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5 June, 2022

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## Submission to Inquiry - Mr Mark Anthony Butler

### 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 \***

Butler

**Given Names \***

Mark Anthony

**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:**

RCB - 77/78 as Section Commander QRF and ROVING PIQUET duties Training prior and during Evidence supporting claim

### Part 4 - Your submission and Supporting Documentation

File Attached: RCB-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**

Mark Butler

**Date**

05/06/2022 /

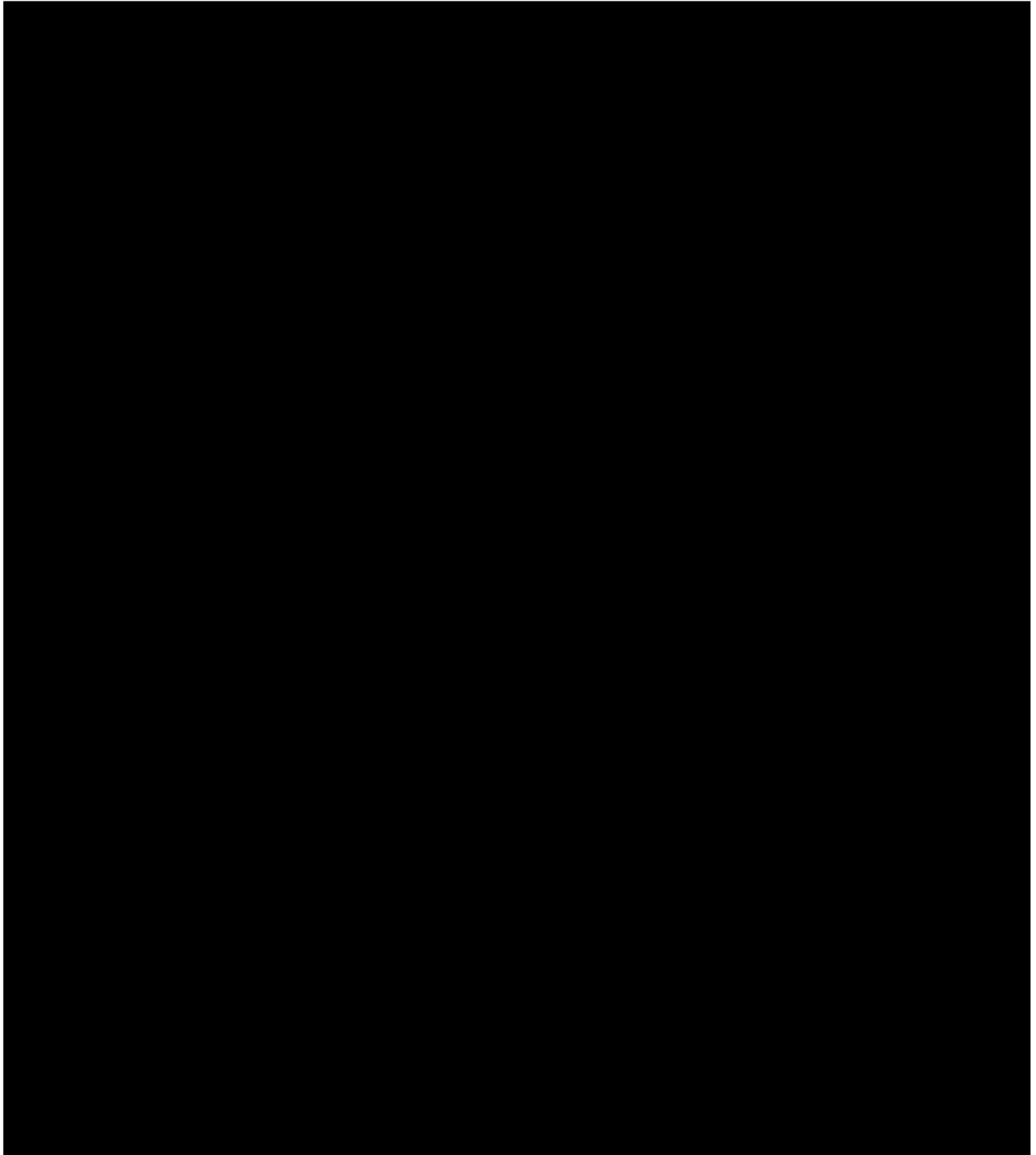
*Mr Mark Anthony Butler*

Signed by Mr Mark Anthony Butler

Signed on: 5 June, 2022

# Signature Certificate

Document name: Submission to Inquiry - Mr Mark Anthony Bu...



