

Document ID: 5a5c2d835cd8782b8f710192d3b95fca54ebd8fd

27 May, 2022

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Submission to Inquiry - Mr Leslie James Ray

Part 1 – Name of Inquiry

Name of Inquiry *

medallic recognition for service with Rifle Company Butterworth.

Part 2 – About the Submitter

Title or Rank *

Mr

Surname *

Ray

Given Names *

Leslie James

Postal Address *

[REDACTED]

Email Address: *

[REDACTED]

Primary Contact Number *

[REDACTED]

Secondary Contact Number

[REDACTED]

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

Part 3 – Desired outcome

Provide a summary of your submission:

Service at RCB was warlike and not a training exercise as claimed by the government. See my attached statement.

Part 4 - Your submission and Supporting Documentation

File Attached: 27-May-2022-submission-for-RCB-warlike-recognition.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

leslie james ray

Date

27/05/2022 /


Mr Leslie James Ray

Signed by Mr Leslie James Ray

Signed on: 27 May, 2022

Signature Certificate

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Mr Leslie James Ray

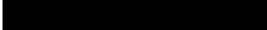
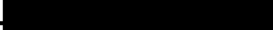
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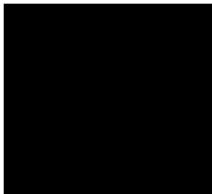
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27 May 2022

Submission to the RCB DHAAT Inquiry

Leslie James Ray



To whom it may concern,

My name is Leslie James Ray and I served at Butterworth between the 5 March 1974 and the 5 June 1974. I served as 1204446 Private L.J. Ray. I was 20 years of age at the conclusion of our deployment.

My principal duties were as a forward scout in 8 platoon, Charlie Company, 5/7 Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment.

My principal weapon was the M16 Armalite rifle (5.52mm calibre), capable of semi and automatic fire.

The following submission was taken from my personal recollections, which I recorded in a diary shortly after the completion of our tour.

The following experiences I experienced myself, and are not hearsay, but personal testimony of the events as I experienced them.

I am currently gainfully employed as the Senior Partner in an accounting practice, and I hold an Associate Diploma in Accounting, a Bachelor of Laws degree, and a Master of Applied Law. I am also a Registered Tax Agent and a Commissioner for Declarations.

Pre-deployment

With the linking of the 5th Battalion and the 7th Battalion on the 3 December 1973, Charlie company of the newly formed 5/7RAR was warned that they would be completing a tour of duty to Malaysia from March to June 1974.

The battalion chose the best and fittest to fill the ranks of Charlie Company and we began immediately to train for this deployment.

Our company consisted of approximately 25% of Vietnam War veterans.

Our training was to raise our status to DP1, which was the standard required for service in South Vietnam. In addition, we trained for riot control and had extensive training for dust-off procedures (medical evacuation by helicopter), and first aid, which continued while at Butterworth.

In a company meeting, our officer commanding (OC), Major Brian Green, told us that we were going to a war zone, and that our training had to reflect that situation. He explained that the current activities of the Communists Terrorists (CT's) were to gain control of the Malaysian Government by force, and he outlined the Malaysian Government responses,

which included Australia deploying a company of infantry soldiers to internally defend the airbase against any attacks by the CT's.

A corporal sitting next to me, a Vietnam veteran, raised his hand and asked Major Green if we were going to be awarded the General Service Medal (GSM) for this deployment.

To everyone's astonishment, he replied that there would be no recognition of warlike service and no medallic recognition, despite warning us that we were going into a war zone and that we had rules of engagement that authorised us to shoot to kill (only within the boundaries of the wire), the carrying of live ammunition, the expectation of casualties, war service discipline, the wearing of identity discs and the completion before deployment of our wills, in addition to being DP1 ready (which means ready for combat).

He explained that the decision not to recognise our deployment was a government decision only.

Deployment

We arrived on the 5th March 1974, and we were immediately given a tour of the airbase and its security arrangements and the current situation in relation to CT's.

I saw the sandbagged gun pits manned by Malaysian guards with loaded weapons.

I saw two Malaysian fighter jets (sabres), fully armed and fuelled with pilots on the tarmac, and we were told that they were there 24 hours a day in case of CT activity. They would fire up their engines every few hours to keep them warm. I remembered this particularly as they were parked close to our barracks, which woke us at night when the engines fired up.

