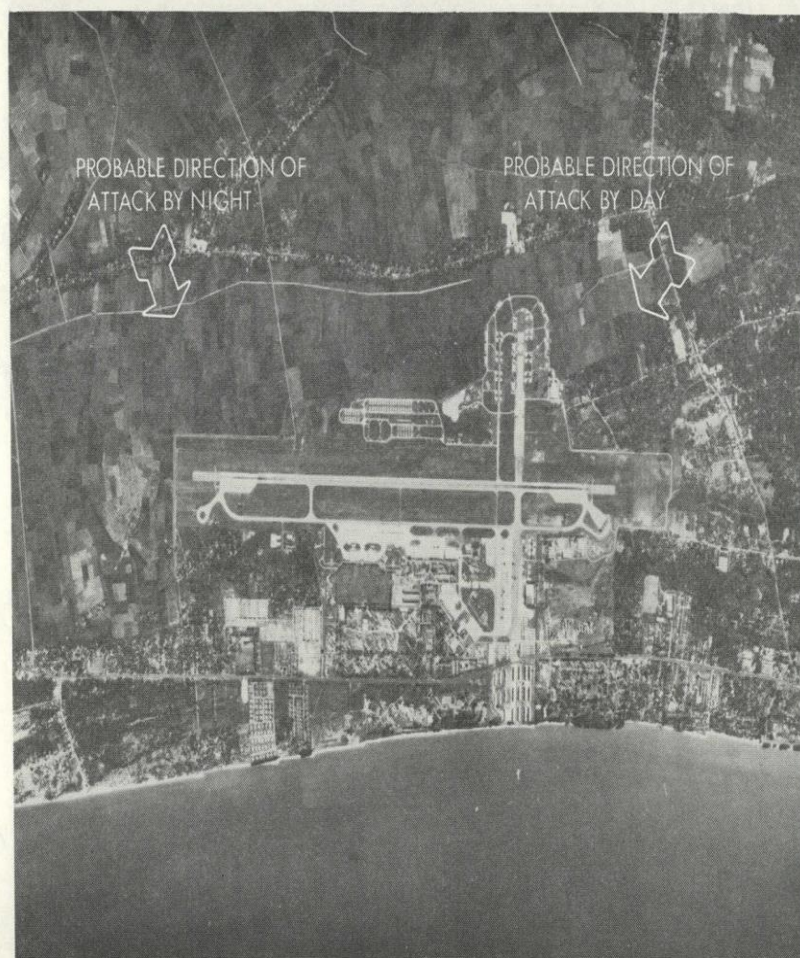


THE THREAT TO AIR BASE BUTTERWORTH



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Annex F
to J10 Study
No. 13/75

Vertical Air Photograph of Air Base Butterworth showing Possible CTO Approaches.

Annex F to J10 Study No- 13/75 – Possible CTO Approaches - Night and Day approaches.

Introduction.

Butterworth Air Base (BAB) was owned and operated by the Malaysian Air Force (MAF) and is located on the west coast in North West Malaysia in the State of Kedah . Australian RAAF were co- tenants at Butterworth Air Base with two squadrons of Mirage jet fighters and other supporting elements under the terms of the Five Power Defence Arrangement (FPDA) .The Integrated Air Defence System (IADS) was also located at Butterworth which came under the responsibility of ANZUK Force through the Five Power Defence Arrangement (FPDA).

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¹ Exchange of Notes - Australian Treaty Series 1971 – No 21 Five Power Defence Arrangement . (FPDA) Status of Forces Agreement.

On the 1st December 1971 an Exchange of Notes which constituted an Agreement between both Malaysia and Australia regarding External Defence under the FPDA was entered into. The Agreement allowed for a retrospective entry into Malaysia effective from 1st November 1971 which is the date 28 Anzuk Force came into effect

In accordance with the Exchange of Notes .

Section 2 – Security:

(1) *“The Australian Service Authorities may take such measures within their installations as they deem necessary to ensure the security of the installations and the equipment, property, records and official information of the Australian Force”.*

Section 4 – Carriage of Arms:

“Members of an Australian force and members of civil police services mentioned in Section 2(4) above may possess and carry arms when authorized to do so by their orders, except that the members of such civil police when employed outside the installations shall only carry arms with the agreement of the Malaysian authorities”

Authority was given by the Malaysian government for Australian forces to take whatever steps necessary which included the authority to carry arms to ensure the security of its Assets within the confines of Air Base Butterworth .At that stage consideration would have been given towards the growing insurgency situation.

Understanding Rifle Company Butterworth (RCB) presence at Butterworth Air Base.

The Communist Insurgency in Malaysia, also known as the Second Malaysian Emergency was an armed conflict which occurred in Malaysia from 1968 through to 1989, involving Communist Terrorists (CTs) from the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) and the Malaysian Federal security forces.

With a growing insurgency developing throughout both West and East Malaysia, in late 1970 the Australian Government deployed an Infantry Rifle Company (Charlie Company 1RAR) direct from Singapore to Butterworth Air Base in a protective security role. These rotations continued up until July 1971 when the 1st Battalion Royal Australian Regiment (1 RAR) was replaced by 6th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment (6 RAR) on a two year tour of duty.

² On the 1st November 1971 a tripartite force was formed between Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, known as ANZUK Force. An Infantry Brigade was formed - 28 ANZUK Infantry Brigade which included Infantry Battalions from Australia (6RAR), New Zealand (1RNZIF) and United Kingdom (1RHF) along with supporting elements which included 28 ANZUK Field Regiment ,

¹ Exchange of Notes - Australian Treaty Series 1971 – No 21

² ANZUK - Wikipedia

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28 ANZUK Field Squadron, 28 ANZUK Aviation Squadron and 28 ANZUK Force HQ which included ANZUK Intelligence and Security Unit.

The RAAF presence at Butterworth Air Base required the protection of Australian assets which included two squadrons of Mirage and personnel along with the Integrated Air Defence System (IADS) on a 24 hour continual basis because there was a real Threat from the CTs and subversive elements aligned to the CTs.

³ IADS was formed at Butterworth Air Base in February 1971 under the Command of an Australian Air Vice Marshall Ron Susans . IADS primary role was to co ordinate military action in the defence of the Malaysian peninsula from external threats. IADS was declared fully operational in September 1971.

The Malaysian Air Force (MAF) was on active service and was fighting a real War within its own country in both East and West Malaysia. The MAF carried out counter insurgency operations against the CTs using Butterworth Air Base as a Forward Operational base.