## **Rifle Company Butterworth Medallic Recognition for Active Service Submission by Mark Butler.**

### **Tour details:**

In 1977-78 I deployed to Rifle Company Butterworth Malaysia (RCB) with B Coy 1 RAR. My role was the Section Commander of 3 section 4 platoon. My section comprised 10 in total which is a full section compliment. Because you had to be 18 years of age or older to go to Butterworth and some of my original members were only 17 they remained in Australia and Lindsay Crompton an Armoured Corp trooper was assigned to my section. Within the Company there were a number of other Corp personnel to ensure we were full strength and all of them came from what we termed the combatant corps. Armoured, Artillery and Engineers to fill the Infantry gaps.

B Coy 1 RAR replaced a company from 3RAR who I understand had extended their tour due to security concerns.

### **Quick Reaction Force and Roving Piquet.**

Upon arriving in Butterworth we were shown around the airbase. Key areas were pointed out to us that comprised the Vital Points that may require our section to respond to if we were called out while performing Quick Reaction Force (QRF) duties. In my time there we always had 1 x 10 man section on QRF every night mounting duty at 4pm till 8am and all day on weekends. During the daytime on a weekday the nominated section and the platoon it was a part off always remained on the airbase and was available if urgently required.

An additional section of 10 men would man a roving piquet every night and provide full time coverage of a person in the Armscote where a large supply of ammunition and weapons were held. At all times the Armscote had to be manned and once a person was inside the door was locked to prevent access. They remained there for the entire duty and a meal was bought to them to consume inside.

The QRF section mounted duty dressed in greens and with basic webbing. They drew their section weapon and this was kept with them throughout. At night when going to sleep the weapon was beside their bunk with their webbing at the end containing their live ammunition in magazines in the case of rifles and link was beside the Machine Gun.

We had a full sections allocation of weapons including the M60 machine gun and a trunk which contained a large quantity of extra ball ammunition and link. I seem to recall this trunk being taken with us on callouts but I cannot be certain.

The Roving Piquet were a 2 man mobile unit on two hour shifts and carried a 77 set radio and one soldier carried an automatic M16 rifle which had a starlight scope attached. This allowed the user to see things much clearer as it absorbed light from external sources and made things more visible. Initially we were told this was for security of the lines against theft but when my section was on Roving Piquet the roving patrol included around the golf course area amongst other places which was nowhere near the soldier's lines.

The guard room office had a Tobias (ground sensor) monitor screen which would let off an alarm and light up if movement was detected within key areas of the airbase. In the same office was located the details for the rules of engagement (ROE) and this was read to everyone on the QRF each time it mounted. These orders also contained the challenge requirement that was to be issued and used in conjunction with ROE.

Sleeping personnel remained fully dressed with boots on at all times because any callout required a rapid response.

Every night on at least 2 occasions we would be called out by the Duty Officer (of commissioned or non-commissioned rank – eg Sgt or Warrant Officer). We would receive a phone call at the guard room and be advised of the number of the Vital Point and we would scramble from the guard room fully armed and pile onto a truck which had a large search light mounted on it and travel at speed towards the nominated point. As the troops were heading towards the rear of the truck I would check the location of the relevant VP on a board if I wasn't 100% sure where it was.

