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Appendix D

MASSEY UNIVERSITY

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Degree: PhD Dept/Institute/School: Centre for Defence Studies

Thesis title: The Platforms: An Examination of New Zealand Special Air Service Campaigns from Borneo 'Confrontation' to the Vietnam War, 1965-1971

Name of Chief Supervisor: Professor Glyn Harper Telephone Ext: 5456

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**The Platforms:
An Examination of New Zealand Special Air Service
Campaigns from Borneo ‘Confrontation’ to the
Vietnam War, 1965 – 1971**

**A thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
Defence and Strategic Studies
at Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand.**

Rhys Ball

2009

Abstract

In 1955, the New Zealand Government authorised the creation of a Special Forces unit to operate with British counterparts in Malaya to defeat a communist-inspired guerrilla insurgency. Between 1956 and 1971 elements of the New Zealand Special Air Service (SAS) were deployed on active service four times. These operational deployments included periods of time in Malaya, Thailand, Borneo and South Vietnam. The research illustrates the chronological progression of the New Zealand SAS through two of its most influential active service campaigns by examining how commitments to the Borneo 'Confrontation' in 1965 and 1966 directly and indirectly influenced the deployment to South Vietnam between December 1968 and February 1971.

The mission of the New Zealand SAS in South Vietnam was to 'assist in providing long range reconnaissance patrols' that would support the larger infantry elements in defeating the Vietcong and North Vietnamese Army enemy. New Zealand SAS soldiers participated in 169 Australian SAS patrols in South Vietnam. Of those, 137 were commanded by the New Zealanders themselves. The research describes what the New Zealand SAS encountered during nearly two and a half years in South Vietnam; from the tactical intensity associated with small five-man patrols often observing or contacting much larger enemy formations, to the uncompromising professional standards that were expected of all members regardless of situation or circumstances and the influences of experienced Patrol Commanders, and the frustrations and inflexibility which characterised the relationship with their Australian counterparts.

The research also further examines the underlying issue of overall strategic success and value of a small nationally-identifiable and strongly independent military unit that was compelled to operate under the command of larger Special Forces coalition counterparts and the impact different political, doctrinal, tactical cultural and cognitive characteristics had on these joint-operational deployments. The size of the New Zealand SAS contribution to the Australian SAS Squadron combined with the command arrangements placed upon it, also dictated that the deployments were never likely to be able to exert influence in any 'independent' or nationally-identifiable

sense, and the relationships, the types of patrol operations conducted, and the value of these operations, would ultimately see many New Zealand SAS veterans largely dissatisfied with the overall performance of the deployment.

Nevertheless, the strength of New Zealand SAS operations in South Vietnam came from its practical application of unique New Zealand Special Forces methodology and field-craft which had been fundamentally shaped and developed in Borneo. The New Zealand SAS operations in South Vietnam and Borneo - the demonstration of the highest standards of patrol techniques, tracking, reconnaissance, ambushing and fire discipline, and above all, operational professionalism that has been the hallmark of New Zealand's military history – provided the evolutionary ‘platforms’ from which today’s highly skilled and enviable New Zealand Special Forces have emerged.

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It goes without saying that this piece of work could quite simply have not been completed without the assistance of a great number of people; friends and colleagues, organisation and agency staff members, group representatives, peers, family and veterans. For those who were gracious enough to host me, in some cases for an extended period of time, I am deeply grateful; Sam Radford and Karl Morris, Jonathan and Taryn Cooper, Helen Holcroft, Kevin and Helen Herewini, Wendy and Graye Shattky, Ion and Sylvia Brown and Kristin and Guy Stone. For those friends who have patiently sat and listened to me rant about my research until ‘eyes rolled’ I thank you for your persistence; to Devon Sutcliffe I owe a significant debt of gratitude; Peter Frost (far more than my trusty travel agent); Marshall and Eve Benson, Neil Bullock and of course Marika Luiso.

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And finally, to all of the veterans who contributed to this research, I could not have come close to understanding what I was writing about without your assistance. I realise some of you spoke to me for a number of different reasons – whatever these may have been, please know that I will always remain most grateful, for you have helped me in greatly understanding who I am. I hope that I have conveyed your story, albeit in this brief and abridged form, in such a way that you remain as proud of your contributions, sacrifices and accomplishments as I and many of the children within the ‘SAS family’ have always been. You not only represented your country but were prepared to lay down your lives for the values that you believed so strongly in; the enduring legacy from both a professional perspective as well as the impact on family generations will remain unstinting and forever lasting.

