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30 May, 2022

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Submission to Inquiry - Mr (WO2) Linton Solomon

Part 1 – Name of Inquiry

Name of Inquiry *

ENQUIRY INTO MEDALLIC RECOGNITION FOR SERVICE RIFLE COMPANY BUTTERWORTH

Part 2 – About the Submitter

Title or Rank *

Mr (WO2)

Surname *

Solomon

Given Names *

Linton

Postal Address *

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Email Address: *

[REDACTED]

Primary Contact Number *

[REDACTED]

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:

My submission is a personal account of my experiences at Air Base Butterworth on two rotations during the early seventies, linked to some of the documents to found in the extensive (now public) data base of documentary evidence currently held Rifle Company Butterworth Review Group. I have also alluded to my personal research mostly through the National Library Australia and National Archives which has revealed many high level documents now held in the RCBRG data base. No doubt, representatives from that group will be presenting the tribunal with much more detail relating to these and many other documents that point to a well concealed deployment of Australian troops into warlike service in Malaysia 1970 to 1989. Two documents included here are my submission and a compilation of news articles collected from Trove which reflect the insidious long term nature of the conflict in Malaysia.

Part 4 - Your submission and Supporting Documentation

File Attached: Malaysia-News-CTs-Sheet1-1.pdf

20220509-RCB-DHAAT-Submission-LF-Solomon-1.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.

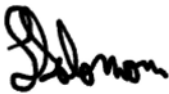
✓ I declare that the information I have provided is correct.

Name

Linton Solomon

Date

30/05/2022 /

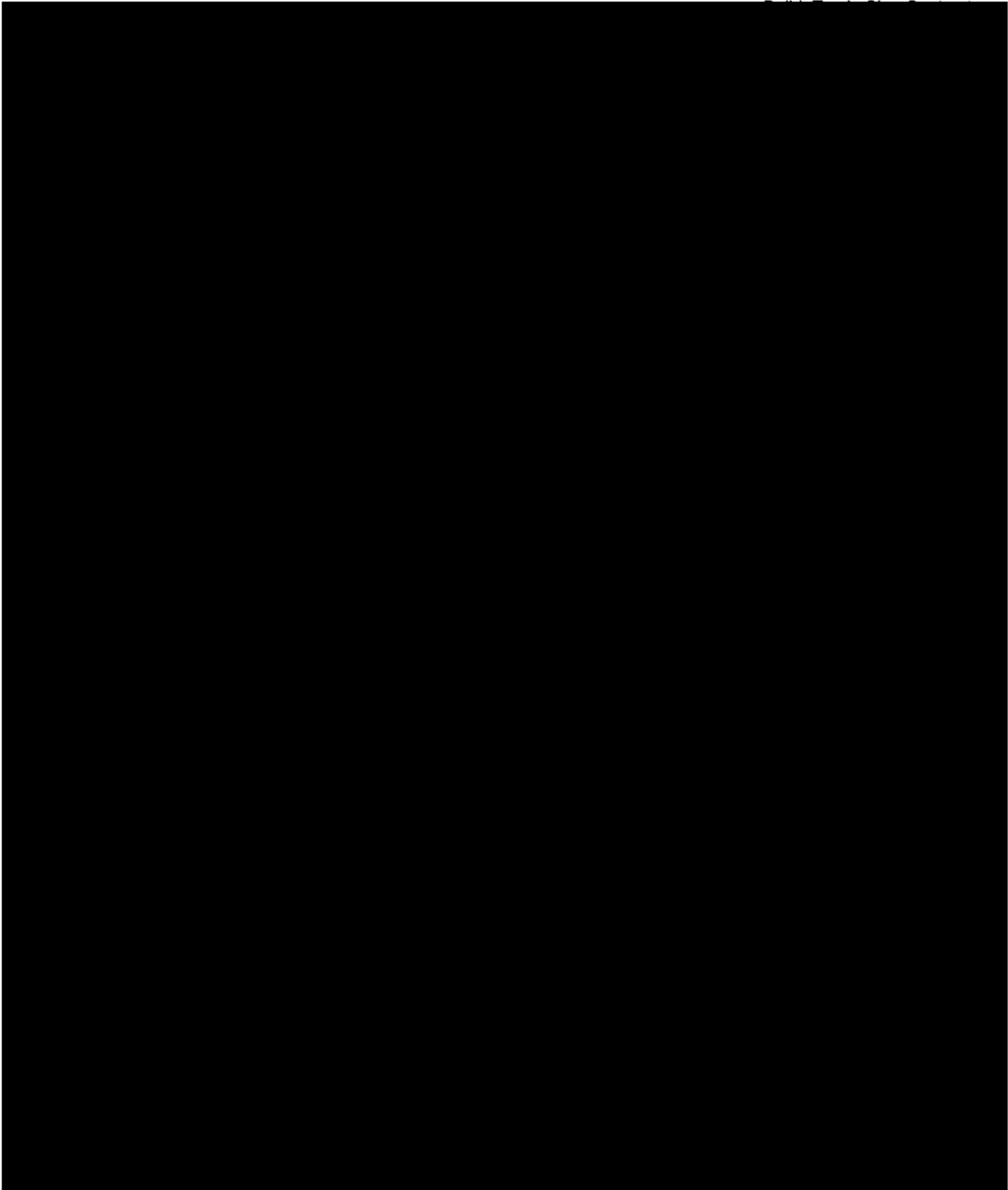


Signed by Mr (WO2) Linton Solomon

Signed on: 30 May, 2022

Signature Certificate

Document name: Submission to Inquiry - Mr (WO2) Linton Sol...