1.0 The Role of Rifle Company Butterworth. (RCB)

- 1.1 The primary role of RCB was to provide protective security to Australian Assets and Personnel at Butterworth Air Base on a continual basis by providing an armed capability through a Quick Reaction Force (QRF) capable of responding in an holistic way to breaches of security and if necessary responding to an attack against the air base by the CTs or subversive elements..
- 1.2 The tasks assigned to OC RCB from the OC RAAF – BAB were as follows.

Generally the role of RCB was to **Protect and Defend** Australian assets on a continual basis by providing an armed capability when called upon to do so. The **Protective** and **Defensive** nature of tasks required of RCB troops was for them to be capable of War fighting at BAB and be capable of extracting and evacuating Australian Assets , personnel and Australian Nationals when called upon to do so. Typically this involved -

- Cordon and Search
- Internal Base Patrolling
- Protection of RAAF Service assets and personnel
- Perimeter Patrols nightly commencing at 1600 hours and concluding at 0630 hours the following morning.
- Protection of Vital Points including those used by the Malaysian Air Force (MAF) both external and internal to the Air base.
- Provision of a Quick Reaction Force of section strength on 24hr stand by in a state of readiness.
- Provision of a reserve force activated on 30 minutes notice to assist the QRF if required
- Manning of listening posts and standing patrols by night.
- Operating mobile tactical lights on likely penetration points.

Typically the structure of an Infantry Rifle Company comprised 3 Rifle Platoons each of 30 fully trained infantry soldiers plus senior Officers .

³ Department of Defence Bulletin - Pathfinder Issue 148 , January 2011

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Each Platoon was broken down into 3 x 10 man sections. In effect there were 9 sections called upon to carry out duty as the Quick Reaction Force (QRF) during a tour of duty as RCB - Headquarters (HQ) Platoon comprised the administrative component of each Company.

The ANZUK Singapore rotations ceased in July 1973 when 6RAR completed its two year tour of duty .The RCB rotations from Singapore were replaced by direct rotations of Infantry units from Australia under Plan Asbestos and continued until 1989.

2.0 4 RCB Operational Role and Tasks Preparedness

In order for RCB to execute and achieve its security role and tasks the RCB procedure was for its Rifle Platoons to rotate continually every three days on a 24/7 roster through the following activities.

Unit Standing Orders -

A. One standby platoon providing :

The Quick Reaction Force (QRF) of section strength (10 men) based in the Guard room in a state of readiness and on immediate call on a 24hour a day basis with weapons and ammunition ready for deployment as required by the OC – QRF .

At night from 1600 hours until 0800 hours the following morning the QRF with radio communication, patrolled at irregular times and routes to vital points and along the air base perimeter which was normally lit up against the air base background against the darkness of night.

During daytime from 0800hrs to 1800hrs the QRF was deployed to patrol the Company area.

A patrol of the air base perimeter was to be conducted at first light on each morning mounted in the QRF truck to check if the perimeter fence had been interfered with by way of removal or tampering of the wire fence. A foot patrol was conducted along the golf course fence where access by truck was restricted. The routes and timing of each morning patrol was varied.

The other two sections were the Reserve QRF on 30 minutes notice to deploy and were involved in training commensurate with QRF duties if called upon within the Company area.

B. The Second platoon was the Reserve standby platoon on a two hour notice to deploy . It was involved in training within the close training area inside the base area or at the nearby rifle range , no further distant than 20 minutes. It remained in constant communication with Company HQ by radio .

C. The Third Platoon was involved in training or stood down following on from duty as the QRF. Training away from the air base required the OC RAAF approval and if any men were on leave they had to record their movements, destinations and timings in the leave register held at Company HQ.

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3.0 5 The Threat to Air Base Butterworth–

3.1 Secret paper dated 27 April 1971 - Security of Australian Personnel and Assets Air Base Butterworth.:

“The aim of this paper is to study the threat to Air Base Butterworth and the defence arrangements.”

3.1.1 Paragraph 4 - Threat Assessment:

- (a) **Border Area.** *“There are between 1200 to 1500 Cts operating on the border and the strength of the Malay National Liberation Front (MNLF) in the area is stated as 15,000.*
- (b) *Concern has been expressed by DMI MINDEF at the ease of penetration by Cts to areas in the southern part of 6 Brigades TAOR which includes Butterworth. There is little Ct intelligence being provided by the local population for fear of reprisals. Hopes are laid for improvement in this aspect. “*
- (c) **Butterworth Area.** *“An exact figure of hard core Ct for the Butterworth area generally is not available however by example the Kulim area 12 miles East of Butterworth has a hard core membership of 20 and has recently supplied 24 recruits. In support of this force are an estimated 27,000 sympathizers in the Penang / Province Wellesley. The work force at Butterworth could contain an element of these supporters. On the night of 7/8 March a force of dissidents (Not Cts) in the Kulim area used 200 lb of a weak explosive to damage the railway line at a location 8 miles from Butterworth”*
- (d) **Capabilities (Enemy)** *“Intelligence reports assess that the enemy has no mortar capability, at the moment, for attacking the base. The railway track incident indicates that the enemy has the capability to use explosives in an attack.*
- (e) **The Likelihood of Attack on Air Base Butterworth.** *“Opinion as to how serious is the threat to Butterworth is largely guesswork. The immediate risk does not appear to be great for two reasons, firstly attacks on the target to date have been of a propaganda nature rather than having a definite military objective, and secondly an attack on a vital installation such as Butterworth may provoke intense military reaction which at the moment may not be acceptable to CT command. However the possibility of attack cannot be ignored.*

3.2 6 A Secret paper in which the security and defence of RAAF Air Base Butterworth was discussed, dated 25th May 1971

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“The purpose of the visit was to obtain details on the security and defence of RAAF Air Base Butterworth and to advice on specialist aspects of base security.”

The Paper discusses the threat to Air Base Butterworth identified in a Threat Assessment by JIO (Joint Intelligence Organization) which basically forecast the threat as –

3.2.1 **Para 9 (a)** *“It is unlikely that any armed action by formed bodies of troops from the CTO or Malaysian Nationalist Liberation Front (MNLF) will be mounted against the base within the next 12 months unless a favourable situation resulted from the diversion of the base security forces and local forces to quell civil disturbance.”*

3.2.2 **Para 9 (b)** *“ there is a continuing threat” from unco-ordinated action by dissident individuals which could result in loss or damage to the assets of the base.*

The JIO determined that although it was unlikely that the CTO would attack the base within the next 12 months there was however a continuing threat identified at 9(b).