Dedication

To Mrs Deirdre Elizabeth Ball: to my principal sponsor in all facets of this piece of research, my greatest motivator and supporter who has always encouraged me to aspire to do my very best. Like those mentioned in these pages – perhaps even more so – you experienced and lived through this period I have written about. And for that, I will remain forever grateful. All my love always.

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Glossary

1ATF	Australian Task Force
161 Bty	161 Royal New Zealand Artillery Battery
22 SAS	22 Special Air Service Regiment (United Kingdom)
2IC	Second in Command
2Lt (2LT)	Second Lieutenant
3Cav	Australian 3 rd Cavalry Regiment
AATTV	Australian Army Training Team Vietnam
AFV	Australian Forces Vietnam
AGS	Army General Staff
AHQ	Australian Headquarters
AK-47	Soviet-manufactured 7.62mm assault rifle
ANZAC	Australian and New Zealand Army Corps
ANZAM	Australian, New Zealand and Malaysia
ANZUK	Australian, New Zealand and United Kingdom Security Treaty
ANZUS	Australian, New Zealand and United States Security Treaty
AO	Area of Operations
APC	M113 Armoured Personnel Carrier
A/QM	Assistant Quartermaster
ARVN	Army of the Republic of Vietnam
Arty	Artillery
ASAP	As Soon as Possible (A-sap)
ASAS	Australian Special Air Service
BBT	Chinese-Communist High Explosive (HE) grenades
BC	Body Count
BDA	Bomb Damage Assessment
Bde	Brigade
BEM	British Empire Medal
BRIAM	British Advisory Mission Vietnam
BSIS	British Secret Intelligence Service, also known as MI6
BT	Blood Trail
Capt	Captain
CASEVAC	Casualty Evacuation: by DUSTOFF Helicopter
CDF	New Zealand Chief of Defence Force
CDS	New Zealand Chief of Defence Staff
CGS	New Zealand Chief of General Staff
CHICOM	Chinese-Communist – usually in reference to the manufacture or source of weapons used by the Vietcong and North Vietnamese Army (NVA), as opposed to Soviet-made weapons
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIDG	United States Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) program
CINCFE	United Kingdom Commander-in-Chief Far East
CINCPAC	United States Commander in Chief Pacific
CM	Cabinet Minute or Cabinet Meeting
CNS	New Zealand Chief of Naval Staff
CO	Commanding Officer
CO	Cabinet Office

COMUSMACV	Commander United States Military Assistance Command Vietnam
CORDS	Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support
COS	Chief of Staff
COSV/COSVN	Central Office South Vietnam - organisation with overall responsibility for Vietcong operations in South Vietnam
Cpl	Corporal
CSR	Commonwealth Strategic Reserve
CTR	Close Target Reconnaissance
D Inf/SAS	Director or Directorate of Infantry and Special Air Service
DAAG	Deputy Assistant Adjutant General
DCAS	Deputy Chief of Air Staff
DCM	Distinguished Conduct Medal
DEA	New Zealand Department of External Affairs
Det	Detachment or detonator cord
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DIA	New Zealand Department of Internal Affairs
DLO	Defence Liaison Officer
DMZ	Demilitarised Zone: a narrow zone across the 17 th parallel dividing North and South Vietnam
DOBOPS	United Kingdom Director of Borneo Operations
DOW	Died of Wounds
DPMC	New Zealand Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (formerly Prime Minister's Office)
DUSTOFF	Call sign for helicopter Medical Evacuation (casevac or medevac)
DZ	Drop Zone
ETA	Estimated Time of Arrival
FAC	Forward Air Controller
FARELF	New Zealand Far East Land Forces
FCO/FO	United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office (formerly Foreign Office)
FFZ	Free Fire Zone
FSB	Fire Support Base
FSPB	Fire Support Patrol Base
FWMAF	Free World Military Assistance Forces: US term for the forces assisting South Vietnam
GR	Grid Reference
GS	Grid Square
GSO2 (Int)	Army General Staff Officer 2: Intelligence
GSO2 (Ops)	Army General Staff Officer 2: Operations
HC	Hoi Chanh: South Vietnamese Vietcong who joined the Chieu Hoi programme
HE	High Explosive
HF	High Frequency: radio
HMG	Heavy-Machine Gun
HQ	Headquarters
HQAFV	Headquarters Australian Forces Vietnam
IA	Immediate Action
IBT	Indonesian Border Terrorists

