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12 May, 2022

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Submission to Inquiry - Mr Raymond 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 *

Raymond

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:

No

Part 3 – Desired outcome

Provide a summary of your submission:

That service at Butterworth between 1970 and 1989 be classified as warlike service under the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986. That service at Butterworth between 1970 and 1989 be awarded with the AASM with clasp Malaysia.

Part 4 - Your submission and Supporting Documentation

File Attached: Ray-Fulcher-submission.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

Raymond Fulcher

Date

12/05/2022 /

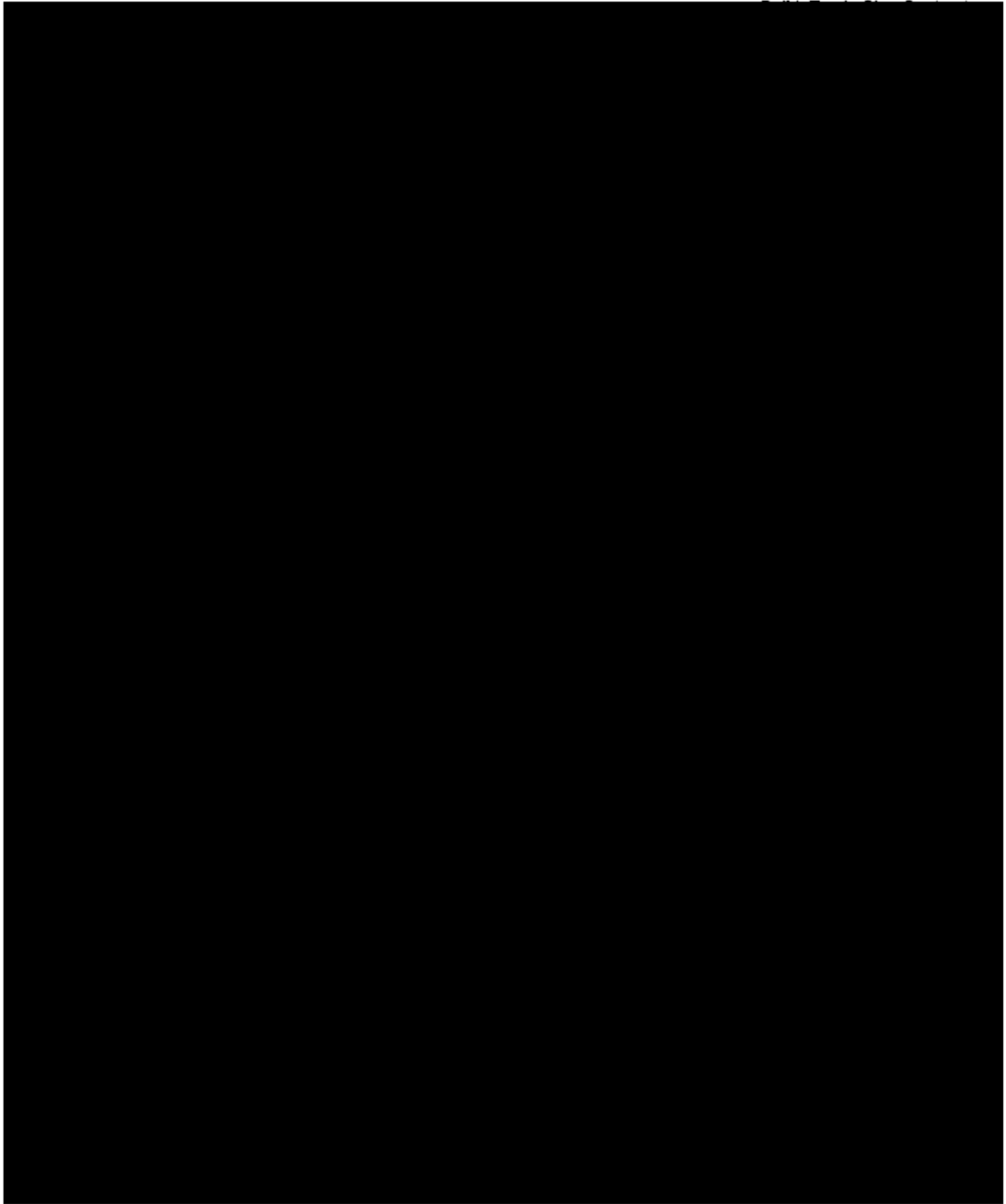
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Fulcher', written in a cursive style.