On air-base driving speed was totally disregarded when responding to a callout. There was an expectation that we would be there as quickly as was possible. At the time everyone on board the truck had their weapons in the load condition. That is a magazine on the weapon but no round in the chamber. In the middle of the night with people still waking up I am genuinely surprised we never had anyone fall out on the way. The truck was open backed and most times people sat on the floor as it was safer. I can attest that a poor/slow response to a callout was met with anger/frustration and a questioning of your leadership skills by the Duty Officer and would mean more than the 2 callouts as a form of punishment.

Just short of the location we would dismount as quickly as possible and shake out into a relevant formation on the ground ready to move towards the objective. Some VP's were small and able to be covered by view instantly while others were more complex and involved buildings and moving through to determine they were clear.

At the location we would then be advised by the duty officer who was generally hidden from sight if it was a drill or not. On a couple of occasions it wasn't a drill.

On one of these occasions my section cleared an aircraft hangar area. At the time we entered the hangar we had gone from the loaded condition to the Action condition which meant we had live ammunition in the chamber of our weapons but the safety catch still applied.

It is possible that a cat or other animal or a technical fault had activated the sensor alarm as we didn't locate any persons there. I cannot emphasize enough our level of heightened awareness during this action. Also you cannot rehearse for every conceivable scenario. With the gun and number 2 acting as a cut-off the remainder of the section moved through the building clearing it as we went. This requires a high level of trust and confidence in those around you when carrying loaded firearms.

On another occasion my section was called away during the day to man a checkpoint on a road within the airbase and stop and check all vehicles and personnel. We only did this for a couple of hours from memory then stood down. I do not recall the reason why we were required to do so.

### **Military Activities from Butterworth Air Base**

It was common knowledge that the Malaysian Air Force was flying bombing/attack missions against Communist Terrorists (CT) insurgents from Butterworth Air Base and we would receive regular Intel updates which would advise when CT activity had been encountered in close proximity of the air base. Butterworth often received Malaysian military casualties from their insurgency operations via helicopter. Many of our company witnessed this occur and wounded soldiers taken off though I did not.

The airbase perimeter contained a number of sentry boxes which were manned by the Malaysian Military. They had a reputation of being very jumpy and we tried to make sure we avoided them especially at night. They were fully armed generally with a submachine gun and had been known to shoot first and question later.

### **Provide a Standing Patrol/Ambush within the perimeter**

On a weekend day either late 1977 or early 1978 my section was tasked to do a daylight perimeter patrol of the Malaysian Airbase to check the integrity of the perimeter fencing. I seem to recall that there were certain Malaysian celebrations going on at this time and we were at an increased level of security on the airbase. During this patrol we detected that in several places the wire had been cut large enough to allow a person to easily enter and in one place a fairly large section had been cut out and removed.

Upon return this was reported and later that afternoon I was advised I was to take my section back to this area. I spoke to the 2IC of the Company Captain Hans Fleer DCM who showed me the area on a map of the Airbase. He pointed to a Monsoon drain that was close by and said this would be a good spot. I asked him if I was laying an Ambush or was it a Standing Patrol when I did my Orders. He said use the Ambush ones but you will have the challenge to deliver if anyone comes in.

Before I left the office he gave me some specific instructions about if we needed to fire and re-enforced the fact there was a Kampong (village) not far from there and that fire discipline was paramount.

Prior to departing the guard room area, I briefed the section and we moved into location after dark. I think we were dropped off some distance away by the QRF truck and walked in but I cannot be certain. Someone took a photo of some of the section which I still have and was publically available and is attached. In it I am shown briefing the section and visible is a member of the Malaysian Armed Forces. I believe he was there so the Malays knew where we were going and to accompany us.

Before moving into the position near the fence we went to the Action condition (fully loaded) with our personal weapons and moved into the monsoon drain as planned. We remained there for many hours and during that time a person approached the fence from the outside. It was in the vicinity of the missing section of wire. They stopped there just looking in for quite a while but did not attempt to enter the Airbase. Eventually they moved away. If they had entered then they would have been challenged and if necessary engaged by small arms fire as per our ROE.

