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4 May, 2022

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## Submission to Inquiry - MR PHILLIP MAXWELL SMAILES

### Part 1 – Name of Inquiry

**Name of Inquiry \***

RIFLE COMPANY BUTTERWORTH - SUBMISSION FOR WARLIKE SERVICE/ACTIVE SERVICE

### Part 2 – About the Submitter

**Title or Rank \***

MR

**Surname \***

SMAILES

**Given Names \***

PHILLIP MAXWELL

**Postal Address \***

[REDACTED]

**Email Address: \***

[REDACTED]

**Primary Contact Number \***

[REDACTED]

**Secondary Contact Number**

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

RIFLE COMPANY BUTTERWORTH SUBMISSION FOR RECOGNITION OF ACTIVE SERVICE

### Part 3 – Desired outcome

**Provide a summary of your submission:**

MY SERVICE WITH RIFLE COMPANY BUTTERWORTH DURING THE MALAYSIAN COMMUNIST TERRORIST EMERGENCY IN MY THREE DEPLOYMENTS 1974, 1975 AND 1978.

### Part 4 - Your submission and Supporting Documentation

File Attached: SUBMISSION-TO-RCB.docx

### 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**

PHILLIP M SMAILES

Date

04/05/2022 /

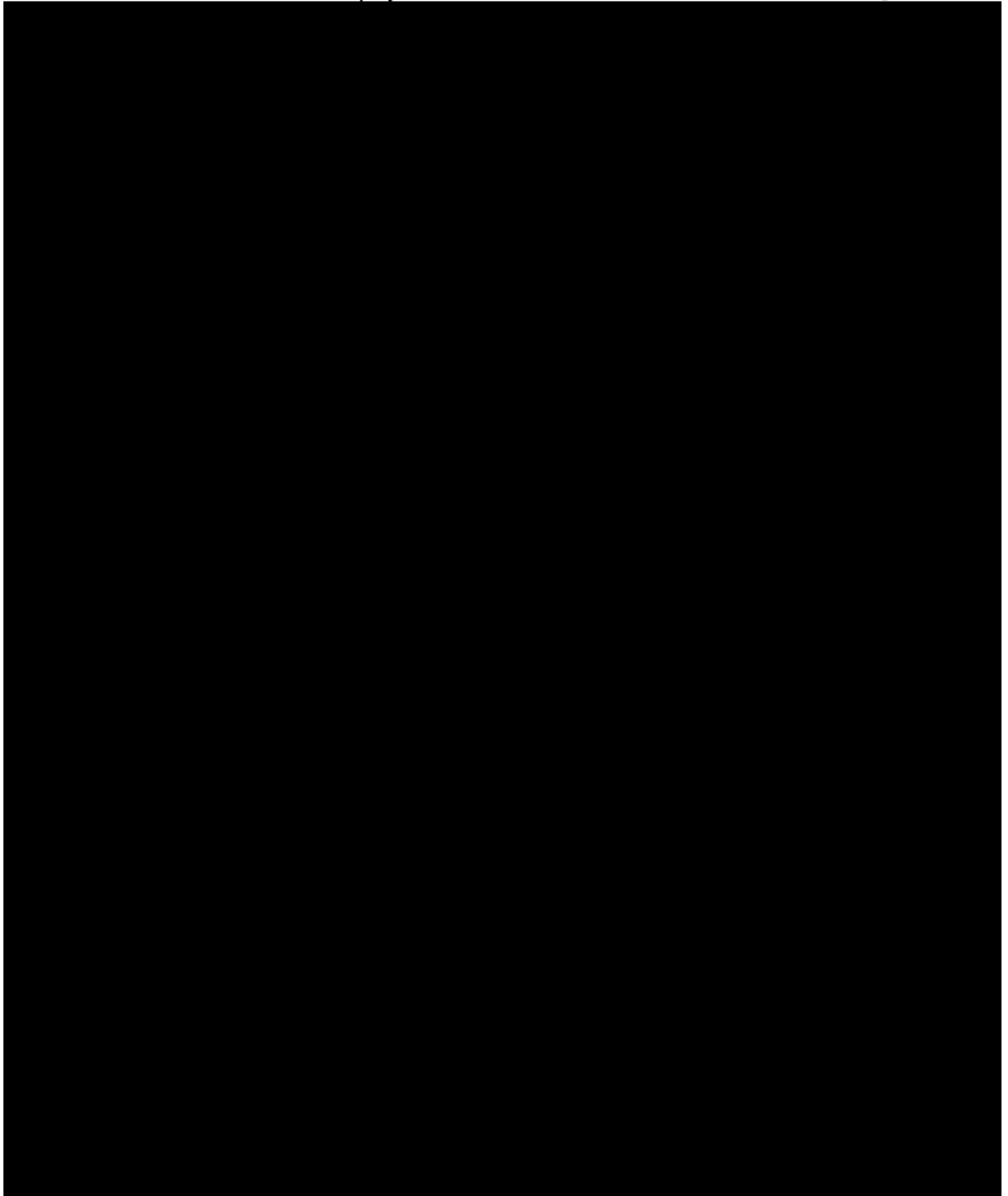
MR PHILLIP  
MAXWELL  
SMAILES

Signed by MR PHILLIP MAXWELL SMAILES

Signed on: 4 May, 2022

# Signature Certificate

Document name: Submission to Inquiry - MR PHILLIP MAXWELL SMAILES



## SUBMISSION TO DEFENCE HONOURS AND AWARDS – RIFLE COMPANY BUTTERWORTH

Statement by:

223524 Warrant Officer Class Two, Phillip Smailes, (Retired)  
Member of 2<sup>nd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> Battalion The Royal Australian Regiment.  
March 1974 to December 1983.

1. I was deployed as a member of C Coy 2<sup>nd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (2/4 RAR) from 4 September – 2 December 1974 for security duties at the combined Australian and Malaysian Air Force Base, Air Base Butterworth, as a member of Rifle Company Butterworth. My position was a rifleman in 9 Platoon and further deployment with A Company 2/4 RAR for the period 11 March to 3 June 1975, my position then was the Section Machine Gunner of 1 Section 1 Pl A Coy, and a further deployment with A Coy 2/4 RAR from 1 March to 30 May 1978, my position then was Section Commander of 1 Section 1 Platoon.

