

## THE AUSTRALIAN SERVICE MEDAL FOR OTHER THAN WARLIKE SERVICE

Kenneth Marsh - 29 January 2023.

1. I take this opportunity to respond to comments made by Mr Ian Heldon, Director Honours and Awards, Department of Defence, to Mr Jay Kopplemann, Defence Honours and Awards Tribunal, on 7 December 2022,<sup>1</sup> via email. I respond as a RAAF veteran who had two postings to Butterworth, September 1971 to March 1974 as a single member, the second between July 1977 and January 1980, accompanied by family.
  
2. I recall the Chair's comments on 23 November recognising this matter may cause distress to some and thank him for them. I will express personal opinions in this piece that may reflect that. I do not pretend to speak for other RAAF veterans, their spouses, or their children, although I know that some have shared similar opinions with me.
  
3. Heldon responded to "the Tribunal Chair's views expressed at the recent hearing about the Defence position on the separation of definitions which apply to nature of service and honours and awards ..." A copy of the 28 June 2001 policy regarding future awards of the Australian Service Medal (ASM) in which the then Minister agreed "that the ASM should still be awarded for service which, although it may not be subject of a formal declaration of 'non-warlike' operation by the responsible Minister, can still be regarded as non-warlike service and declared accordingly under the ASM 1945-75/ASM regulations"<sup>2</sup> was attached.
  
4. Compare this to statements made in Defence's submission to the Tribunal dated July 2022.

... Defence and successive Australian Governments have consistently held that Australian Defence Force service at Butterworth between 1970 and 1989, and since that time, is appropriately classified as peacetime service.<sup>3</sup>

The Governor-General's non-warlike prescribed operations for medallic recognition purposes are essentially for all Australian Defence Force operations/activities 'other than warlike', encompassing peacetime operations. The terminology can be confusing, as the term 'non-warlike' has different meanings when referring to medal regulations or to veterans' legislation and benefits.<sup>4</sup>

While many Australian Defence Force operations with a non-warlike nature of service classification have been recognised with the awarding of a medal, there are also Australian Defence Force operations with a peacetime nature of service classification that have been recognised by the award of a medal. Examples of medallic recognition for peacetime service include the Australian Service Medal 1945-1975 with Clasp 'PNG', the Australian Service Medal 1945-1975 and Australian Service

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<sup>1</sup> Email. 2001 Ministerial briefing and approval - "ADF Medals Policy - Where we have been and where we are going" and approved conditions for the award of the ASM [SEC=OFFICIAL]. Heldon, Ian MR. To Kopplemann, Jay MR. Wednesday, 7 December 2022 9:21:26 AM

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Defence Honours and Awards Tribunal. *Inquiry into medallic recognition for service with Rifle Company Butterworth*. Department of Defence Submission. July 2023. P.2

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* Part 3.24

Medal both with Clasp 'SE ASIA', the Australian Service Medal with Clasp 'CT/SR' and the Australian Operational Service Medal - Border Protection.<sup>5</sup>

5. The ASM was introduced in 1992. The conditions for its award included specific exclusions:

a. **Specific exclusions:**

(i) normal overseas service in diplomatic, representational, exchange, training or Defence cooperation activities, regardless of the hazards associated with that service; and

(ii) assistance in ADF aid to the civil community, either in Australia or overseas, where that service is integrated with other civilian organisations and any threat does not require the use of uniquely military skills, eg. humanitarian relief or assistance as a result of natural disasters.

b. **Activities not so excluded be judged against:**

(i) service not involving warlike service activities in a state of declared war or combat operations against an identified enemy or belligerents;

(ii) the likelihood of service being conducted overseas;

(iii) being activities military in nature, utilising military skills and specialist resources according to the area (circumstances) and/or self protection, eg. rather than an activity involving skills that are available within civilian organisations;

(iv) involving elements of military threat and hazard;

(v) conducted at the direction of Government, rather than an ADF decision alone; and

(vi) likelihood of the activity being of a prolonged duration of 30 days or more.<sup>6</sup>

6. The ASM 1945/75 was introduced following the recommendation of the 1994 Committee of Inquiry into Defence Related Awards (CIDA) for service prior to 14 February 1975. It “was established under the same conditions as the existing ASM.”<sup>7</sup>

7. The regulations for both medals require that “an operation has to be declared non-warlike by the Governor-General”, although this “does not need to be linked to one by the Minister.”<sup>8</sup> While the rationale for this flexibility is not clear to me, the examples given imply it is meant to cover retrospective awards.<sup>9</sup>

8. In May 2000 the Minister requested a review of ADF Medals Policy. The Defence response centred on the ASM and ASM 1945/75, these being the medals causing the most contention in the

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* Part 3.25

<sup>6</sup> ADF Medals Policy – Where we have been and where are we going. 28 June 2001. Para. 8.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* Para. 11

<sup>8</sup> Para. 12

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

service and veteran communities.<sup>10</sup> The review discusses the increasing politicising of medals in the previous eight years resulting from the release of the CIDA report. Defence believed this had devalued the award.<sup>11</sup> It recommended:

27. To retain some value, it is recommended that the ASM should still be awarded for service which, although it may not be the subject of a formal declaration of 'non-warlike' operation by the responsible Minister, can still be put into a category which may be regarded as non-warlike service and declared accordingly under the ASM 1945-75/ASM regulations. Using the 1992 Services agreement as a basis, but adjusted to cater for the new benchmark set by recent changes as a result of CIDA, the Government's policy and the SEA Review, a prescriptive minimum set is recommended as follows:

- a. service rendered in situations that include international security treaties or agreements, eg. FESR, SEATO, ANZUK, MFO, Five Power Agreement etc;
- b. service involving that with an international coalition force and where other countries involved have recognised their defence personnel with a medal, eg. UN deployments, MFO and situations such as the Gulf crisis 1990/91;
- c. activities conducted at the direction of Government, rather than an ADF decision alone, which require the use of military skills unavailable to civilian organisations at the time and are of a nature that allow the activity to be declared non-warlike on the recommendation of CDF vide the ASM 1945-75/ASM regulations."
- d. humanitarian service as a result of human disaster involving civil unrest rather than natural disaster, where that service involves a military presence for self protection and protection of the community involved, eg. Kurdish relief after the Gulf War in Iraq in 1991 and Rwanda in 1994;
- e. activities of a special or particularly dangerous or hazardous nature, in Australia or overseas, involving military skills not available to civil powers at the time which result in control being given to the ADF to conduct the activity in part or in full, (this recommendation meets with the CIDA recommendation, accepted by CDF and the Government in 1994, that certain hazardous activities of a special nature, eg. counter terrorist activities and other similar activities, should be considered for awards of the ASM based on their own merits);
- f. qualification be set at 30 days except where activities involve an imminent threat of war, activities are so short of warlike that they carry similar hazards, special operations outside of normal operations involving associated increased risks, or particularly dangerous or hazardous situations, eg. those outlined in subparagraph e. above, service such as that rendered immediately before the Gulf War in 1991, forward intelligence operations, hot extractions; and
- g. service on exchange duties with a foreign defence force in a hazardous area, not declared by the responsible Minister as a non-warlike area of operations for ADF deployment, be generally excluded (although in some cases it may be appropriate to assess such service on its merits against a particular reason behind a formal third country deployment approval).

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<sup>10</sup> ADF Medals Policy – Where we have been and where are we going. 28 June 2001. Recommendation to Minister

<sup>11</sup> ADF Medals Policy – Where we have been and where are we going.

28. Absolute exclusions recommended are:
- a. service involving warlike service activities in a state of declared war or combat operations against an identified enemy or belligerents (an area declared 'warlike' by the responsible Minister);
  - b. normal overseas service in diplomatic, representational, exchange, training or Defence cooperation activities (this exclusion does not apply to members conducting these activities in an area subject to a formal declaration of non-warlike);
  - c. assistance in ADF Aid to the Civil Community, either in Australia or overseas, where that service is integrated with other Commonwealth, State or civilian agencies such as the State Emergency Service Organisations or National Parks and Wildlife, and that service or threat does not require the use of uniquely military skills, eg. relief or assistance as a result of natural disasters such as drought or bushfires, and assistance to Australian National Antarctic Research Expeditions; and
  - d. normal duties carried out either in Australia or overseas involving no military risk or threat, whether in a capacity of regular, reserve or conscripted service in order to meet Government/ADF ceilings.<sup>12</sup>

9. Clearly excluded was normal peacetime service.<sup>13</sup> Service recognised by the ASM must “still be regarded as non-warlike service and declared accordingly under the ASM 1945-75/ASM regulations”.<sup>14</sup>

10. This is of particular significance to Butterworth. On 28 June 2001 Minister Scott, Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence, approved the submission “ADF Medals Policy – Where we have been and where we are going”<sup>15</sup>. This contained the above policy. Although it was signed in June it had been approved by the Chief of Defence Force (CDF) prior to 21 March 2001 and prior to his recommendation to the Minister of the ASM for Butterworth to the end of 1989.<sup>16</sup> Air Commodore McLennan advised the CDF on 21 March 2001:

Enclosed for your consideration is a submission which recommends to the Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence the award of the Australian Service Medal (ASM) 1945- 75/ASM for service in South-East Asia from 31 Oct 71 to 31 Dec 89.

This submission has been endorsed by CA and CAF. The recommendations made in the submission meet with the principles of the 1993/94 Committee of Inquiry into Defence and Defence Related Awards and accord with the recommendations at paragraph 27 of the recent paper entitled "ADF

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<sup>12</sup> ADF Medals Policy – Where we have been and where are we going. Paras. 27,28

<sup>13</sup> Para 28(d)

<sup>14</sup> Para. 27

<sup>15</sup> ADF Medals Policy – Where we have been and where are we going.

<sup>16</sup> Review of Service Entitlements in Respect of the Royal Australian Air Force and Army Rifle Company Butterworth Service 1971-1989. R.K. McLennan, AirCdre, DGCMP. To CDF. 21 March 2001.