The JIO made recommendations at Paragraph 10 for the recommendation for the implementation of **two distinct defensive measures to counter both a minor and major threat whilst maintaining the necessary arrangements to protect dependents and nominated personnel in the event of civil disturbance.**

3.2.3 **Para 10** *“ The acceptance of this Threat Assessment leads to a requirement for two phases of defensive arrangements , apart from the arrangements necessary to protect dependents and nominated personnel in the event of civil disturbance . These are –*

(a) *The day to day measures to protect the base against the minor threat promulgated at paragraph 9(b) consisting of routine guarding measures and*

(b) *The capability to adopt an expanded security posture to counter the unlikely , but nevertheless possible , threat summarized at paragraph 9 (a)*

A review of CTO operations resulted in a risk being identified that the base could be attacked by the CTO. The level of risk was then evaluated i.e. the ‘likelihood’ of an attack and the ‘severity’. Whilst the likelihood was assessed as low, this was guesswork because it was based on an assumption that the CTO may feel that an attack on Butterworth would result in an response against them.

This lead to the decision to deploy RCB as both a deterrent and a ready reaction force. Whilst the response stated above is a summary of the threat assessment, it failed to fully explain the extent of the threat assessment which also concluded –

3.2.4 **Para 3** *“ The Communist Terrorist Organization (CTO) and the Malayan National Liberation Front (MNLF) are still mainly concerned with preparing for insurgency and engaging local support, although minor incidents such as those in Wellesley Province on 23/24 April are likely to continue. These Organizations have , moreover , made more progress over the past year than previously expected.*

“The capability of the CTO to threaten Butterworth is greater than at any time since the end of the “Emergency” in 1961, and in addition the MNLF has the capacity for limited harassment.

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3.2.5 **Para 6.** “The most likely group, which would be employed if Butterworth were to be a target, would be the CTO group of at least 20 near Kulim which is approximately 13 miles south east of Butterworth. The Malayan National Liberation Front (MNLF) – has members who are known to have been trained by the CTO near Kulim – - and some of the members could assist in the attack.”

3.2.6 **Para 7.** “Should the CTO decide to harass or attack Butterworth, which we assess as unlikely, the attack would probably be in the form of a night time nuisance raid, probably without warning, employing small arms and possibly explosives.

The attack, if launched would be aimed at gaining maximum propaganda value and would probably be directed against key installations, hangars, and any aircraft parked on the tarmac.”

3.2.7 **Para 8.** “To date the CTO are known to have employed small arms including light machine guns, and explosives including booby traps, mines in one case a 200 pound explosive charge. There has been no evidence of the CTO possession of weapons capable of indirect fire such as mortars.”

3.3 ⁷ In an Inward Savingram dated 5 October 1971

The Australian High Commissioner notified the Department of Foreign Affairs of a White Paper prepared by the Malaysian Government titled – “The resurgence of Armed Communism in West Malaysia”

3.3.1 **Para 2.** “The White paper is interesting from many points of view, and documents well the progress which the CPM has made since the call to arms was issued in June 1969 in converting the United Front to a systematic underground -----“

3.3.2 **Para 3.** “One point that the White Paper does not clarify, and one which is very pertinent for the Government, and indeed for Australia with an Air base near one of the areas where the Cts appear to have considerable interest and influence, is the timing of the eventual armed struggle -

3.4 ⁸ In November 1971 the ANZUK Intelligence Group published a Threat Assessment relative to Butterworth Air Base. (BAB)

3.4.1 The document noted that the Base was approximately 46 miles (75 kilometers) from the ‘Betong Salient section of the Thai/Malaysian border ...’ (p.3). This area was under the ‘virtual control’ of the communist’s 12th Regiment (p.p. 3,6-7). The nearby Malaysian town of Kroh is in the area where the Communists launched their renewed armed struggle against Malaysia in June 1968 when they killed 17 Malaysian Security Force personnel in an ambush (p.7).

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- 3.4.2 ANZUK reported that the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) and 'its guerilla arm the Communist Terrorist Organisation (CTO)' enjoyed 'virtual control' of the Thai side of the shared border. From here it had 'been developing a widespread infrastructure in West Malaysia' (p.6). Of these, the Malayan National Liberation Front (MNLF) was 'the largest and best-organised communist **subversive** organisation in West Malaysia ... with cells in most states.' It had 'already demonstrated a capability for co-ordinated subversive and minor terrorist activities in both West Malaysia and Singapore.' The MNLF committees in Perak and Kedah were known to have contact with each other and with the CTO's 12th Regiment. (p.7) There were also other smaller groups, some of whom also had contact with the CPM or the MNLF. At least two of these, plus the MNLF, were known to be operating in the 'Penang/Butterworth area.' (p.7)
- 3.4.3 It was noted that Communist activity had intensified following the June 1968 incident (above) and that the Malaysian riots of May 1969 had provided them the opportunity to ramp up their efforts. At this stage they had 'not attacked military installations or large formed units', focusing rather on 'renewing contacts, with supporters', developing 'lines of communication, bases and food caches, and to recruitment.' Few contacts with security forces had been initiated and those that had were close to the border and the targets carefully selected. (p.p 7-8)
- 3.4.4 The Kulim area was specifically mentioned as an area of concern. It had been a 'traditional area of CT influence and operation'. In 1971 it was believed to be 'a centre for CT movement between the Betong Salient and village areas to the east and south-east of Kulim, in southern Kedah, the Selama district of Perak and the southern part of +Province Wellesley'. (p.11)

Air Base Butterworth is located in what was known at the time as Province Wellesley. It was believed there were around 60 Communist Terrorists (CTs) in the Kulim and surrounding forest areas, including the 8th Assault Unit. The area in which these forces were located was between 15 to 25 miles (24 to 40 kilometres) east of Butterworth (p.11).

- 3.4.5 ANZUK admitted it was difficult to tell when and where the CPM/CTO would have the confidence to initiate its armed struggle' ie, stage 2 of their strategy. However, it was felt unlikely this would occur before the end of 1972. None-the-less, it was believed that by the end of 1972 'the communist infrastructure is likely to be well on the way to completion in the West Coast states and in Kelantan.' (p.p 13-14). It was considered 'likely' this would see 'an increase in armed terrorist activities, largely confined to the border area in Kedah, Perak and Kelantan, although isolated incidents might occur further south; and that the MNLF ... could initiate a limited campaign involving minor acts of sabotage throughout West Malaysia ...' (p.14).

The Likelihood of Attack

- 3.4.6 The ANZUK assessment acknowledged 'a potential threat ... from the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM), the Communist Terrorist Organisation (CTO), and related communist subversive organisations ...' (p.16). Within the period under review however, it was considered the CPM/CTO would continue to consolidate its position within West Malaysia. Therefore, although the risk of an attack in circumstances considered favourable by the CPM/CTO could not be ruled out, it was considered unlikely.