News and Articles - Communist Insurgency in Malaysia (1968 – 1989)

Serial	DATE	PUBLICATION	ARTICLE	NLA LINK
1	1968-06-21	CANBERRA TIMES	Communist get support from China	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article107058877
2	1969-05-14	CANBERRA TIMES	Guns for Malayasia.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article107083197
3	1969-06-07	THE BULLETIN	Malaysia, long cooling off period.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-1751035833
4	1969-06-18	CANBERRA TIMES	Dangers in Malaysia.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article131790761
5	1969-06-07	CANBERRA TIMES	The Crunch in Malaysia.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article131788844
6	1969-07-30	CANBERRA TIMES	Communists kill six soldiers.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article136946831
7	1969-09-20	THE BULLETIN	An old thorn turns septic.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-1761282880
8	1969-10-18	CANBERRA TIMES	Talks to stop border terrorists	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article107898686
9	1970-03-14	THE BULLETIN	Guerrilla Fever Again	http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-1541185408
10	1970-04-24	PNG POST COURIER	11 hurt in blasts.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article250227349
11	1970-05-09	THE BULLETIN	Malaysia Singapore Mythical Menace	http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-1453945024
12	1970-05-30	CANBERRA TIMES	Communist camp captured.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article110324100
13	1970-06-09	CANBERRA TIMES	Five power ex.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article110325800
14	1970-09-05	CANBERRA TIMES	Communist Guerrillas increasing activities.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article110459296
15	1970-10-21	CANBERRA TIMES	Air Base Concern	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article110467118
16	1970-11-14	CANBERRA TIMES	Troops to Malaysia	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article110438662
17	1971-02-19	CANBERRA TIMES	21 Month state of emergency ends.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article110456365
18	1971-03-09	CANBERRA TIMES	Rail blown 7 miles east of base.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article110341756
19	1971-04-02	PNG POST COURIER	Query on army in Malaysia.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article250251548
20	1971-04-02	CANBERRA TIMES	Security	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article110346389

21	1971-05-17	CANBERRA TIMES	Guerillas killed near Airbase.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article131807001
22	1971-05-17	CANBERRA TIMES	Guerillas killed near base #2.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article131807082
23	1971-05-26	TRIBUNE	Guerrilla movement on the upswing.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article237866674
24	1971-06-21	NEW NATION	Reds move from border	http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/Digitised/Article/newnation19710621
25	1971-06-30	CANBERRA TIMES	Questions raised in parliament base security. Coy insufficient.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article131814765
26	1971-08-09	CANBERRA TIMES	Massive manhunt for guerrillas.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article110672846
27	1971-08-12	CANBERRA TIMES	Guerrillas pose threat to west Malaysia.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article110673355
28	1971-09-06	CANBERRA TIMES	China Malay Triangle.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article110676005
29	1971-10-23	THE BULLETIN	Malaysias War that wont go away.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-1641510231
30	1971-11-27	THE BULLETIN	The fences go up again.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-1641615117
31	1971-12-14	TRIBUNE	Return of the guerrilla.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article237868344
32	1972-03-28	CANBERRA TIMES	15 Soldiers killed by terrorists.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article102205990
33	1972-04-04	TRIBUNE	Communist on the long march SE asia.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article237865204
34	1973-02-20	TRIBUNE	Singapore red herring.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article236854592
35	1974-03-05	CANBERRA TIMES	Communists move again in Malaysia.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article110764548
34	1974-07-02	TRIBUNE	Guerrilla sabotage opertions.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article236853803
35	1974-08-14	THARUNKA	Guerrilla Success	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article230398707
36	1974-08-14	THARUNKA	Sabotage.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article230398706
37	1974-12-10	TRIBUNE	Army links in SE Asia.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article236853695
38	1975-05-03	STRAITS TIMES	Saigon Arms may go to reds	https://cutt.ly/DgrdnRZ
39	1975-07-05	CANBERRA TIMES	Communist guerrillas give notice.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article110645503
40	1975-07-07	PNG POST COURIER	Indonesian and Malaysians step up action against communists.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article250388856
41	1975-09-04	CANBERRA TIMES	Bombs kill two police in KL.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article110656831
42	1975-09-16	TRIBUNE	Peoples army starts urban guerrilla war in Malaysia.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article236919440