### **My perception of what I was doing at Butterworth Airbase and Why**

To better assess this we need to look back at what happened prior to departing for Butterworth in our parent unit. When it is announced that your company is going to Butterworth there is a certain buzz that you expect any time a group knows they are going overseas.

### ***Warned out for War Service.***

At a given time prior to deployment we were all called into a training room possibly by platoon lots where the RSM read out to us the provisions pertaining to Military Law when we were over there. Specifically we were told that while in Malaysia we would be "On War Service" which allowed the Company Commander as a Major to award punishments as if he was a Battalion Commander / Lt. Colonel. It was explained that this was necessary for discipline purposes.

I understand the concept of the warning order but during my 6 years in the Battalion during the 1970's I did a total of 3 overseas trips. Malaysia, Hawaii and New Zealand. All of these were as company size units but only prior to going to Butterworth was it ever considered necessary to advise we were "on War Service" for discipline reasons.

From personal enquiries with other defence members I have never found where this was used anywhere except for Butterworth. So this was definitely not the norm because you were going overseas as a company identity and the OC required higher powers. In those other countries we had no higher ranking officer that could have heard the charges if of a more serious level yet in Butterworth we had high ranking RAAF officers that could have been given authority to have dealt higher punishments. The War Service warning only for Butterworth is an abnormally.

### ***Pre-deployment training***

Prior to deployment we carried out extensive training on what we commonly referred to as Aid to Civil Powers training which tended to deal with what you might expect during civilian unrest. We did a lot of training using road blocks with vehicle and troop placement and also manning barbed wire structure style road blocks. All of this training was dramatically different than normal Infantry tactics used in the field back in Australia.

We also did Mounted Vehicle Ambush Drills where we would practice rapid dismounting of initially stationary trucks and then while moving at low speed. The aim was to be able to rapidly place the section on the ground from the truck in a position to be able to bring fire to bear towards the direction of engagement if you came under fire. I understood this was to ensure that we could rapidly react as a drill if fired upon while moving by truck on the airbase especially when carrying out QRF duties or anywhere else for that matter.

At all times during this training we took it very seriously and believed that we were doing so because we may be required to use these skills while in Butterworth.

### ***In Country – CT activities***

While in Butterworth and in particular while providing QRF and Piquet duties I felt that we were quite vulnerable given how open most areas of the airbase are. The airstrip is about 2.5 kilometres long and cleared well beyond at either end. Other open areas on the base are dotted with buildings mostly illuminated. When you are looking towards bright lighting it is almost impossible to see anything beyond it but at the same time it makes you very visible to anyone looking from the darkness.

As Infantry soldiers we were primarily trained to operate in the field where concealment and cover is paramount. What we were undertaking at Butterworth was totally different by nature. As we adapted to our new role where speed was more important than stealth we became a well-trained, well-armed mobile force capable of producing a high volume of firepower if needed.

The airbase contained a number of storm water monsoon drains which were quite large and deep which would provide an opportunity for concealed movement of people along them. Also by nature a Military Airfield contains massive amounts of fuel to supply several squadrons of fighter aircraft and large quantities of High Explosives in the form of bombs, rockets and other ordnance belonging to either the Malaysians or RAAF. The presence of these locations some of which formed our Vital Points could not be discounted as a potential target.

I had been made aware that sometime prior to our arrival that signs of CT activity close to Butterworth had occurred. It was thought that the CT's could consider it a good publicity

opportunity if they were to attack Butterworth Airbase and cause damage given the airbase was where many strikes against them were coming from.

I recall being informed at some point that booby traps and I believe a mortar base plate had been found in the surrounding areas off of the base some time prior to my tour. It was understood that CT's were active around the area of Kulim around 30 kilometres away by road during my time there in 1977/78.

I was aware that a military aircraft had been hit by mortar fire in 1974 on a Malaysian Airfield by CT's. The knowledge that the CT's had area weapons and had previously used them against military aircraft indicated to me that if it happened at Butterworth that area weapons would not be able to differentiate between Malaysian and Australian personnel.

