

Exercise Evaluation Report

Hawkes Bay 2023 SAREX

OPERATION EXTRA

Location: Eastern Ruahine Range, Hawkes Bay

Date: 3rd to 5th November 2023

Report version: Final

Evaluator: Brett MAIN, Senior Constable
NZ Police Search and Rescue, Wellington

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Executive Summary

The annual Hawkes Bay Search and Rescue Exercise (SAREX) was held on the 3rd to the 5th of November 2023 in the upper Tukituki River of the Eastern Ruahine Ranges. With the SAREX management based at the Napier Coastguard base.

A list of objectives was created for the SAREX which allowed for testing of general Search and Rescue (SAR) skills with a multi-agency response while also allowing for readiness plans to be tested. The area had been identified as a risk for a SAR event and the SAREX allowed for communications in the area to be tested.

Overall the SAREX was a success with the aim of the exercise being achieved. All participants gained knowledge and experience throughout the SAREX. This was clearly obvious within IT and SARtrack.

1. Recommendations

- Land Search and Rescue Safety Management System safety standards to be readily available.
- IMT handover documentation needs to be prepared for the incoming IMT personnel to gain a better understanding of the situation.
- Expanding the detail given in GSMEAC briefings and ensure it is recorded.
- Information flow between Field teams and IMT needs to be more detailed for greater clarity, along with IMT situation reports to all teams.
- Developing smart IAP objectives and strategies to drive appropriate SAR resources to achieve the mission.
- Understand the appropriate use of Lost Person Behavior statistical rings around the initial planning point.

2. Introduction

Operation EXTRA was the annual Hawkes Bay SAREX utilizing a response from the Hawkes Bay Police SAR squad and Hawkes Bay Land Search and Rescue together with AREC in a real time incident in the eastern Ruahine Ranges.

The incident involved multiple lost persons that had become separated and incorporated different activities undertaken by the missing parties. Their activities included fishing, hunting and rafting. The SAREX predominately covered river travel, leading into open beech forest and scrub.

Planning for the SAREX was started early and I was engaged as an evaluator early allowing for comprehensive planning. A need was identified to test communications in the area of the Tukituki River allowing the deployment of repeaters and utilizing the Department Of Conservation radio channel as no searching had previously been done in the area.

There was a last minute change to one of the missing party not being available making extra work for the planning team to set clues for the search teams.

The SAREX also included the assistance of a Land Search and Rescue trainer for the IMT development in SARtrack skills.

3. Background

3.1. Background to the Exercise

The Tukituki River was identified as a risk area for a SAR event with a readiness plan having previously been prepared. As no SAR events had taken place in the area a test of the plan and communications in the area was deemed necessary.

3.2. Dates, location, organising agency(s), key people

Date: 3rd to 5th November 2023

Location: Eastern Ruahine Ranges, Tukituki River catchment.

Incident Control Point: Coastguard Base Meeanee Quay, Napier.

Staging Area: Hastings Fire Station.

Organising agencies and key people:

NZ Police, Andrew WALKER, exercise controller

NZ Police, Brian HALSE

LandSAR Mike HAWTHORN, mentor

LandSAR Gerald BLACKBURN, mentor

NZSAR Brett MAIN, evaluator

3.3. Participating organisations

New Zealand Police

Hawkes Bay Land Search and Rescue

AREC

3.4. Exercise aim

To test the readiness plan and communications in the Tukituki River catchment.

3.5. Exercise objectives

- Planning documents demonstrate preparedness.
- The IMT effectively manages the exercise.
- Assess Field Team competencies and effectiveness.
- SAR partner agencies collaborate effectively.
- Information is effectively managed and communicated during the response.
- Risks are identified, removed, minimized or managed.

3.6. Exercise Scenario

The three missing persons will drive to end of Mill Road after work on Thursday in one vehicle. They will travel up in one vehicle and park it on a paddock above the Moorcock Stream. They will head down into the Moorcock Stream then follow that out to the Tukituki River. Two of the party (LP1) are heading up the river to the flats near Rosevalls Track, they intend to have an evening hunt on the flats then camp there for the night. On Friday they plan to fish / hunt up towards Daphne Hut and be back out before dark to pick the third missing person (LP2) up from HW50. LP2 intends to fish for the evening and camp Thursday night at the Tukituki / Moorcock junction. On Friday LP2 intends to raft down the river through the Khyber Pass, stopping to fish at any decent pools. Plans to raft all the way down to HW50 and wait by the bridge for LP1 to pick them up.

