

Document ID: 7e98edcfe2bb47e137b22cbd35140b2c101d8bde

25 July, 2022

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

Submission to Inquiry - Mr Kenneth Neville Marsh

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 *

Marsh

Given Names *

Kenneth Neville

Postal Address *

[REDACTED]

Email Address: *

[REDACTED]

Primary Contact Number *

[REDACTED]

Secondary Contact Number

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

Part 3 – Desired outcome

Provide a summary of your submission:

This is supplemental to my submission that you acknowledged on 1 July 2022. DHAAT INQUIRY 31 DHAAT/OUT/2022/396

Part 4 - Your submission and Supporting Documentation

File Attached: AIR-BASE-BUTTERWORTH-DURING-THE-TWO-EMERGENCIES-THE-GREATER-THREAT-Revised-2-10-2019-Google-Docs.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

Kenneth Neville Marsh

Date

25/07/2022 /

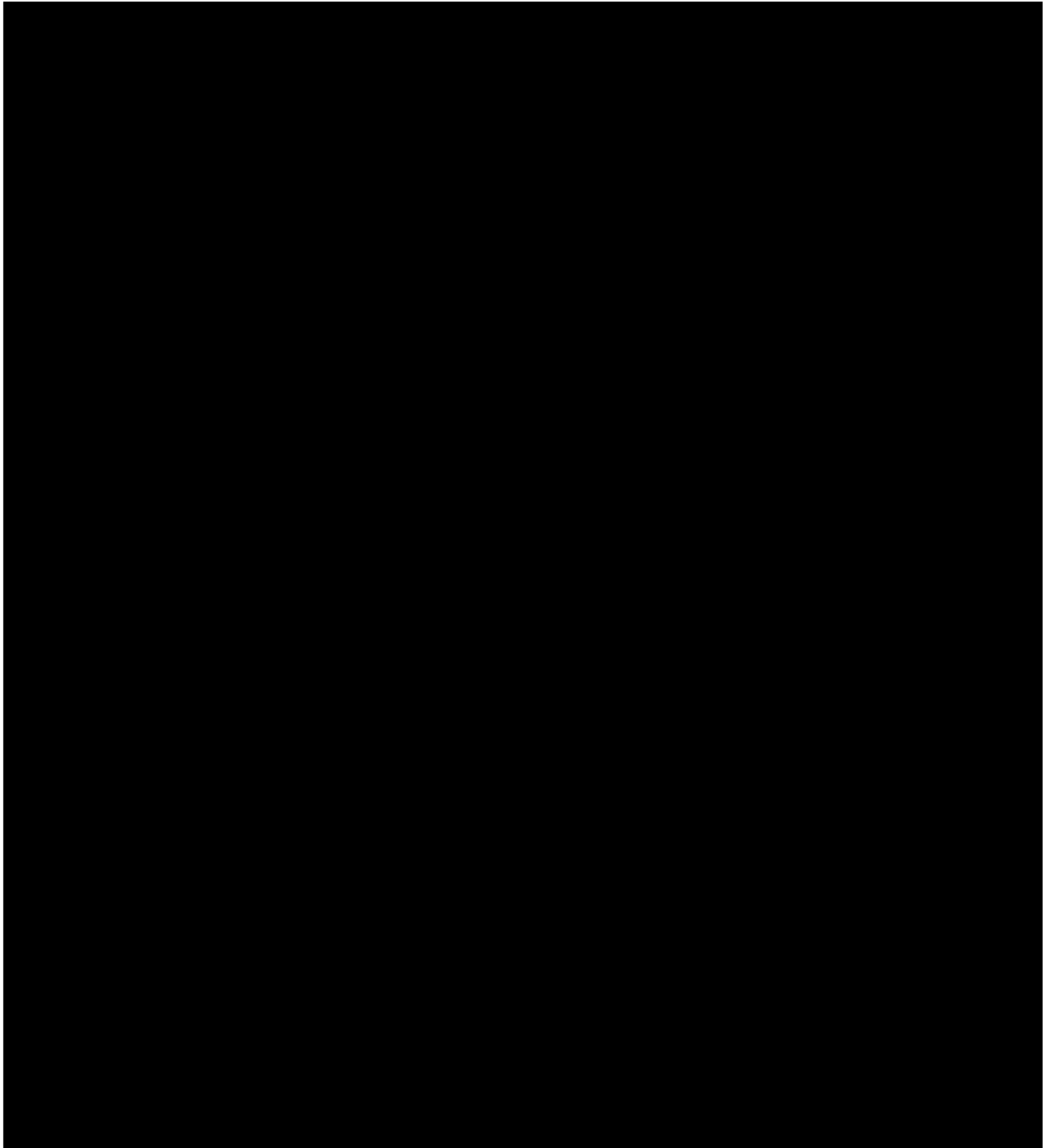
*Mr Kenneth Neville
Marsh*

Signed by Mr Kenneth Neville Marsh


Signed on: 25 July, 2022

Signature Certificate

Document name: Submission to Inquiry - Mr Kenneth Neville Marsh



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

 Audit Trail Serial# 0e7f381156103a01d2029ba4c9b4f239

AIR BASE BUTTERWORTH DURING THE TWO EMERGENCIES - THE GREATER THREAT

Ken Marsh

SYNOPSIS

In what appears to have been a desperate act to hold his disintegrating organisation together Chin Peng launched the Malayan Emergency in June 1948. Armed with small arms acquired from the British during WW2 what followed was an outbreak of violence in isolated areas throughout the Malay Peninsula.

The introduction of White Areas by General Sir Gerald Templer in 1953 marks a real turning point in the war. Cut off from the local populace they terrorised for support the guerrillas were forced deep into the jungle where they were hunted down by the security forces. By 1955 they were no longer presented a significant threat.

By the time the Emergency was declared over in 1960 the surviving communists had withdrawn to the relative safety of South Thailand. From here they regrouped, rebuilt their forces and prepared, under the direction of Beijing, to relaunch their campaign to take Malaysia and Singapore.

This came in 1968 with an attack on a Malaysian Security Force convoy in the border region adjoining Thailand resulting in the death of 17 security force members. This time the communists were better prepared, better trained, equipped and taking the time to carefully infiltrate back into the Peninsula. While there were periodic clashes with the security forces it was not until 1974 that a widespread outbreak of violence erupted. In marked contrast to the first Emergency the Second Emergency saw an outbreak of urban terrorism including attacks on military and security force installations in urban areas.