We were also instructed on the other security arrangements at the base, which included a Quick Reaction Force (QRF) of platoon strength during the day to react to any security breach that may occur, and one section of that platoon doing nightly patrol duties.

We were also instructed on the warnings to issue in the event of a security breach.

QRF

The night duty consisted of a section (10 men) who would be called out several times a night.

This was not sentry duty.

One man would be stationed in the Armscote building (armoury) and he would be supplied with his own ammunition and ordered to defend the building in the event of a security breach.

I was assigned to the Armscote building once and I was given specific orders as to my actions in the event of a security breach on the air base. Those orders, which came from my section commander, Corporal Lenny Allen, included loading my weapon with live ammunition and defending the building and its contents until relieved.

Each callout of this section through the night was considered a real reaction to a security breach until we were advised otherwise.

At no time were we told that it was only a training exercise, or that we were simply doing guard or sentry duties.

The point was stressed that we were responsible for the protection of Australian assets and personnel (including the families of RAAF personnel) within the boundary of the air base.

The Rules of Engagement (ROE) were clearly instructed to us, and a copy was posted on the company notice board.

Ammunition for the section was carried in the QRF truck and issued in the event that the callout was not a drill but a security breach.

I performed approximately eight QRF night duties during my tour. The callouts took us to various parts of the airbase, including the perimeter fence where we took up defensive positions, and the married quarters, where we patrolled through the yards of the buildings.

None of these callouts were subsequently declared to be a security breach, but our orders during the callout was to consider them as such until advised otherwise.

The three sections of the QRF would perform training during the day but only on the base in case the QRF was activated.

I recall the QRF being activated once during my tour.

Mirage A3-18

On the 1st April 1974 our platoon was the designated platoon for the QRF, and we were called out to guard the wreckage and surrounds of a crashed Australian Mirage fighter jet that crashed several kilometres from the airbase.

An Australian Mirage (A3-18) crashed as it approached the air base several kilometres outside of the airbase.

We were immediately activated and transported to the crash site. We were armed with our section weapons and webbing, and live ammunition was available in the QRF vehicle.

One section guarded the road and controlled the movement of civilians, one section camped next to the wreckage and the third section took up defensive positions on the beach.

The section I was in was assigned to guard the road and our role was to keep inquisitive civilians back from the site and controlled those who needed to use the road.

I saw the wreckage firsthand. I noticed that the rear section of the plane was intact but there were three holes in a straight line. To me they looked like bullet holes. I called over my section commander, Corporal Lenny Allen, and he expressed his view that they were bullet holes and he said that we had to 'switch on', which was a euphemism of the day signifying that this was a real security threat caused by the CT's and that we had to be on full alert.

The next day a patrol of armed Malaysians came through the crash site and one of them approached us for food. I was one of the soldiers he approached. We asked him what he was doing there, and he told us that his battalion was called out to 'find the CT's that had shot the plane down', to quote his exact words.

We were there for a couple of days and during that time an Iroquois landed with some high-ranking army officers on board. I saw the red on their lapels, so I decided to make myself scarce, a common practice for privates. I've often wondered why high-ranking army officers would be concerned with a crashed air force mirage.

In the last few years, I was able to locate the findings of the Board of Enquiry held at Butterworth that investigated the crash of A3-18¹.

The Board of Enquiry found:

It is most probable that the first event in the sequence which culminated in the destruction of A3-18 was the separation of a portion of one of the front row compressor blades. Whether the blade broke as a result of impact with a foreign object, or as a consequence of a pre-existing deficiency will be the subject of further analysis by authorities in Australia. The separated piece of blade seems to have caused massive compressor damage. The engine was then no longer capable of producing sufficient thrust to sustain flight and the crash becomes inevitable.²

The enquiry was not able to determine if the rotor blade broke due to an internal fault or whether a foreign object caused the failure. The report recommended that further analysis be conducted in Australia.

The pilot testified that he had not gone lower than 8000 feet and that the fault occurred as he was pulling out of his dive. He had not fired his weapons. He was also questioned as to the planes reaction if a foreign object had entered the engine.

