

SEA MONSTER ALERT

THROUGHOUT K81 all ships involved were constantly on guard for threats from every imaginable source.

At Blue force refuelling stops ashore, sentries and boat parties were stationed to ensure that any clandestine attempts by Orange saboteurs could be countered.

At sea, the strictest of alerts were maintained in case marauding enemy patrol boats got within range of HMAS MELBOURNE in its role as leader of the Blue forces at sea; the sky, of course, was the subject of a 24-hour watch – as was the subsurface threat.

With all these precautions, few members of the ship's company were prepared for the unidentified intruder which was sighted near the end of the exercise as HMAS MELBOURNE headed for the Shoalwater Bay area.

The mystery object bobbed up in best "thing from another world" fashion in calm, clear conditions – but nobody could hazard an ID.

Opinions about the nature of the beast varied:

gunnery officers argued for a type of warhead-equipped Tontine pillow, or an udder-mounted Mark four point eight torpedo; Intelligence (but not necessarily intelligent) staff postulated that a buffalo from the hinterland of central Queensland had been scuttled and skinned, with the pelt inflated and used as a decoy by Orange submariners.

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But the most popular theory was advanced by the chief cook and his men who thought the object was a fugitive pumpkin, of the jumbo type used ashore in certain political circles to prepare a species of scone around the Kingaroy area.

Despite the conjecture, the mystery remains unsolved; under the watchful eyes of MELBOURNE's bridge, the UFO (Unidentified Floating Object) passed by to disappear in the west.