Ownership of Air Base Butterworth was transferred to Australia in 1958 following a two-and-one-half year upgrade of the facility by the RAAF's No. 2 Airfield Construction Squadron. Air Force members posted to Butterworth were accompanied by their families.

The outbreak of violence in the 1970s saw security measures reintroduced in the Butterworth area that had not been employed since 1954. Documents sourced from the National Archives of Australia clearly demonstrate the real concern top defence and intelligence officers held for the security of Butterworth, including the families of Defence Force members living in the area. While they could not say Butterworth would be singled out for an attack in lieu of other military bases in Malaysia neither could they rule out the possibility of an attack. It was a situation they could not ignore.

By the early 1980s the threat had considerably diminished. The Malaysia forces had significantly improved their capability to deal with the communists who had by that time figuratively shot themselves in the foot. It would not be until 1989 that peace was secured.

INTRODUCTION

Australian service personnel served at Air Base Butterworth in North West Malaysia during the 1948-1960 Malayan Emergency and the 1968-1989 Second Malaysian Emergency (SME). During both periods military members were accompanied by their families who lived either in Butterworth or on the adjacent Penang Island.

Service at Butterworth during the First Emergency is classified as warlike and veterans of that period receive the associated repatriation benefits. The Australian Department of Defence maintains service during the SME is appropriately classified as peacetime, meaning it considers the dangers faced by Butterworth veterans are no more than that faced by all other veterans engaged in peacetime service.

This paper examines the military threat to the Butterworth area, including Penang, during both periods. The evidence demonstrates significantly greater threat to military members and their families during the SME.

The scope is limited to Butterworth and Penang. By the time the Australian Army commenced operations against the communists in 1955 the enemy was contained deep in the jungle. Clearly the threat to those engaged in combat operations against the enemy in the jungle were different to those serving on the ground at Butterworth.

BACKGROUND

Australia's commitment to the Malayan Emergency commenced with the arrival of 38 Squadron Dakotas and Lincoln bombers of 1 Squadron in 1950. The outcome of the Emergency was no longer in doubt when the Army's 2nd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment reached Penang in 1955 to undertake mopping up operations. On two occasions in 1956 and 1957 Australian naval ships fired on suspected communist positions. Of the 39 Australian servicemen killed during this time 15 died as a result of operations and 27 were wounded. Most of the casualties were army.¹

Air Base Butterworth is located in Province Wellesley, or Seberang Perai, opposite Penang Island and is part of Penang State. A pre-war base it was established by the RAF as one of their Far East bases. In 1955 number 2 Air Field Construction Squadron commenced a two-and-a-half-years upgrade of the facility. Although ownership remained with the RAF it was placed under RAAF control in July 1958. Ownership passed to Malaysia in March 1970 although it remained under Australian control until June 1988.²

¹ Australian War Museum, *Malayan Emergency*, <https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/atwar/malayan-emergency>, accessed 27 Aug 2019

² 60 Years Australia and Malaysia, *New Defence Arrangements for a New Era*, Chapter 1, Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, at

Butterworth became the home of the RAAF's 78 Fighter Wing, comprised of 3 and 77 Squadrons, and 2 Bomber Squadron. Following the handover to Malaysia Australia maintained two Mirage Squadrons at Butterworth as part of its commitment to the Five Power Defence Arrangement (FPDA) until the last Mirages were withdrawn in 1989.³ 75 Squadron was withdrawn in 1983, 3 Squadron 1986 to be replaced by 79 Squadron.⁴

In the face of an armed communist threat an army company, known as Rifle Company Butterworth, or RCB, was established as a quick reaction force to respond to security threats to the Australian assets at Butterworth. The company was initially provided from the ANZUK forces in Singapore but, following the withdrawal of the Australian Battalion in Singapore the company was deployed on the basis of three month deployments from Australia.⁵ These deployments were unaccompanied with the Company being placed under the control of the Officer Commanding RAAF Base Butterworth.⁶

Because of political sensitivities at the time the real purpose of the deployment, security, was hidden under the cover of 'training, flag flying and change of scene'.⁷ This deception is clear in different high level, high security classification documents.

A directive for the attention of Lt Colonel Hollings 'Security of Butterworth: Provision of Army Company' dated 13 June 1973, shows the importance placed on the Company rotated from Australia. Noted are the following:

- deploy fully equipped with three months reserve of "war stores";
- resupply of ammunition from RAAF Butterworth who should hold about ¼ of a battalions first line reserve as applicable to the company;
- same procedures to be followed as applied to Vietnam as there was 'a lot involved' in the deployment;
- company to be DP1 [combat ready] before deployment;
- placed under the direct command of the Officer Commanding RAAF Butterworth.⁸

Consisting of up to three Orion PC3 aircraft Detachment A of 92 Wing commenced operations from Butterworth in February 1981. In response to the Soviet invasion of

<https://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/international-relations/60-years-australia-in-malaysia/chapter1-new-defence-arrangements.html>

³ Australian War Memorial, *Butterworth*, at <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/PL2027>

⁴ Pathfinder Air Power Development Centre Bulletin, *Integrated Area Defence System: 40 years old and still going strong*, Issue 148, January 2011
Wikipedia, *No. 79 Squadron RAAF*

⁵ Background Paper, *Recommendations of the Review of Service Entitlement in Respect of the Royal Australian Air Force and Army Rifle Company Butterworth Service 1971-1989*, approved by Minister Bruce Scott MP, 18/04/2001 (date unclear), PE 2000-34836 Pt 1, CDF 249/01

Defence Committee, Minutes of meeting held on 11 January, 1973, *Five Power and ANZUK Arrangements and Withdrawal of Australian Battalion and Battery*, Agendum No. 1/1973, Minute 2/1973, 11 Jan 1973

⁶ Tange, A.H. (for), Secretary, Department of Defence, to the Secretary, Department of Air, Security at Butterworth, 71/3160, 2 Mar 1972

⁷ Tange

⁸ A.V. Preece, Col, D Inf (for), *Security of Butterworth: Provision of Infantry Company*, DOP 548/73 of 8 Jun 73

Afghanistan in 1979 Detachment A was employed on surveillance of Soviet shipping, including submarines, in the region throughout the period to the end of 1989.⁹ Operation Gateway continues to this day.

