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14 September, 2022

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

## Submission to Inquiry - WING COMMANDER RETD GARY RICKMAN PENNEY

### Part 1 – Name of Inquiry

**Name of Inquiry \***

Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal (DHAAT) Inquiry into RCB service.

### Part 2 – About the Submitter

**Title or Rank \***

WING COMMANDER RETD

**Given Names \***

GARY RICKMAN

**Surname \***

PENNEY

**Post-nominals (if applicable)**

**Street Number and Name \***

[REDACTED]

**Suburb \***

[REDACTED]

**Postcode \***

[REDACTED]

**State \***

[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:**

Recognition of Active Service by Australian Army personnel who deployed to Malaysia as members of Rifle Company Butterworth. Recognition of Active Service by Royal Australian Air Force personnel who were Airfield

Defence Guards and Ground Defence Officers who were posted to RAAF Butterworth in the role of Airfield Ground Defence.

## Part 4 - Your submission and Supporting Documentation

File Attached: STAT-DEC-RCB.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.

*Wing*  
Name

GARY RICKMAN PENNEY

*COMMANDER RETD*  
Date

14/09/2022

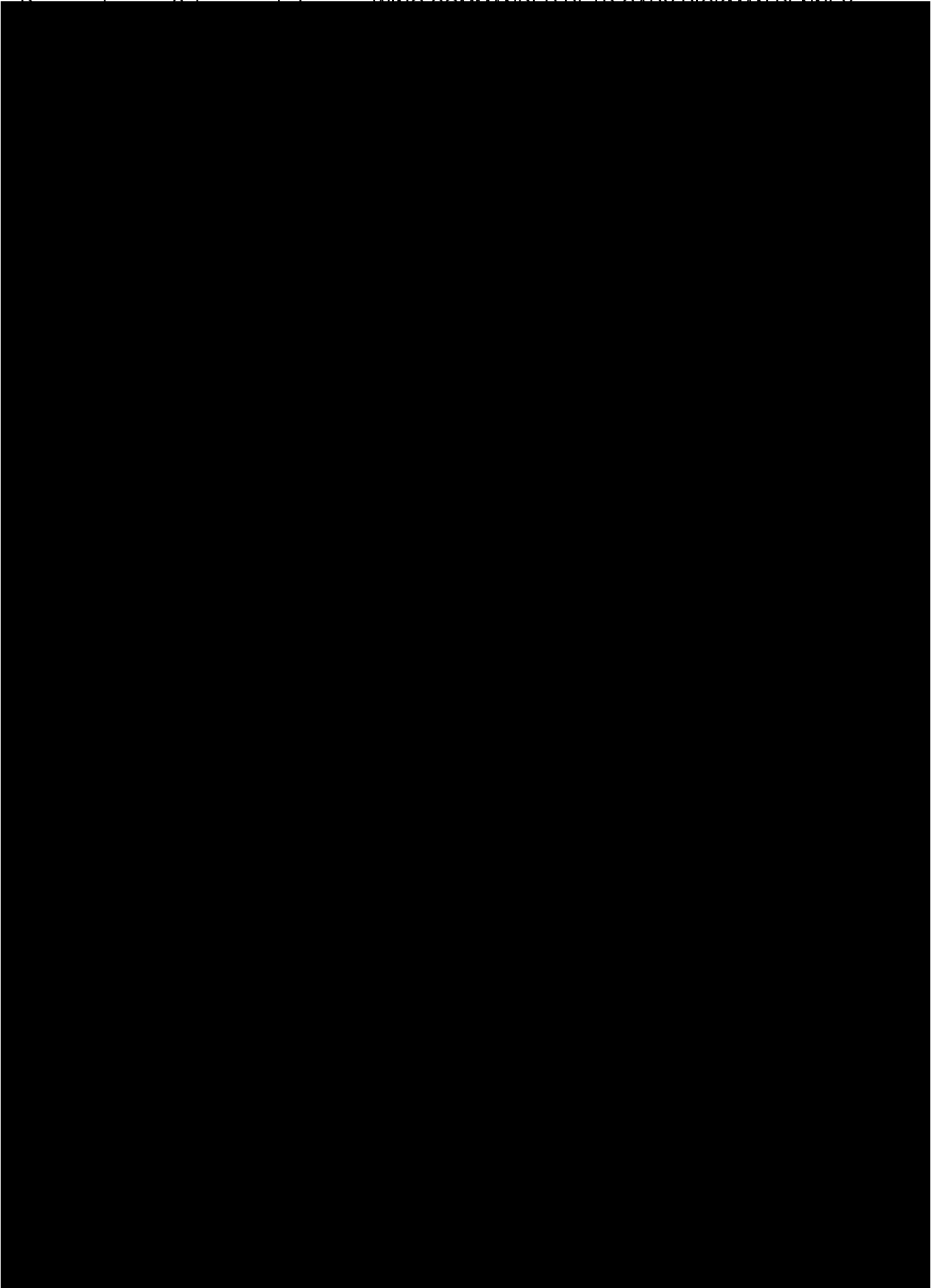
*GARY RICKMAN  
PENNEY*

Signed by WING COMMANDER RETD GARY  
RICKMAN PENNEY

Signed on: 14 September, 2022

# Signature Certificate

Defence Honours Tribunal - WING COMMANDER PETER GARY RICKMAN BENNEY





## Statutory Declaration

QUEENSLAND  
TO WIT

I, GARY RICKMAN PENNEY

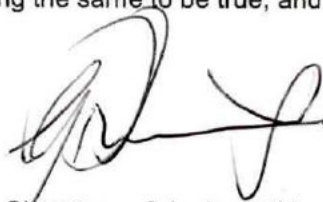
of [REDACTED] in the State of Queensland