LP1 will travel upriver to Daphne Hut and leave a note saying they arrived late afternoon, later than expected because one parties back injury is playing up and has slowed their progress considerably. They are now heading back downstream to the vehicle. They might have a look up a couple of the side streams if time allows and be back at the car before dark. Will walk back down to the south arm of the Tukituki and head upstream, leaving sign to make it obvious which way they have gone. Can camp up here for the Friday night then push east up through the bush, cross over the Moorcock-Daphne track and end up on the ridge overlooking the Moorcock. Because this is private land, they will not respond to voice appeals until teams are very close and will be trying to find their own way out. Aim to be located 0800-0900 Sunday morning.

Due to LP2 not being available for the SAREX at last minute the planning team had to use a dummy and lay the clues for the teams to locate.

LP2 will build a camp near the Moorcock Tukituki junction and leave some food scraps, cut grass for a bed, cut branches etc. Will also leave a pill bottle with name and medication for dementia on it (in case IMT don't ask about a Wandersearch tracker the medication should give a clue). LP2 will discard clothing items along their trail (hypothermia). The Wandersearch tracker will be in a pocket of one of the clothes so teams can home in via tracker then have to track to locate. Aim to be located midday Saturday then teams can be re-tasked to help find LP1.

4. Evaluation Methodology

4.1. The agreed outcomes of the evaluation activity

The evaluator was contacted early and asked to observe the SAREX as a whole and produce an evidence-based report comparing objectives to what was observed.

4.2. Evaluation scope

The Objectives for the SAREX:

- Planning documents demonstrate preparedness.
- The IMT effectively manages the exercise.
- Assess Field Team competencies and effectiveness.
- SAR partner agencies collaborate effectively.
- Information is effectively managed and communicated during the response.
- Risks are identified, removed, minimized or managed.

Several key performance indicators were linked to each objective which assisted in being able to assess if the objectives were met.

4.3. Aspects of the exercise observed, what was not observed

Evaluator observed:

IMT progress during the SAREX.

Radio communications from the SAR base.

Not Observed:

Briefing of teams at the Staging Area.

Teams in the field.

4.4. The process followed in preparing and submitting the report

The evaluator and exercise controller agreed on the objectives to be tested and reported on prior to the SAREX.

The evaluator was able to attend the SAREX for the Friday to the morning of the Sunday. The evaluator had to leave early on the Sunday due to an unseen family situation. A SAREX debrief was held with notes from the IMT and field teams sent to the evaluator to consider along with the observations made.

A draft of the evaluation report was sent to Andy WLAKER and Andrew KNOX. They were receptive to the report and no changes have been made to the final report.

4.5. Other information

The evaluator was unable to attend briefings for teams at the staging area as this was in Hastings and did not observe teams in the field.

5. Findings

Objective: Planning documents demonstrate preparedness:

KPI's Planning documents up to date with current information.

All planning documents support health and safety best practice.

IMT access the readiness plan in an appropriate time frame.

A readiness plan was available to the IMT for this area as it had previously been identified as a risk area for a SAR event. The IMT initially has several questions about the area and access. When prompted by the SAREX controller the IMT were able to identify that there was a plan for the area and it was utilized.

The objective has been met but familiarity with and the availability of readiness plans should be well known by the IMT and accessed early in an operation.

Objective: The IMT effectively manages the exercise:

KPI's IMT structure is in accordance with CIMS model.

IMT operation ensures integrated information management and communications.

Relevant documentation is completed.

IAP is established for the initial operational period.

IAP is updated for subsequent operational period.

IAP review meetings are conducted by the I/C.

I/C leads regular IMT briefings.

IMT function managers undertake regular team briefings.

IMT executes stand-up SOPs (pagers, apps, phones, etext).

IMT briefings follow GSMEAC format.

IMT confirms the availability and response of resources.

IMT sources equipment for the response.

IMT ensures suitable communications for the incident are established.

Tasked resources are controlled and coordinated in line with the IAP.

Logistical support is provided as required.

Tasking's are appropriate to the resources.

Resources are supported to operate in accordance with health and safety practices.