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- 3.4.7 Despite this, ANZUK concluded ‘there is definitely a risk of one or more CTs, or members of subversive groups known to be operating in the vicinity could, regardless of CPM/CTO policy and/or acting on their own initiative, attempt an isolated attack on or within the Base at any time’ (p.17). This type of attack could take the form of ‘sabotage by the planting of delayed-action devices, booby-traps and other similar devices designed to damage Vital Points and injure personnel ...’ It was considered that any warning of such an attack would be ‘unlikely’ and it ‘could take place at any time.’ (p.18). As noted above, guerilla units were largely left to operate on their own initiative without central control.
- 3.4.8 The document is quite clear. There was, in 1971, an expectation that Butterworth could come under a small scale attack that could result in injury to personnel, and that this could come at any time without warning. It was also considered likely that the Communists could be in a position to move to stage 2 of their strategy sometime after 1972 and that this would see an increase in terrorism throughout the West Malaysia.
- 3.4.9 **Likely Methods of Attack.**

(p.23) (b) ***Advance warning** of any form of attempted attack (except a large scale attack) would most probably not be received whether the attack were by the Cts or by members of subversive groups.*

The likely methods of attack were summarised as follow.

(c) *methods and strengths which could conceivably be employed , if it were decided to attack the Base ranged through a number of possibilities. –*

i *Direct frontal assault by a large group of Cts up to **60 strong** using small arms fire or explosives*

ii *Covert penetration , probably at night , by one or more individual Cts or small groups totalling **up to 20 with a view to surprise attack on Vital Points** , especially the aircraft by small arms fire and explosives.*

iii *Mortar or other indirect weapon attack ,if the Cts acquired this capability , using a small force of up to 10 men located in the surrounding rice field / kampong areas, especially those to the east.*

iv *Sabotage by the planting of explosive devices or booby traps, designed to damage vital points and injure personnel by one or more Cts , members of subversive groups , or sympathetic or suborned LEC/ contractor personnel.*

3.5 ⁹ February 1972 - the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in a Secret Intelligence Memorandum Ref 0839/72 titled – Communist Insurgency in Malaysia -

At this point in time the CIA held concerns about the ability of the Malaysians to counter the growing insurgency and in particular there were real concerns held by the

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CIA on the ability of the Malaysians to control the growing insurgency problem in the West of Malaysia due to an unrelated insurgency in East Malaysia.

- 3.5.1 (p.2)(2) *“ Since the communists combat element , the Malayan National Liberation Army (commonly known as CTS or the Communist Terrorist Organisation) moved into Thailand during the 1950s , it has reorganised and grown in numbers and influence within its base area. From some 600 members , it has grown to an estimated 1500 to 1700 men armed primarily with an assortment of locally obtained World War 2 and small arms and rifles. The force is supported by an auxiliary Malayan Communist Youth League numbering about 3000 young men who have received ideological and paramilitary training”*
- 3.5.2 (p.3) (1) *“The reappearance of a fledging insurgent operation in West Malaysia after over 10 years of quiet has raised questions concerning Kuala Lumpur’s ability to protect itself .*
- 3.5.3 (p.5) (7) *“ there are good reasons why the initial communist effort was directed against Perak and Kedah. These were previous Communist strong holds and contain a relatively high density of rural Chinese” “ In this preparatory period the communists are doing everything they can to avoid contact with government security forces”*
- 3.5.4 (p.10) (19) *“ The Governments counter insurgency effort in the West is being affected by the Communist led insurgency in the East”.*

3.6 ¹⁰ In January 1973 the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in a Secret Intelligence Memorandum Ref 1617/73 titled – Insurgency in East Malaysia - noted the following-

- 3.6.1 (p.5) *More troops (approximately 9000 to 10,000) are engaged in operations in Sarawak today than at the height of the confrontation. The Forces include over six battalions of the Malaysian Army, four Battalions of more racially mixed Police Force units and perhaps 1200 native Border Scouts”.*
- 3.6.2 (p.11)(24) *Communist strategy has led the party to turn its back on some rather enticing targets and the chance to make headlines. For example , the insurgents are known to be active within 20 miles of **Butterworth Air Base.***

3.7 ¹¹ RAAF Intelligence Reports Department of Air Force Intelligence –DAFI

The RAAF Department of Air Force Intelligence issued monthly intelligence reports in relation to the Threat situation at Butterworth Air Base.

Primarily the reports focussed on the Threat to Air Base Butterworth concluding at each report – “ **The assessed threat to Air Base Butterworth remains unchanged**”

The extracts quoted below from various reports is indicative of the threat environment that existed at the time with continuation through to 1989. The findings of the Intelligence reports are too numerous to quote in this submission and as a result extracts from random reports dated 1973 through to 1975 are quoted. The theme

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predicated in the reports tells of a war occurring external to Air Base Butterworth involving the Malaysian Armed Forces and the Communist Terrorists.

3.7.1 ¹² Report No 33 - Dated 3rd July 1975- Security Situation Air Base Butterworth

Para 1 - At 0230 hours 19 May 1975 a sweeper driver at Air Base Butterworth discovers 30 feet of loosely rolled fencing wire on the centre line halfway mark of the runway . This incident was considered to be deliberate as no vehicles had used the runway since the last movement at 1900hrs 18 May.

Para 4 - Operation Delta Seven has resulted in one Ct killed and one wounded on 9 May in the Lenggong area (40 miles SE of Butterworth) During May the Security Forces taking part in Operation Delta Seven found 10 large Ct camps, 22 resting places six food dumps and large quantities of food and medicines.

Para 6 - During the period 20 to 22 June air strikes were mounted from Air Base Butterworth involving four Sabres, each armed with 38 x 2.75 rockets and about 200 rounds of 30mm cannon shells, and four Tebuan aircraft armed with 2 x 500lb bombs .The target was a 10km square area situated on the lower half of a ridge north of the town of Grik – from Butterworth.

Para 9 - The possibility of the Cts possessing operational mortars adds to the threat against Air Base Butterworth. However it is most unlikely that any warning of impending attack would be received prior to the attack taking place.

3.7.2 ¹³ Report N28 - Dated 4 December 1974 – Security Situation at Air Base Butterworth

Para 1. - According to ANZUK intelligence agency, 6 Malaysian Infantry Brigade has mounted a five battalion operation in the Gunong Inas and Gunong Bongau forest reserves. The operation commenced on 23rd October , units taking part in the Operation are 2,10,and 12 Royal Malay Regiments , 2 Rangers and 13 Malaysian Territorial Army with a total strength of about 2000.The strength of the Command and Control element for the Operation is about 400. One other Battalion is thought to be involved but this is not yet confirmed.