THE TWO EMERGENCIES

Sungei Siput lies roughly 30 kilometres north of Ipoh, the capital of the Malaysian state of Perak. Thirty two kilometers east of Sungei Siput lay the isolated rubber plantation Ephel Estate. A little before 8.30 on the morning of 16 June 1948 three young Malayan Chinese parked their push bikes against the office wall and walked casually into the office. A few seconds later the English estate manager was dead, shot through the chest and the heart.¹⁰

Less than 30 minutes later at the Sungei Sipit Estate, 16 kilometers away 12 armed Chinese surrounded the main building. Ten or so minutes the manager and his assistant, both English, were murdered. These incidents mark the beginning of the Malayan Emergency which was officially declared over on 31 July 1960. A third British manager 'escaped with his life because his jeep broke down while he was on his rounds.' The terrorists waiting for him became suspicious so left on their bicycles.¹¹ Two days later, on 18th June, 'a state of emergency was declared for all of Malaya.'¹²

As the Emergency ground to an end the remaining communists retreated to the jungles of Southern Thailand. In the years following they built relationships with the local population, reorganised, recruited new members and prepared for return to Peninsular Malaysia. They streamlined communication from its 'top representatives in Beijing, from whom it received directions and policy instructions from time to time.'¹³ Most of the Malayan Communist Party's (MCP) senior officials had moved to Beijing by 1961 and it was from Beijing that the MCP was directed.¹⁴

New cadres were recruited from 'family members and their sympathisers in Peninsular Malaysia, and also amongst residents in south Thailand'. These recruits 'were given exposure and intensive training such as marksmanship, guerilla tactics and military drills as basic training in preparation for guerilla warfare before they were absorbed into the various assault units or became members of underground elements.'¹⁵

⁹ Office of Air Force History, Oral History Program, *RAAF Participation in Operation Gateway*, Snippets No.5

¹⁰ Barber, Noel. *The war of the running dogs – How Malaya defeated the communist guerrillas 1948 – 1960*, William Collins, 1971, 2004 Paperback Edition by Cassell, p.p 20-22

¹¹ Barber, p.p. 22,23

¹² Australian War Memorial, *Malayan Emergency*, at <https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/atwar/malayan-emergency>, accessed 27 Aug 2019

¹³ Mohamed Ghazemy Mahmud (Translator), *The Malaysian Army's Battle Against Communist Insurgency 1968-1989*, Army Headquarters, Ministry of Defence, Wisma Pertahanan, Jalan Padang Tembak, 50634 Kuala Lumpur, First Printing and originally published in 2001 in the Malay language as 'Tentera Darat Manentang Insurgensi Komunis 1968-1989, p.p. 4, 6, 13

¹⁴ Ong Weichong, *Malaysia's Defeat of Armed Communism - The second emergency, 1968-1989*, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2015. p.49

¹⁵ Mohamed Ghazemy Mahmud (Translator), *The Malaysian Army's Battle Against Communist Insurgency 1968-1989*, Army Headquarters, Ministry of Defence, Wisma Pertahanan, Jalan Padang Tembak, 50634 Kuala Lumpur, p.p. 13,15

Twenty years after the start of the Emergency, on the 17 June 1968, the communists relaunched their assault on Malaysia. Rather than isolated planters this time the communists ambushed a Malaysian Security Force convey 'near Kroh on the Thai border, killing 17 policemen ...'¹⁶

THE EARLY YEARS

The Malayan jungle provided an ideal cover for the Communist Terrorists (CTs). It allowed them to emerge from the jungle, launch surprise attacks and disappear back into it. The security forces could not tell where or when they would strike next. From the beginning in 1948 it was a guerilla campaign against isolated targets such as European planters, tappers, small towns and police stations up and down the Peninsular. Trains, buses and military convoys were also ambushed with success.¹⁷

Barber records that by early 1949, 482 police, troops and civilians had been killed by the CTs and another 404 wounded. 'In 1950, 646 civilians were murdered and 106 were missing'. Without providing statistics Barber reports 'the months of killing in the summer and autumn of 1951' as 'perhaps the blackest period of the twelve-year war' with no signs of casualties decreasing.¹⁸

'By 1953 the communists had lost the initiative ...' and were 'being forced deeper and deeper into the jungles ...'¹⁹ Compare this to the early years of the Second Malaysian Emergency (SME).

According to the Malaysian Army after some aggressive encounters with the Malaysian Security Forces the Communists changed tactics, concentrating instead on infiltrating their assault units back into the Peninsular.²⁰ Ong describes the years 1968-1973 as the 'first phase'. He says this 'was characterised by the infiltration and movement of CPM²¹ groups into Peninsular Malaysia and the reestablishment of an underground mass support and supply infrastructure ...'²² During this time activities 'such as ambushes were conducted to tie up security forces in border areas, thus permitting maximum ease of infiltration movements.'²³

¹⁶ Lim Cheng Leng and Khor Eng Lee, *Waging an Unwinnable War - The Communist Insurgency in Malaysia (1948-1989)*, Xlibris, 2016, revised 10/21/2016, p. xxxi

¹⁷ Barber, p.p. 38, 51, 91-98

¹⁸ Barber, p.p. 98, 146

¹⁹ Dugdale-Pointon, T. (26 August 2007), *The Malayan Emergency (1947-1960)*, http://www.historyofwar.org/articles/wars_malaya.html

²⁰ Mohamed Ghazemy Mahmud (Translator), *The Malaysian Army's Battle Against Communist Insurgency 1968-1989*, Army Headquarters, Ministry of Defence, Wisma Pertahanan, Jalan Padang Tembak, 50634 Kuala Lumpur, First Printing and originally published in 2001 in the Malay language as 'Tentera Darat Manentang Insurgensi Komunis 1968-1989, p.6

²¹ CPM - Communist Party of Malaya.

²² Ong Weichong, p.51

²³ Ong Weichong, p.p 60, 61

A 1973 report prepared by the United States' Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) describes a careful and methodical re-establishment of a very competent communist guerrilla force in North West Malaysia.

By mid-1968, some 600 armed Communist insurgents ... began to move gradually from inactive to active status under stimulation from Peking. They moved back across the border [from Thailand], first to reconnoitre and then permanently to position themselves in small base areas in northern West Malaysia. The CTs - - that is, Communist Terrorists or members of the MNLA [²⁴] – numbered about 600 regular armed cadres at the close of the Emergency (1948-1960), expanded to about 1,000 by 1968, to about 1,600 in mid-1970, and to about 1,800 in mid-1972. The slow upward progression in the number of armed insurgents represents a positive gain, and the existence of small bases capable of accommodating about 40-60 CTs points toward a long-term potential expansion.'