Attached with this submission are two photos that show holes in the rear section of A3-18 that I believe are bullet holes.

A possible explanation was offered by some former RAAF members who hypothesised that the holes were inspection holes that had been filled with solder, and when the plane burnt the solder melted. That sounds a reasonable explanation except for the fact that a part of the planes serial number and other markings are still visible, so the rear section did not burn.

I have searched for the Australian enquiry into the crash of A3-18, but I have been unable to locate it. Until I see evidence to the contrary, I am of the belief that A3-18 was brought down by hostile enemy fire.

I have reached this conclusion by my own observations and from orders from my section commander, a distinguished Vietnam veteran, and Malaysian soldiers at the site that CT's were responsible for the crash, and that our subsequent actions were dictated by the objective danger we faced.

¹ Proceedings of the Court of Inquiry into Aircraft Accident No 75 Squadron Mirage A3-18 Butterworth Malaysia – 1st April 1974.

² Ibid - Page 12 Conclusions

BC Bar

A few weeks after the crash of the mirage jet, I was in the BC bar that is located outside of the entrance to Butterworth Air Base. I was with several members of my platoon. I remembered being with Corporal Lenny Allen, Lance Corporal Cramp and Privates Darryl Wardrop, Danny Ponton, Phil Hall, Ron Sturgess, and others whose names I can't recall.

During the evening, a man entered the bar. He was of Chinese appearance, was well dressed and well spoken. He joined us at our table and started to ask us questions. He asked us about our unit, its numbers, weapons, and movements. We immediately became suspicious but engaged him in conversation while Ron Sturgess slipped out the back of the bar through the kitchen and called the RAAF police. They showed up shortly after and took the man away for questioning.

We were never told of the outcome of that incident, and we never enquired as it wasn't our place to, but I am of the firm belief, as do the others there at the time, that this man was a CT seeking intelligence for his organisation.

In any case, our reaction was in response to the security arrangements we were a part of, and whether a CT or not, our reaction supports the objective danger test.

For perfect clarity, I have always been a non-drinker, and I was known during my tour as a non-drinker, so for the night in question I was perfectly sober, so this recollection cannot be clouded by alcoholic distortions.

Bidan Island

Bidan Island is home to some RAAF buildings used to monitor the live firing by fighter aircraft on Song Song Island, a few kilometres to the north.

I have also read that the Bidan Island was used by RAAF personnel as a R&R location.

My section was sent there around the 18 May 1974, for duty, lasting a week.

We were not given a reason for this deployment.

We flew there by Iroquois helicopters, and we took our section weapons and webbing. I can't recall if we took live ammunition with us or whether it was available on the island, but ammunition was assessable to us during this week.

This was six weeks after the A3-18 incident, which initially began as the pilot was preparing to fire on targets on Song Song Island.

Whether the two incidents are related I cannot say, but it seems strange that we were landed on the island by helicopter dressed in patrol order. My only conclusion was that this was done publicly to deter the enemy, and not for the purposes of R&R.

After a week, we travelled back to Penang by ferry and then by bus to Butterworth.

Johor Bahru

Our platoon travelled by bus to the area known as Johore Bahru for a week of jungle training. We were told that it was a training exercise, but in preparing for the patrol we were advised of the dangers that we could encounter, which included the possible presence of CT's.

Specifically, as the lead scout of the platoon, I was taken aside by my platoon commander, Lieutenant Pike, and Sergeant Turra, and advised directly that I had to be aware of 'wild pigs, tigers, elephants and CT's'. I was told that CT's had training camps in Johore and to be alert.

We were not issued with live ammunition; however, certain members of the platoon were issued with live ammunition.

The exercise was conducted under patrol conditions.

During the patrol, I came across a camp, and I immediately called up my platoon commander Lieutenant Pike and Sergeant Turra who reconnoitred the camp and determined that it was a Malaysian Army training camp, and we proceeded through it without incident. Malaysian soldiers were present as we passed through.

My reaction was in accordance with my orders which was to conduct the patrol under patrol conditions³, and to treat any interactions with locals with the utmost caution until advised otherwise.

Training with Malaysian military forces

We never trained with any Malaysian military forces during our tour.