In fact I am not sure that the Malaysian Military had sufficient personnel present at Butterworth to have responded immediately to any threat on the base. I am certain if they did then our role regarding where on the base we were expected to protect would have been different. I do not recall ever being informed of their presence apart from the guards on the perimeter and gate. With respect to the Malaysian Military guarding the perimeter I never saw anything that even vaguely represented the firepower capability of an Australian Rifle Company Section.

## **War-Like Service**

### ***There for the purpose of training.***

In the past results of submissions much has been made of the requirement for the Rifle Company in Butterworth to be able to use the opportunity for training with the Malaysian Military. Further that security was very much secondary to the training requirement. This is an insult to those who served there particularly during the 1970's because training with the Malaysian Army simply didn't happen.

This "for training" concept just doesn't stack up because:

- We had plenty of jungle at home to train in and
- The Malaysians were in an insurgency war and didn't have the time, inclination or spare troops and equipment to train with us.
- Most of our NCO's and above were South Vietnam, Borneo and Malaysian Emergency veterans and were fully capable of imparting their knowledge and skills

Regarding Jungle training North Queensland and in particular Mt Spec and Tully had more than enough jungle for us to go and undertake training at a company or platoon level. These were recognised Military Jungle Training Areas and Canungra was also still available to use if needed.

Strangely enough we never went to either Mt Spec or Tully to brush up on the jungle skills prior to deployment to Malaysia which if we were going to be out in the jungle training with the Malaysians would have been a good idea.

To be sent to Butterworth you had pass the highest level of fitness and skill competencies which was the same as any soldier sent to South Vietnam. In short any soldier who undertook a tour of duty to Butterworth was combat ready. Surely this wouldn't have been an issue if we were only training.

The most recent review finding suggested that our tour of duty to Butterworth was normal peacetime service – garrison type duties. I can advise that during my military service I have



never undertaken the type of training in order to carry out security of a military establishment within Australia as I did for Butterworth.

Nor have I ever placed a section on the ground with fully loaded weapons ready to open fire on any person who entered that establishment. Guard duty in Townsville during my time in the battalion was done armed with the wooden handle of a mattock. Some significant difference. Nor do I recall seeing pictorial warning signs showing someone being shot placed all over our Military bases though they were strategically placed in Butterworth. Warning signage in South East Asia particularly showing severe consequences like being shot are not taken lightly.

All travel by Military vehicles off of the airbase especially to ranges for weapons practice saw us fully armed with NCO's and above issued live ammunition in the event we encountered hostiles. There was no real danger of encountering Tigers or other wild animals whilst in transit.

### ***Requirement for Training prior to arrival.***

In document titled NAA: C707, 722/K11/17 titled Rotation of Australian Rifle Company at Air Base Butterworth – volume No. 11 – 408 page Brief Part 1 – Operational Aspects written on 06 July 1979 19. B Annex B, Security Training advises that “to enable the company to properly carry out security duties on arrival in Butterworth, it is recommended that the company complete the following security training prior to deployment”.

- Conduct a security patrol and search a vulnerable point in an urban environment
- Set up and conduct a road block
- Search Vehicles
- Conduct mobile patrols
- Control a crowd
- React to a Motor Transport Ambush
- Engage an enemy from a moving vehicle
- Be-bus from a moving vehicle

Even though this was written a year after my tour it reflects the type of training that my section undertook prior to deploying. It was obvious that it was designed specifically for use in either the airbase or an urban setting that might exist nearby possibly the married quarter's areas.

### ***Training and familiarisation to be conducted at Butterworth***

The same document as above in Annex B then outlines the training to be carried out at Butterworth. In particular:

- Search-light and generator instructions
- Familiarisation with key points
- Appreciation of the enemy threat and likely approaches; and
- Quick reaction exercises.

All of these reflect the training I undertook with my section upon arriving and serving at Butterworth.

### ***Implications about this training “in country”***

Why do I need to know likely enemy approaches and threat levels to a Military Airbase if I am only in Malaysia for the opportunity to train alongside of another Army? Which I never got the chance to do because they were too busy fighting that enemy.