... The evidence is that the revival of the insurgency in mid-1968 reflected from the start considerable military competence: good planning, tactical caution, good execution. CT units were armed and given uniforms in Southern Thailand and were infiltrated skilfully into Malaysian territory with the initial mission of reconnoitring and re-establishing contacts with underground insurgents. Their mission later became that of making selective attacks on Malaysian security force units and undertaking selective sabotage of key installations in West Malaysia. Toward the end of 1968, the number of NMLA – or CT – incursions from southern Thailand gradually increased. In late 1970, it was solidly confirmed that small groups of CT infiltrators had permanently established small bases for inside-Malaysia operations – a development occurring for the first time since the late 1950s. Later, the base camps were reported to be capable of supporting 40-60 CTs, as they included food caches.

The CTs were still building their units and were not in a phase of general offensive operations. But they did engage in selective strikes against government forces. A major incident involving the mining by CT forces of the main west coast road linking Malaysia and Thailand took place in late October 1969. On 10 December, a strategic installation was hit: a group of CTs blew up the 100-foot-long railway bridge on Malaysian territory about two miles southwest of Padang Besar, Perlis Province, severing for a few days the main railway link between Thailand and Malaysia. Gradually the CTs increased the number of cross-border incursions, their calculation having been to demonstrate their ability to operate on Malaysian territory without suffering extensive combat losses. They wanted to test their own ability to safely infiltrate, to hit important installations and roads, and to move bigger units across undetected. Their planning was careful, the pace deliberate, and the actions generally low risk²⁵.

Comments regarding the 'considerable military competence' may be more telling than first appears. In July 1948 Malayan Police-Superintendent Bill Stafford killed Lau Yew, whom Barber says was the communist leader Chin Peng's 'only real military adviser'. His loss is described as 'a crippling blow from which Chin Peng never really recovered, for Lau Yew was the only CT with any real pretensions to military tactics'.²⁶ Lim and Khor state the Emergency 'was launched by communist terrorists with little combat experience despite their vaunted resistance campaign against the occupying Japanese military over a period of more

²⁴ MNLA - Malayan National Liberation Army

²⁵ Directorate of Intelligence (Central Intelligence Agency, USA (CIA)), Intelligence Report: Peking's Support of Insurgencies In Southeast Asia (Reference Title: POLO LIII), April 1973, p.p. 115 - 118
at <http://www.foia.cia.gov/CPE/POLO/polo-37.pdf>, accessed 12 Sep 2012

²⁶ Barber, p.p. 66, 68

than three and a half years'. They cite the Communists Central Political Bureau from November 1949: 'None of our troops received sufficient training before the outbreak of the Emergency'.²⁷

By way of contrast Lim and Khor say: 'The second insurgency was led by veterans of the first campaign - now more experienced, better trained and indoctrinated, and taught state-of-the-art techniques (including Vietcong tactics) of making revolutionary war. And this time, the insurgents were also better armed.'²⁸ The implication of this for Butterworth is discussed below.

HOW THE EMERGENCIES UNFOLDED

As has been shown above, the Malayan Emergency erupted in 1948 with an outbreak of violence up and down the Malayan Peninsula. By 1953, less than six years later, the communists had lost the initiative and were being driven deep into the jungle so that by 1955 they were no longer 'a real threat'.²⁹

Ong Weichong divides the SME into three distinct phases: 1968-1973; 1974; and 1975-1989.³⁰ The Malaysian Army describes the period to 1974 as 'the early stages of the CPM's so-called "Armed Struggle"'. During the 1975-1980 period the enemy's uniformed and underground 'groups intensified their activities' with frequent clashes between the Security Forces and the enemy. By the 1980s the army had attained the strength and capability to deal effectively with the threat.³¹

In the period leading up to 1974 the communists worked carefully to re-establish their presence in the Peninsular, rebuild their underground networks and supply structure, 'test the reaction of the security forces' to their attacks and to publicise the outcome of these attacks as part of their propaganda campaign to build their credibility.³² During this period Ong says the 'ill-coordinated anticommunist sweeps' of the Security Forces 'produced little in terms of contacts, intelligence or serious disruption of the CPM's infrastructure and network ...' Part of this problem lay with the fact that following the British withdrawal in 1967 the small Malaysian army was overstretched.³³

Ong identifies 1974 as the 'turning point of the Second Emergency'. Prior to 1974 the communists had acrimoniously split into three factions. In 1974 this erupted into 'spectacular acts of revolutionary violence as each CPM faction vied for the legitimacy and

²⁷ Lim Cheng Leng KMN, AMN & Khor Eng Lee, *Waging an Unwinnable War: The Communist Insurgency in Malaysia (1948-1989)*, Xlibris, 2016, p. xlvii

²⁸ Lim & Khor, p.xlvii

²⁹ Dugdale-Pointon, T. (26 August 2007), *The Malayan Emergency (1947-1960)*,

³⁰ Ong p.51

³¹ Sharon Bin Hashim (ed.), Mohamed Ghazemy Mahmud (Translator), *The Malaysian Army's Battle Against Communist Insurgency 1968-1989*, Army Headquarters, Ministry of Defence, Wisma Pertahanan, Jalan Padang Tembak, 50634 Kuala Lumpur, First Printing and originally published in 2001 in the Malay language as 'Tentera Darat Manentang Insurgensi Komunis 1968-1989, p.p. 156, 158

³² Ong, p.53.

³³ Ong, p.p. 116, 117

leadership of the communist movement in Peninsular Malaysia and Singapore.' Each faction 'tried to outdo each other in open battle with the government and among themselves'.³⁴

Commencing in 1974 each faction committed to 'the all-out pursuit of revolutionary violence'. Communist victories in Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam bolstered their confidence and provided them with the hope of real support from these quarters. It was not until 'well into 1977' that the Malaysian Security Forces began to counter the CT 'at the tactical level' and the Communists stubbornly pursued 'all-out armed struggle' into 1981.³⁵

By 1979 it became evident to the British that the communists were 'clearly on the strategic defensive' and the communists themselves realised 'their armed struggle was becoming unsustainable and prospects for success unrealistic' by mid 1980.³⁶ It would not be until 2 December 1989 however that a peace agreement the Malaysian Government and the Communist Party of Malaya would be signed.³⁷

The Malayan Emergency erupted suddenly with an outbreak of violence. Within 6 years the Communists had lost the initiative and two years later had ceased to be a significant threat. In contrast the SME began slowly. It was not until its fifth year that the violence erupted. It would take around another seven years before it became clear that the Communist threat was defeated although it would drag on another 8 years before peace finally came to Malaysia. Both conflicts had a comparatively long tail period after the enemy was defeated.