Medals Policy - Where We Have Been And Where Are Going" recently approved by yourself and the three Service Chiefs.<sup>17</sup>

11. On 28 March 2001, McLennan advised the CDF:

In answer to your queries concerning the enclosed review, the extension of recognition is based on the principle established by MAJGEN Mohr, during his deliberations on service in SE Asia that if ADF personnel are placed in circumstances where they may be used to react to an assessed threat made by Australian Government Intelligence agencies, it has to be considered operational service. This is regardless of whether that threat is realised or not.<sup>18</sup>

12. The CDF authorised the ASM recommendation on 10 April 2001, and although the date is unclear on the document provided, it appears Minister Scott approved the award of ASM to the end of 1989 on 18 April 2001. That is after the Medals Policy was approved by the CDF and Service Chiefs. Therefore, it cannot be construed that the ASM was awarded for service at ABB to the end of 1989 to recognise peacetime service.

13. Heldon in his email of 7 December noted, "Butterworth is briefly mentioned in Paras 18c and 25" of the medals policy.<sup>19</sup> The comment at 18c was made within the implementation stage of "The Independent Review of Service Entitlements Anomalies in Respect of South-East Asia Service for the Period 1955-1975 (SEA Review)", and related to;

Criticism from ex-Service organisations that the recommendations of the Review did not go far enough for recognition of service in Butterworth after cessation of the FESR in 1971, or for service in PNG post 1975.<sup>20</sup>

14. Paragraph 25 explains the contemporaneous concerns that decisions at the time had devalued the ASM in particular.

Significantly, CIDA and the more recent SEA Review have turned what is essentially an ADF matter into a highly political one. This is demonstrated by the Coalition's service medals policy in response to CIDA and current correspondence from Members of Parliament concerning the SEA Review. The decisions to award the VLSM for short service in Vietnam; the ASM 1945-75 for service in PNG during 1951-75 and RAN service with the FESR between 1955-71; and now service in South East Asia generally for the period 1955-71 have considerably changed the benchmark for awarding service medals. These decisions go against ADF policy and the CIDA Principles and have placed a new set of expectations into the current and ex-Service communities regarding the types of service which may now be recognised by a medal. These decisions have reduced the ASM (in its generic sense) to recognising service that has been carried out as part of normal Defence Force duties, albeit overseas and in some cases under uncomfortable (but not hazardous) circumstances. For example, most of the

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Review of Service Entitlements in Respect of the Royal Australian Air Force and Army Rifle Company Butterworth Service 1971-1989. R.K. McLennan, AirCdre, DGCMP. To CDF. 28 Mar 2001

<sup>19</sup> Email. 2001 Ministerial briefing and approval - "ADF Medals Policy - Where we have been and where we are going" and approved conditions for the award of the ASM [SEC=OFFICIAL]. Heldon, Ian MR. To Kopplemann, Jay MR. Wednesday, 7 December 2022 9:21:26 AM

<sup>20</sup> ADF Medals Policy – Where we have been and where are we going. Para 18c.

service in Singapore and Butterworth was rendered under normal peacetime garrison conditions with additional luxuries not experienced in Australia such as the availability of housemaids and servants.<sup>21</sup>

15. Pertinent is the comment, “most of the service in Singapore and Butterworth was rendered under normal peacetime garrison conditions with additional luxuries not experienced in Australia such as the availability of housemaids and servants”.<sup>22</sup> In 2011 the Defense’s Nature of Service Branch (NOSB) pointed to “the civilian and domestic, that is non-military, environment in the Butterworth region” to “provide support to ADF service being determined as peacetime.”<sup>23</sup>

16. This happened again in 2014. Giving evidence to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Petitions on 29 October 2014 regarding RCB service at Butterworth,<sup>24</sup> the Hon. Stuart Robert, Assistant Minister for Defence, introduced Colonel Thompson, Director General of Military Strategic Commitments with the words:

... he actually spent three years of his life—I think you said as a 'RAAF brat', Colonel ... It is good that we can bring someone along who is not only a military professional but who can also speak firsthand on what it was like there at the time, with mum and dad, at Butterworth.<sup>25</sup>

Robert continued:

By way of background, approximately 9,000 Australian Defence Force personnel served on infantry rifle company rotations between 1970 and 1989. It is estimated that up to 19,000 members of the Royal Australian Air Force also served at Butterworth during the same period. In addition, there were Australian public servants and teachers working at or near the base. For RAAF personnel, these were accompanied postings, with families living in married quarters located outside the base perimeter fence in the nearby area and on Penang. There were no restrictions placed on movement by car, taxi or bus in the Butterworth area, or on travel via ferry to Penang Island. During the Vietnam conflict, which ended in 1972, Penang was a formal rest and recuperation leave centre.<sup>26</sup>

17. While I have no knowledge of any restrictions placed on Penang for Vietnam personnel on “rest and recuperation” leave, Robert failed to mention both the Hartal Riots of 1967, during which 24 hour curfews were imposed for at least part of the two month period, and the National State of Emergency and nation wide curfews declared after race rioting in Kuala Lumpur following the May 1969 election. Given the claim “considerable and ... thorough” research conducted by Defence at the time it is surprising there is no mention of these incidents. (See attachment) I also question the validity of a witness who was a child at the time and as such would not have been privy to classified security information or fully familiar with the operations of the air base.