On the enemy subject who are the enemy and are they the Malaysian's enemy or mine or when occupying a shared military base while the host is engaged in a conflict and those they are fighting have access to area weapons does it become a collective enemy?

Can there be an enemy when your "service at Butterworth was clearly or markedly no more demanding than normal peace time service" as cited in the March 1994 Report of the Committee of the Inquiry into Defence and Defence Related Awards.

### **Objective Danger**

Justice Mohr's comments about "objective danger" as outlined in the February 2000 Review of Service Entitlement Anomalies in Respect of South-East Asian Service stated in part.

"If a servicemen is told there is an enemy and he will be in danger then that member will not only perceive danger, but to him or her it will be an objective danger on rational and reasonable grounds. If called upon, the member will face that objective danger. The member's experience of the objective danger at the time will not be removed by hindsight showing that no actual enemy operations eventuated"

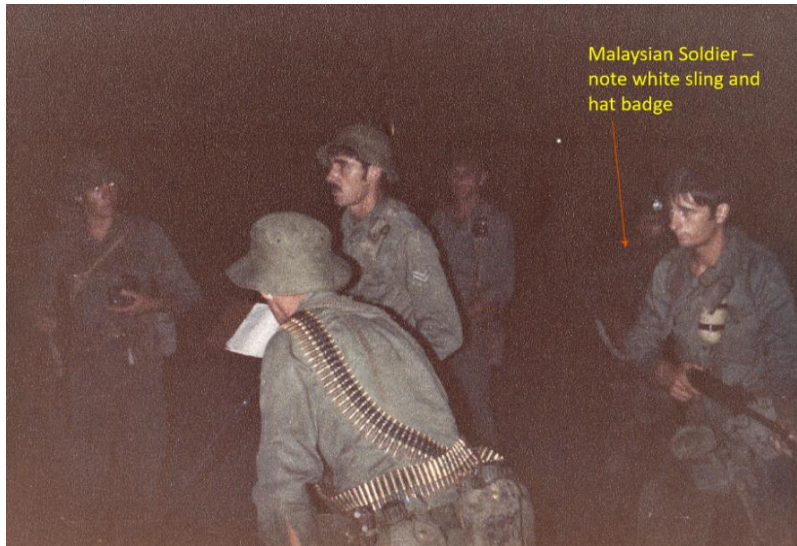
During my service in Butterworth an armed enemy did exist. We received regular updates as to their activities and as part of our familiarisation we were told where their likely approaches would be to the air base. My section when on QRF/Piquet was responsible for the security of the vital areas that we familiarised ourselves with and trained to respond to several times both day and night when on duty.

When my section was deployed on the perimeter where there were breaches of the perimeter fence we were in no doubt of what we were required to do should someone enter and not halt when challenged. Also the Malaysian Military on the base at the time were aware of our location and tasking. The presence of a Malaysian soldier at my briefing of the section and accompanying us to the location is a clear example of both forces working together in the defence of the airbase. This was not the only time this had occurred and I have spoken to others who took Malaysian soldiers on overnight standing patrols with them.

If any insurgent had of entered the Butterworth Airbase and posed a threat then there is no doubt in my mind that the initial response to them would have been the QRF section as we rehearsed so many times every day/night.

The CT's had previously demonstrated an intent and ability to attack Military Aircraft on an Airbase using area weapons (mortars). Mortars fire on what is believed to be the correct settings and then are adjusted onto target by those on the ground who can see the fall of shot. Any such attack upon Butterworth may have seen rounds fall anywhere until corrected. There is nothing to suggest that Australian Servicemen would not have been caught up in such an event.

Protection of vital assets and Military aircraft on a Military Airbase is a phase of war. RCB was warlike.



Malaysian Soldier –  
note white sling and  
hat badge

I am in the middle briefing my section prior to going out to the perimeter fence where we had found holes cut in the wire during a day time patrol. Note Malaysian Soldier with us.

Submitted for your consideration

Mark Butler