In the lead up to the First Emergency the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) was in a state of turmoil following a coup which had installed Chin Peng as leader, 'the overnight collapse of its front organizations and the leadership revolt within the Communist-dominated PMFTU (Pan-Malayan Federation of Trade Unions) - the spearhead of the labour movement under Red control'.³⁸ Internationally recognised expert on Communism and former psychological leader in Kuala Lumpur, C.T. Too, states 'something drastic had to be done to pull the party out of such a horrible mess'.³⁹ It seems logical to assume the Emergency was launched in June 1948 in a desperate attempt to hold a chaotic movement together.

By way of contrast the SME had a carefully planned and implemented strategy from the beginning until the Communists again tore themselves apart with internal division. Writing in the International Journal of Culture and History Amelia Yuliana Abd Wahab, Wan Hashim Wan Teh and Abdul Rahman Razak Shaik view the Second Emergency "as more aggressive compared during [*sic*] the *First Malayan Emergency*".⁴⁰ This claim is supported by the evidence presented in this paper.

³⁴ Ong, p.61

³⁵ Ong, p.p. 65,66

³⁶ Ong, 72,71

³⁷ Sharon Bin Hashim (ed.), Mohamed Ghazemy Mahmud (Translator), Appendix 1

³⁸ Lim & Khor, p. 2

³⁹ Cited by Lim & Khor, p. 2

⁴⁰ Amelia Yuliana Abd Wahab, Wan Hashim Wan Teh & Abdul Rahman Razak Shaik, *Demystifying the Rise and Downfall of Communism in Malaysia (1968-1989)*, International Journal of Culture and History, Vol. 2, No. 4, December 2016.

INTRODUCTION OF WHITE AREAS

At the outbreak of the First Emergency something like 600,000⁴¹ Chinese squatters 'lived at the fringes of the jungle and could aid the guerrillas'⁴² The CTs relied on this vulnerable group for support including food, medical supplies and money. Members of the communist underground and communist sympathizers lived among them. Non-compliance or resistance to the terrorists demands or cooperation with the government were met with acts of savagery. In one case a village headman's arms were cut off with a parang while his wife and six year old daughter were forced to watch. Children were murdered in front of their parents.⁴³

The British realized that if they were to stop the flow of support to the enemy it was essential to secure the population.⁴⁴ Squatters were forcibly removed to New Villages where they were provided with electricity, their own land, education and medical care. The villages were fenced and protected by security forces with the aim of cutting 'the lines of communication between CTs and villagers, and force the CT out to battle.'⁴⁵

Relocation of itself was insufficient as food and other goods were smuggled out of the New Villages 'either because of coercion or sympathy'. Curfews, vehicle and body searches were among the measures introduced, some demanded by the squatters themselves so the communists would know it was impossible for them to help.⁴⁶

In 1953 General Sir Gerald Templer imposed severe restrictions on the citizens of Malacca. In his words 'I made life absolute hell for them'.⁴⁷ Ten days into these restrictions Templer made it clear to the people that the duration of their punishment depended upon their cooperation with authorities by completing a security questionnaire. Consequently 'some thirty Chinese, mainly shopkeepers, were detained and a number of arrests were made.' Information collected also led to the killing of a local insurgent leader.⁴⁸

On 5 September 1953 all restrictions were lifted on condition that the people cooperate with the Government including the requirement to report any insurgents that tried to return. This happened subsequently when four enemy tried to return. There is no record of an area once being declared 'White' having this status revoked.⁴⁹ Barber describes this move as 'a brilliant, unorthodox tactic in the war ...'⁵⁰

⁴¹ Barber, p. 118

⁴² National Army Museum, *Malayan Emergency*, at <https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/malayan-emergency>, accessed 19 Aug 2019

⁴³ Barber, p.p. 28,29, 91

⁴⁴ Coates, Henry John, *An Operational Analysis of the Emergency in Malaya 1948 - 1954*, Thesis submitted for the Degree Master of Arts in the Australian National University, Canberra, p. 139

⁴⁵ Barber, p.p. 116 - 118

⁴⁶ Barber, p.p. 130, 131

⁴⁷ Barber, p.235

⁴⁸ Coates, 139

⁴⁹ Coates, 140

⁵⁰ Barber, p. 118

When Templer left Malaya in October 1954 most of the Peninsular had been secured.⁵¹ By 1955 the Communists had ceased to be a real threat, being hunted down by the military deep in the jungle.⁵²

Private R.G.E. Betts arrived in Penang on 19 October 1955 as a member of the first Australian Infantry Battalion to return to Malaya since WW2. The Battalion 'stayed on Penang Island for the remainder of 1955, getting equipped out with all our combat gear, and as Penang Island was declared a white area we were able to refresh and brush up on our jungle training, as well as climatised to the tropical weather⁵³.'

Province Wellesley and adjoining areas of South Kedah, including 12 mukims (sub-districts) of the Kuala Muda district and three in the Kulim district were declared 'white areas' in August 1954. Speaking at the time the Resident High Commissioner for the Penang Province Wellesley area, Mr R.P. Bingham, congratulated the people on this achievement and asked them to keep it so – by continuing to resist Communist ideas and co-operating with the Government'. At the same time the Sultan of Kedah also congratulated his people 'for proving themselves loyal citizens who had refused to help the Communists'.⁵⁴

Note the significance of this for Butterworth and Penang. By the time Private Betts arrived in 1955 Penang, including the Butterworth area, was considered free from the Communist threat with all emergency restrictions lifted.

Compare this to the same area during the SME. A draft document, 'Brief for DCAS Concerning Security of Butterworth' states, at paragraph 15: 'In April 1975, following rocket attacks on Kuala Lumpur and Minden Barracks Penang, CAS briefed the Minister that security precautions on the base had been tightened'. Also noted were increased security measures off base. These included '... routine screening of the population, road blocks, vehicle checks and community inspections by police field force (PPF). Direct Military action involved the patrolling of areas around the base to deny CT freedom of action, detect signs of CT activity, locate and destroy CT saboteur, mortar and rocket teams'.⁵⁵

In 1975, as reported by The Straits Times of 14 September, curfews had been reimposed in the Butterworth region:

Certain areas in the three districts of Butterworth, Bukit Mertajam and Nibong Tebal in Province Wellesley will be put under a five-hour daily curfew, from midnight to 5 a.m. from Monday ... the curfew was a direct consequence of the establishment of the Inter-state Security Committee.⁵⁶

⁵¹ National Army Museum

⁵² Dugdale-Pointon

⁵³ Biography of R.G.E Betts, Pte, 4 Section, 2 Pltn, A Coy, 2nd Bn, Royal Australian Regiment, British Forces, Malayan Emergency <http://www.justinmuseum.com/famjustin/Bettsbio.html>