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* Para 25.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> 2011 Nature of Service Branch Review ADF Service at RAAF Butterworth 1971-1989. Nature of Service Branch. 14 October 2011. Paras 32-36.

<sup>24</sup> Official Committee Hansard. House of Representatives. Standing Committee on Petitions. Petition on reclassification of service by the Rifle Company Butterworth 1970-89. Wednesday, 29 October 2014. Canberra.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

18. Veterans' submissions to this inquiry have included evidence of threats to service families at ABB, including the 1975 JIO assessment of October 1975.<sup>27</sup> This was referenced by NOSB in 2014 at paragraph 40.<sup>28</sup> JIO believed there was a "distinct threat" to Australian service personnel and their dependents from booby traps and minor terrorist acts. JIO considered it possible that married quarters adjacent to the base could be targeted by the insurgents. It was also believed the insurgents could readily adopt the tactics of kidnapping or murdering foreign nationals, including Australian personnel and their dependents.<sup>29</sup> This important information was not mentioned.

19. In 2014 NOSB also acknowledged a Family Protection Plan "issued in May 1972" that identified the threat of "... racial communal disturbances to families resident in Butterworth Married Quarters".<sup>30</sup> This is confirmed by the 1975 JIO assessment:

There is always a risk of racial communal disturbances that could affect families resident in Base married quarters, housing estates, and hirings in Butterworth and Pinang.<sup>31</sup>

20. While at Paragraph 8 NOSB cite the 1975 document "Strategic Basis for Australian Defence Policy"<sup>32</sup> they ignore Paragraph 89 which portrays other than an idyllic, peaceful, environment:

The sub-region of Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia is now more exposed to external exploitation of political instabilities. In each country there are major sources of disaffection. Political control is heavily dependent on sectional advantage and coercion. Communal relations in Malaysia are essentially fragile. There is a long-established insurgency in Malaysia which is based on the Thai-Malaysian border to which arms could be supplied. There is potential for large-scale instability in Malaysia if there were to be widespread disaffection in the Chinese population and if dissidents were to receive arms and other support.<sup>33</sup>

21. Heldon's reference to Paragraph 25 in particular, can only be seen as an attempt to emphasise the understanding of "normal peacetime" service at Butterworth as evidenced by the presence of families. As demonstrated in this paper, this tactic has been used previously in both 2011 and 2014. It is also demonstrated that in 2014 NOSB were fully aware of documents identifying a "distinct threat" to Australian service personnel and their dependents from booby traps and minor terrorist acts, and the "essentially fragile" Malaysian communal relationships. This has all the appearance of downplaying the real threat to Australian service personnel and their families at Butterworth during the 1968-1989 Communist Insurgency War.

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<sup>27</sup> JIO Study No. 13/75. The Security of Air Base Butterworth. Joint Intelligence Organisation Department of Defence, Canberra, ACT. Issued Oct. 1975.

<sup>28</sup> Background Paper. Parliamentary Petition Dated 3 March 2014. Rifle Company Butterworth 1970-1989. Nature of Service Branch. 28 April 2014.

<sup>29</sup> JIO Study No. 13/75. Paras. 26, 48 (d) & (e), 56, 57.

<sup>30</sup> 2011 Nature of Service Branch Review ADF Service at RAAF Butterworth 1971-1989. Nature of Service Branch. 14 October 2011. Para.26

<sup>31</sup> JIO Para 14.

<sup>32</sup> Background Paper. Parliamentary Petition. Para. 8

<sup>33</sup> Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy (1975). Para. 89

22. During the 1950s and 60s, Australian Army and Air Force members posted to Malaysia had been accompanied by families, as was the case with members of other Commonwealth forces.

Thousands of Australian Air Force servicemen and members of the Artillery Corps of the Australian Army, with their families, were sent to Malaysia for tours of duty varying from 2 to 3 years. They were accommodated on the base or in private hirings on the mainland at Butterworth or on Penang.<sup>34</sup>

23. Schooling for children was provided at different British schools, including those in Singapore, the Cameron Highlands, Butterworth, and Minden Barracks on Penang Island. A dedicated RAAF school commenced in 1958 to cater for the growing number of RAAF children.<sup>35</sup> Army and Air Force members were accompanied by families during the 1948-60 Emergency and the 1962-66 Indonesian Confrontation.

24. Recognising the Tribunal must make its determination on purely objective fact, I have in my possession a first draft "Brief for DCAS Concerning Security of Butterworth", 1975. It addresses the complexity of the situation faced. The following comments are relevant to families:

- The first and obvious effects from rocket mortar and other forms of attack will be the damage to aircraft, equipment and facilities, and the death and injury to personnel including The first and obvious effects from rocket mortar and other forms of attack will be the damage to aircraft, equipment and facilities, and the death and injury to personnel including families ...
- Agitation for the withdrawal of RAAF units from Butterworth or at least dependant families could be expected. Such a 'withdrawal' would be politically advantageous to the CTs and potentially damaging to Australia's prestige in SEA.
- Immediately following the first attack on Butterworth an unestimated number of families could be expected to demand repatriation to Australia. Whilst not in effect a withdrawal, some planning for this contingency should be undertaken.
- An increase in the level of defence preparaedness including signs of defensive works against rocket attacks could produce the effects at 11b [demand for repatriation of families] ... above even before an attack develops ... it may be necessary to determine the extent of information which should be released to dependants when protective works are undertaken.<sup>36</sup> (see attachment)

25. I recognise the difficult position facing senior Air Force officers at the time. They recognised the real possibility of RAAF families being targeted by the Communists and the impact that not only an attack, but the construction of protective works, could have on families and the demand for repatriation. They also understood that the repatriation of families would potentially damage Australia's standing in the region.