2. During these deployments I carried out the duties of a rifleman, machine gunner, and later as Section Commander, in an infantry rifle section, with much training and rehearsal of infantry minor tactics prior to deployment to provide ongoing security as the quick reaction force (QRF) to maintain the security of Air Base Butterworth, with the emphasis on protecting Australian assets there from the Communist Terrorists threat that was very active at this time. In my opinion, these deployments as Rifle Company Butterworth crossed the threshold into active service due to this continual Communist Terrorist threat.

3. Prior to deployment to Butterworth, as a Townsville Battalion, we exercised extensively in close country (jungle terrain) to sharpen our skills with infantry minor tactics. Many of our platoon members were Vietnam Veterans then, which hastened our readiness for the task at Butterworth. Our readiness required that the Company achieve Draft Priority1, (DPI checks were the bane of the soldier!) the same state of readiness for troops deployed to Vietnam, further indication that there was a communist terrorist threat in SE Asia at this time.

4. On deployment to Butterworth, we attended many briefings on the layout of the Base and, importantly, the location of Vital Points (VP's) that were required to be protected. There were many, each numbered on our Air Base Maps, they were vital points necessary for the operation of the Air Base.

5. On completion of airbase familiarization by vehicle on day one, the second day of deployment at Air Base Butterworth involved Iroquois helicopter familiarization. Sections were emplaned onto the chopper close to our barracks location and flown to many Vital Points (VP) on a leap frog basis throughout the airbase.

6. Our Company area also included a secure building (we referred to it as the Armscote) where the Company weapons and first line ammunition was stored including heavy weapons such as 66mm Light Anti-Armour Weapon, and Karl Gustav 84mm medium anti-armour weapon. Soldiers' individual weapons were also stored in this building. The building was manned 24 hours a day by a soldier on piquet, locked inside the building for the 24-hour period.