do solemnly and sincerely declare that

The four page statement attached as Annex A is a true and accurate description of the facts as I know relating to the hostile threat posed to RAAF Airbase Butterworth, Malaysia, by Communist Terrorists during the period 02 December 1979 to 02 December 1981 inclusive.

[REDACTED]

And I make this solemn declaration conscientiously believing the same to be true, and by virtue of the provisions of the Oaths Act 1867.



Signature of declarant/deponent

Taken and declared before me at

[Location] [REDACTED]

this

16<sup>TH</sup>

day of

OCTOBER 20 21



A Justice of the  
Peace/Commissioner for  
Declarations.



**STATEMENT BY GARY RICKMAN PENNEY WGCDR (Retd.)**

My name is Gary Rickman Penney and I reside at [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

I served as a Ground Defence Officer in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) from March 1970 until retirement as a Wing Commander in April 2004 after 34 years of service. During my period of Service, I was posted to RAAF Base Butterworth in Malaysia and served as the Base Ground Defence Officer from 02 December 1979 until 02 December 1981. My role as the Base Ground Defence Officer was to plan, control and coordinate the ground defence of the base from possible hostile threats. My tasks also included, but not limited to:

- Liaison with Local Malaysian Police
- Liaison with other Local Malaysian Emergency Services
- Liaison with local Malaysian Armed Forces (primarily Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) and Royal Malay Regiment (RMR))
- Liaison with local Police Field Force Units
- Briefing Rifle Company Butterworth (RCB) Command Elements on each rotation (generally 3 monthly) on Base ground Defence requirements and their role and tasks within the ground defence of the base
- Briefing RAAF new arrivals (including dependants) on each monthly rotation of personnel
- Training RAAF base ground combatant forces drawn from RAAF personnel stationed at Butterworth.
- Conducting bi-annual base ground defence training exercises that involved ground defence elements provided by RAAF, RMAF, RCB, and RMR forces in location at Butterworth.

On my arrival at Butterworth, I attended strategic and tactical intelligence briefings provided by the Senior Base Ground Defence Officer as well as the RMR Battalion Commander based at Sungai Petani (town located 40 minutes' drive north of Butterworth), and the local Police Field Force(PFF) Commander based at Kulim (town 30 minutes' drive east of Butterworth). Each of those briefings, conducted in the two weeks after my arrival 02 December 1979, provided up-to-date information on the level and nature of the threat posed to the base, assets and base personnel from Communist Terrorists (CT) known to be active in Malaysia at that time. I was left in no doubt that the CT did pose a real threat to RAAF Base Butterworth; the threat did not include a large-scale attack, rather smaller acts of interdiction and terror aimed at interrupting airbase operations and gaining propaganda to support their cause. These were assessed as being actioned through off-base direct and indirect fire weapons, or penetration of the base defences by small groups to attack vital points e.g., aircraft, fuel, ammunition/bomb storage, aircrew, aircraft maintenance facilities,



personnel quarters, navigational aids, command posts etc. A prime target was the 5 nations Integrated Air Defence System (IADS) that was Headquartered at Butterworth.

During my time at Butterworth, the RAAF personnel and their dependants averaged 3000-3500 in number. Butterworth was home to two squadrons of RAAF Mirage Fighter aircraft (approximately 28 aircraft), a Transport Support Flight of 1 Caribou aircraft and earlier on a DC3 Dakota. In addition, the RAAF included a Maintenance Squadron and a Base Squadron. The RMAF had 1 Squadron of F5 Fighter aircraft (approximately 14 aircraft), 1 squadron of Nuri Heavy Lift Helicopters and one Squadron of Alouette Helicopters, a Base Squadron, a Maintenance Squadron and a Handau Squadron (now known **Pasukan Khas TUDM (Abbr.: PASKAU; 'RMAF Special Forces')**). Defence Force personnel from Australia, New Zealand, Britain, Malaysia and Singapore also comprised the Headquarters of the 5 nation Integrated Air Defence System (IADS).

To maintain an awareness of the local tactical ground situation, I was required to attend regular intelligence briefings at Sungai Petani throughout my posting at Butterworth. During those briefings I was kept aware of CT activity throughout Malaysia at that time. CT were active in the Betong Salient and down into the mountain spine of Malaysia. with several contacts and subsequent engagements occurring between CT and RMR/ PFF elements. This activity continued on and off throughout my posting tenure. At that time RMAF air elements were prosecuting operations from Butterworth against CT forces near the Thai Border using both helicopter and fighter aircraft.