26. I still recall the anger I felt when I first read this document. As I read it, the Government was prepared to risk the lives of RAAF dependents, including mine, so as not to lose face in South East Asia. Our families were simply pawns in high risk international diplomacy. As a service member I cannot complain about being placed in "objective danger". I agreed to that possibility when I

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<sup>34</sup> <http://raafschoopenang.com/schoolhistory.htm>. Accessed 25 Jan 2023

<sup>35</sup> *ibid*

<sup>36</sup> NAA: A703, 564/8/28 Part 8. RAAF Butterworth – Ground defence plans. Folio 283. Date uncertain.



enlisted. The Oath of Allegiance did not include service families, but all the evidence clearly shows they were so exposed. Yet Defence try use their presence at Butterworth to support the claim this was a normal peacetime posting. I believe this is an insult to both the veterans and their families. I have included in the attachment comments made on the RAAF Butterworth FaceBook page by veterans, dependents and, in one case, a civilian teacher at RAAF School Penang. These were unsolicited but made in response to posts I have made in the group.

28. This paper has demonstrated that the decision to recognise Butterworth service to the end of 1989 with the ASM was made in the full knowledge of the 2001 Medals Policy and was in harmony with it. It has also been demonstrated that in 2001 Defence understood the award was for operational, non-warlike service. A raft of documents discovered by veterans since 2001, including those referred to in different submissions to the Tribunal and provided by Lieutenant Colonel Russell Linwood ASM (Retd) in Submission 066 at documents,<sup>37</sup> confirm warlike service conditions at Butterworth during the Communist Insurgency War.

29. The paper “ADF Medals Policy – Where we have been and where we are going”<sup>38</sup> reveals the concern of Service Chiefs that the ASM in particular had been devalued as a result of political lobbying. The recommended policy was intended to ensure it retained some value:

To retain some value, it is recommended that the ASM should still be awarded for service which, although it may not be the subject of a formal declaration of 'non-warlike' operation by the responsible Minister, can still be put into a category which may be regarded as non-warlike service and declared accordingly under the ASM 1945-75/ASM regulations.

30. The decision to recognise Butterworth service with the ASM was made after the recommendation of the revised policy and was in harmony with it. By its insistence that peacetime service conditions existed at Butterworth during the 1968-89 period, Defence continue to devalue the ASM for all to whom it has been awarded.

31. The claim for warlike service extends to more than the Army and Air Force veterans from that period. It includes those RAAF dependents and civilian teachers at the RAAF School Penang who were there at the time. I do not propose that they be recognised with the award of a medal or repatriation benefits, but proper recognition of the service member's service acknowledges the risk to which they were opposed and the circumstances they lived through. I consider the evidence for warlike service compelling and that to be the only just outcome available. I ask the Tribunal to correct this long-standing injustice.

## **Attachment.**

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<sup>37</sup> Submission 066 – Lieutenant Colonel Russell Linwood ASM (Retd)

<sup>38</sup> ADF Medals Policy – Where we have been and where are we going.

# Penang loses its charm

From JOHN  
BENNETTS,  
in Singapore

**F**OR years the island of Penang has been a tourist resort renowned for its quiet, old-world charm.

Seen through a morning mist, the island rising out of the Straits of Malacca has a storybook beauty.

Visitors, including Australian airmen from Butterworth base, nearby on the mainland, flock to Penang's palm-shaded swimming beaches. Among other tourist attractions are the funicular railway, which rises nearly 3,000 feet to the top of Penang hill, and the famous Snake Temple in which hundreds of snakes sleep on altars and rafters.

Penang's peaceful reputation was shattered on Friday by riots in which eight people died and more than a hundred were injured.

At the weekend the island

was under curfew. Armed police and troops patrolled streets of shuttered shops. The pedicabs and the wayside stalls which dispensed satay and other delicacies had disappeared.

The riots developed from a "hartal" — a strike among shopkeepers who closed their doors in protest against the 15 per cent devaluation of the old Malayan currency following the sterling devaluation the previous weekend.

Penang is a stronghold of the Communist-infiltrated Malayan Labor Party and Malaysia's Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman claimed on Saturday that the party had in fact promoted the "hartal".

The Tunku said that young party members, whom he described as the equivalent of Mao Tse-tung's Red Guards, were sent out to beat up any Chinese or Indian shopkeepers who refused to close.

The young thugs then attacked Malay foodstall operators who retaliated with violence, the Tunku said.

"What originally was a Communist resistance against the government and people turned into a Sino-Malay conflict", he added.

The Tunku is undoubtedly trying to escape blame for the domestic currency devaluation which started all the trouble.