43	1975-10-21	CANBERRA TIMES	Shoot to kill order to guards.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article110663748
44	1975-11-10	PNG POST COURIER	Malaysia fights red guerrillas.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article250311016
45	1975-11-13	CANBERRA TIMES	Guerrillas return to Malaysia.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article102185204
46	1975-12-29	PNG POST COURIER	A fight against terror.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article250315736
47	1976-12-02	NEW NATION	Will Malaysia Fall to the reds.	https://cutt.ly/BeZfWZP
48	1976-01-21	CANBERRA TIMES	Unrest in Malaysia	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article110798199
49	1976-02-04	CANBERRA TIMES	Malysian army rushed to reinforce border.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article110800832
50	1976-02-06	CANBERRA TIMES	Rebel bases smashed.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article110801267
51	1976-03-05	CANBERRA TIMES	Malyan emergency act 2 scene 1 begins.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article110806729
52	1976-03-10	TRIBUNE	Malaysia still struggles for liberation.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article236923938
53	1976-04-28	CANBERRA TIMES	Helo shot down 11 dead.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article110815039
54	1976-06-08	PNG POST COURIER	Malaysia angry over border move.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article250141678
55	1976-07-09	CANBERRA TIMES	People used as sheilds.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article110816616
56	1976-07-13	CANBERRA TIMES	Moves to cut support to communists.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article110817064
57	1976-06-15	PNG POST COURIER	Terror in Malaysia.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article250142333
58	1976-07-17	THE BULLETIN	The Emergency is on again.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-1430558727
59	1976-07-21	CANBERRA TIMES	Communist threat.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article110818194
60	1976-09-03	CANBERRA TIMES	Malaysia top newsman confessed communist.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article110824170
61	1976-11-12	CANBERRA TIMES	Malaysia and Thailand step up operations agains guerrillas.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article131795530
62	1976-12-22	STRAITS TIMES	Third Army division for KL	https://cutt.ly/xeZ9rcp
63	1976-12-24	CANBERRA TIMES	New division to combat communism.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article131803173
64	1977-02-15	CANBERRA TIMES	Poverty and communism.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article110841152
65	1977-03-15	CANBERRA TIMES	Joint drive, more than 5000 troops in security operation.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article110728516
66	1977-04-15	PNG POST COURIER	Rebels get Viet arms	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article251050065

67	1977-05-10	CANBERRA TIMES	Australia and Singapore prepare to defend Malaysia.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article110844995
68	1977-05-11	PNG POST COURIER	Australia and Singapore prepare plan.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article250480801
69	1977-07-05	CANBERRA TIMES	Malays and Thais new border drive.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article110853279
70	1977-08-26	CANBERRA TIMES	Month long op against 2600 guerillas.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article110861800
71	1977-09-00	AFAR	Thai- Malay Joint Counter Insurgency	http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-921138541
72	1978-03-01	CANBERRA TIMES	New anti guerilla drive expected.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article110885453
73	1978-06-06	PNG POST COURIER	Alert for suicide squads.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article250161902
74	1978-07-11	PNG POST COURIER	After 20 years at ABB. Mentions of insurgency.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page27732119
75	1979-01-14	CANBERRA TIMES	Communist considerable comback since 1975	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article136974946
76	1979-03-07	PNG POST COURIER	Troops kill rebels.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article250284931
77	1980-03-17	CANBERRA TIMES	Communists in clash.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article110583295
78	1980-03-17	CANBERRA TIMES	Opposition objects to orgy of execution.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article110583291
79	1981-07-19	CANBERRA TIMES	Communists step up subversion.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article127052423
80	1981-09-21	CANBERRA TIMES	Rebels in the jungle still linger on.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article126847816
81	1982-09-07	THE BULLETIN	A new set of perceptions.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-1639211014
82	1981-09-24	CANBERRA TIMES	21 years after, rebels still linger on.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article126847816
83	1988-01-21	CANBERRA TIMES	Thailand helps Malaysia win 40 year struggle.	http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article101971254

SUBMISSION
ENQUIRY INTO MEDALLIC RECOGNITION FOR SERVICE
RIFLE COMPANY BUTTERWORTH

Introduction

My name is Linton Solomon, I served in the ADF as an Infantry soldier from 20 February 1972 to 3 November 1993, retiring in the rank of Warrant Officer Class 2. I was deployed with B Company 8/9RAR at Airbase Butterworth (ABB) as a member of the Rifle Company Butterworth (RCB) on two rotations, *1974/5* and again in *1976*. At the time I was *222920 Private Linton Francis Solomon*.

My primary roles were variously as Rifleman, Bren Gunner and Signaller in a rifle platoon. The personal weapons carried in these roles were the M16A1 rifle, Bren light machine gun and SLR L1A1. I and other company members carried normal infantry company weapons as required on operational service and were all highly proficient with the whole range of infantry weapons available at the time as required by Draft Priority One (DP1) for operational service.

The companies' heavy weapons were also readily available along with the required ammunition on base. While on QRF (Quick Reaction Force) duties, battle order with weapons and side arms including section machine guns were routinely deployed. Both tours of duty were very similar in nature.

