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16 April, 2022

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## Submission to Inquiry - Mr John Graham Summers

### Part 1 – Name of Inquiry

**Name of Inquiry \***

Inquiry into Medical Recognition for Service with Rifle Company Butterworth

### Part 2 – About the Submitter

**Title or Rank \***

Mr

**Surname \***

Summers

**Given Names \***

John Graham

**Postal Address \***

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**Primary Contact Number \***

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**Secondary Contact Number**

[REDACTED]

**Is the Submission on behalf of an organisation? If yes, please provide details:**

No

### Part 3 – Desired outcome

**Provide a summary of your submission:**

Recognition of Warlike Service.

### Part 4 - Your submission and Supporting Documentation

DHAAT-Submission.pdf

### Part 5 – Consent and declaration

I consent to the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal making my submission publicly available.

I also consent to the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal:

- using information contained in my submission to conduct research;
- providing a copy of my submission to a person or organisation considered by the Tribunal to be appropriate; and

- providing a copy of my submission to a person or organisation the subject of adverse comment in the submission;
- using content in my submission in its report to Government.

**The Tribunal will decide which person or organisation is appropriate, and this may include:**

1. persons or organisations required to assist with the inquiry; and
2. persons or organisations with an interest in the inquiry.

✓ I declare that the information I have provided is correct.

**Name**

John Summers

**Date**

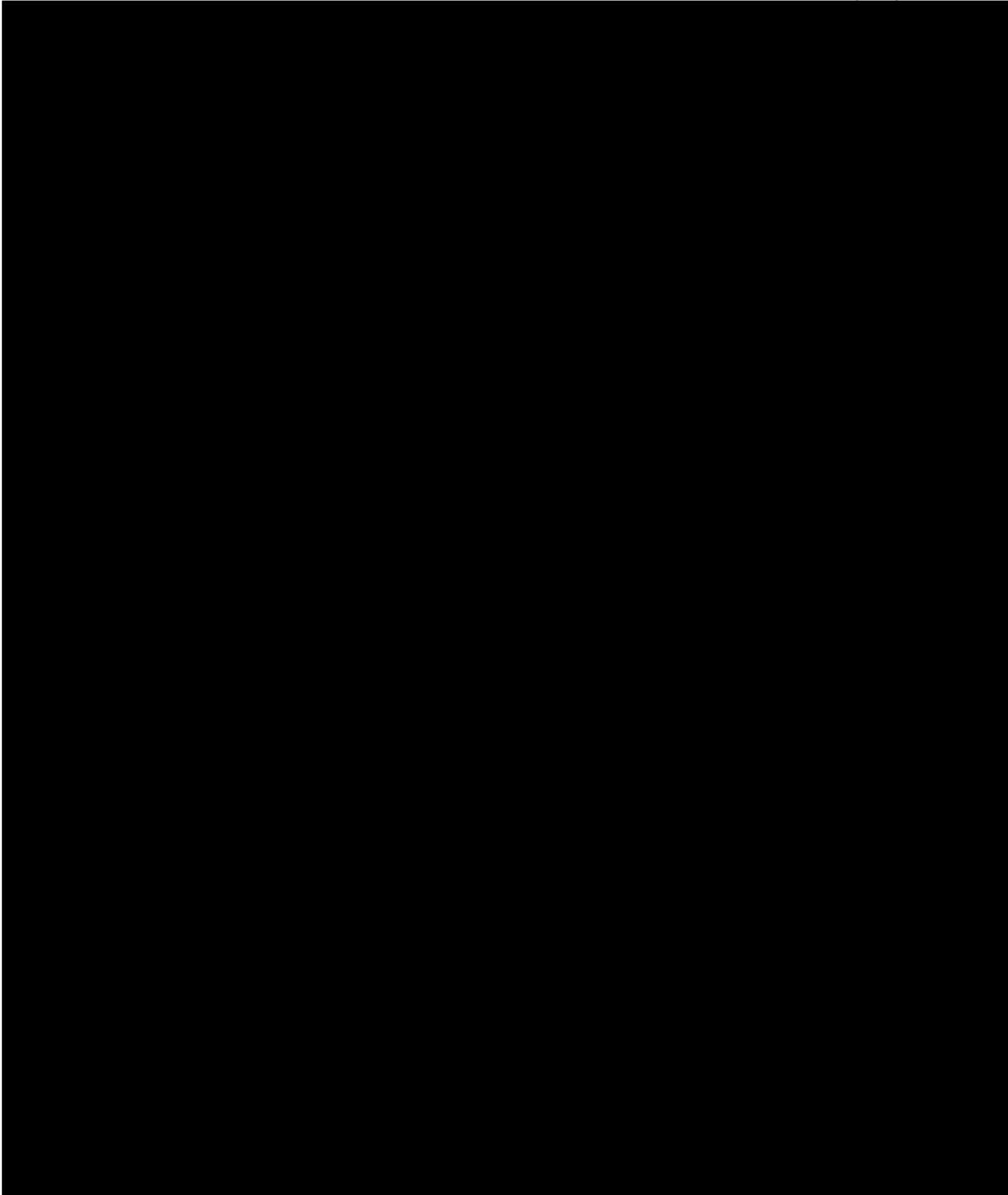
16/04/2022 /

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Summers". The signature is written in a cursive style with a period at the end.