But he is probably correct in his claim that Left-wing extremists exploited discontent over the devaluation to provoke communal rioting.

Racial tension is not far beneath the surface of Malaysia's multi-racial harmony.

Only a few weeks ago the Malaysian branch of one of the world's biggest tobacco companies found itself facing financial ruin because of rumours that it was discriminating against its Chinese employees.

proceeds.

Chinese shopkeepers throughout Malaysia refused to handle the company's products. Members of Chinese secret societies threatened to assault anyone they found smoking the company's cigarettes.

The company had to undertake a nation-wide public relations campaign to rebut the rumours and retrieve its marketing position.

It is still a mystery why the usually canny governments in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore sprang a partial domestic devaluation on nervous multi-racial communities which had for months been assured that their old and new currencies had equal value.

The two governments are estimated to have made the equivalent of about \$20 million by devaluing the old Malayan currency.

Clearly they have made it at the expense of poor people, many of whom were easily persuaded in their anger and confusion to join in the Penang disturbances.

Possibly the two governments felt obliged to recoup some of the losses they had sustained through the devaluation of funds they held in London.

But they might well have achieved this more equitably and less provocatively by means of taxation.

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10. The major difficulty from a Defence viewpoint is that the CT's are able to decide the timing, nature and frequency of attacks virtually unhindered and with little fear of retaliation. Conversely they can effectively disrupt base operations by 'leaking' false intelligence regarding their intentions to either create alarm resulting in the setting up of tighter security which can then be reconnoitred and probed to determine its weakness, or which from sheer inactivity on the part of the CT's will be repealed within a short period. In any case, the advantage remains with the CT.

## EFFECT OF ATTACKS ON RAAF BUTTERWORTH

### General

11. Attacks on the Butterworth base would be launched for political/psychological aims to attain publicity and sympathy, not for the military purposes of capturing ground or materiel. Accordingly, these attacks should they develop, are expected to be irregular or perhaps non-recurring. The CTO is not yet considered to be in a position to conduct sustained military, sabotage or rocket attacks on any one target. This factor renders more difficult, the task of establishing and maintaining a satisfactory defence and security system. In any case, any arrangements introduced could only serve to reduce the freedom of action of the CTO and could not obviate the risk of attack.

### Personnel and Materiel

12. The first and obvious effects from rocket mortar and other forms of attack will be the damage to aircraft, equipment and facilities, and the death and injury to personnel including

/ families

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families and LECs. Damage to aircraft and facilities will provide substantial political/psychological propoganda to the CTO. The personnel effects will be:

- a. Political within Australia. Agitation for the withdrawal of RAAF units from Butterworth; or at least dependant families could be expected. Such a 'withdrawal' would be politically advantageous to the CTs and potentially damaging to Australia's prestige in SEA.
- b. Morale in Butterworth. Immediately following the first attack on Butterworth an unestimated number of families could be expected to demand repatriation to Australia. Whilst not in effect a withdrawal, some planning for this contingency should be undertaken.
- c. Likely Effect on LECs. Immediately following the first attack, LECs could be expected to absent themselves from work for several days, possibly resulting in a requirement to replace the civil labour from Australia.

13. An increase in the level of defence preparedness including signs of defensive works against rocket attacks, could produce the effects at 11b and c. above even before an attack develops. It may be necessary to consider the personnel implications of requests for early repatriation to Australia and the replacement of civil labour. Additionally, it may be necessary to determine the extent of information which should be released to dependants when protective works are undertaken.

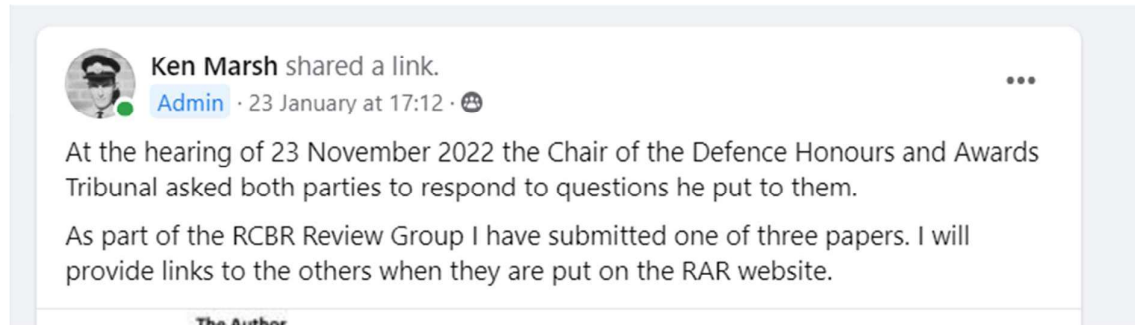
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## FACEBOOK CLIPS FROM THE PRIVATE GROUP RAAF BASE BUTTERWORTH

The following has been cut and pasted from the above Facebook Group. I have copied the original post and selected comments from each post.

As I have not asked permission from the posters I have not included names.