Task execution is monitored.

Tasked resources are debriefed at the completion of each task.

All teams are debriefed on completion of exercise.

Safety briefings are conducted during the operation.

Planning process is documented.

Planning is established for the next operational period.

IT systems are set up and operational capability is completed in a suitable timeframe.

IMT personnel can operate the IT systems in use for the incident.

SARTrack set up and operational capability is completed in a suitable timeframe.

IMT personnel can operate SARTrack as required for the response.

SARTrack remains operational throughout the response period.

Briefings and debriefings are conducted.

Information is relayed appropriately and in time.

Information received within the IMT is analysed.

Information is collated and disseminated within the IMT as appropriate.

IMT planning meetings are conducted on a regular basis.

Information for next operational period is established.
IMT is continuously aware of resource progress, welfare and activities.

This is a large list of KPI's and the evaluator will not be writing to all of them.

A CIMS structure was used throughout the SAREX with participants easily identified as to their roles. CIMS function cards and a poster were readily available for reference. There was some creep between roles and this was acknowledged in the debrief. SAR forms were used throughout, and a paper system was initially used. SARtrack was slow to be running efficiently but with the assistance of Seffan as a mentor their skill greatly increased and became more efficient especially with information flow between IMT and AREC for radio messaging. IMT briefings were regularly held which helped give direction and awareness of the situation. GSMEAC was partially used but underutilised for consistency of briefings. This was particularly noticeable during IMT handovers with the incoming IMT taking time to have a good understanding of the situation, little to no handover documents or IMT notebook entries were handed over.

With two different activity types the IMT identified the highest risk of the rafter. Good intel was gathered about the lost persons which assisted the IMT and search teams. It did take time to establish in Initial Planning Point (IPP) and to establish lost person behaviour statical data to the maps. The IMT did add further statistical rings to a second location of Daphne Hut when it was established LP1 had been there onto a paper map and into SARtrack. A better understanding of the use of the statistical information is needed for planning from the IPP.

An IAP was established early with objectives being set. The strategies were more task oriented, this improved through the SAREX with better strategies on how to achieve the objectives. This was clearly noticeable in the Sunday demobilisation as the IMT could clearly see what was needed to achieve the outcomes and the utilising of a demobilisation plan.

Keeping track of teams in the field was done with the Team Chart updates being done periodically. There is a need to keep the Chart constantly updated so everyone involved knows immediately which team is on which task and when it was last updated. There was no system to capture how many personnel and their time spent in the IMT, this would assist with reporting on SARdonyx after an operation.

Overall the objective was met with all the missing parties being located. Clear improvements in the IMT process could be seen throughout the weekend with areas for improvement noted above.

Objective: Assess field team competencies and effectiveness:

KPI's Team members fit and healthy.

Field team members can implement training in field situations.

Field team members are proficient at utilising various search techniques in the field.

The evaluator did not see teams in the field or be able to check if any training had been implemented in the field. One team member had to be extracted due to becoming unwell and this was managed well by the IMT. The field teams were locating clues and ultimately located the missing persons.

Objective: SAR partner agencies collaborate effectively:

- KPI's All agencies required for the exercise participate.
- All agencies participating collaborate effectively.
- Liaison arrangements for inter-agency engagement are maintained.
- Information is communicated within and across agencies.
- Agencies work under common structures, roles and responsibilities.
- Agencies use common terminology.
- Agency response is coordinated.
- Agencies coordinate resource organisation.

This objective was met. The appropriate agencies were involved in the SAREX and a CIMS structure was used for the IMT. From speaking to Police, Land Search and Rescue and AREC I could clearly see there was a good working relationship between them all. It was good to see Police management come into the IMT and show their appreciation to the volunteers involved.

Objective: Information is effectively managed and communicated during the response:

- KPI's Information is collated and disseminated within the IMT as appropriate.
- Information received within the IMT is analysed and corroborated.
- Actionable intelligence is developed.
- Field teams follow radio schedules and protocols.
- Information from IMT to field teams follows SOPs.
- Communication lines between IMT and field teams operate effectively.
- Communication systems are operational in a timely manner.
- Communication systems remain operational throughout the response period.

Overall this objective was met. The intel section made through investigations in the early stages of the SAREX developing good missing person profiles which assisted the IMT and field teams with the missing parties ultimately being located.