Para 2 - The press reported that Security Forces engaged in the Operation killed two terrorists on 18 November ----- Shortly before the incident SF had encountered an unknown number of terrorists in the same area ----

Para 3 - On 3 November one SF was killed and another wounded in a clash with Cts in the Kroh area and on the 4 November one Ct was killed in the Betong area when a reported 50 Cts attacked a joint outpost.

3.7.3 ¹⁴ Report No 16- Dated 28 September 1973 – Security Situation at Air Base Butterworth

Para 2.- On 26 August one SF was wounded in a clash with Cts in the Baling district. On 2 September SF contacted an unknown number of Cts but there were no casualties.

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On 8 September a clash between SF and 20 Cts in the Kulim area resulted in the death of once Ct and one SF officer. Blood trails left by the Cts indicated that others may have been wounded. -

Para 3 - Official sources have been quoted as saying that 70 Cts were in the Operation area at the time and the Minister of Defence has been quoted as saying that SF were tracking about 30 Cts in the Sedar area following the Operation

Para 5. -The assessed threat to Air Base Butterworth remains unchanged

3.8 ¹⁵ Joint Intelligence Organisation (JIO) Study 13/75 - issued October 1975 The Security of Air Base Butterworth.

The Australian intelligence agency JIO following on from the 1971 ANZUK Threat assessment, published an updated assessment of the threat situation that affected Air Base Butterworth

The content of the study is similar to the 1971 Threat Assessment however with an added emphasis on the following –

- 3.8.1 *Page 14 – Para 38 .The Threat against the Air Base still remained however as noted with the possibility of Mortar attack due to the CTO acquiring a mortar capability.*
- 3.8.2 *Page 14 – Para 41 . Introduced the concept of a deterrence role being carried out by RCB and it would appear at this stage that the gamble to place Australian Families and Personnel into a country that was at war internally paid off with no loss of life or property. A lucky roll of the dice so to speak.*
- 3.8.3 *Page 6 -Included details showing the strength of Ct Units with a reference to a map showing location of these units relative to Butterworth at Appendix D .*
- 3.8.4 *Appendix F to J10 Study No- 13/75 – Possible CTO Approaches - Night and Day approaches. (Photo on front page of submission)*
- 3.8.5 *Page 13 – Para 37 . Despite the Malaysians being responsible for the external defence of the Air Base, the Study concluded that there were no continually manned military posts close to the Air Base that would hinder the reconnaissance and approach of any CTO assault group.*
- 3.8.6 *Page 8 – Para 25 . The Terrorists have shown that they will attack government positions and individual officials in retaliation for reverses suffered as a result of government operations . In May 1974 , after a successful government operation in the Ipoh area, more than 100 communist terrorists from the 12th CTO Regiment destroyed road plant – demonstrating a formidable capability to conduct large scale sabotage operations – a factor that is relevant to this study.*
- 3.8.7 *Page 12 – 13 -Para 36 Following on from a division sized Operation in April 1974 (Operation Gonzales) near Ipoh, the Malaysian Forces retracted into a defensive mode with static – guard duties and close patrolling operations (Similar to Rcb) to protect construction sites after the Cts attacked the works being carried out on the East – West Highway and Temengor Dam .*

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3.8.9 *Page 14 – Para 41 – The CTO may have refrained from attacking the Base because it fears that Commonwealth Forces would be reintroduced into the Governments anti – terrorist campaign.*

3.8.10 Summary Of CTO Capability – Page 13 Para 38

The Study noted that there had been a significant increase of the capability of the CTO with a total strength of more than 2000 terrorists based in Thailand and in Peninsula Malaysia. They had expanded their influence considerably since 1968 and had successfully established armed units and base areas in Malaysia as far south as the Kuala Lipis – Raub area of Pahang. The MNLF and other subversive organisations had cells throughout peninsula Malaysia that were capable of conducting minor acts of sabotage and terrorism.

3.8.11 *Page 4 – Para 11 - The ARA Company assists with the protection of RAAF personnel , property, and shared facilities within the Base. It provides a section (normally 10 men) as a quick – reaction force from 1600hrs to 0800hrs daily and irregularly provides squads to guard various vital points on the airfield during these hours. Except that fire and medical services are available for day to day operations , there are no special passive defence arrangements to mitigate the effect of sabotage or of mortar or rocket attacks.*

3.9 ¹⁶ **A Secret paper in which the security and defence of RAAF Air Base Butterworth was discussed, dated 25th May 1971**
“The purpose of the visit was to obtain details on the security and defence of RAAF Air Base Butterworth and to advice on specialist aspects of base security.”

Para 6. “The base area of 670 acres has been promulgated as a Protected Place within the terms of the Protected Areas and Protected Places Ordinance 1959.”

Para 9 (a) *“It is unlikely that any armed action by formed bodies of troops from the CTO or Malaysian Nationalist Liberation Front (MNLF) will be mounted against the base within the next 12 months unless a favorable situation resulted from the diversion of the base security forces and local forces to quell civil disturbance.”*

Para 9 (b) *“there is a continuing threat from unco-ordinated action by dissident individuals **which could result in loss or damage to the assets of the base.**”*

The JIO determined that although it was unlikely that the CTO would attack the base within the next 12 months there was however a continuing threat identified at 9(b).

The JIO made recommendations at Paragraph 10 for the recommendation for the implementation of two distinct defensive measures to counter both a minor and major threat whilst maintaining the necessary arrangements to protect dependents and nominated personnel in the event of civil disturbance.

¹⁶ Report on visit by SR (GD) and PM to RAAF Air Base Butterworth 4th to 12th May 1971

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Para 10 “ *The acceptance of this Threat Assessment leads to a requirement for **two phases of defensive arrangements** , apart from the arrangements necessary to protect dependents and nominated personnel in the event of civil disturbance . These are –*

(c) *The day to day measures to protect the base against the minor threat promulgated at paragraph 9(b) consisting of routine guarding measures and*

(d) *The capability to adopt an expanded security posture to counter the unlikely , but nevertheless possible threat summarized at paragraph 9 (a)*

4.0 ¹⁷ Shared Defence Plan - Operational Order 1/ 71 **SHARED DEFENCE OF AIR BASE BUTTERWORTH OPERATION ORDER No. 1/71**

1. The stated mission - ¹⁸

Mission- *To Protect operational assets , property and personnel within the perimeter of Air Base Butterworth by joint arrangement and mutual support*

During the latter part of 1971 discussions had taken place between the Malaysian and Australian Governments regarding the shared defence of Air Base Butterworth.

Concerns had been raised by the Officer Commanding RAAF Butterworth about the availability and performance of the Malaysian forces .

Operational Order No. 1/71 came into effect in November 1971 which was mission specific which gave the OC RAAF Butterworth control over the Defence of the Air Base

through the Ground Defence Operations Centre (GDOC). The incorporated structure of the Base Defence Plan relied upon RCB as the primary unit which had the capability to adopt a more aggressive position in the event of an attack against the Air Base.

