

Document ID: 812527ab441782ed11f1ca7f8a8f81101bd9d112

9 May, 2022

Signed On : <https://defence-honours-tribunal.gov.au>

Submission to Inquiry - Mr Mark FULCHER

Part 1 – Name of Inquiry

Name of Inquiry *

Inquiry into medallic recognition for service with Rifle Company Butterworth

Part 2 – About the Submitter

Title or Rank *

Mr

Surname *

FULCHER

Given Names *

Mark

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:

Part 3 – Desired outcome

Provide a summary of your submission:

This submission is a summary of my personal recollections of my deployment with A Coy, 3 RAR to Airbase Butterworth, MALAYSIA in 1982. This submission should be read in conjunction with the evidentiary documents submitted by the Rifle Company Butterworth Review Group (RCBRG) and act as corroboration to that submission. The probative value of my submission, along with others, as well as the documentary evidence of the RCBRG should leave the tribunal in no doubt the Australian Rifle Company was deployed on warlike operations during the Second Malaysian Emergency period of 1970 to 1989.

Part 4 - Your submission and Supporting Documentation

File Attached: Mark-FULCHER-Butterworth-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

Mark FULCHER

Date

09/05/2022 /

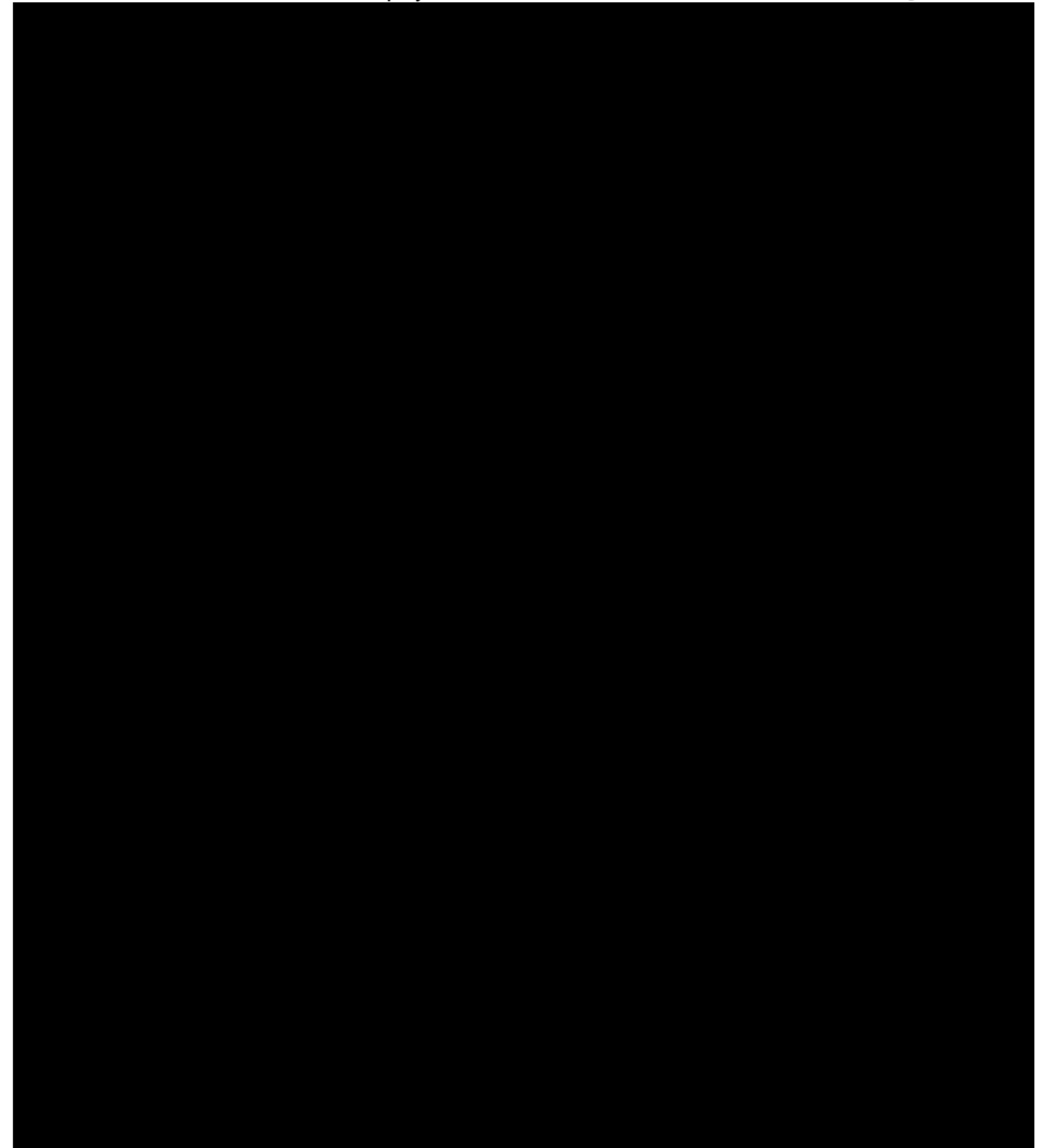
Mr Mark FULCHER

Signed by Mr Mark FULCHER

Signed on: 9 May, 2022

Signature Certificate

Document name: Submission to Inquiry - Mr Mark FULCHER



SERVICE TESTIMONY

RMAF Base Butterworth Service Summary

I served as 416832 Private Mark FULCHER at Air Base Butterworth, between 31 August and 8 December 1982 with 1 Platoon, A Company, 3 RAR. I was 19 years old and a member of the Australian Rifle Company deployed to defend the Australian assets, RAAF personnel and families located there. My primary task was as a rifleman in a rifle section. I was regularly assigned with my section to Quick Reaction Force (QRF) duties. Section weapons were carried by the QRF and live ammunition was issued by the section commander on mounting. Although one section was on active QRF duties (QRF 1), the remainder of the platoon was also on call and remained on base in a state of readiness (QRF 2 & 3). Each platoon rotated through the QRF cycle and it was maintained at all times during my deployment. The company was brought up to full strength (reinforced) for the deployment, including 4 rifle platoons instead of the usual 3, company headquarters, extra medics, transport section, cooks, storemen and armourers.

