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28 June, 2022

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## Submission to Inquiry - Mr. Derek Mackenzie Mason

### Part 1 – Name of Inquiry

**Name of Inquiry \***

Inquiry into Medalic Recognition for Service with Rifle Company Butterworth

### Part 2 – About the Submitter

**Title or Rank \***

Mr.

**Surname \***

Mason

**Given Names \***

Derek Mackenzie

**Postal Address \***

[REDACTED]

**Email Address: \***

[REDACTED]

**Primary Contact Number \***

[REDACTED]

**Secondary Contact Number**

[REDACTED]

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

### Part 3 – Desired outcome

**Provide a summary of your submission:**

As I beleive my service in the RAAF at Air Base Butterworth meets all the primary elements that constitute warlike service, I would like to see the current status upgrade to warlike

### Part 4 - Your submission and Supporting Documentation

File Attached: RCB-TRIBUNAL-TESTIMONY1.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**

Derek Mason

**Date**

28/06/2022 /

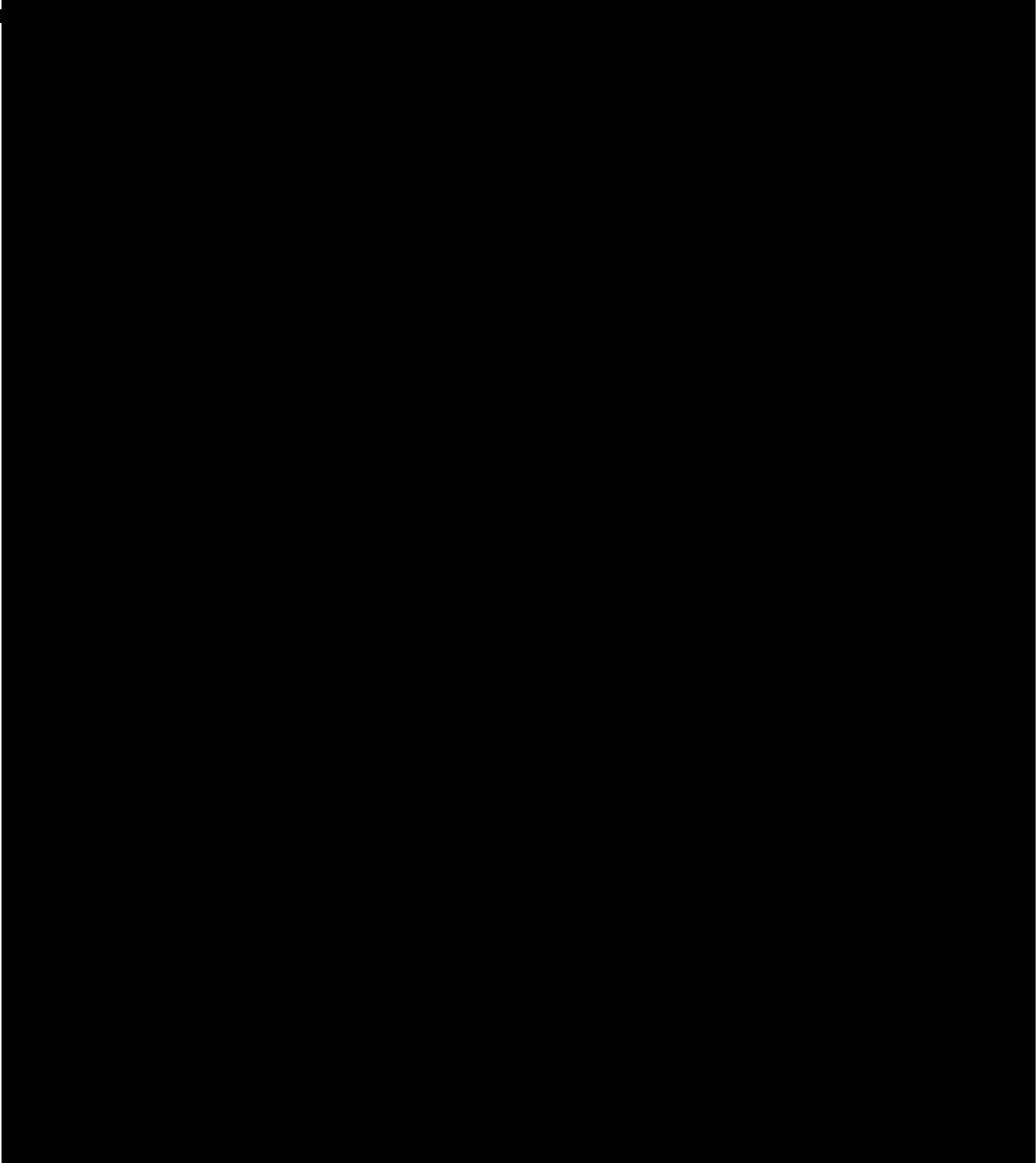
*Mr. Derek Mackenzie Mason*

Signed by Mr. Derek Mackenzie Mason

Signed on: 28 June, 2022

# Signature Certificate

Document name: Submission to Inquiry - Mr. Derek Mackenzi



## **BUTTERWORTH SERVICE TESTIMONY**

### **RAAF Butterworth Service Summary**

I am a RAAF veteran who served as a dog handler at Air base Butterworth (ABB), Malaysia between 1971 and 1973. I was in the initial group of dog handlers to be deployed to Malaysia and in fact, I accompanied by two other airmen escorted the fifteen dogs to Butterworth via service air.

