



## RIFLE COMPANY BUTTERWORTH (RCB) 1969 – 1989

4 April 2023

This article is dedicated to all those unsung veterans who have been battling the Department of Defence for recognition. This article is a tribute to their long struggle and fine work behind the scenes. No matter what the outcome is, they are a bunch of bonza blokes in my book.

At this moment in time, veterans are on a collision course with the Australian Department of Defence. Veterans on one hand are seeking acknowledgement of their service to be recategorized warlike, while on the other the Department of Defence, given their vast resources continue to deny that recognition. This matter is now before a Tribunal responsible for investigating and making a decision of acknowledgement. The following are but some of those matters now being considered by the Tribunal:

A. Students and veterans of military history are aware that there were extenuating circumstances surrounding the rotation of highly trained and armed troops to an overseas nation that was struggling with internal divisions caused by communist and irregular forces.

B. The nation in question was Malaysia. A time of civil unrest, uncertainty and certainly a period of ethnic animosity amongst the conglomeration of its citizens. Communist irregulars and terrorists began their trail of destruction and mayhem during the period 1969 to 1998. A time when the Vietnam war still in progress in the sixties and early seventies.

C. The Government of the time in Malaysia, was hesitant to call the internal strife a war within its borders, because the insurance companies located in the United Kingdom would not pay compensation for such acts of violence to Malaysian citizens and the nations assets.

D. The Malaysian government introduced a policy at creating a harmonious environment that included all ethnic groups, built new infrastructure, employment, housing, laws, law enforcement, education facilities, strong and stable political government and attracting international investment.

E. The creation of a viable and deterrent Police and Defence force trained by the British SAS and followed up by the New Zealand SAS. (Special Air Service). Australia's contribution included the location of aircraft at Butterworth (along with their families) as well as an infantry company size group of highly trained and armed troops on a three-month rotational basis. This was part of the ANZUK agreement at the time involving the three nations. (Australia, United Kingdom and New Zealand).

F. Political inferences, political aspirations and political double speak by consecutive governments of Australia began with the change of governments in 1972. The government of the day wishing to keep its promises of withdrawing from the Vietnam War, did so, without compromising their agreement under the three-power agreement of ANZUK and that of the Malaysian government. The Australian government to ensure it kept its end of the bargain maintained its presence in Malaysia because of the ongoing threat of the growing threat of communism and the uncertainty at the time. The Australian presence was certainly a deterrent.

G. The Department of Defence in accordance with political influence at the time, watered down the threats to those troops deployed by renaming or using language such as calling it normal peace training, peace keeping and, in some cases, "extraordinary" training. They were careful to avoid using language (words) such as hostile, police action, warlike and/or even hazardous in the event it attracted recognition as such.

H. All troops who were deployed to Malaysia did so "Whilst on War Service" and carried live ammunition during their deployment period. The troops were provided with intelligence briefs before and during their deployment to envisage casualties, advised of their Rules of Engagement responsibilities and that loss of life could be expected. There are a number of such action reports that have mysteriously disappeared from Department of Defence archives, making it difficult for the Tribunal. However, to their credit, the Tribunal is scrolling through numerous oral and written histories of those troops who were deployed during that period.

I. What is of interest, is that the Malaysian government has acknowledged that a war existed within its borders, that it was battling the communists, that a treaty was made with the guerrilla leader and that medallic recognition provided was issued to its combatants. The Malaysian government had also approached the Australian Government and New Zealand governments to issue medals to veterans, but consecutive Australian governments have refused to recognise Australian troops that they were deployed to a warlike environment. The New Zealand government on the other hand took the unprecedented step of recognising its troops deployed during the same period. It is oblivious to many that the spirit of ANZAC was lacking amongst certain corridors of the Australian Defence Department.

It has been alleged that the Department of Defence found a loop hole during the war in Afghanistan and other regions where our troops were deployed. It appears that some took advantage of this by attending one day briefings, remaining overnight, near airfields and/or visiting centres far from "hostile and warlike" environments. Yet somehow and miraculously were awarded the AASM. Such practices attracted the ire of one embarrassed high-ranking officer who realised the erroneous and errant methodology being used and put a stop to it.

Although this article is merely scratching the surface and that I have written other articles based on this subject, there are better qualified individuals that I to present the case for recognition. Furthermore, there is a huge collection of material yet to be considered which is stored away in archives and not available to the public; which some would say, it is because of national Security, political and not in the interests of certain parties. If such material becomes public in the future, it will be far too late to make amends as most of the veterans involved would have passed away.

I pay tribute to all those who have submitted their submissions to the Tribunal for their well-structured and wonderful memories of a time where the environment was hostile in nature and casualties were expected. I also pay tribute to the leadership of the day who ensured that all troops involved were in a high state of readiness and battle ready to meet any threat.

The following links for those interested may demonstrate a case for recognition:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rifle\\_Company\\_Butterworth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rifle_Company_Butterworth)  
<https://abalinx.com/rifle-company-butterworth-penang.../>  
<https://abalinx.com/.../rifle-company-butterworth-1970.../>  
<https://9now.nine.com.au/.../b9e2272c-1e18-4ed3-bb21...>  
<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C274464>  
<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/PL2027>  
[http://rarasa.org.au/?page\\_id=1400](http://rarasa.org.au/?page_id=1400)  
<https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/subscribe/news/1/...>  
<https://www.rarnational.org.au/rifle-company-butterworth.../>  
<https://defence-honours-tribunal.gov.au/inquiries/>

As always, remain vigilant, be of good cheer for the world is still a beautiful place, never give up and always fight the good fight.



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