4.1.1 The following designated units formed part of the Base Defence Plan. Worthy to note that there were no Malaysian Infantry combat units attached, other than the Special Security Police unit.

- (a) Headquarters RAAF Butterworth
- (b) Headquarters RMAF Butterworth
- (c) Base Squadron Butterworth
- (d) Technical wing RMAF Butterworth
- (e) No 47 Squadron RAAF
- (f) No 75 Squadron RAAF

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¹⁸ Shared Defence Plan 1-71 section 2

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- (g) No 3 Squadron RAAF
- (h) Transport Support Flight RAAF
- (i) No 4 RAAF hospital
- (j) Special Security Police (SSP) of No 26 Coy **Malaysian Military police**
- (k) No 1 Air Defence Centre **RMAF**

4.1.2 ¹⁹ A Fail Safe plan Reference **Operational Order 1/72** dated 20 April 1972 had been implemented as an appendix to the Base Defence Plan **Operational Order 1/71**.

Attachments: No 65 Ground Liaison Section
ANZUK Infantry Company

Detachments: RAAF Fighter Squadron to SAF Tengah (Singapore)

The Fail Safe Plan was to be implemented in the event of the Malaysian Armed Forces being unable to meet their commitments as required under Operational Order 1/71.

Para 1 (a) – **Situation** – Outline . *In the event of the Malaysian Armed Forces being unable to meet their commitments within the provisions of Reference A ,the Task Organisations and attached units as specified in the Order must be prepared to undertake additional responsibility for securing our operational assets and providing the necessary protection for personnel and property.*

4.1.3 ²⁰ The Shared Base Defence Plan was implemented in three stages relative to a progressively worsening security situation.

The security stages were identified as

Security Green – .(Cautionary) This stage related to a cautionary stage of an impending security situation the Ground Defence Operations Centre (GDOC) **will be skeleton manned but not activated** .

The Ground Defence Commander will exercise command through the normal channels

- The SSP Company remains responsible for the security of the Air Base.
- The ANZUK Infantry Company comes under control of the Ground Defence Commander
- The Company Commander must bring one Platoon to two hours readiness.

Security Amber – (Alert) This stage related to a security situation where it is known that a shared defence situation of **Air Base Butterworth was imminent**.

- The GDOC will be fully manned and activated.
- The Ground Defence Commander will exercise command of shared defence operations through the Deputy Ground Defence Commander .

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- The SSP Company and the RAAF Police Section come under Operational control of the GDOC and remain responsible for entry, control and security of isolated Vital Points. (VP's)
- The RAAF and RMAF mobile reserves are activated and come under command of the GDOC and commence Operations as directed.
- Anzuk Infantry Company – The Company Commander must bring his Platoon at two hours notice up to immediate readiness and place it under command of the Ground Defence Commander or his Deputy.²¹
As soon as possible must bring his remaining Platoons to full readiness –

Security Red. ---- (Emergency) This stage relates to a severe threat situation to Air Base Butterworth. The following units are activated.

- 3SQN, 75SQN, 478 (M) SQN RAAF, 35SQN, 11SQN (M) RMAF Defence Flights are activated and assume responsibility for the protection of VP's in their respective areas.
- The SSP will withdraw from those areas and become responsible for VP's allocated in appendix "G"²²
- Bomb disposal team
- ANZUK INFANTRY COMPANY – As for security Amber
- **Tasks – The Company will be employed as far as possible on tasks commensurate with their training and specialist skills.**²³

The specialist role required of the Infantry Company was spread across the three stages of Security Alertness and was not just confined to protective security of Vital Points but moreover an holistic role in the event of an attack to repel and to defend commensurate with its training and specialist skills in infantry tactics.

The Infantry Company was required to be in a state of readiness on two hours notice under Command of the Ground Defence Commander or his Deputy. Infantry personnel are trained in both aspects of providing the specialist capability of Security and Defence .

4.1.4 ²⁴ Medical Plan

The Shared Defence Plan incorporated a Coordinated Medical Plan²⁵

CO No 4 RAAF Hospital will implement a satisfactory medical plan within the restrictions imposed by curfews etc. He will

- (a) *Prepare in advance a broad medical plan **to meet shared defence situations***
- (d) *On declaration of Security Amber appoint an officer responsible for close liaison with the Duty Controller GDOC.*

²¹ Shared Defence Plan 1-71 Annex 6 Page 1 (3) (a)

²² Shared Defence Plan 1-71 section 3 (d)(3)

²³ Shared Defence Plan 1-71 Annex 6 Page 1 (5)

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²⁵ Shared Defence Plan 1-71 Appendix C –Operation Order No 1/71 8th September 1971

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- (1) *The activation or modification of a Medical Plan which meets the current restrictions in force and is co ordinated within the overall GDOC plan.*

Expectation of Casualties

The Infantry Company came under control of the Ground Defence Commander at Security level Green and at Security level Amber the Officer Commanding the Infantry Company was required to bring one Platoon under Command of the Ground Defence Commander and the other two platoons up to immediate readiness. The medical plan was activated at security level Amber. There was a clear expectation of casualties.

4.1.5 Rules Of Engagement:

The Infantry Company carried out two distinct roles whilst at Air Base Butterworth comprising both roles of Security and Defence as referenced in Section 3.9 of this submission.

(A) Security Role :

In this situation a Platoon would be designated as the Quick Reaction Force (QRF) rotating each of its three Rifle sections over a 24 hour period.

Another Platoon would be involved with Security duties which involved Sentry or Patrols of the Air Base perimeter commencing at 1600hours until 0800 hours the following morning.

The remaining platoon would be involved with training on base or being stood down.

(B) Defensive Role:

In an Emergency situation the GDOC was activated at Security level Green which then required the reserve RCB rifle platoon being brought up to readiness on two hours notice. The other two platoons were placed in standby mode. This type of response would normally relate to an imminent attack or Emergency situation. In other words to defend the air base against attack.

4.1.5.1 Orders For Sentries and Patrols – General

The orders for sentries and Patrols is set out in Appendix 5 – Annex C of Operational Order 1/71 as follows. The Orders for Sentries and Patrols authorized the use of force and the carriage of live ammunition. Air Base Butterworth was declared a Protected Place.

1. *Sentries guarding VPS and other Service property may be static or mobile (patrols). In areas where there are other members working , static sentries may be mounted singly by day . In all other circumstances they are to be mounted in pairs. Sentries will normally be armed with a rifle or SMG. Tactical sentries are to be armed with a rifle or SMG. The rifle is the best weapon for a Sentry.*

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2. (a) Rifle – ***The bayonet is to be fixed and the magazine charged with 20 rounds***. No round may be fed into the breach until you are prepared to fire. Your safety catch is to be applied.