INTREP	Intelligence Report
INTSUM	Intelligence Summary
IO	Intelligence Officer
JG	Jungle Green (uniform)
JWS	Jungle Warfare School
KIA (BC)	Killed in Action (confirmed by a sighting of the dead body)
LAF	Laotian Armed Forces
LF	Vietcong Local Force Guerrillas
LFT	Light Fire Team – Two RAAF 9 Squadron ‘Bushranger’ Helicopter gunships
LMG	Light-Machine Gun
LO	Liaison Officer
LOCSTAT	Location Status: statement of present location
LRDG	Long Range Desert Group
LRRP	Long-Range Reconnaissance Patrols
LT	Lieutenant
LT-COL	Lieutenant-Colonel
LT-GEN	Lieutenant-General
LUP	Lying Up Place/Laying Up Place
LZ	Landing Zone
MAAGV	Military Assistance Advisory Group – Vietnam (1955-1964)
MACSOG	Military Assistance Command – Studies and Advisory Group
MACV	Military Assistance Command – Vietnam
Maj	Major
MAJ-GEN	Major-General
MATT	Mobile Advisory and Training Team
MC	Military Cross
MEA/MFAT	New Zealand Ministry of External Affairs (now Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade)
MEDEVAC	Medical Evacuation
MF	Vietcong Main Force Guerrillas
MG	Machine Gun
MIA	Missing in Action
MID	Mentioned in Dispatches
MILSEC	New Zealand Army Military Secretary
MM	Military Medal
MMG	Medium Machine Gun
MMTT	Montagnard Mobile Training Team
MOBRIG	Indonesian Police Mobile Brigades
MOD	Ministry of Defence
MRF	Mobile Riverine Force
MSF	Mobile Strike Force
MSR	Main Supply Route
MTT	US Navy SEAL Mobile Training Teams
Nasho	National Serviceman (NS) conscript (Australian Army)
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
NEWZARM	New Zealand Army
NVA	North Vietnamese Army
NZADV	New Zealand Army Detachment Vietnam
NZDF	New Zealand Defence Force

NZPA	New Zealand Press Association
NZSAS	New Zealand Special Air Service
NZV Force	New Zealand Vietnam Force
O Gp	Orders Group (O-Group)
OC	Officer Commanding (usually of Squadron or Company)
OCS	Officer Cadet School: Portsea, Victoria
OIC	Officer in Charge
OG	Olive Green
OP	Observation Position
Op	Operation
OPSO	Operations Officer
OR	Other Ranks
OSS	United States Office of Strategic Services
OTLP	One Time Letter Pad
PC	Patrol Commander
PE	Plastic Explosive: Composition 4 or C4
Pers	Personnel
PF	Popular Forces: South Vietnamese Militia
PLAF	People's Liberation Armed Forces or Nhan Dan Giai Phong Quan – otherwise known as the Vietcong
PNG	Papua New Guinea
POW (PW)	Prisoner of War
PRC-25	Personal Radio Communications Very High Frequency (VHF) radio set
PRP	People's Revolutionary Party - the political wing of the South Vietnamese Communist Party
PRU	Provincial Reconnaissance Units (Phoenix Program)
PSYOPS	Psychological Operations
PT	Physical Training
Pte	Private
PTSU	RNZAF Parachute Training and Support Unit
PUO	Pyrexia (fever) of Unknown Origin
PW	Prisoner of War
PX	Post Exchange: American Services Duty Free store
Q Accounts	Quartermasters Accounts
R & R	Rest and Recreation (Recuperation): leave taken outside of Vietnam
RAF	Royal Air Force
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RAR	Royal Australian Regiment
RAR/NZ	Royal Australian Regiment/New Zealand (attached) Company
Recce/Recon	Reconnaissance
Regt	Regiment
Resup	Resupply
RF	New Zealand Army Regular Force
RM	Royal Marines
RNZA	Royal New Zealand Artillery
RNZAF	Royal New Zealand Air Force
RNZIR	Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment
RNZN	Royal New Zealand Navy

