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28 December, 2022

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Submission to Inquiry - Warrant Officer Class One (Retired) Stuart Hansford

Part 1 – Name of Inquiry

Name of Inquiry *

Rifle Company Butterworth

Part 2 – About the Submitter

Title or Rank *

Warrant Officer Class One (Retired)

Given Names *

Stuart

Surname *

Hansford

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:

The purpose of this submission is to highlight evidence that I believe answers the Chairman's request to examine if casualties could have been expected. In the absence of any battlefield casualties with RCB, this request requires evidence that supports the fact that casualties were an operational expectation and a real

possibility. For there to be an expectation of casualties' certain conditions need to be established. The proposal that I am putting forward concentrates on the following conditions: a. That there was a threat. b. The threat could reasonably be expected to, and was capable of actions to, inflict casualties. c. The posture of the Rifle Company Butterworth (RCB) was such that they expected to engage in battlefield conditions that may result in casualties. d. That the Butterworth airbase was prepared to handle casualties. I argue that all these conditions have been met.

Part 4 - Your submission and Supporting Documentation

File Attached: 2022-DHAAT-RCB-Supplementary-Submission-WO1-Stuart-Hansford.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

Stuart Hansford

Date

28/12/2022

*Warrant Officer Class One
(Retired) Stuart Hansford*

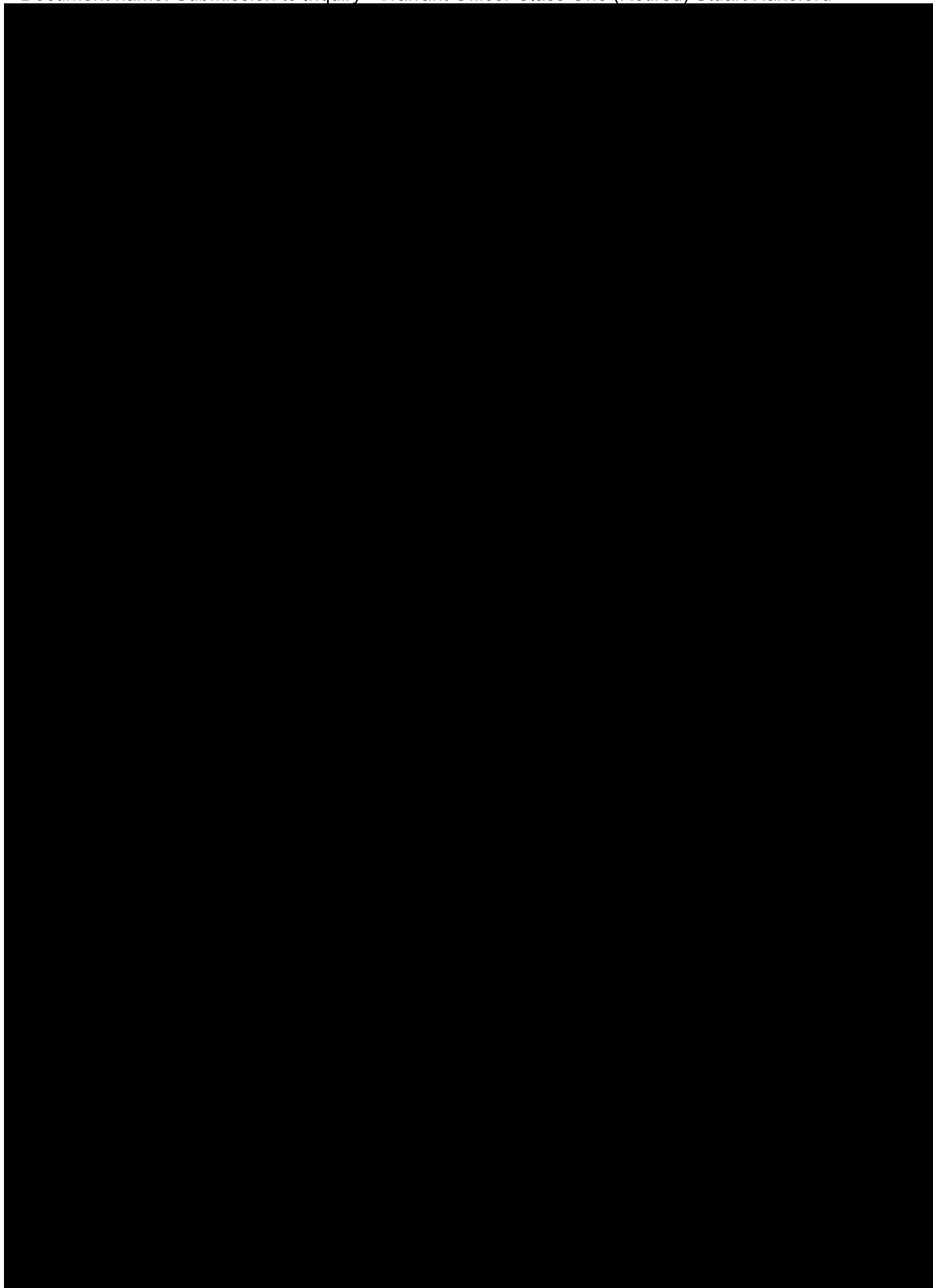
Signed by Warrant Officer Class One (Retired)