Enemy

Prior to deployment the company received regular briefings and training that concentrated on the threat of Communist Terrorists (CT) on the Malay Peninsula. We were left with no doubt the CT were a threat to the Australian assets, RAAF personnel and families and their defence was our primary reason for deploying. On arrival at Airbase Butterworth we were again briefed on the CT threat and given a tour of the Key Points (KP) that required defending should the need arise. We were also briefed on the likely enemy approach through the kampongs surrounding the eastern and southern perimeter fence. As a Private soldier I was well aware Airbase Butterworth was a forward base used by the Malaysian Armed Forces in their conflict with the CT. This was highlighted by the fighter aircraft that would take off fully loaded with ordinance and return having expended their bombloads.

Danger

There was no doubt in my mind that a danger did exist at the time of my deployment to Airbase Butterworth. The continual briefings the company received before and during the deployment outlined the threat that existed due to not only the CT's, but also the numerous booby traps they utilised in the field. We were briefed on the booby traps and the signs the CT would use to indicate their location. Our Rules of Engagement (ROE) and Orders for Opening Fire (OFOF) were clear and precise; they were reinforced at all times and particularly at the commencement of every QRF cycle. An armscote within the company lines containing all company weapons and live ammunition was manned 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for the duration of the deployment. One of the daily tasks of the QRF was to traverse the entirety of the Airbase perimeter fence at dawn and dusk (most likely time of an enemy attack) looking for any breaches in the wire that could precede a CT incursion. This was completed on the back of an open truck fitted with a spotlight, while the section carried section weapons, including the M60 general purpose machine gun, loaded with live ammunition.

Expectation of Casualties

Pre-deployment training provided to the company included battle casualty first aid and briefings that specified casualties could occur. In Australia there was a single medic attached to a rifle company, while on deployment to Airbase Butterworth A Company had three. The CT threat

was omnipresent for the company and this was accentuated when the Malaysian battle casualties were brought in by helicopter to the Airbase hospital.

Training with the Malaysians

The primary task of the Australian Rifle Company at Butterworth Airbase was to defend the Australian Assets, RAAF personnel and families located there; a secondary task was to conduct 'training' with the Malaysian Armed Forces. Whilst deployed I participated in what was termed 'training' with the Malaysian Armed Forces on two occasions. The first was an exercise on base to test out the 'Five Power Defence Arrangements' relative to the airpower of the base. During this 'exercise' my section was tasked to secure a radio transmission tower and building on the eastern side of the base, my recollection was that it was outside the main perimeter fence of the base. Again we were armed with section weapons and live ammunition, we remained in place in what amounted to an observation post for two days. The second 'exercise' I participated in was with 6 Battalion Royal Malay Regiment. The two week 'exercise' was in the north of the country; Malaysian soldiers were embedded with Australian sections and vice versa. Before this 'exercise' each soldier was issued with a magazine of live rounds and each M60 GPMG was issued with 100 rounds of live link ammunition. We were briefed on the situation we were going into and the circumstance of the Malaysian operational cycle. It was explained to us the Malaysians had three brigades and at any one time there was one brigade on operations against the CT, one brigade was on leave after having completed their operations phase and one brigade was on lead-up training to return to the operations phase after completing their leave. A Company (minus 4 Platoon who remained at Airbase Butterworth to continue QRF duties) was attached to 6 Battalion during their lead-up training phase. Although this phase was deemed lead-up training, the area we were patrolling and conducting our training in was actually the rear echelon to the operational brigade so as 6 RMR was able to deploy and assist if necessary. We were provided with a code word that if heard over the radio would initiate a switch from 'training' to operations, hence the live ammunition that we were issued. The live ammunition was for the purpose of extricating ourselves from any combat situation we found ourselves in; this was specifically stated during briefings. During the exercise my section was selected to move forward of the Battalion and provide an overnight listening post, we were transported to the edge of a swamp by Malaysian armoured vehicles and then moved into our position for the night. We were provided with a starlight night vision scope for the task (the only time I had ever seen one during my time in the regular army). While in the listening post I observed the two Malaysian soldiers embedded with my section appeared to be extremely nervous, when I asked them why, they replied with "CT, CT" and indicated to our front. They told me we were in an active CT area and that is why they were nervous. I knew at that point this 'exercise' was like nothing I had ever experienced in Australia.

Actual tasks

The primary task of the Australian Rifle Company at Butterworth Airbase was to defend the Australian Assets, RAAF personnel and families located there. To that end I regularly performed QRF duties, during which we were called out to a KP twice a night, every night and never knew if it was a real incursion or not. The routine when called out would be to search the area and secure the KP. On one occasion when my section were called out to a KP we were deployed in extended line on arrival, ordered to the weapon readiness state of 'Action' and commenced to dry fire and move towards the fence line in pursuit of a male that exited through a hole in the perimeter fence. There is no doubt in my mind the service I provided as part of

the Australian Rifle Company at Butterworth was in support of the Malaysian Armed Forces during their second insurgency war.

I am prepared to give oral evidence if required to appear before an independent inquiry.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Fulcher', with a stylized, cursive script.

Name: Mark FULCHER

Email: [REDACTED]

Telephone: [REDACTED]

09 May 2022