ROE	Rules of Engagement
ROK	Republic of Korea
RPD	Soviet-manufactured Light-Machine Gun
RPG	Rocket-Propelled/Projectile Grenade
RPKAD	Resemen Para Komando Angkatan Darat, Indonesian Special Forces
RSD	Vietcong Rear Services Group
RSM	Regimental Sergeant-Major (Warrant Officer Class One)
RTU	Returned to Unit
RV	Rendezvous
RVN	Republic of Vietnam
SARBE	Search and Rescue Beacon
SAS	Special Air Service
SASR	Australian Special Air Service Regiment
SBS	United Kingdom Special Boat Service
SEAL	US Navy Special Forces (SEa, Air and Land)
SEATO	South East Asia Treaty Organisation
SF	Special Forces
SMM	Saigon Military Mission
SOF	Special Operations Forces
Sgt	Sergeant
SHQ	Squadron Headquarters
Sig	Signals or signaller
SIGINT	Signals Intelligence
SITREP	Situation Report
SKS	Soviet and Chinese-manufactured semi-automatic rifle
SLR	United Kingdom L1A1 7.62mm Self-Loading Rifle
SMG	Sub-Machine Gun
SOG	Studies and Observation Group
SOE	Special Operations Executive
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures or Standing Operating Procedure (see 2 Squadron, September 1968) or Standard Operational Procedure
SQMS	Squadron Quartermaster Sergeant (SQMS)
SQN	Squadron
SSgt	Staff-Sergeant
SSM	Squadron Sergeant-Major (Warrant Officer Class Two)
Tac	Tactical
TACAIR	Tactical Air Support
TAOR	Tactical Area of (Operational) Responsibility
Tet	Vietnamese Lunar New Year which occurs in late January or early February
Tet Offensive	The coordinated general offensive against South Vietnam that began on 29 January 1968
TF	New Zealand Army Territorial Forces
TNI	Tantara Nasional Indonesia - Indonesian Regular Army
Tpr	Trooper
TS	Top Secret
UD	Unauthorised Discharge
UDT	United States Navy Underwater Demolition Teams

UH	Utility Helicopter: Bell UH1-Iroquois
UHF	Ultra-High Frequency: radio
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
US	United States
USA	United States Army
USAF	United States Air Force
USMC	United States Marine Corps
USN	United States Navy
USSF	United States Special Forces
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (Russia)
UW	Unconventional Warfare
VC	Vietnamese Communist (a contraction of Viet Nam Cong San)
VC	Victoria Cross
VHF	Very-High Frequency: radio band
Viet Minh	Vietnam Doc Lap Dong Minh: Vietnam Independence League
VLF	Very-Low Frequency: radio band
VNA	Vietnamese National Army
VNAF	Republic of Vietnam (RVN) Air Force
VR	Visual Reconnaissance
WIA	Wounded in Action
WOI/WO1	Warrant Officer Class One
WOII/WO2	Warrant Officer Class Two
WWII	World War Two

Introduction

Over the last twenty five years, military Special Forces organisations around the world have probably gained more publicity than they would like. This has most certainly been the case for the three Commonwealth Special Air Service (SAS) Regiments and Groups from the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand.¹ Interest has grown quickly and much unwanted exposure and misinformation has been presented which has resulted in something of a mixed impact. While there is a considerable amount of publicly-available research material on key political and operational aspects of New Zealand Special Air Service (SAS) activities in Borneo and Vietnam, much of the material in archives is still not freely available. Of that which is available, to date there has been little academic study of the wider strategic impact and efficacy of New Zealand Special Forces. The subject of Special Forces is often riddled with speculation and over-eager imagination by a salacious media and public. The aim of this research is to record a credible and robust history of the New Zealand SAS in Vietnam and to show how CLARET operations in Borneo between 1965 and 1966 influenced that performance.

Colin Gray has proposed that modern (military) strategy has not invented 'special warfare,' but after 1939 it invented Special Forces geared to secure strategic effect through an unconventional modus operandi. What has not always been so, he added, was the manifestation of the seeming paradox of regular troops, organised, trained, equipped, and directed to wage war unconventionally in what is now known as 'special operations or Special Forces.'² Despite Gray's assertions, it has been claimed the background of New Zealand's Special Forces begins much earlier than the middle of the twentieth century. During the 19th century Land Wars between the Government of New Zealand and some Maori, the nature of New Zealand's terrain – as well as the tactics of the conflicts themselves – favoured the use of relatively small units of well-armed, physically