Signed by Mr John Graham Summers  
Signed on: 16 April, 2022

# Signature Certificate

Document name: Submission to Inquiry - Mr John Graham Summers



## RCB SERVICE TESTIMONY

### RCB Butterworth Service Summary

I served with Pioneer Platoon, Support Company 6 RAR at Air Base Butterworth as a member of RCB from March to June 1985. At the time, I was 230988 Private John Summers. My specialist role was a Battalion Signaller, however on this deployment my primary task was a number 2 rifleman in a rifle section. My weapon was an SLR, while the rest of the company carried their normal small arms weapons as required for operational service. The company's heavy weapons were also readily available along with ammunition stored in a strong point in close proximity to our barracks. While on QRF duties, normal section weapons and live ammunition were issued and carried, this included the section machine guns. On callouts the QRF went to the loaded condition and boarded the QRF truck which was equipped with a searchlight. The QRF was activated several times during the course of this duty. When activated on callouts to various KP's on the airbase we were ready for contact with the enemy. We would cordon and search, and clear the KP. Before standing down we would conduct a check around runways and the perimeter fence of the airbase using the searchlight. When the QRF attended the mess for meals, it would take the QRF truck to the mess. The soldiers carried radio, webbing, weapons and ammunition to the mess, ready to respond immediately.

### Enemy

Prior to deploying from Australia we were briefed on entering an active war zone and the possibility of contact with enemy CT forces. We were told that we were deploying on war service by numerous SNCO's and Company Officers and told we were lucky because this would give us Qualifying Service. We learnt our ROE and practiced the verbal challenge (in Malay) that the ROE required prior to opening fire. We practiced cordon and search techniques and zeroed our weapons prior to deployment. We were DP1 and squared away with our personal admin prior to deployment. We again received briefings on the ground in Butterworth which included updates to the enemy situation.

### Danger

I had no doubt we were deployed to Air Base Butterworth to provide security and defend it with deadly force if that situation arose. Live ammunition was carried when on QRF and also by the 2 man roving piquit, where we patrolled our area of responsibility within the airbase from dusk to dawn 7 days a week. Prior to mounting duty as either a member of the QRF or the roving piquit our orders and the rules of engagement were read to us. It was clear that we had the right to use deadly force within the bounds of the ROE. Never in Australia while conducting a roving piquit or guard duty did we carry live ammunition or have ROE as part of our orders. The balance of the company's weapons were stored along with the front line of ammunition in a strong point which was manned 24/7 by a soldier. This facility was locked from the inside only, with no means to open it externally.

It is interesting to note that on my numerous other overseas deployments since Butterworth, I was never issued live ammunition, briefed on ROE, nor did I conduct armed QRF duties or armed roving piquits whilst on a military base in a foreign country. So what made Butterworth so special, that we had live ammunition and conducted the activities of an active security/defence force there, whereas we could not do so anywhere else, including Australia.

Additionally when the company moved in a bus convey to a training area, live ammunition was distributed to us, we were told it was in case of an ambush by CT's. We would have live ammunition to be able to defend ourselves.

Returning to base from Penang was at times potentially hazardous. The Malaysian Sentries posted at the main entrance were young and sometimes acted aggressively toward us. Pointing the rifles at us and demanding identification. I believe they were generally scared and I was always careful to obey their orders to prevent any escalation.



### **Expectation of Casualties**

Given the pre deployment orders and enemy briefings I received, I had an expectation that we could likely engage with an armed enemy CT group or individuals and that there may be casualties as a result of that engagement.

### **Training with the Malaysians**

We conducted one training exercise with the Malaysian Army. I was injured and medivaced to Kuantan Hospital. I felt alone, vulnerable, very suspicious of everyone and everything around me. My RSO visited me later and handed over a 9mm pistol. Prior to that I had my bayonet and machete at my bedhead within easy reach. As to my thoughts on our presence in Malaysia being to do military training, I think not. I believe we were primarily a force to be used as defence and security of Australians and Australian assets at Air Base Butterworth. Training was a secondary consideration.

### **Actual Tasks**

My company was a Support Company of 6RAR comprising 5 platoons of specialist trained soldiers, Signals, Mortars, DFSW/Anti Armour, Pioneers and Recon platoons. However SPT Company didn't deploy to Malaysia and operate in those Platoon formations. SPT Company instead reconfigured into a traditional Rifle Company formation 3 Platoons, SPT Section and CHQ, to meet the requirements of our task to provide the fighting force needed to provide security and protection for Australian personnel and assets at Butterworth Air Base from a known hostile force.

### **Additional Deployments to RCB**

I had another opportunity to deploy to RCB this time from November 1989 to March 1990 with B Company 6RAR. I was then the section commander of 6 Section, 5 Platoon. The contrast between my previous deployment in 1985 and this one couldn't be greater. No warning of war service, no briefings on the enemy, no additional training was conducted and if I remember correctly we didn't zero weapons prior to deployment. In Malaysia there was no QRF, no roving piquits, no ROE. No live ammunition carried on base. I wonder why the change? Well I don't really because we know the Communist leader had entered into peace talks and signed a peace treaty in early December 1989. The need for the aforementioned armed QRF, piquits and the ROE had ended with that peace deal. There couldn't be a greater example of a role change at Air Base Butterworth, than what I experienced between my two deployments, 1985 and 1989/90.

I am prepared to give this and possible further oral evidence if given the opportunity to appear before an independent inquiry.

**Name:** John Summers

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**Telephone:** [REDACTED]