I have included references to various documents held by the Rifle Company Butterworth Review Group (RCBRG) in their extensive evidentiary database which is now publicly available <https://recognitionofrcbservice.com/rcb-review-group-research-deployment-to-air-base-butterworth-ab-b-master-document-database-index-primary-secondary/>. My references are by no means comprehensive, rather, just examples of the many available that clearly depict warlike deployment of troops in Malaysia during the period in question.

It is clear from all of the available research that Rifle Company Butterworth (RCB) deployments were/are still shrouded in deceit, outright lies and deception. For diplomatic and practical reasons, Australia could not pull out of Malaysia in the short term. As the threat to the base began to escalate during the 70s it became imperative that Air Base Butterworth (ABB) and its assets be effectively protected without offending the Malaysians. The Australian public were unlikely to accept another deployment into a potential Asian conflict without political consequences. So began the need to disguise the deployment of an Infantry combat force to ABB. "Training" became the official stance on the deployments, this was a lie, generated from high level Malaysian and Australian sources.¹ The documentary evidence is clear and unequivocal, RCB was there to protect the base against attack, not to train with Malays.^{2 3}

¹ 197111202 B Five power defence - Rotation of NZ company to Butterworth Diplomatic cable/Signal ExCONFIDENTIAL High Commissioner (NZ) Kuala Lumpur CF 35805 dated 2 Dec 71 Highlights the MAL extreme sensitivity about having NZ (happy with AS and BR) troops at ABB. More evidence of the successful AS diplomatic effort to have AS there without any fanfare, Malaysian official suggest that it may be presented as training.

² 19701021 Deployment of Army Company to Butterworth Cablegram to Ministers and Departments of BOTH Defence and External Affairs, JIO, DOC and Prime Minister ExCONFIDENTIAL Rowland, High Commissioner Australian High Commission 3682 dated 21 Oct 70 High Commissioner suggesting a cover plan be created for the MAL press about the imminent arrival of RCB at ABB – a training deception.

³ 19730111 Five Power and ANZUK Arrangements and Withdrawal of Australian Battalion and Battery Committee meeting minutes Ex-SECRET Defence Committee, Sir Arthur Tange (Chairman) Minute 2/1973 dated 11 Jan 73 Critical advice to government to deploy a rifle coy to ABB direct from Aust for security duties; and to present the deployment publicly as being for "training purposes". This is the ultimate "Training Lie"/Deception of the Australian Public which the Government accepted and put into effect.

Enemy

We were briefed in relation to the Communist Terrorists (CTs) prior to departure and again on arrival, particularly in that they could well have the ability to penetrate the air base at Butterworth and the importance of our role as QRF and protection of Australian families in an emergency.

The threat of possible enemy action was highlighted from time to time with “red letter days” when we were put on a higher state of readiness and alert. On the rare occasion that my platoon was off base at a firing range we were accompanied by Malaysian armed sentries as we were not allowed to operate outside the wire.^{4 5}

Periods of local leave came with the warning that we should never be alone and that we should avoid any civil disturbances and no go areas. A leave location book was also maintained at Coy HQ at all times in case of emergency recall. The consequences of ignoring a recall order by RAAF Police were dire as we were subject to ‘war service’ disciplinary codes, our Company Commanders having the powers of a Commanding Officer whilst at Butterworth.⁶

The 1975 rocket attack on Minden Barracks on Penang Isle serves to emphasise the proximity of the threat to the base and its assets.⁷ This attack is one of many well documented incidents and security force clashes with CTs nearby and around the country.^{8 9 10 11}

The Malaysians publicly acknowledged the Second Malaysian Emergency from 1968 until 1989 when the Malaysian Communist Party (MCP) signed a peace accord with the Malaysian Government. It is beyond the scope of this short submission to enter into the plethora of secondary detail that is available

⁴ 19750801 Malaysia – The Threat to Air Base Butterworth Brief Ex-SECRET Unstated, SRGD appears as a pencil entry on first page RAAF 564/8/28 Part 8 file (Ground Defence – RAAF Butterworth – Ground Defence Plan Comprehensive 30-page brief by JIO on the ground threat to Butterworth. Cover the base, its assets incl RCB, enemy threat and options for enemy attack.

⁵ 19740915 Malaysia -The threat to Air Base Butterworth to the end of 1975 JIO Report 14/74 Ex-SECRET Undisclosed JIO author JIO Report 14/74 issued Sep 74 Detailed intelligence report including a section titled Situations in which Air Base Butterworth might be attacked, a list of enemy contacts, and a map of the ABB area showing locations where CTs activity has occurred . paras 7-8 specifically state RCB is there as part of the Security measures to protect the base.

⁶ 19640101A The Army Law Manual 1964 Vol 1 Part 1 Law Manual (extract) Unclassified Army ALM Vol 1 Part 1 – The Defence Act Section 54 deems the locations of members of the Military Forces while overseas to be on war service and subject to the Army Act, whether on war service or not; disciplinary code.