On day of arrival 1973 was given a second brief, first was before we left, on the requirements should an "incident" occur, then wife (Dec) said what do you mean by " incident " and after a pause was advised that there was a very real possibility of insurgent attacks on the island and mainland, and first response would be by personnel living on mainland (us as soon as house became vacant) and wives would needs to stay in houses and to display a white sheet or towel in window if assistance was required and to maintain at least 3days of food above normal requirements at all times. Great welcome for a girl who had never been out of Sydney/Newcastle and was new to service life.

Did a few range visits around similar times that Malaysian defence and police activity increased (transport past base and Tan Sai Gin full and clean, return very muddy and less full - choppers would land at ABB to offload wounded etc)



Ken Marsh ▸ RAAF Base Butterworth

[Admin](#) · 20 December 2022 · 🌐



**Hi Ken, just like to thank you for the work on butterworth, I was a school kid in Penang it maybe a other avenue to look at for the tribunal as school kids we were taught about booby traps at school and report them to the sp. far from a sale place of school kids went through this. Also at one time there was armed Guard s on the school buses. Hope this helps if it hasn't been brought to your attention before**

Good to see Current Affair highlight this matter. I was a teacher at RAAF school 82-83 and I clearly remember the briefing we were given at the Base about potential problems . We were allocated to a “warden” whose instructions we had to follow if anything eventuated. Why would civilians seconded to Defence Force be provided this protection if there was no potential conflict situation?  
Hopefully the Tribunal will result in fairness to those who protected us.



Ken Marsh shared a photo.

Admin · 21 April 2022 · 🌐

The threat was real. Butterworth was much closer to the communist strongholds.



I remember they were still putting boobytrapped toys on fences when were there 73-6-76

I remember it all well saw much on our police patrols. Still have dreams about it. There 69/72.

Malaya 1972 to 1975 (RAAF) lived at Jalan Bunga Tunjong I remember two things - In 1973 and again in 1974 (around March) we were warned to keep our kids away from the hill overlooking the Gaja. Reason numerous red flags displayed,



Ken Marsh shared a post.

Admin · 6 April 2022 · 🌐



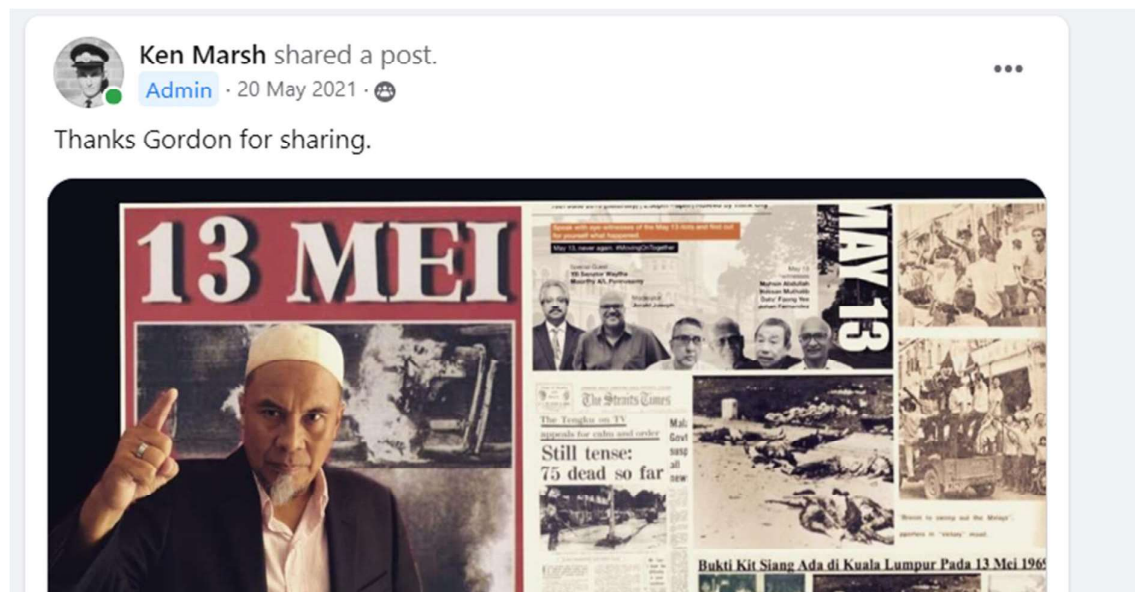
Worked at SASS Butterworth and remember a Malaysian chopper arriving with a dead soldier lying on the floor, the medic that unloaded him was very pale. This would have been about 1971.

Got a letter from my Mother, worried about those headlines when I was at Butterworth.

Arrived early <1972 and early in the tour briefed by an ADG as to action to be taken if called to arms. I won't go into details but it was very explicit how we were to act if attacked. Others may recall the necessary actions explained by the Adgie.- 😬

interesting to hear. As a dependant back then... we were largely oblivious. We did know of the race riots of the late 60s, potential lockdowns of families living at TSG and Robina Park. And talk of communist insurgents coming down from the Thai border. My father played golf in Kedah, under the watch of armed Malaysian soldiers in Jeeps on the perimeter. I saw that first hand. Thanks for this clarity.

We used to hear gunfire most days when we lived in Butterworth in 1976 and there were places out of bounds because of it



Yes, remember the curfews

1966 & 68 curfews with a lot of bloodshed.