My first patrol was conducted 24 hours after arrival and prior to any formal briefing. I was issued a pistol, ammunition and a basic radio and taken to the flight line by the service police and was advised that I was solely responsible for the security of both fighter squadrons aircraft. I was issued a call sign and told that I was required to report every hour or in the event of an incident to report immediately. The atmosphere was totally alien to anything I had experienced in my service career previously. The Service Police ensured that I was fed, and monitored my wellbeing throughout the shift. At daybreak I saw someone riding a pushbike along the hardstand, I immediately challenged this person who was a local, in uniform and in possession of a submachine gun. There were communication difficulties and throughout the interaction the presence of the weapon made me extremely nervous, however, my dog's reaction reassured me of his ability and eagerness to protect me. I radioed the Service Police who advised me that this was the relief guard. Later that morning we were formally briefed on our responsibilities and the overall situation on the base and in Malaysia.

Our main objective was to provide security for and protect the RAAF's two Mirage fighter squadrons from acts of sabotage, we were armed with live ammunition, and had clear Rules of Engagement issued. We worked ten-hour shifts, eight-hour patrols and two-hour continuation training

Patrols of the flight line were carried out by two dog handlers each primarily responsible for the security of one squadron. Patrols commenced at stand down and were completed at stand to when squadron personnel would arrive for duty. On weekends the patrols were run 24/7 with patrols during daylight hours being conducted by one dog handler responsible for both squadrons. Radio communication with the RAAF Service Police was maintained at hourly intervals, unless there was an occurrence, which would be reported immediately. We also had to change radio frequencies if Soviet ships were in the harbour.

In the event one or both squadrons were night flying. We would patrol Married quarters (Tan Sai Gin and Robina Park) outside the base perimeter, we would also patrol the grounds of 4 RAAF hospital including Officers and NCO's quarters. We would also take a dog through the bomb dump at random intervals. This area was primarily the responsibility of the RMAF

### **Pre-deployment Training**

RAAF personnel are deployed as individuals, as opposed to army personnel who are deployed in units. Dog handlers were not provided any specific pre deployment training; however, as our dogs had to maintain a specific operational standard of training, we were possibly the only group in the defence force who had to pass a trade test on monthly basis. The first group to serve at Butterworth was deployed on very short notice.

### **Enemy**

The section was briefed by Senior Officers from both Headquarters and Base Squadrons including the base Defence/ Intelligence officer, ADG's and senior Service Police who advised us there were communist terrorists active in the area and a railway bridge had been damaged by explosives a few kilometres to the East of the base a few months earlier. It was made clear that the aircraft we were responsible for guarding would be an attractive target. This was a narrative that continued throughout our service at Butterworth. We were also advised that should an incursion occur that casualties were a possibility. We were also advised that the

Malaysian government was engaged in combat operations, and that the airbase was heavily involved in those combat missions which made it an attractive target for the CT's. The base defence plan was discussed and we were made aware of the various squadron defence flights, the Mobile Flight Reserve and the presence of a support rifle company. The dependant evacuation plan was discussed, and we were briefed on the possibility of booby traps being planted around married quarters, and other places, and advised this usually happened on dates associated with communist anniversaries. The rules of engagement (ROE) were issued and our obligations and responsibilities under those rules were explained to us.

## **Danger**

During patrols of the flight line there were several incidents where parachute flares were deployed outside the wire adjacent to the runway and flight line. These occurrences reinforced in our minds the narrative relating to the presence of an enemy. During such incidents, there is a belief that you are in imminent danger of attack as you are within strike range of the perimeter fence (500-600M). Whilst the attacks never eventuated, the remainder of the shift was spent on edge, with a heightened anticipation of danger and elevated adrenalin levels. These incidents were reported to the RAAF Service Police via radio transmission and duly documented in Duty Log Book. On another occasion several members of our section were removed from the duty roster to provide round the clock close quarter armed protection for the Air Officer Commanding RAAF Butterworth who had received some form of threat which was taken seriously.

## **Expectation of Casualties**

As previously discussed, we were briefed that there was an enemy present, and that in the event of an incursion there was an expectation of casualties, together with the fact the communist terrorists were known to employ booby traps an expectation of casualties in amongst dependants cannot be discounted.

## **Training with the Malaysians**

Dog handlers did not train with the RMAF, we were there to protect the Australian fighter squadrons and any other assets as directed

## **Actual tasks heightened**

During the period of my service at Butterworth the Malaysian Government and its armed forces (MAF) were prosecuting a counter insurgency War against the communist terrorists who were being supported by the Chinese and Vietnamese Governments. Air Base Butterworth was a major forward operational base for the MAF air and ground combat operations against the insurgents and therefore a potential target for the communist terrorists. We were continually briefed on the activities, and presence of communist terrorists. This was not normal peacetime garrison duty, at no other time during my RAAF service was I armed with live ammunition (except on the range). On armed payroll escorts in Australia, weapons were always empty no ammunition or rules of engagement issued, we were instructed to offer no resistance in the event of a robbery. Butterworth is also the only unit where I have served where I had to maintain hourly radio communications with a control station; other units I have been stationed at provided no communications whatsoever.

At Air Base Butterworth I noticed a Service Police member wearing the ribbon of a General Service Medal and inquired as to which campaign it had been awarded for. He indicated it had been issued for previous service at Butterworth. I then inquired as to what service conditions were like during that period. His response was "Exactly as they are now".

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

**Yours sincerely,**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Derek Mason', with a stylized, cursive script.

**Derek Mason**

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Telephone:** [REDACTED]