7. The QRF room, located in the Headquarters building, included a small alcove where telephones and radio communications were monitored. A military trunk containing first line ammunition, was held in the QRF room which consisted of 800 x 7.62mm belt linked rounds for the M60 Machine Gun and 60 rounds each of either 7.62mm rounds for the SLR Rifles, and 100 rounds for the M16 rifle. Smoke grenades and illumination parachute flares were also carried on the QRF Truck, together with a rather large Search light mounted on the truck to illuminate the night.

7. Each day a rifle Section (10) men were tasked as the Quick Reaction Force (QRF) on a 24-hour shift, attending Platoon Training throughout the day, then manning the Quick Reaction Force Ready Room. We were provided briefings from Platoon Commanders and Duty Officers each day on any Perceived Threat. Each night, the QRF were reacted to a callout to attend a Vital Point (VP), it was not disclosed if there was an actual threat or not at that time. This kept us on our toes on the likelihood of encountering intruders or indeed communist terrorists.

8. Section members were issued cards stating the Rules of Engagement, including the challenge to *Stop or I will Fire*, in both English and Malaysian, said three times. All members memorised this challenge. Copies of the Rules of Engagement were presented to each QRF Section on commencement of night duty. As a section commander, the Rules of Engagement were familiarized at commencement of each duty with the QRF Section.

9. On call out by the Duty Officer, in communication with RAAF operations room, the drill was to obtain a magazine of live ammunition for each SLR and M16, the feed end of the magazine was taped using black tape, making the magazine inoperable if accidentally fitted to the weapon. The Gun Group obtained a 100 round belt and was carried by the Gun No2.

10. At an undisclosed time during the night period, each QRF Section was called out by the Duty Officer to attend to a particular VP, in the shortest time possible time utilizing the QRF vehicle, one member of the Section manning the Search light on the vehicle. Once in the vicinity, the drill was that the Section would dismount from the truck, go to ground in extended line formation, usually gun group to the right, rifle group on the left of the truck and section commander in centre. We then used the searchlight assess the situation of any intruders. We would then move through the VP using dry fire and movement, to clear the VP of any Communist Terrorist threat or intruders that could be hiding in the shadows. Many of these VP's were close to the perimeter fence, several sections had encounters where the wire fence had been cut, indicating possible incursion into the airbase. This was a very usual occurrence.

11. On my deployment to RCB as a member of A Coy 2/4 RAR from 1 March – 30 May 1978, my position then was as Section Commander. My previous two deployments gave me much experience on the task and requirements of protecting Butterworth Air Base. We knew at this time that the Malaysian Airforce were flying sorties to attack and destroy the Communist Terrorists, body bags were seen to be removed from Malaysian aircraft, and this is well documented now. There was always the thought, as a Section Commander, that the QRF call out was operational rather than a Drill. As a Section Commander I had much responsibility to my men to ensure that our training was at the topmost level in the event of insurgents or belligerents being encountered during a QRF Callout.

12. On both my first and second deployments, I noted, and it was plain to see, that the Mirage aircraft lines were very exposed to belligerents who may attack with rockets and mortars. Subsequently, on my return deployment in 1978, I noted that revetment walls were constructed to provide blast protection to the aircraft. One of many upgrades to

security in these early to mid-years of the 70's. The Mirage lines were patrolled by armed RAAF dog handlers in off duty hours.

13. Moving on to 30th March 1975, there was much media reporting of the intending victory by North Vietnamese forces and the impending fall of the Capital of South Vietnam, Saigon. Air Base Butterworth security was increased during this time due to the possible Communist Terrorist threat to the airbase.

14. The Australian Government of the day was urged to provide humanitarian airlifts at the request of Saigon to assist the American evacuation of thousands of refugees. This was achieved by raising Detachment S, which consisted of seven (7) Hercules (C130 aircraft) from Richmond, arriving Butterworth 31 March 1975.

15. However, prior to the arrival of these aircraft from Richmond, there was a Hercules in South East Asia that was diverted to Butterworth and was subsequently used as the advanced element of Detachment S.