Stuart Hansford

Signed on: 28 December, 2022

Signature Certificate

Document name: Submission to Inquiry - Warrant Officer Class One (Retired) Stuart Hansford



Rifle Company Butterworth Service Supplementary Submission.

Summary:

The purpose of this submission is to highlight evidence that I believe answers the Chairman's request to examine if casualties could have been expected.

In the absence of any battlefield casualties with RCB, this request requires evidence that supports the fact that casualties were an operational expectation and a real possibility. For there to be an expectation of casualties' certain conditions need to be established. The proposal that I am putting forward concentrates on the following conditions:

- a. That there was a threat.
- b. The threat could reasonably be expected to, and was capable of actions to, inflict casualties.
- c. The posture of the Rifle Company Butterworth (RCB) was such that they expected to engage in battlefield conditions that may result in casualties.
- d. That the Butterworth airbase was prepared to handle casualties.

I argue that all these conditions have been met.

This can be evidenced by:

- An active and declared war by the Malay Communist Party.
- Threat assessments including The JIO Secret Reports 1971 and 1975.
- Physical attacks occurring including the Sungai Besi MAF base on 31 Mar 74 and Kuala Lumpur in 1975.
- Use of conventional warfare phases of asset defence and counterattack.
- The carriage of live ammunition.
- The use of rules of engagement including use of lethal force.
- The RAAF Base Hospital emergency plan.

These conditions added together provide ample evidence that the RCB could have been engaged with direct and / or indirect fire from enemy forces that could have inflicted casualties.

The absence of actual battlefield casualties should not be a consideration as to whether a threat existed.

Submission:

My personal experience as provided in my initial submission covers the following service.

First Tour: 04 September to 25 November 1974

Unit: 2/4 RAR

Company: C

Role: Forward Scout

Second Tour: 02 September to 03 December 1979

Unit: 5/7 RAR

Company: D

Rifle Company Butterworth Service Supplementary Submission.

Role: Section Commander

Ready Reaction Support: April 1975 (Based in HMS Terror, Singapore).

Unit: 2/4 RAR

Company: C

A Threat Existed

There was an ever-present threat to Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel. There were documented references to the potential threats posed by the communist forces who were undertaking an armed insurgency. This can be evidenced by numerous official documents, such as, The Australian JIO Secret Reports 1971, 'Threat to Butterworth', 552/2; No 13/75 dated 1 October 1975 - the security of Air Base Butterworth; and Butterworth Security Report to the Minister from AVM N. P. McNamara Deputy Chief of Air Staff dated 14 October 1975.