⁵⁴ The Straits Times, *Two More Areas Are Now Declared White: 160,000 people 'freed'*, 15 August 1954, p.3

⁵⁵ *Brief for DCAS Concerning Security of Butterworth*, 564/8/29, included with Annex A to 554/9/33(87) JIO *Assessment of Threat and Likely Methods of Attack*, 2 Oct 75

⁵⁶ The Straits Times, *Curfew in province districts from tomorrow*, 14 Sept 1975

More than six weeks later, on 30 Oct 1975 Headquarters Butterworth advised DEFAIR Canberra via a Cablegram headlined 'Siterep Butterworth and North Peninsular Malaysia : 'Situation in immediate area remain unchanged. Curfew remains in force in 3 districts of Province Wellesley ...⁵⁷

The author clearly recalls roadblocks in the town of Butterworth following his return to Malaysia in July 1977. They had not been there during his first posting 1971-1974. Clearly roadblocks and curfews would not have been in place following the declaration of white areas in 1954. The imposition of curfews in 1975 is clear evidence the communist threat had returned to the immediate area of the RAAF Base.

OUTBREAK OF URBAN GUERILLA TERRORISM

During the First Emergency the Communists stuck to a distinct three phase plan to take Malaya. The first was to 'raid isolated estates, tin mines and police and government buildings in rural areas to drive the British into the cities.' During the second phase these 'Liberated areas' would be used to build the army. As the army expanded and moved to phase three attacks would be carried out on 'towns, villages and railways' with the communist underground movement 'acting as saboteurs to cripple the economy. Once the country was on its knees the Army would face the British on the open battlefield'.⁵⁸

While the communists tried to capture towns in late 1948 they were driven back into the jungle by the British battalions. Consequently they reverted to guerilla tactics. Sir Gerald Templer, known as the Tiger of Malaya, arrived in the colony in February 1952. Within months he had broken the enemy's momentum.⁵⁹ As noted above, Templer's tactics forced the terrorists 'back into the deep jungles and stopped the random attacks. By 1953 the communists had lost the initiative and were never to regain it.' They had ceased to be a real threat by 1955.⁶⁰

Writing for the journal 'Pacific Affairs' summer edition of 1977 Richard Stubbs says:

In September 1975 the Malaysian Prime Minister, Tun Razak, described the recent resurgence of communist guerrilla activity in Peninsula Malaysia as the "New Emergency". By making the comparison [to the 48-60 Emergency], the Prime Minister clearly signalled the seriousness with which the Malaysian Government viewed the renewal of the communist threat ... Not only had there been a number of spectacular terrorist attacks – the bombing of the capital's War Memorial; the assassination of Perak's Chief of Police; and the grenade and rocket attacks on the Police Field Headquarters, Kuala Lumpur military air base and several camps in Johore, Port Dickson and Penang – but also, and perhaps more ominously, there had been a steady increase in the preceding three years in the number of police and security

⁵⁷ Outward Cablegram, A112, DEFAIR for DAFI, *Siterep Butterworth and North Peninsular Malaysia*, 30 Oct 75

⁵⁸ Dugdale-Pointon, T. (26 August 2007), *The Malayan Emergency (1947-1960)*, http://www.historyofwar.org/articles/wars_malaya.html

⁵⁹ Mark Moyar, *Right Man, Right Time*, History Magazine 2 June 2018, at <https://www.historynet.com/right-man-right-time.htm#>, accessed 7 August 2019

⁶⁰ Dugdale-Pointon, T. (26 August 2007), *The Malayan Emergency (1947-1960)*, http://www.historyofwar.org/articles/wars_malaya.html

force personnel killed and injured. Moreover, the communists seem to have been able to attract recruits and solicit at least some support throughout the peninsula.⁶¹

The Sydney Morning Herald of Sept 12, 1975 reported: 'Malaysian troops will shoot to kill in a move to contain an urban guerilla war which the communist have begun.' This followed 'a communist grenade attack on the paramilitary police headquarters ... near the Parliament building in Kuala Lumpur.' Two police officers were killed and another 52 wounded. The paper reported 'guerillas from the militant Marxist-Leninist group issued leaflets two months ago warning people they would launch an urban war this year ... Several Government departments, security force camps and essential services like power stations and water works in towns throughout West Malaysia have been placed under guard ... Checkpoints manned by troops and police have been established on all roads leading into Kuala Lumpur'.⁶²

In October 1975 the Department of Foreign Affairs commented on Malaysia's internal security situation:

In the past year there has been an upsurge in terrorist incidents approaching the scale of the last years of the Emergency. Incidents have included co-ordinated rocket attacks on military bases, the selective assassinations of Special Branch officers and ambushes of security force patrols. The Malaysian national monument in Kuala Lumpur was blown up two months ago. This was followed by a terrorist attack on Kuala Lumpur's Police Headquarters when terrorists lobbed ... grenades over the wall killing and wounding a number of police officers ...⁶³

This is in stark contrast to the Kuala Lumpur of Templer's day. As recorded by Moyar:

Templer also took his message into the capital city of Kuala Lumpur, which was physically and psychologically removed from the fighting in the countryside. The city's residents, particularly the Europeans, seemed unconcerned about the insurgency and were keeping themselves busy with business and pleasure. Upbraiding the capital's high society at the Rotary Club in April 1952, Templer exclaimed, "You see today how the communists work ... They seldom go to the races. They seldom go to dinner parties or cocktail parties. And they don't play golf!"⁶⁴

These attacks on military and security force bases and in the centre of Kuala Lumpur were a significant and threatening departure from the strategy employed in the earlier conflict.

Australia's Joint Intelligence Organisation also identified the threat of possible attacks against Air Base Butterworth. In October 1975 the Australian Joint Intelligence Organisation

⁶¹ Richard Stubbs, *Peninsular Malaysia: The "New Emergency"*, Pacific Affairs, Vol. 50, No. 2 (Summer, 1977), University of British Columbia, p.249.

⁶² The Sydney Morning Herald, 12 Sep 1975, *Malaysian towns under attack - for the communist guerillas, a switch of tactics*.