16. Early morning on Sunday 30th March 1975, as a member of 1 Platoon, A Coy 2/4 RAR, (in fact the whole Company), we were placed on ready reaction force and attended orders groups (O Group) and subsequent battle preparation for deployment to Vietnam to provide security to Detachment S aircraft, and to the Australian Embassy assets in Saigon.

17. At this time Charlie Company, C Coy 2/4 RAR were on exercise in Singapore and were warned for immediate deployment to Butterworth to relieve A Coy 2/4 RAR on their intending deployment to Vietnam in support of Detachment S. Charlie Company's deployment to Singapore required DP1, (Draft Priority 1), that is, with all equipment necessary to be deployed overseas.

18. 1 Section 1 Platoon A Coy 2/4 RAR, under command of CPL J R Smith, of which I was the Machine Gunner of this Section, were tasked as the infantry advanced element of Detachment S and were to depart on the C130 Hercules (C130-160) aircraft undergoing pre-flight checks and loading on the Tarmac at Butterworth. The remainder of 1 Platoon were to follow up later that day.

19. My recollection of our mission was to proceed to the Australian Embassy. We were issued with front line ammunition with much reserve ammunition, rations and other necessary equipment. My Section Commander, CPL Smith, was issued with a large amount of Vietnamese and US currency to 'get us by' in case of unforeseen circumstances. Loaded in the aircraft was a yellow RAAF VW kombi van for our Sections use on the ground at Saigon. (See Pics attached). This kombi was subsequently used by RAAF Ground Defence Guards (ADG's) and was left on the ground at Tan Son Nhut (Saigon Airport) on the withdrawal of Detachment S some weeks later.

20. C130 – 160 departed Butterworth with a detachment from Rifle Company Butterworth, 1 Sect 1 Pl A Coy 2/4 RAR, at 0900 hrs on Sunday 30 March 1975 bound for Tan Son Nhut. Whilst on approach to Saigon Airport some minutes prior to touching down, the aircraft commander received radio communication to abort the mission and was called back to Butterworth.

21. Four RAAF ADG's later that day accompanied this advanced element aircraft of Detachment S to Tan Son Nhut. Their orders were to protect the Embassy staff and Australian embassy people travelling between there and the airport and to prevent "unauthorised" people boarding RAAF aircraft. They were each armed with a 9mm pistol.

22. This is the same task given to 1 Section 1 Platoon A Coy 2/4 RAR at RCB who deployed to Saigon in the aborted flight. Detachment S went onto evacuate hundreds of refugees and orphans, many of which were the product of foreign soldiers and Vietnamese mothers.

22. In view of the then circumstances of this deployment, having been warned for active service as an element of Detachment S, and deployment to Vietnam by detailed immediate local orders from the Commander of Airbase Butterworth, on advice from Army Command Headquarters in Australia, and the tasking on the day for immediate battle preparation and readiness as the quick reaction force, I believe that through these actions, 1 Section, 1 Platoon A company 2/4 RAR, and indeed all of A Coy 2/4 RAR, being warned for deployment to Vietnam, this one action, crossed the threshold into active service whilst serving as Rifle Company Butterworth.

23. The 4 ADG's who accompanied future flights to Vietnam were awarded the AASM for their services.

24. This deployment is further evidence that Rifle Company Butterworth was Active Service. A Coy 2/4 RAR were part of it, on this deployment, we crossed the threshold into Active Service.

25. I was a member of 1 Section, 1 Platoon A Company 2/4 RAR deployed on the flight to Vietnam. I took the photographs attached from within the aircraft. My AAB 83 Service Record indicates my Rifle Company Butterworth deployment.

26. I take this opportunity to make some final comments;

27. In my three deployments as a member of Rifle Company Butterworth, at no time did each 2/4 RAR Company that I was a member of, or any elements of these Companies, train with Malaysian Forces, they were too busy fighting communist terrorists in peninsular Malaysia.