Subsequent matters

Since my deployment in 1974, the following matters have been determined:

- a. The Second Emergency from 1968-1989 has been recognised by the Malaysian military, government, and leading academics⁴,
- b. Malaysian military forces involved in the Second Emergency have been recognised with the Malaysian Service Medal (Pingat Jasa Malaysia or PJM) for the periods between 1969 and 1989,
- c. Australians who served during the First Emergency have been recognised with the PJM but not those who served during the Second Emergency, even though Malaysian forces were recognised during that period,
- d. The New Zealand government in 2021 recognised the 1RNZIR company deployments to Butterworth between 1971 and 1973 with the NZ Operational Service Medal (NZOSM) as being 'clearly for operational deployments rather than for the stated training purposes' and 'intelligence assessments and operational visits identified a clear threat to the Base and the Australian Mirage fighters stationed there...'

³ Patrol conditions means to be on the alert for enemy contact and/or enemy dangers such as booby traps, trip wires and punji pits. It entails silent movement through the jungle. It was emphasised to me before the patrol that CT's were known to be in the area.

⁴ *Securing the population from Insurgency and Subversion in the Second Emergency (1968-1981)*, Weichong Ong, Research thesis, University of Exeter, August 2010.

These facts indicate that two governments, the Malaysian and New Zealand governments, recognise that service at Butterworth during the Second Emergency was operational warlike service, and not a training exercise as maintained by the Australian government.

Both of these governments have recognised the operational service provided by their armed forces during this period, and they have clearly rejected the training lie perpetuated by the Australian government.

The facts used by the NZ government to award their servicemen operational warlike status have been based on facts collected from records held by the Australian government.

Recognition Sought

Recognition is both medallic and monetary.

Medallic recognition recognises that the service of RCB, over the period of 1970-1975 should have been recognised with the relevant award available at the time, which in my case is the General Service Medal (GSM) clasp Malaysia.

For those tours over the period between 1975 and 1989, recognition should be by the award of a new GSM, to align both periods of service with similar recognition.

All tours up to 1989 recognised with the Australian Active Service Medal (AASM) clasp Malaysia, to recognise prescribed warlike operations in accordance with previous awards.

The award of the Returned from Active Service Badge (RASB) in accordance with previous awards.

The award of the PJM as recognition by the Malaysian Government of Australia's contribution during their Second Emergency, in accordance with Australia's contribution during the First Emergency.

The Infantry Combat Badge (ICB) for all tours up to 1989. The criteria for the ICB states that it is recognition for service as an infantryman in warlike operations, in an independent company acting in a traditional infantry role, for a period of 90 days.⁵

Monetary recognition recognises the active service nature of the deployment by granting these veterans access to veteran's entitlements and benefits.

The cost of recognition

The total number of veterans who served at RCB totals about 9,000 men and several women. For recognition purposes, this figure was calculated by multiplying the average company strength of 120 by four deployments per year by 19 years.

However, that calculation does not consider those service men who performed multiple tours (we have on record one soldier who performed seven tours), or those who had previous active service such as Vietnam (in the earlier tours) or those who had active service post 1989, or those who have subsequently died. The actual number who qualify for increased veteran

⁵ *The Army Standing Instruction (Personnel)* Part 11, Chapter 4 - Infantry Combat Badge.

benefits would number in the few hundreds (by my own calculation) so the cost to the government would not be substantial.

Appearance before the Inquiry

I can attest that, to my knowledge, the above statement is true, and that I am prepared to attend the hearing to give any evidence I have under oath.

Kind Regards,

Leslie J. Ray C.dec

Photos



Figure 1 Private John Pitt and Sergeant Turra in front of the tail section of Mirage A3-18. Note the hole at 2 o'clock, the remains of the serial number, and both soldiers dressed in patrol order minus their shirts.



Figure 2 A photo taken by a member of the RAAF. The shadows on the wing are holes. Also note the casual dress of the RAAF member compared to the army members above.



Figure 3 Les Ray, taken between 5 March-5 June 1974 Butterworth Malaysia.



Figure 4 ANZAC Day 2016. Former 'Charlie' company members, Rod Bruce-Smith, Les Ray, and Phillip Hall. Phil died in 2021.



Figure 5 8 Platoon plaque showing the names of the platoon.