Challenging and Use of Force:

Para 14. If any person either **enters the wire** surrounding the Protected Place **or** is seen by you to be attempting to make his way through , over or under the wire or is acting in a manner to arouse suspicion of unauthorized presence, you are to act as follows.

- (a) Adopt the “on guard” position and challenge In a loud clear voice – “**HALT WHO GOES THERE** “ and “**BERHENTI SIAPA ITU**”
- (b) If the person fails to halt or stop his efforts to enter the Protected Place, challenge again. “**HALT OR I FIRE**”- “**BERHENTI ATAU SAYA TEMBAK**”
- (c) If the person fails to halt or stop his efforts to enter the Protected Place , adopt Instant Position, challenge again – “**STAND FAST I AM READY TO FIRE**” – **BERHENTI TEGAN SAYA SEDIA MANEMBAK**”
- (d) If the person still fails to halt or stop his efforts to enter the Protected Place you will using as little force as necessary , but including firing as a last resort , force him to halt and hold him covered with your weapon until help arrives .

Para 16 . When You May Fire

- (a) If the person fails to halt in his efforts to enter the Protected Place
- (b) If a person escapes after being arrested
- (c) If a person is in the act of destroying or damaging by fire or explosives or other violent means –
- (d) If you fear for your life and are being attacked from both inside or outside the Protected Place.**

The Rules of Engagement (ROE) were designed to cater for the two distinct roles of providing protective security to assets and personnel and in the event of an attack as outlined in the threat assessments by the Cts , subversive groups or individuals against the Air Base.

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The right to use force in self defence arises in response to a Hostile Act (attack) and or demonstrated Hostile Intent (Threat of imminent attack) ²⁶

5.0 Activation of the Ground Defence Operations Centre (GDOC) –

Given the above it comes down to the question as to whether or not RCB / QRF was called upon to react to a Threat against the Air Base. The GDOC was not activated until Security level Amber , although was skeleton manned at security level Green.

Monthly Reports were issued by the OC RAAF Butterworth which provide clear evidence that RCB / QRF were called upon to react to a Threat situation at which point in time the GDOC Base Defence Plan was activated which included other elements involved in the Base Defence Plan.

DEFENCE SECTION:

3. OPERATIONAL.

- a. GDOC Conference with IADS to discuss aspects of ADEX No 1/78 was held on 12APR78.
- b. Preparation of lectures, administrative planning and site reconnaissance by defence section staff for No 139 COMSURV Course took place during the period 1 - 24APR78.
- c. Increased Security Measures were adopted at Air Base Butterworth on 22 - 23APR78 for the anniversary of the MNLF April Movement, then again on the 30APR78 for the CPM Inauguration Day.

DEFENCE SECTION:

2. OPERATIONAL.

- a. A communications exercise to test SAR SSB Radios was made to Alor Star via Sungei Petani on 11 Mar 78.
- b. GDOC co-ordinated increased security measures from 1500 hours 10 Mar 78 to 1500 hours 19 Mar 78 during the visit of the F111 Flight from RAAF Amberley. A ground exercise was conducted concurrent to the ADEX 14/15 Mar 78 to test security and emergency procedures.
- c. The RAAF SPs, the SSPs and the Butterworth Rifle Coy carried out increased security on the Communist Anniversary 22 Mar 78.

²⁶ San Remo Handbook on Rules Of Engagement – International Institute of Humanitarian Law -2009 , P3 clause 9,

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Defence Section:

2. Operational.

- a. Defence Section and 'B' Coy 1RAR carried out increased security on the 1 and 2 Feb during the anniversary of Army Day of MNLA.
- b. A liaison visit was made to ALOR STAR by CO BSBUT, GPCAPT R.W. Bradford, SQNLDR G.W. Foskett and FLTLT R.J. Coopes on 3 Feb '78.
- c. 'B' Coy 1RAR carried out increased security on a reduced scale on 15 and 16 Feb during the anniversary of the split of the GPMRF from the GPM.
- d. Advance party from 'B' Coy 2/4 RAR arrived from Australia on the 17 Feb '78.
- e. A liaison visit was made to 6 MIB HQ at Sungei Petani on 21 Feb '78.

Defence Section

2. Operational

- a. Defence Section and 'A' Coy 3RAR carried out increased security on 25 November 1977 to cover a possible threat to Air Base Butterworth.
- b. 'A' Coy 3RAR marched out pm hours 29 November 1977.
- c. 'B' Coy 1RAR marched in pm hours 29 November 1977.
- d. Defence Section has been re-located from building 18 to building 56.

Defence Section

2. Operational

- a. Defence Section was on standby on the following two occasions:
 - (1) on 29 October 1977 a hijacked Vietnam Air DC3 passed through Malaysian Air Space and eventually landed in Singapore; and
 - (2) increased security on a lower level than normal on 30 October 1977 to cover a possible threat to Air Base Butterworth.

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Defence Section

2.

Operational

- a. Defence Section and A Coy 3RARCOYGP manned GDOC 26 September 1977 (Possible ground threat to Air Base Butterworth).
- b. FLTLT R.J. Coopes 061815GRDEF took over duties from FLTLT R.J. Matthews 0316508 GRDEF on 5 September 1977.

Defence Section

4.

Operational

- a. Defence Section and C Coy 3RARCOYGP manned GDOC 1 - 2 August 1977 (Possible ground threat Air Base Butterworth).
- b. FLTLT R.J. Coopes arrived on 16 August 1977 to take over Defence Officer's duties from FLTLT R.J. Matthews on 5 September 1977.
- c. A Coy 3RARCOYGP marched in p.m. hours on 24 August 1977.