28. When we deployed off base to attend training at several rifle ranges in the vicinity of Butterworth, we were reminded and briefed on the likely threat and danger of communist terrorist activity in the area. We always maintained a watchful eye when travelling in a military convoy in Malaysia.

29. In essence, I believe that our presence as Rifle Company Butterworth acted as a deterrent to the Communist Terrorists, however, there were incidents over the many years of RCB presence at Butterworth, that indicated terrorist activity and sabotage to Airbase Butterworth equipment and infrastructure from time to time.

I look forward to wearing my Australian Active Service Medal.

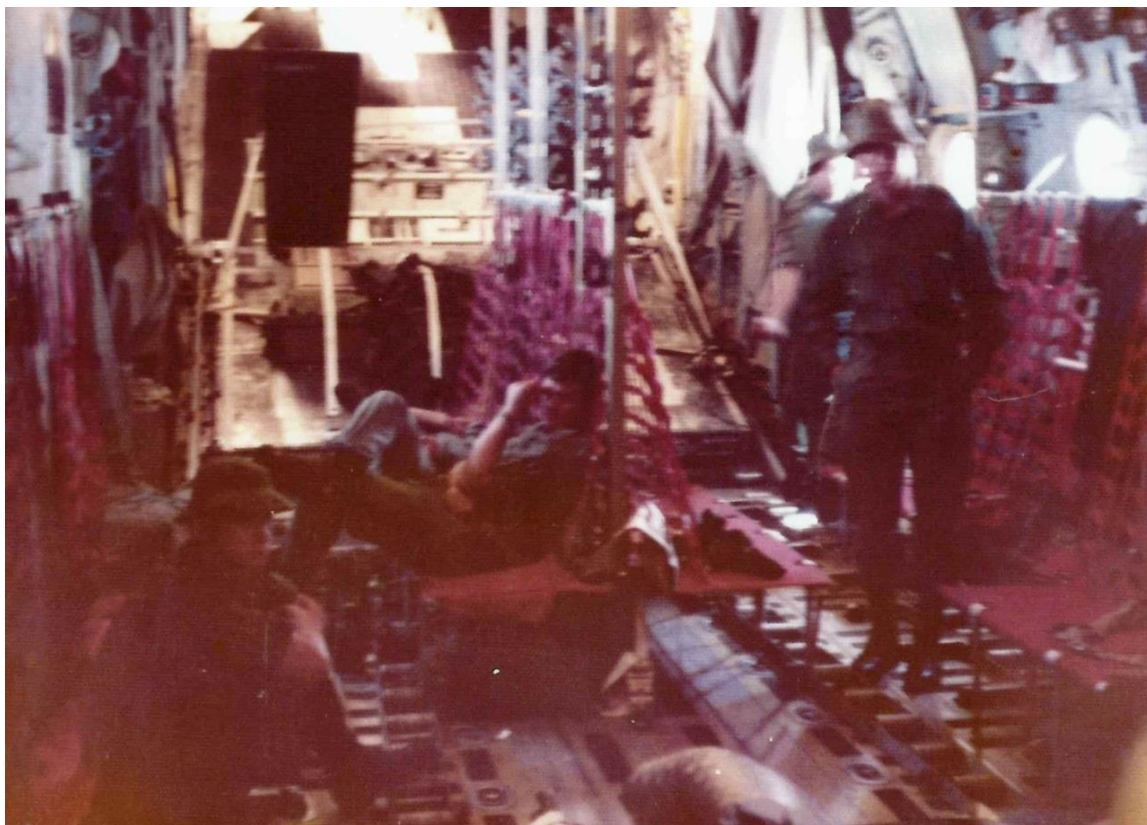
Kind Regards

Phillip Smailes  
Member of 2nd/4th Battalion  
The Royal Australian Regiment.  
March 1974 to December 1983

28 April 2022



PIC OF INTERIOR OF AIRCRAFT LOOKING AFT. CPL J R SMITH SEATED IN CENTRE, OTHER MEMBERS OF 1 PL A COY 2/4 RAR- DETACHMENT S MISSION TO SAIGON.



Our Kombi Bus for use in Saigon.