⁷ 19750402A INT Report – Rocket Attacks Malaysian Service Installations Signal Ex-SECRET 65 GL Sect (at ABB) ABB OPS 026 dated 020810Z Apr 75 Reports confirmed 3.5” rocket attacks on Minden and advises local RMAF difficulty protecting ABB as well as other RMAF ammo dumps.

⁸ 19720315A Rebels strike near Malaysia air base Media report Unclassified Michael Richardson, reporter Melbourne age dated 15 Mar 72 Reports a CT attack 15 miles from ABB and highlights the base vulnerability incl the RAAF assets there.

⁹ 19740205 Rebel guns boom again – Many attacks in Malaysia Newspaper article (Melbourne Herald) Unclassified Unknown reporter Melbourne Herald dated 5 Feb 74 Reports the big increase in CT activity (see 19740131).

¹⁰ 19750401A Butterworth Base Security Minute to Minister Ex-SECRET AM JA Rowland, CAS Air 418/4/17 dated 1 Apr 75 Minister is advised of CT attacks in MAL and increased threat during current period of tension at ABB.

¹¹ 19750402 Security Situation Peninsula Malaysia CT Rocket Attacks 31 March – Cablegram/Signal to JIO Ex-SECRET High Commission, Kuala Lumpur High Comm file 237/3/26/401 dated 2 Apr 75 Detail of several rocket attacks across Malaysia, including one that damaged a Caribou acft at RMAF Air Base Kuala Lumpur. Reporter was MAJ Petersen, an Australian instructor. Butterworth is also mentioned; assumed to be in case they had received similar rocket fire. Extract: In 1972 Peterson returned to Canberra and was responsible for equipment acquisition for the Infantry corps. Not long after returning Peterson was sent to Malaysia as an instructor for 2 years educating the Malaysian Army. He found this highly rewarding but endured some highly stressful and dangerous moments. Located at <https://captbarrypeterson.weebly.co m/operational-experiences.html>

through the many academic papers, books and films depicting the Counter Insurgency War (1968-1989) against the resurgent communist terrorists.¹²

Danger

Whilst deployed on QRF duties it was normal to be reacted to a vital point at least twice during the night. We would react with a real sense of urgency, fully armed in combat order with live ball ammunition to the relevant area with the assumption that it was a CT incursion onto the base. We took this extremely seriously, it was always considered very dangerous as there was always a possibility of casualties should we encounter an enemy infiltration. Our rules of engagement (ROE) were always clear in our minds and well reinforced including the use of lethal force.¹³

The short periods of field training allocated to us came with the sobering warning that it was possible to inadvertently bump into CTs even in jungle training areas. The carriage of small amounts of live ball ammunition were allocated to mitigate this potential circumstance however we would be in no position to oppose any determined force and the danger of casualties under the circumstances could be high.¹⁴

The ever present danger to the base¹⁵ was highlighted to us one night when we were woken in the early hours of the morning by a considerable volume of small arms fire somewhere nearby but outside the base. Documents in the RCBRG database clearly point out that publicity of anything to do with RCB was avoided due to political and diplomatic machinery of the time. We were not activated and nothing more was said about the incident.^{16 17}

The danger was also demonstrated by the frequent coming and going of Malaysian combat aircraft. Our accommodation being near the main airstrip gave us a ringside seat to the events being enacted from the base. Although we were not privy to the movement or destination of these aircraft, it seemed very clear to us that they were often engaged in combat missions of one sort or another.

¹² Malaysia's defeat of armed communism : the Second Emergency, 1968-1989 / Ong Weichong

¹³ 19711019 ANZUK Force Directive to the OC Butterworth Company Directive ExCONFIDENTIAL Air Commodore CL Siegert, Chief of Staff ,ANZUK Force ANZUK 007/3001/1 OPS dated 19 Oct 71 Explicit security tasks including Annex with ROE using live ammo.

¹⁴ 19730610 Exercise Instruction OPORD 01 (Exercise Secret) Exercise Instruction Ex-RESTRICTED CO 6 RAR 6RAR June 73 - AWM95 AS Army Commanders' diaries Item No 7_6_70 While an Exercise SECRET instruction, it DOES include the carriage of LIVE Ammunition and is part of a 28 BDE exercise (notionally) with 7 MIB (MAL unit).

¹⁵ 19790706 Field Force Command Staff Instruction No 2/79 – General Instructions for the Australian Rifle Company at Air Base Butterworth (LESS Annexes) Staff Instruction Ex-RESTRICTED MAJGEN JI Williamson, General Officer Commanding HQ FF Comd 722/K11/17 dated 6 Jul 79 (same file name) The prime document that launches the coy, under direct command of the HQ Field Force Command while deployed away from its parent battalion in Australia on service at ABB where the coy comes under the operational control of the OC RAAF BUT.