There was a declared war, the Malaysian Counter Insurgency War (1968-1989)¹

There is evidence of an active enemy presence that posed a threat. In an assessment of the security situation in 1971, a group of up to 20 communist terrorists were believed to have been operating in Kulim, 20 km east of Butterworth.² Although the Joint Intelligence Organisation considered an armed attack unlikely, the threat of an incursion onto Butterworth Air Base remained possible.³

In a report by Group Captain R. S. Royston, dated 3 Jul 1975, it is stated that...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.⁴ Another report by Wing Commander R. A. Brazier in November 1975 indicated that the potential acquisition of rockets "...has potentially grave effects for Butterworth."⁵

Threats existed to Air Base Butterworth as shown by threat assessment Note no1/1971. This threat assessment states the possibilities (or variants of these) are:

- a. Direct frontal assault by a large group of CT's up to 60 strong using small arms fire and explosives;

¹ Malaysia's "Second Emergency" (1968-89), Gregor Benton, 2018. "In 1968, the Malaysian Communists under their ethnic-Chinese leader Chin Peng declared war on the Malaysian government. They kept their insurgency going until 1989, although to increasingly diminishing effect. This armed struggle is generally known as the Second Emergency, following the original "Malayan Emergency" of 1948-1960."

² Department of Air, 1971, 'Security of Australian Personnel and Assets Air Base Butterworth'; Department of Air, 1971, 'Report of Visit by SR(GD) and PM to Headquarters Air Base Butterworth 4th to 12th May 1971', 564/8/26, 25 May 1971.

³ Joint Intelligence Organisation, 1971, 'Threat to Butterworth', 552/2, Department of Defence.

⁴ DAFI Report no 34. Dated 3 July 1975

⁵ Minute 564/8/28, referencing INT 8/10/3 Pt 3 of Nov 1975, dated 21 Nov 1975

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- b. Covert penetration, probably by night, by one or more individual CTs or small groups, totalling up to 20 with a view to surprise attack on vital points especially the aircraft, by small arms fire and explosives;
- c. Mortar or other indirect weapon attack, if the CTs acquired this capability, using a small force of up to ten men located in the surrounding ricefield/ kampong areas especially those to the east;
- d. Sabotage by the planting of delayed action explosives, booby-traps and other similar devices designed to damage Vital Points and injure personnel, by one or more CTs, members of subversive groups, or sympathetic or suborned LEC/Contractor personnel.⁶

The Threat Could Inflict Casualties

During my first tour we did not attend any external joint training exercises with the MAF as the RAAF base commander would not allow the Company (or parts of it) to be away from Air Base Butterworth due to the threat level. There had been attacks against the MAF Air Base at Sungai Besi in March. Given his concern over possible communist terrorist activities in the area, the RAAF Commanding Officer directed RCB to remain largely 'within the wire'.⁷

In addition to these documents, as declared in my first submission, we were turned out to respond to a report of shots fired from outside the perimeter of the airbase towards the Mirage hangers. A sweep of the area did not find any intruder. The MAF did clearances beyond the airbase. This was not the usual quick reaction force drill.

In addition to the Sungai Besi Air Base attack there were numerous other incidents of armed attack including inflicting casualties. These incidents include an attack on an air base in Kuala Lumpur and other operational contacts. The Canberra Times reported a large-scale attack of 100 plus guerrillas on Malaysia's East West highway. ⁸ A Butterworth security report stated in part... The security situation in Malaysia has deteriorated in the last year, particularly during the past six months. The CTO has become bolder in its actions and has been willing to attack military installations with 3.5 inch rockets for the first time. Based on these incidents, there is an increased likelihood of attack on Air Base Butterworth.⁹

There is a listing of the killed-in-action and wounded-in-action of the MAF contingents that demonstrates that casualties were sustained throughout the second emergency.

This evidence indicates that the enemy could, and did, attack assets like Air Base Butterworth with lethal force with the desire to inflict damage and casualties.

RCB Posture to Expect Casualties

⁶ ANZUK INTELLIGENCE GROUP (SINGAPORE), Note No 1. 1/1971, The Threat to Air Base Butterworth up to the end of 1972, paragraph 57. P18., 3 Dec 1971.

⁷ Australian Army, 1974, 'CO 5/7 RAR Visit to Airbase Butterworth, 24 Apr-3 May 74', 5/7th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment, 502-3-3, 13 May 1974.