Initially a DOC radio channel was utilised until AREC and land teams were able to deploy repeaters to the area. There is room for improvement in communications between teams and IMT with clear tasks and end of day sitreps for the teams. Comments were made that the teams did not know one of the missing persons had been located with one team wondering why they were being re-tasked when following sign. This had been made more difficult by having multiple radio channels to cover the search area so not all teams were able to be situationally aware of what may be happening. At one point the linking repeater was causing issues and once it had been turned off the quality of the comms signals improved. The information flow between IMT and AREC for radio comms with teams was greatly improved with the integration of SARtrack rather than on paper.

Objective: Risks are identified, removed, minimised ore eliminated:

KPI's Operational risks are analysed.

Risk management systems and processes appropriate to the nature and complexity of the situation are defined.

Briefing information appropriately addresses identified risks.

This objective has only partially been met. Although a safety plan was created and left in a prominent position it was only referred to once in a briefing after it had been initially written. The plan did show which safety standards should be observed but these were not displayed or readily available in the IMT. During other briefings safety was not really touched on other than monitoring of field team fatigue. In managing fatigue, the IMT did set times for the teams to be camped for the night and monitored for assistance with transportation. They also kept to times set for operational periods in IMT that recognised the limitations that long hours has on coordination and planning ability.

6. Conclusions

Overall the SAREX was a success allowing for the Aim to be met: To test the readiness plan and communications in the Tukituki River catchment. It has allowed for familiarization of the area, an appreciation of the skill set and resourcing required to respond adequately for a future SAR event. The objectives and KPI's were met on the whole with some recommendations for developing future training.

It was a good learning environment for those that had not performed in particular roles previously. It also provided a learning in SARtrack with mentorship and gave the IMT an appreciation for the value of working in this space.

There is an obvious healthy relationship between all the groups involved. This resulted in good teamwork and the missing parties being located.

7. Appendix

MP PROFILES

Aaron Hanson	Nick Hume	John (Jon) NORRISH
<p>Sex - Male Age/DOB - 19/11/72 (51) Address - 13 Tulehu Rd, Aukia Phone # - (027) 266 8425 - Home in Nok - Melissa Hanson (021) 150 9500</p> <p>Height - 6ft (178cm) Build - Ethnic - Complexion - Hair - Brown Eyes - Brown Other -</p> <p>Clothing Headwear - Torso - Blue dry fit top, green cargo pants Legs - Blue dry fit shorts Footwear - (each) black gaiter (no heel) Black low cut shoes Gear - Magpul PBR - concealed side brace Low cut PBR bag GPS system on bag</p> <p>Vehicle - Fitness - Very fit Skills - Hunter Rifle (AR15) Survival (C/N/A)</p> <p>Arms - Nil Headwear - PLB - Yes Food - MREs, freeze ration Medical - Condition - No known medical conditions No medication</p> <p>Intentions - hunting "up river" Tutu Lake area. With Nick.</p>	<p>Sex - Male Age/DOB - 6/1/77 (42) Address - 37 Acorria Ct, Tauranga Phone # - (027) 6 618 225 NOK - Cynthia Hume (021) 952 874</p> <p>Height - 1-78cm (6ft) Build - Ethnic - Complexion - Other - short beard (cut), sandy trimmed Hair - Brown</p> <p>Clothing Headwear - Beret Torso - Legs - Long pants Footwear - Open toeing boots 10% (4cm) Gear - GPS, multi-tool, slings, bag Big black backpack, Opono</p> <p>Vehicle - Fitness - Very fit Skills - Rifle - AR15 Survival - Nil</p> <p>PLB - Yes (working on very small) Food - Medical - Condition -</p> <p>Intentions - Walk upstream towards Upper hut with Aaron. Camp approx 2km up river at hut.</p>	<p>Sex - Male... Age/DOB - 48 Address - Australia, Surfers Paradise Phone # - (021) 025 93465 Nok - +61 407 192034</p> <p>Height - 6ft Build - Medium Ethnicity - NZ Euro Other - No known scars/dentures Complexion - Fair Hair - Bald</p> <p>Clothing Headwear - Torso - Legs - Footwear - Gear/other - Vehicle -</p> <p>Fitness - Skills - Knowledge of area - PLB - Food - Medical -</p> <p>Intentions - Walk from end of Mill road to confluence of Merepepe and Tutuahi Rivers, camp on bank near Meremere Rift down river to Tutuahi Ampers access point. Return approx 1000hrs, 3/4/23</p>

