICS

- T Cards
- Trailer @ staging area.
- maps BQ 32 & printed maps of ballot blocks.

### COMMAND & SIGNALS

I/c Sergeant Matthew WHEBLE  
Staging area Constable Simon COBB  
Primary Radio ESBSB - SAA Portable repeater 02  
Secondary channel ESBS1 - Portable Repeater 03  
HF if necessary.

### LOCATION MAP



Waikiamata/Changrango Hunting Ballot Blocks

TCU SEARCH WARRANT GEAR  
OD ASSIGNED

1 MAN RAM  
CROWBAR  
GLOCK  
TASER  
M4  
CAMERA  
EXHIBIT FOLDER  
EXHIBIT BOX  
FIRST AID KIT

Fig 4 (Team tasking board)

Number	TEAM	BLOCK	TASKING	TIME	LOCATION	Block 9	Item
Wghtn 1	Nicole Ranger (TL) Nicola McLean (P) Assessor Ricky Kennon (P) Brett M	8	8-1	1700	On task 8/A Following Sight SE to headwater Little Miso Creek. Moving INTO SECTION I	I D	Positive Sign
Wghtn 2	Meg Shaw (TL) + Assessor Stratford Adams (P) Matt Mason Hazel Ridmead. + Matt	8	8-2		ERA ROAD END 1715 On task 8/B subject to S/N	9-2	Positive Sign Voice @ 9-2 Goat print
Wghtn 3	Dave Heatley (TL) Sue Ruddle Marc Daglish	9	9-1		On SPUR heading down S/E		
Wghtn 4	Peter King (TL) Andre Casson (P) Dan Chaytor (P)	9.	9-2	1536	On task 9/B Following voice clue		
Wghtn 5	Mare Henderson (TL) Paul Staggelbaum (P) Gavin Holden	7	7-1	1630	On task 7/A		
Wghtn 6	Sarah Mibicki (TL) Edward Colenbrander (P) Paul Bird. + Ant	7	7-2		On task 7/B IN THICK BUSH		
	Anti-Harmer Hamish Melton } Assessor						
Wairarapa 1	Wairarapa Brendan (TL) Andrew Rob	6	6-1 + 6-2	1452	On task 6/A		
Wairarapa 2	Wairarapa Andrew D (TL) Nicola Franky	10	10-3	1536	On task 10/D		
Trans 1	Transit Team Rachelle Andrew		FREE	1323	Staging Area		
Trans 2	Pete Theobald	Orongorongo Catchment Rd	FREE		Returning to S.A.		
Trans 3	Ray Hartness + Simon Cobb	Orongorongo Catchment Rd	Heading home		Returning to S.A.		
Trans 4	Jeremy Paterson.		Not Avail further info		With Trans 5		
Trans 5	Ricky Clarkson		Not Avail " "		With Trans 4		
						Block 10	

(fig 5) Team Positions

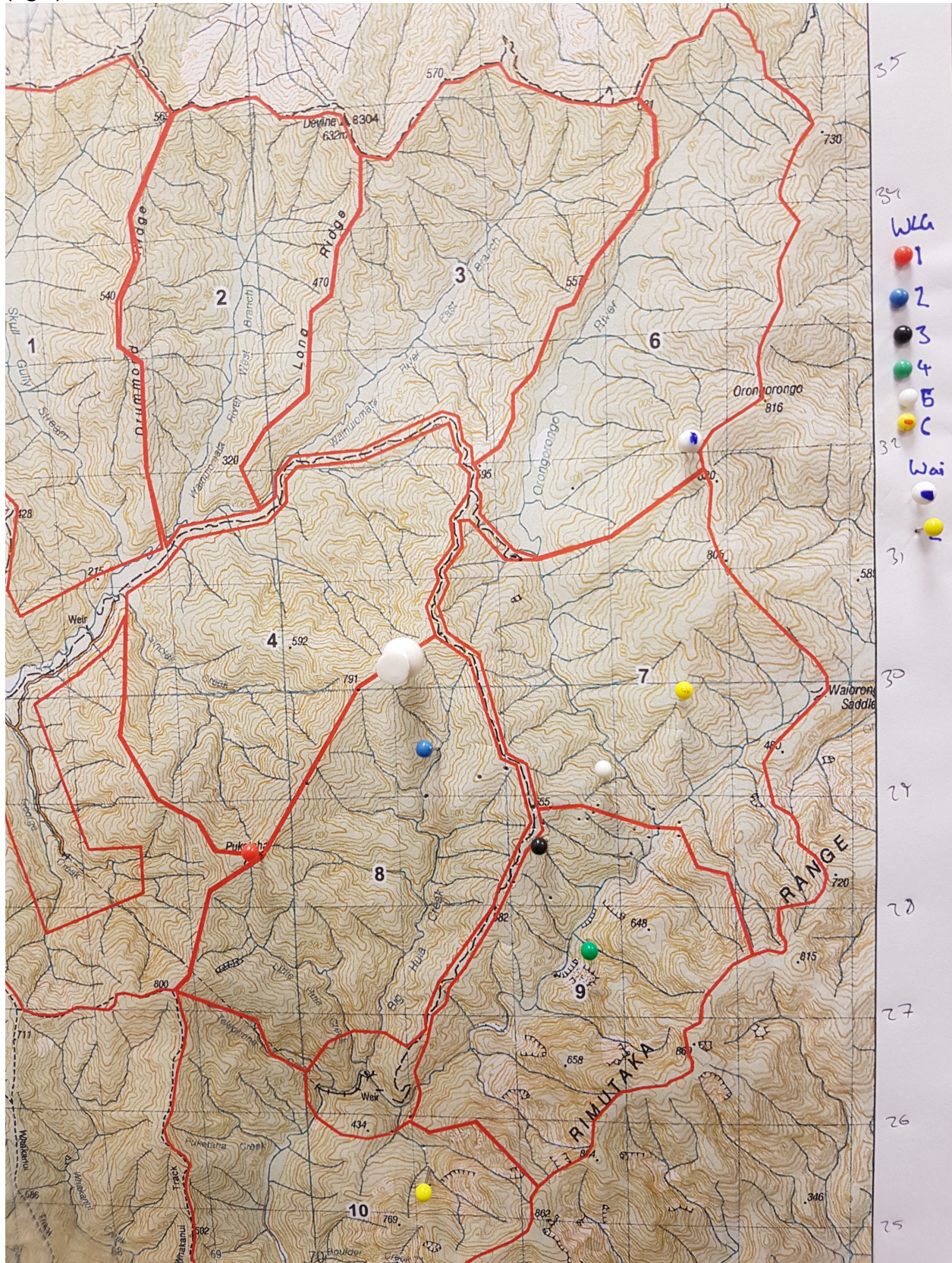


Fig 6 (GPS downloads)