Defence Section

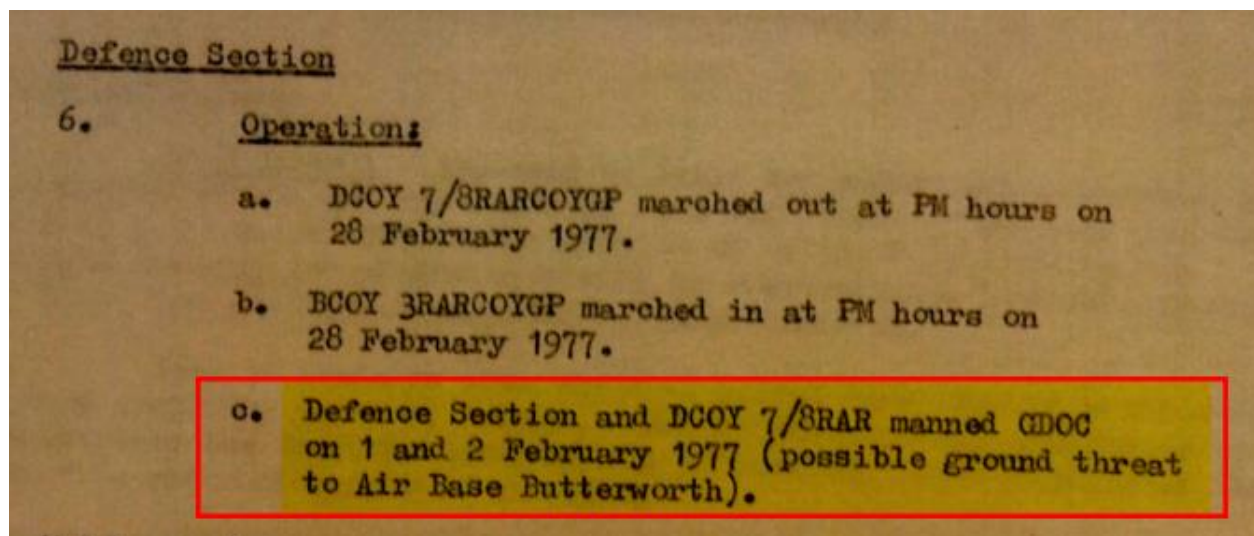
5.

Operational

- a. Defence Section and C COY 3RARCOYGP manned GDOC 20 July 1977 (possible ground threat Air Base Butterworth).
- b. A shared defence briefing was given to the DGM-AF AIRCDRE Parker on 25 July 1977.

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**House of Representatives -
Standing Committee On Petitions – Hearing October 2014**

In October 2014 representatives from the Rifle Company Review Group met with the Standing Committee on Petitions - a function of the House of Representatives.

Evidence of service was provided by members of the Group and in particular the following evidence was provided by Mr Gary Stone a former RCB Officer.

Page 1 – Mr Stone , *I am a chaplain in the Army at the moment .I served 25 years as an Infantry Officer and then 20 years as a chaplain. I have seven operational deployments overseas , four of them were warlike and three of them were peacekeeping. One of the warlike operations I deployed on was Rifle Company Butterworth.*

Page 2 – Mr Stone , *My service started in 1974 at Butterworth , I would like to offer some relativity to you. ----- I have been 29 times to Timor , I have served there operationally nine times. Definitely , the service that I had at Butterworth in 1974 – 75 was absolutely comparable to the service of the Air Force Defence Guards at Comoro Airport throughout that period.*

Throughout my infantry service I went on to be a Lieutenant Colonel. I had eight years at Lieutenant Colonel. I commanded a peacekeeping force in the Iran – Iraq war. I commanded the Army response to the Fiji Coup in 1987 ----- Specifically too, as Lieutenant Colonel in the ADF Command Centre , I was responsible for deploying the contingents that we sent to Cambodia, to Operation Desert Storm and to the Western Sahara. I had been in charge of Infantry Operations in Army headquarters ----

The bottom line for me is that in 1974 – 75 in Butterworth , every night we deployed armed patrols – with weapons and with rules of engagement who would have taken offensive action and killed people without any further orders every night of our operation. It was a warlike operation. I as Platoon Commander , felt grave responsibility that our soldiers were doing that every night. We knew from intelligence briefings we got weekly that there were communist terrorists throughout the area within kilometres of Butterworth Air Base. It was a Warlike operation.

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Case Study: - Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal ²⁷

Inquiry Into Unresolved Recognition Issues For Royal Australian Air Force Personnel Who Served At Ubon Between 1965 – 1968

I refer to the outcome of this hearing in which the Tribunal took into consideration the following points.

- *“The factual circumstances that existed in their totality and not just as appears on official documents”*
- *“The Tribunal considers that it is necessary to take into account the finding of the Mohr Review”*
- *“Did the Squadron face an objective danger? Did they incur danger? even though no danger eventuated in the sense that there were no actual combat engagements, they were armed for combat and had been told by those who knew more of the situation that danger did exist and they must hold themselves in readiness to meet it, not at some indeterminable time in the future, but at five minutes notice”* ²⁸

In the February 2000 Review of Service Entitlement Anomalies in Respect of South-East Asian Service 1955-1975 Justice Mohr addressed the matter of ‘objective danger’. Mohr stated:

“To establish whether or not an ‘objective danger’ existed at any given time, it is necessary to examine the facts as they existed at the time the danger was faced. Sometimes this will be a relatively simple question of fact. For example, where an armed enemy will be clearly proved to have been present. However, the matter cannot rest there.”

“On the assumption that we are dealing with rational people in a disciplined armed service (i.e. both the person perceiving the danger and those in authority at the time), then if a serviceman is told there is an enemy and he will be in danger, then that member will not only perceive danger, but to him or her it will be an objective danger on rational and reasonable grounds. If called upon, the member will face that objective danger”.

“The member’s experience of the objective danger at the time will not be removed by ‘hindsight’ showing that no actual enemy operations eventuated.”

“It seems to me that proving that a danger has been incurred is a matter to be undertaken irrespective of whether or not the danger is perceived at the time of the incident under consideration”.

²⁷ DHAAT – 2011- Inquiry into unresolved Issues for Royal Australian Air Force personnel who served at Ubon between 1965 to 1968

²⁸ DHAAT – 2011 – Page 17 - Clause 60

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*“The question must always be, **did an objective danger exist?** That question must be determined as an objective fact, existing at the relevant time, bearing in mind both the real state of affairs on the ground, and on the warnings given by those in authority when the task was assigned to the persons involved.”*

The Tribunal in this particular case considered the Ubon claim for warlike service against the principle laid down by Justice Mohr - the “Objective danger test”

Summary-

The primary elements that constitute Warlike Service are -

Mission- *To Protect operational assets , property and personnel within the perimeter of Air Base Butterworth by joint arrangement and mutual support.*

Rules Of Engagement: *The Infantry Company carried out two distinct roles whilst at Air Base Butterworth comprising both roles of Security and Defence as referenced in Section 3.9 of this submission. The Rules of Engagement were broad in application to cover both of these situations.*

Objective Danger / Incurred danger: *If a serviceman is told there is an enemy and he will be in danger, then that member will not only perceive danger, but to him or her it will be an objective danger on rational and reasonable grounds. If called upon, the member will face that objective danger”.*

The case for recognition for Rifle Company Butterworth for the period 1970 through to 1989 is worthy of consideration as Warlike Service in the context that there was a real and ever present threat which meets with the definition of Objective Danger all as evidenced in official Secret and Top Secret government records.

For and on behalf

Australian Rifle Company Group

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