Signed by Mr Raymond Fulcher

Signed on: 12 May, 2022

Signature Certificate

Document name: Submission to Inquiry - Mr Raymond Fulcher



Submission to DHAAT Inquiry into Medallic Recognition for Service with Rifle Company Butterworth

**Submission by Raymond Fulcher
12 May 2022**

Rifle Company Butterworth Service Summary

I served with C Company 2/4 RAR at Air Base Butterworth as a member of an RCB rotation 14 February – 23 May 1979. At the time, I was 425088 Private Raymond Fulcher. I was a member of the reconnaissance platoon of 2/4 RAR and attached to a rifle section as a rifleman for the tour. My weapon was an SLR while the rest of the company carried their normal small arms weapons required for operational service, GPMG M60, M16, M203 etc. The company's heavy weapons were also readily available along with ammunition on base. While on QRF duties front line ammunition for all weapons was always carried. Front line ammunition is the ammunition required to be carried by troops in a combat situation.

Enemy

Prior to departure to Butterworth we were briefed on the nature of the role being to protect RAAF assets, personnel, families and the base due to an ongoing insurgency. We were also required to complete a will.

On arrival at Butterworth we were briefed as a company on the presence and threat of communist terrorists in the vicinity of the base, of the potential threat and our role in guarding aircraft and vital points. We were advised that the communist terrorists (CT) had acquired mortars and that these posed a significant risk to the base.

Danger

Given the briefings we received of the proximity of the communists, the carriage of live ammunition on patrol and QRF reactions that we were never told were a drill until we had cleared a vital point, the sense of danger from the enemy was very real. My platoon sergeant, "Johnno" Johnston (a Vietnam vet), told us that we must stay on our toes as we never knew when we might be hit. Our rules of engagement (ROE) made it clear that we could use lethal force in defence of the base, the vital points in particular, and ourselves.

On a callout of the QRF, we would all mount the truck and head to the area of the callout, usually a vital point. Close to the vital point we were ordered either dismount right or dismount left. By this stage our weapons were in the action state, meaning only switching the safety catch was necessary to fire the weapon. We deployed in a line, either left or right of the truck, and commenced to dry fire and move through the objective. Fire and movement is the method used to move aggressively against an enemy where one part of the section moves while another group fires at the enemy. The term 'covering fire' from American movies encapsulates the tactic. Dry fire and movement is used when you suspect an enemy presence but have not yet positively identified its presence. Rather than waste ammunition, the stationary group aims in the suspected direction of the enemy but does not fire until an enemy is identified. That could be either by seeing enemy or being fired upon. Given that these callouts were never presented as a practice, that we had live ammunition and knew of the CT threat, every callout we had to anticipate that we *could* end up in a firefight.

One night my section was tasked with guarding a Hercules transport plane that had been loaded with small arms being shipped back to Australia the next day. Our platoon commander briefed us that we were to guard the plane all night under our normal ROE. He said that the

plane was a prime target for the communists as the small arms would be a boon to them if they could be captured.

An hour or so before dawn I saw a figure approaching the plane out of the darkness. I challenged the person in the manner prescribed in our ROE but the figure did not stop. I brought my rifle to instant (rifle in the shoulder, safety off) and warned the person, in English, "Stop, I am ready to fire". It was at that point that I realized that the figure was an RAAF flight officer and made my weapon safe.

Expectation of Casualties

Prior to departing Australia we had to be at DP1, with no medical or fitness issues, and to a high standard of training ready for operational deployment. As part of that we underwent refresher training in combat first aid. Due to our pre-deployment briefings it was clear that we could be facing a real need for the refresher training. This was reinforced by the Vietnam vets amongst us who went through the same prior to departure to Vietnam, and by other diggers who had been on exercise overseas in other allied countries yet had never had to undergo the same refresher training or fitness scrutiny prior to departure.

In conversation with a Malaysian helicopter crew in country they made it clear that the enemy was very capable of inflicting damage almost anywhere in the country.

On a QRF clearing patrol one morning (to check for signs of incursions onto the base along the perimeter wire) we witnessed helicopters unloading dead and injured MAF soldiers in the Malaysian's flight area.

Training with the Malaysians

Training with the Malaysians was never even discussed. What training we did was either normal Company training or training in QRF duties or counter penetration drills. We understood that our main role related to defending the base and, other than platoon training and a one week jungle exercise each platoon did in turn, our training was largely focussed on this goal.

Actual tasks

I believed, and still do, that our deployment to Butterworth was primarily to defend the base, vital points, etc from a communist terrorist threat. To that end we were brought up to DP1, passed fitness tests and refreshed our training prior to departure, were briefed on the enemy threat, carried live ammunition whilst on QRF or when patrolling the base perimeter or on exercise outside the base and were repeatedly reacted to what could have been genuine incursions as far as we knew.

I am prepared to give this and possible further oral evidence if given the opportunity to appear before the inquiry (personally or by zoom or phone).

Raymond Fulcher

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