19710528 Security of Air Base Butterworth Minute to the Minister Ex-SECRET AVM CF Read, DCAS Dept of Air 564/8/28 dated 28 May 71 Provides minister the 19710525 document and advises the Minister that "... the main problems of shared defence, the role of the attached Army company, ... should be resolved without delay as they are considered necessary to enable Air Base Butterworth to adequately meet the assessed threat." RAAF file 564/8/28 folio 55

¹⁶ 19701021A Army Company Butterworth Cablegram to Ministers of External Affairs, Defence, JIO etc ExCONFIDENTIAL Aust High Commission, Singapore AHC 3108 dated 1634 hrs Oct 70 Advises ' No publicity should be sought on this deployment'

¹⁷ 19730820B Rotation of AS Rifle Coy at Air Base Butterworth Signal Ex-RESTRICTED Army HQ AHQ OPS 278404 dated 200435Z Aug 73 AHQ orders Army that the deployment is to be viewed as routine, and no publicity is to be sought.

Current documentary evidence held by the RCBRG shows that this was indeed correct and that these sorties may give the CTs reason to strike the base.^{18 19}

Expectation of Casualties

We all knew that there was the possibility of an armed enemy incursion onto the base. It was accepted by us that such an incursion could result in casualties and that the responding QRF force would be at much higher risk of taking casualties. With this firmly in mind, all QRF call outs were conducted with the aggressive intent drilled into the infantry soldier regardless of the potential consequences.

Training with the Malaysians

This was never mentioned to us and did not occur during my tours of RCB. We were aware that the Malaysians were preoccupied with their own CT problems and our own very limited field training was conducted without any training interactions with Malaysian forces. This training was never more than one platoon and was only for very short periods under our own command and administration. There is now ample documented evidence that shows the Malaysians reluctance and inability to facilitate training interactions as they were fully engaged in CT operations. Any training that we might engage in could not be in or near their areas of operations or known CT areas.^{20 21 22}

We trained to go there, we did not go there to train.

Actual tasks

Both my deployments to RCB with 8/9RAR were clearly presented to us as being there to provide a quick reaction force (QRF) for the protection of the air base and its assets at Butterworth against CT incursion. Our actual tasks involved, QRF duty, standing patrol activity, standby reserve, downed aircraft protection.²³

¹⁸ 19770520 Sitrep for Butterworth and Northern Peninsula Malaysia (Farley) Cablegram Ex-SECRET (FARLEY) Dept of Foreign Affairs Canberra A101/AIR3 dated 200805Z May 77 Int proof for FGA sorties by RMAF against the CTs out of ABB, and enemy activity Kulim area.

¹⁹ 19770715 Sitrep for Butterworth and Northern Peninsula Malaysia Cablegram to Mt Parkinson, Sir Arthur Tange, AM Rowland (CAS) and LTGEN MacDonald (CGS) Ex-SECRET FARLEY HQ Butterworth DCR 027/15 dated 150200Z Jul 77 Reports the local situation including movement of CT 8th Assault Unit east of Kulim, and RMAF fighter ground attack missions from ABB against the CTs.

²⁰ 19731004 Australian Company at Butterworth Letter to Sec Dept of Def Ex-RESTRICTED GPCAPT IJ Hoare, Security Advisor, High Comm High Comm 207/5/14 dated 4 Oct 73 Addresses trg needs (the training lie) and advises that RMAF COMD 6 MIB is too busy on operations to have time for trg. Gurun range was untenable as the RMAF forces in the area had free fire authority to shoot on sight anyone not wearing the appropriate RMAF military clothing.

²¹ 19731024A Clearance/Training Facilities for Australian Coy Malaysian Official instruction to HQ 6 MIB Probably classified (CTC) Kolonel Mohamed Daud Bin Abu Bakar for COMD HQ 2 MAL Div HQ 2 (MAL) Div KP/TD/LATIH/5252/2 dated 24 Oktober 1973 Clear evidence of local Malaysians (6 MIB) on operations with restrictions on where Australian Rifle Coy (RCB) could go, and related training guidelines. MAL Div HQ gave these instructions; a copie ended up on a RAAF file. Qualifies 19721008 by further stating that NO foreign troops including Butterworth Australians are to use Area Xray, while no combined exercises are permitted without HQ 2 Div concurrence. Hardly a facilitation of "training"

²² 19740702A Report of Tour of Duty Butterworth Mar-Jun 74 Report Unclassified MAJ Brian Green OC C Coy 5/7 RAR Unreferenced report dated 2 Jul 74 Tour of Duty Report that lists three NODUFF base defence alerts, an operational base, and denial of use of a live firing range due to 'operational situation necessitating the RCB needing to be protected by 6 MIB.

²³ A RAAF Mirage aircraft crashed near the base and we were deployed outside the base without weapons or ammunition to secure the wreck site until investigators could conclude their work. This was extremely risky as we were not allowed to operate outside the base and had no means to defend ourselves. At the time, we were not at all sure how the aircraft came to grief nor did we know if CTs played a part in it (later investigations found that it was not due to hostile actions.

On occasions during periods of high alert a platoon or the entire company would be on standby in the lines in battle order ready to deploy around the base at the direction of the Ground Defence Operations Centre (GDOC).