⁸ Canberra Times, Malaysia, Tuesday 28 May 1974.

⁹ Annex A, Minute 564/8/28 Butterworth Security, dated 21 Nov 1975.

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The RCB operated in a war-like posture with rules of engagement, the carriage of live ammunition to respond to any enemy engagement, and the requirement to train for and manage casualties.

The rules of engagement were very clear that we could come under attack and therefore sustain casualties. The rules of engagement stated, in part:

"If you or any other person is illegally attacked in such a way as to give you reason to fear that death or grave bodily injury will result, you may open fire on the person carrying out the attack PROVIDED THERE IS NO OTHER MEANS OF PREVENTING THE PERSON FROM CARRYING OUT THE ATTACK."

The fact that live ammunition was carried by the RCB ready reaction forces is not in dispute. The carriage of live ammunition indicated that live rounds were a reasonable use of force in given circumstances with the most frequent circumstance being that you were under a threat from a potentially armed and hostile CT. This indicates that there is an expectation of casualties.

As stated in my original submission, our unit had also been sent to the Jungle Training Centre, Canungra and underwent pre-deployment training. This course was an evaluation course prior to operational deployment used for units deploying to Vietnam. Only units going to operational areas undertook this course. Poor evaluation could result in the person not being deployed with their unit. Defensive and offensive operations involved counterattack assault drills, prisoner handling and casualty management.

All personnel had to be deployment class 'draft priority one' (DP1) status. This included ensuring that wound bandages were taped to their webbing. These bandages were carried when on ready reaction duty. All soldiers were trained on administering initial first aid to casualties ensuring to use the wounded person's bandage in the first instance.

The declarations I made in my original submission also remain:

I personally received briefings and training on defensive and offensive operations to defend the airbase against an attack by an enemy in a declared conflict.

I personally participated in quick reaction force call outs, carried live ammunition, and operated under rules of engagement that included the use of lethal force.

I personally experienced a threat to my life on all occasions that we were called out and during road convoys outside of the base. There were command level decisions by the RAAF Base Commander to always retain a force at Air Base Butterworth based on threat levels.

Air Base Butterworth Expectation of Casualties

It should also be noted that the wider Air Base Butterworth planned for casualties as the result of incidents on the base including direct and indirect fire from enemy forces.

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4 RAAF Hospital was required to implement a medical plan to meet shared defence situations.

The base used three levels of Security: Green, Amber, and Red. On the activation of Security Amber, a medical officer would be appointed and was responsible for close liaison with the duty controller GDOC. This included activation or modification of the medical plan as coordinated within the overall SDOC plan. On the activation of Security Red, the hospital will issue a first aid kit to each defence headquarters and to have a medevac capability on immediate call to move on GDOC direction using vehicles or helicopters.¹⁰

On declaration of Security Amber, and Security Red, the GDOC is activated, and the operational control of the Company (RCB) will be exercised through this centre.¹¹

During the RCB period of war-like service this plan was reviewed and updated but maintained a central support to manage casualties.

This is evidence that RCB was part of the Air Base Butterworth Op Order that included a medical plan and medevac capability. There was obvious planning for ‘...all shared defence situations...’ and the likelihood of casualties.

Conclusion

This submission provides evidence that there was a real threat, and that threat could reasonably be expected to take actions to inflict casualties. The posture of both RCB and the wider Air Base Butterworth was to be prepared to take actions that could reasonably expect casualties.

As stated above every time I was called out, I was very aware that there could be casualties. This was particularly so when we were ordered to load magazines of live ammunition. Casualties from enemy action were a real expectation as demonstrated by the evidence outlined in this submission.

Declaration:

Declaration submitted by:

I declare that to the best of my knowledge all statements in this submission are true and correct.

WO1 Stuart Hansford (Rtd)

¹⁰ Air Base Op Order No 1/71 dated 8 September 1971.

¹¹ Appendix 6 to Annex C, Air Base Op Order No 1/71 dated 8 September 1971.