To counter the above CT threat to Butterworth airbase, the RAAF and RMAF maintained several elements at Butterworth as a defensive deterrent. The RMAF kept a Squadron sized unit of RMAF Handau permanently at the base to provide perimeter security and vital point protection. The RAAF maintained a ground defence cadre of 1 Squadron Leader Ground Defence Officer, 1 Flight Lieutenant Ground Defence Officer, 1 Sergeant Airfield defence Guard and 2 Corporal Airfield defence Guard tasked to man and operate the Base Ground Defence Operations Centre (GDOC) and control and coordinate the ground defence of the airbase. Further, the RAAF maintained two 30-man Flights of base combatant personnel (BCP) who were trained and skilled in ground defence as a secondary duty. All other RAAF personnel were required to attend weapon training at least twice per year to become proficient on all types of RAAF Ground Defence weapons: 9mm Pistol, 9mm F1 Sub Machine Carbine, 7.62mm L1A1 Self Loading Rifle and the 7.62mm L2A1 Automatic Rifle. This training was far in excess of what RAAF personnel were required to undertake on Australian Bases at that time and was reflective of the perceived ground threat to the Butterworth airbase at that time. The RAAF also maintained a RAAF Police Section for airbase security and security of RAAF personnel and their dependants off-base. Along with the RAAF Police, a section of RAAF Police Dogs and their handlers, maintained flight line security during stand down hours and during heightened periods of threat. It must be emphasised, that the level of ground defence training received by RAAF personnel at Butterworth, and their employment as part of the base ground defence operations, was at a much higher level than



that reflected at any airbase in Australia at that time. The ammunition usage authorised for the continuation training of RAAF personnel was far above the allocation to any base in Australia. The number and types of weapons held within the armoury at Butterworth was on a scale much higher than any base in Australia at that time. Further, the Ground Defence cadre was significantly larger than that expected to be in place at bases within Australia.

The RCB at Butterworth were garrisoned on base and as part of their complex they were provided with armoury and ammunition storage facilities within their area. On arrival at Butterworth, the Company Commander and Company 2i/c were fully briefed by both me and the Senior Ground Defence Officer on their unit's role and tasks for the ground defence of the base. They were comprehensively briefed on the location, function and importance of each of the base's vital points. They were briefed on the rules of engagement (ROE) that were in force at the time i.e., challenge, re-challenge, and then take the appropriate action to prevent the threat from proceeding. This included at the highest level of engagement the firing of live rounds if the individual believed that firing live rounds was the only means by which they could prevent an attack on their life, someone else's life, or an attack from occurring against an airbase vital point. The RCB was required to maintain a 24/7 Quick Reaction Force (QRF) of Section Strength on 15minutes notice to move throughout their tenure at the airbase. The QRF was truck mounted and were required to carry first line ammunition of live rounds in taped magazines. A second line was carried on the vehicle to be used if required. The QRF was required to rehearse the various QRF counter attack and counter-penetration drills against various vital points at least twice (both day and night) during each 24-hour period of QRF duty. The responsibility for this activity was delegated to the Company Commander RCB.

To ensure RAAF personnel and their dependants, RCB personnel, and other Australian personnel employed by Defence (e.g., school teachers for the RAAF School Penang) were fully inducted into their new posting/attachment location, all were required to attend an induction briefing held in the Base Cinema one or two days after their arrival in Malaysia. Included in this induction was a presentation by the RAAF Base Ground Defence Officer on the nature of the threat presented to the base by CTs, and their roles and responsibilities as Servicemen and women within the ground defence of the base. This briefing was supported by the Base Intelligence Officer and the Base RAAF Police Officer. All new arrivals were made aware of areas that were unsafe to travel around Malaysia due to the possibility of attack, as well as preventative measures that they could employ to ensure their survival when faced with a threat. These briefings occurred on an average of one per month and continued throughout my tour of duty at Butterworth.

In summary, during the period between December 1979 and December 1981, Communist Terrorist (CT) activity presented a continuous threat to RAAF Airbase Butterworth assets and personnel. Various Australian and Malaysian Defence force units and personnel were deployed and tasked with the defence and protection of the airbase assets and personnel against those threats. Included within the Australian Defence Force contingent were RAAF



ANNEX A  
TO STATUTORY DECLARATION  
BY GARY RICKMAN PENNEY  
DATED 16 OCTOBER 2021

personnel stationed at Butterworth and an Infantry Rifle Company (Rifle Company Butterworth (RCB)) personnel who were deployed on 3-month rotation to provide quick reaction forces and defence against attack to vital assets and personnel. All Australian and Malaysian personnel were provided with Rules of Engagement which included use of lethal force. RCB units were issued with, and carried, live rounds when tasked with 24/7 Quick Reaction Force. I am without doubt that during my posting to Butterworth from 1979 to 1981, that a live threat to the base existed from hostile ground forces known as CT, that Butterworth Airbase was being used by the RMAF to mount missions against the CT, and that both RAAF and RCB personnel were at risk of attack and were trained, armed, equipped and rehearsed to counter such attacks.

Gary Penney

08 October 2021