There were also occasions when standing patrols were stationed at static sand bagged emplacements around the base with full individual battle-ready live ball ammunition allocations.²⁴

Warlike Service

Having been instrumental in the research and acquisition of many of the revealing documents and media articles that are now collated and recorded in the RCBRG database, it seems to me to be irrefutable that RCB service was warlike in nature and clearly meets the criteria for warlike service:

- **Mission:** There was a mission to (*the Defence of the Airbase and Australian assets*).²⁵
- **Enemy Threat:** There was a clear and present enemy threat to the base and its assets from CTs. Many archival documents show fear for the safety of the base which was emphasised in the 70s when it was considered that a much larger force was required to adequately *defend* the base. It was also suggested that this force should be operating off base due to the probable use of mortars and rockets to attack the base.^{26 27 28}
- **Rules of Engagement:** There were clear rules of engagement (ROE) commensurate with that threat that included lethal force that we were well versed and practised in.²⁹

Clandestine Radio

Clandestine radio transmissions supporting the CTs and promoting propaganda originating out of southern China “the voice of the Malaysian revolution”, are well recorded in NAA files and through academia. One particular document mentions accurate details of the RAR Company at the base.³⁰ There was a real fear that these broadcasts could incite local dissidents into attempting an attack on ABB.³¹

²⁴ 19750805 Sitrep Butterworth and North Peninsula Malaysia Signal Ex-SECRET /FARLEY HQ BUT Duty Officer A140 dated 050730Z Aug 75 Reported two holes in fence (old), CT activity in town, deployment of five standing patrols during night, one inf section patrolling aircraft by day. QRF on high alert, CT sightings reported 27 Jun.

²⁵ 19771129A CDFS Directive to CGS & CAS – Rotation of an AS Rfl Coy to Air Base Butterworth, Malaysia Directive Ex-RESTRICTED GEN AL MacDonald, CDFS Unreferenced directive dated 29 Nov 77 Plan Asbestos is cancelled, but this Directive simply achieves the same thing. The training deception is continued, the same operational tasks are still there, as is explicit acceptance that there is a CT (insurgent problem). Defence inside the base is still explicit.

²⁶ The Malaysian combat formation based nearby (6MIB), whose area of operations (AO) the air base was part of, could never guarantee any sort of reaction to the base in an emergency as it was fully committed to other CT operations most of the time.

²⁷ 19751001 JIO Report - The Security of Air Base Butterworth (less Annexes A, B) Intelligence Report Ex-SECRET JIO Australia, Defence Report 13/75 issued Oct 75 Top level detailed JOI assessment of the security threat including extensive detail on CT activity etc. Includes 9 pages of contacts/sightings/activities in Annex E near ABB, which proves NO doubt that there was enemy action ongoing. Annex F is an air photo that shows assessment of likely CT attack approaches to ABB. Missing Annexes A and B (aerial photos of defence).

²⁸ 19750716 Butterworth Security Minute Ex-SECRET WGCDR JI Brough, SRGD-AF DOD (Air Office) 564/8/28 (73) dated 16 Jul 75 Calls for a review of the threat and raises the need of off-base patrolling by the infantry coy given mortar threat.

²⁹ 19770531 Australian Forces at Butterworth (Qn Upon Notice No. 748) Hansard - Answers to Questions Upon Notice Unclassified House of Representatives - Parliament Hansard No 748 dated 31 May 1977 Proves Government knew of enemy threat from CTs and that the RCB is there with ROE.

³⁰ 19720511 Threat to ABB (Clandestine Radio) Signal to Canberra, COMANZUK FOR and OC RAAF ABB ExCONFIDENTIAL Australian High Commission Singapore AHC (S) signal dated 1300 hrs 11 May 72 Reports a US embassy intercept of Clandestine CT radio attacking Minister Fairbairn's visit, accurately listing RAAF assets at ABB; the role of RCB even. Clearly the enemy were well aware of the ABB arrangements.

³¹ 19720512 Threat to Air Base Butterworth Letter to DFA, AHC(S), COMMD ANZUK Force and OC RAAF AAB ExCONFIDENTIAL JB Holloway, AHC(KL) AHC(KL) 207/2/3/5 dated 12 May 72 Includes a report on the clandestine China-based radio broadcast Suara Revolusi. Notes this is the FIRST direct broadcast referring to ABB and while not specifically calling for an attack, it could incite one by CT activists and supporters.

Conclusion

The fact that ABB was never openly attacked does not mean that the deployments were not warlike in nature. Quite the contrary, the fact that RCB was deployed there and the fearsome reputation of the Australian soldiers so recently gained in Vietnam, was very likely a key factor in preventing any open attack on the base.