¹ Many would argue that the catalyst for this was the successful resolution of the Iranian Embassy siege by British SAS soldiers in London in early May 1980. Since then, further Special Forces contributions to military campaigns have been widely written about and reported on by writers, journalists, commentators and, most importantly, former soldiers themselves. Recent campaigns in Afghanistan have also seen increased public awareness of New Zealand SAS operations. See Staff Correspondents (1980): 'A Daring Rescue at Princes Gate' in *Time Magazine*, May 19, 1980, pp 16-19, Tony Geraghty, *This is the SAS: A Pictorial History of the Special Air Service Regiment* (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1982), Michael Paul Kennedy, *Soldier 'T': SAS* (London: Guild Publishing by arrangement with Bloomsbury Publishing Limited, 1990) and Paul Little, *Willie Apiata VC: The Reluctant Hero* (Auckland: Penguin Group, 2008).

² Colin Gray, *Modern Strategy* (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 287.

and mentally tough, bush-wise volunteer soldiers. Both the Taranaki Bush Rangers and the Forest Rangers became especially adept at unconventional warfare.³ During the Second World War, New Zealanders served with various notable British, Australian and Fijian Units. The most significant numbers operated with the Long Range Desert Group (LRDG),⁴ but a handful of New Zealanders also operated in Greece in 1942 on Special Operations Executive (SOE) ‘special service’ missions which assisted Greek guerrillas⁵ and later in the war a small number of New Zealand soldiers were sent or volunteered to serve with Australia’s Z Special Unit and the First Commando Fiji Guerrillas.⁶

In both World Wars, New Zealand’s forces began their participation in the struggle in the Middle East. In the post-World War II strategic environment, New Zealand’s commitment to Empire defence was initially focused in that same theatre.⁷ However, by 1956, New Zealand had acquired different and geographically more logical responsibilities through its memberships of the Australia, New Zealand United States (ANZUS), Australia, New Zealand and Malaysia (ANZAM) and South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) alliances. Despite this, New Zealand’s military, political and popular thinking adapted to these geostrategic changes rather slowly.⁸ The break-through

³ See James Belich, *The New Zealand Wars and the Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1986), James Cowan, *The New Zealand Wars, A History of the Maori Campaigns and the Pioneering Period, Volume I: 1845-1864 and Volume II: 1864-1872* (Wellington: New Zealand Government Printer 1922 and 1925), Tim Ryan and Bill Parham, *The Colonial New Zealand Wars* (Auckland: Grantham House, 2002) and Richard Stowers, *Forest Rangers: A History of the Forest Rangers During the New Zealand Wars* (Hamilton: Richard Stowers and Print House, 1996).

⁴ See H.W. Wynter and United Kingdom Public Records Office, *Special Forces in the Desert War, 1940-1943* (Kew: Public Records Office, 2001), Frank Jopling and Brendon O’Carroll (eds), *Bearded Brigands* (Wellington: Ngaio Press, 2002), Brendon O’Carroll, *Kiwi Scorpions: The Story of the New Zealanders in the Long Range Desert Group* (Devon: Token Publishers, 2000) and *Barce Raid: The Long Range Desert Group’s Greatest Escapade* (Wellington: Ngaio Press, 2005), Major-General David Lloyd Owen, *The Long Range Desert Group 1940-1945: Providence Their Guide* (London: Pen and Sword, 2001) and James Sanders, *Desert Patrols: New Zealanders with the Long Range Desert Group* (Auckland: Wilson and Horton, 1976).

⁵ Arthur Edmonds, *With Greek Guerrillas* (Putaruru, New Zealand: A Edmonds, 1998).

⁶ In June 1942, the Special Operations Australia (SOA) unit was renamed Z Special Unit named after the Z Experimental station near Cairns in Queensland. The group conducted a number of intelligence operations, sabotage actions, coast watching and observing the Peninsula of Malaya, Singapore, Borneo, Brunei and Portuguese Timor, operating in a combination of fishing trawlers, small boats (canoe) and motor submersible canoes. Unit casualties included 112 killed in action, while they were responsible for 1846 Japanese killed and 249 taken prisoner. See Ronald McKie, *The Heroes* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson (Publishers) Pty Ltd, 1960), New Zealand Malay Veterans website at <http://www.malayanvets.org> and Headquarters Fiji Section 2NZEF, “Unit History – 1st Commando Fiji Guerrillas, 20 November 1945,” in Department of Internal Affairs D.354/3/25, Archives New Zealand (ANZ), Wellington.