Remember being scared when these Riot Police were outside our front gate at Greenlane 1969



Like Reply 1 v



There was also a curfew when I was there in 66 or 67. Guards on school buses etc.



Just before we got there. Still remember the little red packages the commo's use to leave around the place.

I have this newspaper.



Like Reply 1 y

Ken Marsh shared a post.  
Admin · 15 April 2021 · 🌐

Bomb victim dies  
The Straits Times, 25 April 1970, Page 1  
Article also available on microfilm reel NLO480 (Lee Kong Chian Reference Library - On shelf)

Citation Added · First · Previous · Next · Last

**Bomb victim dies**

SINGAPORE, Fri.

SIX-YEAR-OLD Katy Salter, injured in a booby-trap bomb blast at Changi yesterday afternoon, died in the Changi Hospital tonight.

Katy, a primary school student, and her neighbour, Peter Neil, nine, stepped on the bomb buried in a playground where a communist hammer-and-sickle flag was planted.

According to the Singapore Government's website 'The CPM Threat' the six year old daughter of a British serviceman was the last fatality at the hands of the communists in Singapore. The girl and her nine year old playmate were injured by a booby trap placed in a playground in April 1970. The boy survived.

<http://www.thecpmthreat.sg/>

I was on duty as a RAAF Service Policeman one night in 1969 when RMAF helicopters brought to RAAF Butterworth the bodies of 9 Malay soldiers who had been ambushed and killed by communist forces on the Thai Malay Border. Also we as RAAF Police were armed and patrolled RAAF Married quarters and the base during the Malay riots of 1969.

Even in 1975 we ATCOs kept an eye on the Eastern fence from the tower. We were on the watch for any vehicle stopping on the road. The Tebuans and Alouettes from the RMAF would take off for the Thai border fully armed and return empty ever day.

Remember it well , we all got a stern lecture in our classes , about a month later we spotted a commie flag on the hill at the back of Tanjong tokon - went straight to the SP who lived down the road - was I a proud seven year old or what 😊😊



### RAAF Butterworth and the Malaysian Insurgency War

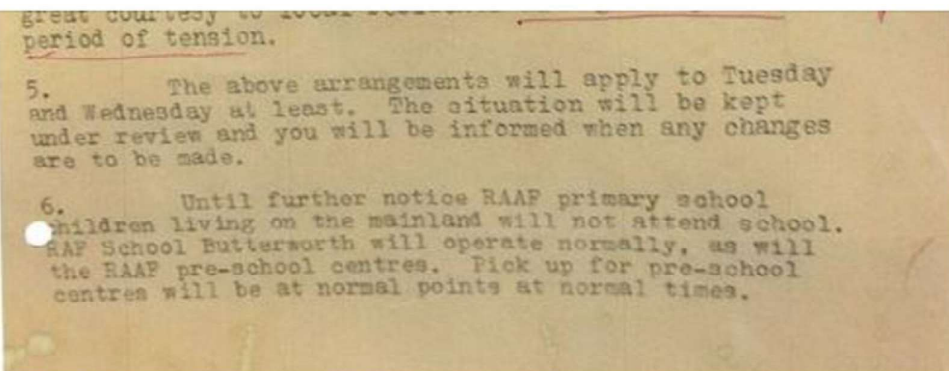
22 March 2021 · 🌐

On 13 May 1969 bloody race riots broke out in Kuala Lumpur. A nation wide state of emergency was declared by the Government. Kids at RAAF School Penang were on holiday at the time.

On 19 May the Officer Commanding RAAF Butterworth issued a directive regarding the resumption of school the next day. Children living on Penang would be accompanied to school by RAAF Service Police. During the period of tension they were required to remain quietly seated.

Kids living on the mainland would not be able to attend school.

<https://drive.google.com/.../1pH2cuXEraad9doJ4Csl.../view...>



I remember the school closing early due to concerns about troops in the hills behind the school

We were under curfew after arriving in Butterworth. 10pm to 6am if I recall correctly.



## RAAF Butterworth and the Malaysian Insurgency War

4 August 2019 · 🌐



WHAT WE WEREN'T TOLD ABOUT THE THREAT TO  
FAMILIES.

These three images have been cut from the 1975 Joint Intelligence Organisation's document 'The Security of Air Base Butterworth'.... [See more](#)

(d) Sabotage, by the planting of delayed-action explosives, booby-traps, and other similar devices designed to damage equipment and to injure personnel, by members of subversive groups or sympathetic locally-employed civilians or contract personnel. In this case targets outside the Base might be chosen, as there would not be as much danger of detection by security patrols. Minor acts of sabotage committed within the Base by such personnel would result in their detection and in a 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 the

As a school age dependant I and many others were bussed to school every day of the working week, from Tan Sai Gin .... I knew of previous lockdown of housing estates. And oblivious to the risk of our our buses being attacked or hijacked. The benefit of being young and ignorant of worldly issues.

I was a child there in 58 to 61 then a teenager 69 to 71.

Two emergencies.

We lived with conditions that were similar to siege or undeclared war. There were constant threats to peaceful living and quite unusual to the life we enjoyed back home in Australia.