Missing Person Profiles

INCIDENT ACTION PLAN

NEW ZEALAND SEARCH AND RESCUE

Situation: 3 parties about fishing/hunting. Family has concern for safety

Mission/Goal: **Safely locate missing parties**

Date/Time Missing: 03/11/2023

Missing Person and NOK:
John - Fellowship 021422172
Aaron - Melbry - 021 150 9500
Nick - Cynthia HUME
021 962 874

LKP:

Survivability:

Phase/Operational Period: 630-2200hrs

Objectives for Operational Period (Keep it SMART):

- Establish DOT of PBR
- Clear Tutuahi river
- LP Profile - ongoing
- Establish info from Opono hut
-

Strategies to Achieve It:

- Process vehicle composite
- T2-T4 Patrol sign along river bank
- Intel
- T-5-T3-T1 - Clear river and tracks to Depot Hut

Comms Plan:
Doc II now
ESB58
ESB57
HF Day/Night

Rescue Plan:

Weather:
- Showers - Breaching fire
- Mts snowing
- Low: 4°C
- Tomorrow: Partly Cloudy
- Fine
- High: 15°C

Safety/Hazards:
- Water/Rising - low flow river
- Terrain - Slippery elsewhere

Critical Elements/To do:
- One party likely in forest

Media:

COMMAND STRUCTURE

Incident Controller: Andrew FRICK

Logistics: Same as Planning

Operations: Andrew Chantley

Planning: Patrick W/ Paul Kannah

Intel: Nathan Pipit, Matt Beletka

RCCNZ CAT II INCIDENT:

Initial IAP

SEARCH & RESCUE LAND SAR NEW ZEALAND **LANDSAR SAFETY PLAN** (Version 4) Page 1
 This form is for recording safety information and decisions at an event management level. Review and update plan for each operational period.

Event Name: Operation Extra – P056597871 Date: 3/11/23 Time: 1710

Person in Control: Sen. Sgt. Andrew KNOX Safety Advisor: Sen. Sgt. Andrew KNOX

A Identify Hazards

Event Location: Taranua Ranges – Mill Road end – Daphne Hut

List Hazards at Location

Natural Hazards: The river – generally easy to cross but boulders upstream from Mill Road – slippery and greasy. Water flow normal at the moment – knee deep but can get up to waist depth. Rhyber Pass and downstream – very steep and bluffs. 100m drops at places Ongaonga – Plenty of it!!!!

Manmade Hazards: The track is slippery after rain during the week. Care is needed; slips/trips and falls. Going through farmland, so normal farmland operations, with cattle on riverbed.

Other Activities: There will be other hunters in the area. Big block of private land – no issues, but guided operations. All clear for the weekend.

Event Description: HB Police SARex. 3 x missing people. 1 possibly on river in small inflatable raft. 2 x hunters making way towards Daphne Hut.

List Task Related Hazards

Task Hazards: River travel and steep, slippery bush areas/faces.

Current Weather: Intermittent passing showers, becoming clear...

Forecast Weather: Weather forecast on Intel board

List Weather Related Hazards

Climate Hazards: Rain, wind and a bit of sun.