⁶³ Paper prepared by the Department of Foreign Affairs, *Malaysian Domestic Situation*, October 1975, cited in Walsh, J.R. & Munster G.J., *Documents on Australian Defence and Foreign Policy 1968-1975*, 1980, p.p. 256-261

⁶⁴ Mark Moyar, *Right Man, Right Time*, History Magazine 2 June 2018, at <https://www.historynet.com/right-man-right-time.htm#>, accessed 7 August 2019

assessed the security of Air Base Butterworth⁶⁵. 'The possible forms of attack by the CTO' on the Air Base included:

Sabotage, by the planting of delayed-action explosives, booby-traps, and other similar devices designed to damage equipment and to injure personnel ... Minor acts of sabotage committed within the Base by such personnel would result in their detection and in tightening of security with no significant gains for the CTO cause. Nevertheless, the use of booby-traps and minor acts of sabotage by subversive groups are relatively common throughout Peninsular Malaysia and pose a distinct threat, both to Australian personnel and their dependents.

Acts of terrorism against RAAF married quarters adjacent to the Base (Tan Sai Gin and Rubina Park).

Note the assessment identified dependents of servicemen as potential targets. In fact, as the assessment considered an attack within the Base could result in the detection of the enemy and increased 'security with no significant gains for the CTO cause ...' it is reasonable to conclude that those in the 'married quarters adjacent to the Base' were exposed to a higher risk.

The assessment also considered the possible threat of the kidnapping and murder of Australian personell and their families.

The CTO could easily adopt tactics used by other terrorist organisations, notably those in South America, of murdering or kidnapping important foreign residents in order to embarrass the Government publicly and to obtain concessions, such as the release of political prisoners, as part of a wider campaign of urban terrorism.

While it was considered unlikely the Communist's Central Committee would take this action given it 'was concerned in controlling the rural areas in line with the orthodox Maoist doctrine' the threat from the Marxist-Lennist and Revolutionary factions could not be dismissed.

There have been indications, however, that the Marxist-Lennist and Revolutionary factions differ from the Central Committee faction over this question and might seek to implement a campaign of urban guerilla warfare. The increase in the numbers of incidents in 1975 points in this direction, but it is doubtful whether the factions have the resources to conduct an extended urban campaign, although they have demonstrated a capability for coordinated action throughout Peninsular Malaysia. If this situation did arise, however, Australian personnel and their dependents stationed at Butterworth could be threatened; it is impossible to say whether they would be primary targets in preference to other foreigners in Malaysia, such as diplomatic missions.⁶⁶

With the wisdom of hindsight it is easy to dismiss this assessment. Good planning has always considered and evaluated all possible risks, or threats. In this case no one could know if the factions planned to carry out such an action until someone had been killed or

⁶⁵ JIO *The Security of Air Base Butterworth*, October 1975, para 48.

⁶⁶ JIO *The Security of Air Base Butterworth*, para. 26

kidnapped and this may have happened without any warning. Australia service members and or their dependents could have been victims.

The 1975 JIO assessment reflects to some extent the earlier ANZUK assessment of 1971 which concluded at paragraph 71 (e):

There is definitely a risk that one of more CTs of members of subversive groups could, regardless of CPM/CTO policy and/or acting on their own initiative, attempt an isolated attack on within the Base at any time.⁶⁷

The re-emergence of communist activities in the former White Areas of Penang and Butterworth along with the introduction of urban guerilla terrorism by the Marxist-Lenninst faction added a level of complexity and threat not present since the introduction of White Areas in 1954 and, in the case of urban terrorism, unknown in the First Emergency.

COMMUNIST CAPABILITY

A small core of British officers withdrew into the jungle after Singapore fell in 1942. They were joined by other British officers secreted into the Peninsular to harass the Japanese and pave the way for its eventual liberation. Known as Force 136 they allied with the Malayan Communists, known as the Malayan Peoples' Anti Japanese Army. The MPAJA were trained and armed by the British.⁶⁸ Lim & Khor maintain the MPAJA was nothing more than a 'minor irritant' to the Japanese, citing Hanrahan⁶⁹ who questions if it 'tried to preserve and conserve its subsequent guerilla war against the British colonial authorities'.⁷⁰ Following the disbandment of the MPAJA in 1945 some 5,000 weapons were hidden in the jungle for later use against the British.⁷¹

In its 1971 assessment of the threat to Butterworth ANZUK concluded the enemy possessed small arms such as rifles, light machine guns, sub-machine guns, pistols and shotguns. There was 'no evidence of the CTs having Chinese, Soviet or other communist weapons, for example mortars or other indirect weapons' although it was accepted that 'a mortar capability ... could be acquired at short notice and probably without our receiving advance warning'.⁷² Only a few years later on 31 March 1974 CTs damaged a Caribou aircraft with a mortar attack on Sungai Besi military air base outside Kuala Lumpur.⁷³

⁶⁷ ANZUK Intelligence Group (Singapore), Note No. 1/1971, *The Threat to Air Base Butterworth up to the End of 1972*, Singapore, 30 November, 1971

⁶⁸ Barber, p.34.

⁶⁹ Hanrahan, Gene, *The Communist Struggle in Malaya*, University of Malaya Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1971, p. 202

⁷⁰ Lim & Khor, p.p. li, lii

⁷¹ Amelia Yuliana Abd Wahab, Wan Hashim Wan Teh & Abdul Rahman Razak Shaik

⁷² ANZUK Intelligence Group (Singapore), Note No. 1/1971, *The Threat to Air Base Butterworth up to the End of 1972*, Singapore, 30 November, 1971, paras 23,24

⁷³ Mohamed Ghazemy Mahmud (Translator), *The Malaysian Army's Battle Against Communist Insurgency 1968-1989*, Army Headquarters, Ministry of Defence, Wisma Pertahanan, Jalan Padang Tembak, 50634 Kuala Lumpur, First Printing and originally published in 2001 in the Malay language as 'Tentera Darat Manentang Insurgensi Komunis 1968-1989, p.49

By 1975 Australian Defence hierarchy were concerned about growing Communist capability. On 3 July Group Captain R.S. Royston, DAFI minuted SR(GD) regarding the security situation at Butterworth. He advised at paragraph 7:

It has been reported that the CT have been training with mortars in Southern Thailand. The type of mortar is not yet known, but it is possibly 81/82mm. Possession of mortars would greatly increase the capability of CT, they are man-portable, deployed with relative ease and the range (81mm effective range 3000m) allows reasonable accuracy from a safe distance.