Documents clearly show that the CTs had good intelligence on the working of the base and had the weapons and the manpower to execute a strike. As Vietnam was winding down fears grew that there would be an influx of weapons and support for the CTs in Malaysia and the end of the conflict may embolden them to begin aggressive offensive action throughout the Peninsula.³²

Australia had some difficult decisions to make after the British withdrawal from Malaysia and Singapore. The RAAF presence at Butterworth was being called into question. High level strategic plans needed to be reviewed.³³ ABB was a large and vulnerable asset along with its attendant personnel and their families. The base had no discernable means of defence against CTs that were demonstrating their willingness to progress their cause through armed insurrection.³⁴ It was clear from intelligence assessments that the CTs were on the rise again and that any attack on ABB would have catastrophic effects across the board.³⁵ Worse still was the fact that there was nowhere to put the Mirage squadrons in Australia. The fear was that by just being there the Malaysians might expect us to help them in the event of large-scale escalation of hostilities.³⁶ The Malaysian Army and Police were already conducting large-scale operations against the CTs all around the vicinity of ABB as well as border operations just north of the base.³⁷

The Australian government could not afford to be drawn into another endless asian conflict as Vietnam drew to a close. The Malaysian government was very sensitive about its perceived ability to deal with its own problems. Australia could not shirk its regional responsibilities or ignore the need to protect a large and very valuable asset at Butterworth. Desperate attempts evolved to rationalise the RCB deployment and navigate the diplomatic intrigue eventually led to the well documented, high level, lies and deception surrounding the RCB deployments.³⁸

³² 19760302 Hair raising drive to Penang Newspaper Article Unclassified unknown Sydney Morning Herald dated 2 Mar 76 Describes CT guerrillas, encouraged by Communist victories in Vietnam, now seeking out police officers in hit and run tactics. MAF roadblocks to help counter the major insurgency problem.

³³ 19710501 Threat to Butterworth Intelligence Assessment Ex-SECRET RW Furlonger, Director JIO JIO 552/2 dated 1 May 71 High level JIO response to RAAF Intel request for strategic assessment. While a major attack is unlikely, CTs are assessed as having the capability.

³⁴ 20090701A Extract from 'The Tiger Man of Vietnam' Book extract Unclassified Frank Walker WALKER, Frank - The Tiger Man of Vietnam, Hachette Australia, Sydney, 2009, ISBN: 9780733623660, p 288. Evidence of rocket attacks on military camps in Malaysia in 1975, additional to mine and booby trap casualties to MAF forces; mines identified as having come from Vietnam through Thailand and used by the CTs.

³⁵ 19720315A Rebels strike near Malaysia air base Media report Unclassified Michael Richardson, reporter Melbourne age dated 15 Mar 72 Reports a CT attack 15 miles from ABB and highlights the base vulnerability incl the RAAF assets there.

³⁶ 19711210A Malaysian Security Situation and Five Power Paper Ex-SECRET MJ Cook, Assistant Secretary, Foreign Affairs Unreferenced Defence Policy Branch paper under cover of 19711210B Provides policy advice to the then Minister about what AS should do if asked for armed support to MAL. In para 4 it admits that Prime Minister Gorton already stated AS would provide such. Clearly shows that combat assistance to MAL was a key concern in managing the FPDA at this time.

³⁷ 19700525 FARELF SITREP NO 21/70 as at 250001Z May (70) Signal Ex-SECRET CAPT MJ Stanley, G OPS HQ FARELF FARELF u nreferenced signal dated 250835 May 70 (Copy no 18 of 19) Further evidence of CT operations and captures, specifically mentions curfews in place in PENANG and other areas around ABB.

³⁸ 19730725 Rotation of AS Rifle Coy to Air Base Butterworth Signal ExCONFIDENTIAL Army HQ OPS 24851 dated 250510Z Jul 73 Order given by Army to the Army that the "training lie" deception be put into effect: "From receipt of this signal the line is to be taken in discussing the role of the coy, particularly with troops involved, should be that deployment of coy provides an opportunity for trg and developing further co-operation with Malaysian forces and the elements of RAAF at Butterworth." In reality, most RCBs did ZERO training with MAF or RAAF; remaining on-task with security, and did their own security-focussed training. (DMOP File 307-H-2 pt 1, not folio numbered)

Malaysian CDF

On the 50th anniversary of RCB the Malaysian CDF officially thanked RCB for its service at ABB: *“your presence and sacrifice here on Malaysian soil in protecting RMAF Butterworth Air Base during the resurgence of the communist insurgency in 1970-1989 was a remarkable contribution and has always been a highlight of your presence here”*.³⁹

Media Clips

The attached clips clearly record the insidious long lived nature of the conflict in Malaysia during this period and are a useful supplement to the information publicly available through NAA and other resources and subsequently the RCBRG database.

What we seek

- Qualifying service for VEA entitlements, and have the BAB declared under the Defence Act an active service area.
- Australian Active Service Medal (AASM) with clasp Malaysia.
- Returned from Active Service Badge (RASB), and
- General Service Medal 1962, with clasp Malaysia for those who served in RCB until 14th February 1975.

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



The Author mounting duty on QRF at ABB 1975.

Linton Solomon

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

³⁹ 20201101 50th Anniversary Rifle Company Butterworth (RMAF message) Website posting Unclassified CDF Royal Malaysian Armed Forces RMAF Official Website Malaysian CDF officially thanks RCB for its service at ABB. Specifically recognises ‘your presence and sacrifice here in Malaysian soil in protecting RMAF Butterworth Air Base’.