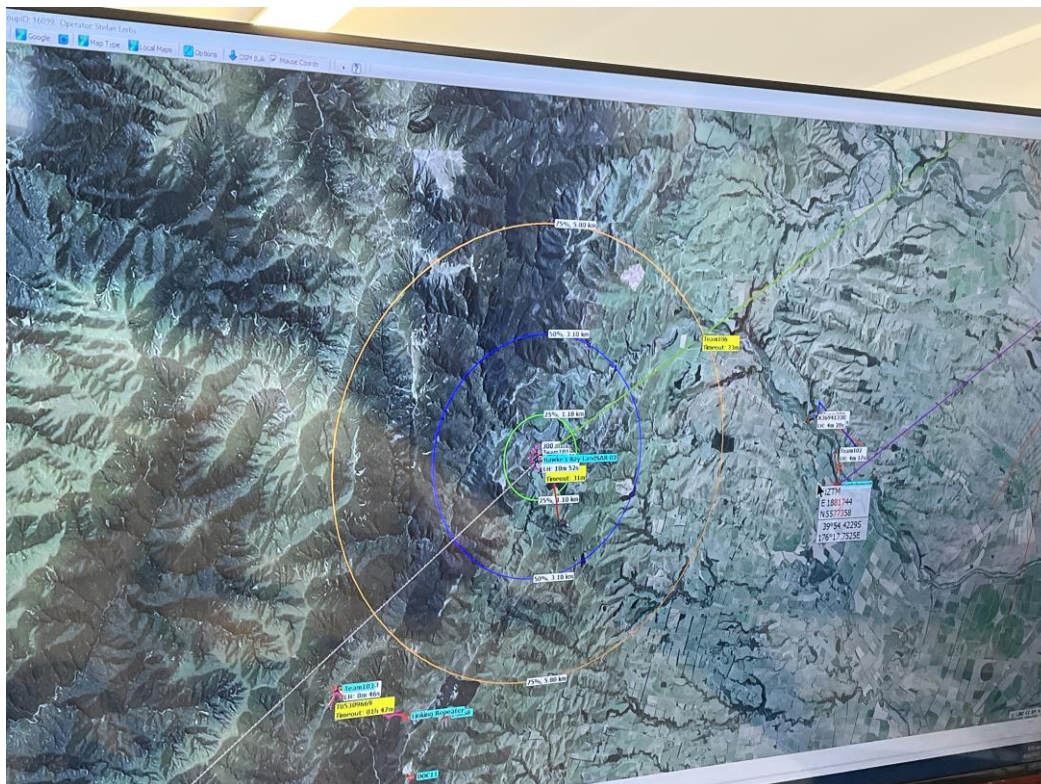
B Risk Controls

Risks resulting from exposure to the above hazards will be controlled by the following actions:

Compulsory Safety Practices

- Complete specific safety assessments for all team taskings
- Team safety discussions before the commencement of tasks and whenever plans, conditions or other circumstances change during a task
- Safety equipment, appropriate for each task, is available and is used

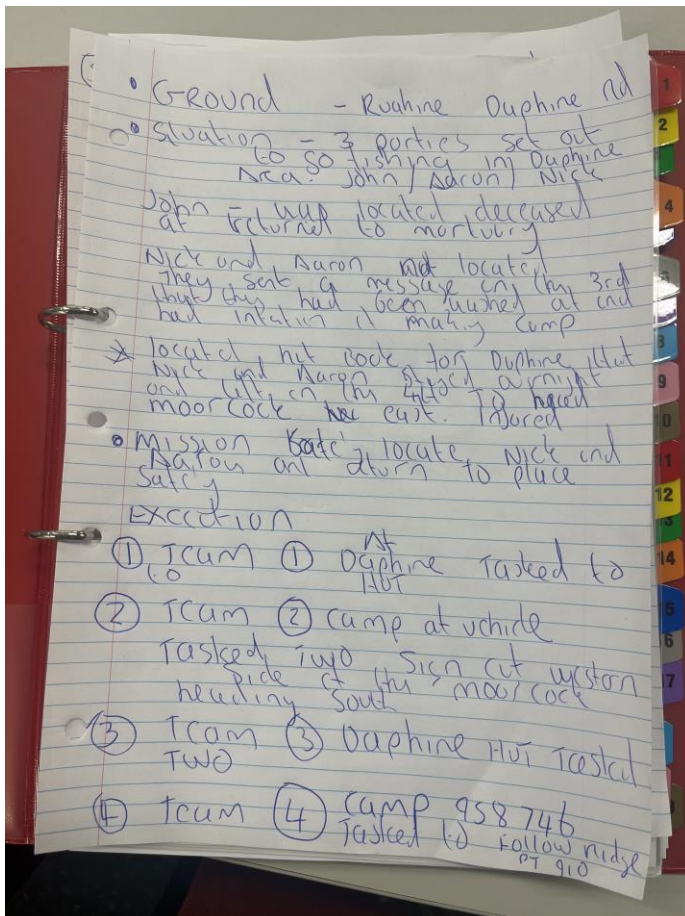
Safety Plan



Statistical rinks on SARtrack from IPP



Second statistical rings on paper map.



GSMEAC brief notes