He concluded at paragraph 9:

The possibility of the CT possessing operational mortars adds to the threat against Air Base Butterworth. However, it is most unlikely that any warning of an impending attack would be received prior to the attack taking place.⁷⁴

W.B. Pritchett, FAS SIP, on 27 May 1975, minuted the DJS regarding advice received from 'the Defence Adviser in Kuala Lumpur that the Malaysians were 'concerned at the possibility of rocket attacks on Butterworth.' The 'main reason for concern was that the CTO urban cell in Penang, "although only 5 or 6 strong, was one of the most active and was quite capable of mounting similar attacks on Air Base Butterworth.'"⁷⁵

In late 1975 Air Office noted the growing capability of the Communists, including 'the upgrading in training and military status of the CTO ... a significant diversification of, and increase in, the forces available with a capability of launching an attack against Air Base Butterworth ... a marked increase in recent months in the use of modern weapons by the CTO including M16 rifles, 7.62 SLR, 9 mm sub-machine guns, and M79 grenade launchers ... evidence of 81/82 mm mortars ... ' and the fact the 'CTO also appears to have a quantity of 3.5 inch rockets which they have used during the past six months in attacks against military installations ...' ⁷⁶

At the same time Air Office agreed with the Defence Advisor Kuala Lumpur that Air Base Butterworth was 'unlikely to be singled out for attack in preference to any others.' On the other hand there was 'no reason to suppose Butterworth would be left out of any future decision to mount rocket attacks against military installations in Malaysia'.⁷⁷

These Air Office concerns were forwarded to the relevant Minister by Air Marshall Rowland, Chief of Air Staff, who informed the Minister on 7 October 1975. At paragraph 2 he advised:

The recent intelligence information concerning possible CTO intentions to launch rocket attacks on bases in Malaysia increases our concern regarding the security of areas around the base. Intelligence sources consider there is a possibility that CTs have or are able to

⁷⁴ Royston, R.S, *Security Situation - Air Base Butterworth Report No 33*, INT 8/10/3, 3 Jul 1975

⁷⁵ Pritchard, W.B, FAS SIP, Strategic and International Policy Division, *RAAF Mirage Security at Butterworth*, 27 May 1975

⁷⁶ Annex A to 554/9/33(87) 2 October 1975

⁷⁷ Annex A to 554/9/33(87) 2 October 1975

obtain 81/82mm mortars to supplement their known supplies of 3.5 inch rockets. Mortars are crew served weapons which are accurate area weapons of considerable destructive force against targets at maximum range of 4,700 metres. The attached map shows that at a range of 3000 metres from the Butterworth Base, a perimeter of 16,000 metres is formed. To compound the problem of defence, the area within the perimeter includes a large number of Malaysian houses, a network of roads and several hectares of padi-fields, all of which offer CTO assembly and firing bases.⁷⁸

Just seven days later the Deputy Chief of Air Staff informed the DJS ‘... base planning has taken into account the requirement for blast shelters should the situation deteriorate further.’⁷⁹

Anecdotal evidence suggests revetments may have been installed in January 1976. Construction is confirmed in the attachment to a minute dated 22 October 1976.⁸⁰

By 1975 the enemy’s improved capability in terms of training, military ability and weaponry saw Butterworth more exposed to the risk of attack than at any time during the First Emergency and especially since the arrival of 2 Airfield Construction Squadron in 1955. The situation in which Australia found itself is shown in the following comment penned by AVM McNamarra:

CT operations are particularly insidious from a defensive viewpoint. The terrorist has freedom of movement in the civil community, a reasonably wide choice in the selection of targets and types of weapons or nefarious explosive devices which can be used to attack or sabotage personnel, assets and facilities. The defensive penalty in the face of these kinds of threats is the diversion of large numbers of security force personnel to counter possibility of CT attacks. To ignore the threat of attack is to risk an extremely high loss in terms of assets with the attendant military ignomy, and in terms of political, psychological gains for the CTO. The extent to which both Malaysian and Australian forces are prepared to engage in protracted defensive operations in a compromise situation is the question to be determined.⁸¹

This was a threat that could not be ignored if Australia wanted to avoid ‘an extremely high loss in terms of assets with the attendant military ignomy’.

CONCLUSION

While the Malayan Emergency erupted in 1948 by 1953 the communists were well and truly on the back foot, being forced into the deep jungle and by 1955 had ceased to be a significant threat. During this time the communists remained committed to their strategy of attacking isolated targets with the aim of securing the countryside before taking the cities. At no time did they move beyond the first stage of their plan.

⁷⁸ Rowland, J.A, Air Marshall, CAS *Security of Butterworth* 554/19/33 (87), 7 Oct 75

⁷⁹ McNamara, N.P, Air Vice Marshall, DCAS, *Butterworth Security*, 14 Oct 75

⁸⁰ AUSTEO *The RAAF Presence at Butterworth*, Para 21, attached to Hamilton R.N, A/First Assistant Secretary Strategic and International Policy Division, *Review of Butterworth Deployment*, 22 October 1976, Reference: DEF 270/1/4

⁸¹ McNamara, N.P, Air Vice Marshall, DCAS, *Butterworth Security*, 14 Oct 75

The Second Emergency began slowly, with the communists carefully moving their forces back into Peninsular Malaysia and rebuilding their underground networks. Militarily they were better trained, led and equipped than at any time during the First Emergency. Attacks on security force installations such as the Malaysian Military Air Base at Kuala Lumpur and the nearby paramilitary police headquarters and the outbreak of urban terrorism introduced a level of threat non-existent in the 1948-1960 period.

The improved capability of the enemy in terms of training, military ability and weaponry saw Butterworth more exposed to the risk of attack than at any time during the First Emergency and especially since the arrival of 2 Airfield Construction Squadron in 1955 with security assessments concluding a real threat to Air Force dependants. When all the evidence is considered it becomes clear the threat to those military members who served at Butterworth during the SME and their families was markedly higher than at any time during the First Emergency.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The author joined the RAAF in 1967 as an apprentice and trained as an engine fitter. He completed 20 years service, five of those at Butterworth (Sept 1971 to Mar 1974, Jul 1977 to Jan 1980). While his recollections of those days are vague he clearly remembers being warned of the dangers of booby traps and told that the Malaysian Air Force operating from Butterworth were 'bombing Chin Peng [the Communist leader] out there in the jungle somewhere' soon after arriving in 1971. He also recalls armed police roadblocks in the town of Butterworth during his second tour and reading reports of actions against the communists in the local papers. In 1969 the Malaysian Government imposed a state of emergency and nation wide curfews following race riots in Kuala Lumpur in 1969 and he was aware of those tensions still bubbling away below the surface in the 1971-74 period.

Since departure from the RAAF he has completed both a Graduate Diploma and Masters Degree in OHS with the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences at the University of Newcastle and over the last eight or so years done considerable research on the matter of Butterworth. He has accessed and retains files from the National Australian Archives, the Australian War Museum, academic theses, newspaper articles and more.