⁷ Malcolm Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire: New Zealand’s Involvement in Middle East Defence and the Suez Crisis 1947-57* (Wellington: Auckland University Press in association with the New Zealand Institute of International Affairs (NZIIA) and GP Print, 1994), p.5.

⁸ Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.5.

took place in 1955 when both New Zealand and Australia committed to participate in the peacetime Commonwealth Strategic Reserve (CSR).⁹ This change marked the key turning point in New Zealand's conceptions of war-making; henceforth, it would rely on regular forces to meet defence commitments.

As part of its initial commitment to the CSR, the New Zealand Government authorised the creation of a Special Forces unit to operate with British counterparts in Malaya to counter a communist-inspired guerrilla insurgency. Between 1956 and 1971 elements of the New Zealand SAS were deployed on active service four times as part of New Zealand foreign policy contributions to key collective international treaties and commitments. These operational deployments included periods of time in Malaya, Thailand, Borneo and South Vietnam.

The single most important influence on the establishment and development of New Zealand's Special Forces was the British Special Air Service Regiment. Much has been written of the historical development of the British SAS as well as its operational history from its formation in 1941 to the present day.¹⁰ Although the British SAS had a particularly successful war, it was nevertheless stood down in 1946 only to be revived as the Malayan Scouts in 1948.¹¹ What allowed Special Forces to prosper in the post-World War II period was the decolonisation of the world, in particular the move towards independence of many countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East meant that these countries were no longer able to be controlled by their former European colonial powers. The use of British Special Forces in small scale wars against subversive movements in

⁹ F.L.W. Wood, 'Political and Strategic Background,' in Ken Keith (ed), *Defence Perspectives: Papers Read at the 1972 Otago Foreign Policy School* (Price Milburn for the New Zealand Institute of International Affairs (NZIIA), 1972), pp.30-31.

¹⁰ Michael Asher, *The Regiment: The Real Story of the Special Air Service* (London: Penguin Books Limited, 2007), Ken Connor, *Ghost Force: The Secret History of the SAS* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1998), Roger Ford, *Fire from the Forest: The SAS Brigade in France, 1944* (London: Cassell Military Paperbacks, 2003), Robin Hunter, *True Stories of the SAS: The Special Air Service* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1985), Tim Jones, *SAS Zero Hour: The Secret Origins of the Special Air Service* (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2006), Anthony Kemp, *SAS at War: The Special Air Service Regiment 1941-1945* (London: Murray, 1991) and *The SAS: Savage Wars of Peace* (London: John Murray Ltd, 1994), Damien Lewis, *Operation Certain Death: The Inside Story of the SAS's Greatest Battle* (London: The Random House Group Limited, 2004), Jack Ramsay, *SAS: The Soldiers' Story* (London: MacMillan, 1996) and Julian T. Thompson (ed), *The Imperial War Museum Book of Modern Warfare: British and Commonwealth Forces at War 1945-2000* (London: Pan Books in association with the Imperial War Museum, 2002) are but some examples of the vast number of British SAS publications that have been published in recent times.

¹¹ John Keegan, *Intelligence in War: Knowledge of the Enemy from Napoleon to al-Qaeda* (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2003), pp. 308-309.

former or existing British possessions – Malaya, Kenya, Borneo, Aden, Cyprus and Oman – provided operational models from which other countries observed the strategic merit of such forces. The British SAS example formed the inspiration from which emerged the New Zealand Special Air Service Squadron in 1955.

When New Zealand Prime Minister Sidney Holland made his offer to his British counterpart Anthony Eden, New Zealand had nothing akin to a Special Forces capability. The decision to establish the New Zealand SAS was made at, or following, the Prime Ministers' Conference in London in February 1955, in response to the United Kingdom's request that New Zealand send an infantry battalion to Malaya as part of the CSR. Holland refused, saying that New Zealand's Korean commitment 'necessarily limited our ability' and instead, thanks to being made aware of the concept by his British counterpart earlier during the visit, offered a New Zealand SAS Squadron. The SAS sub-unit was to be New Zealand's first contribution to the CSR.

From an operational perspective, the New Zealand SAS Squadron proved to be relatively successful during its two years in Malaya. Its performance, as described by the commander of the British SAS Regiment George Lea, 'not only show[ed] again that New Zealand soldiers are second to none, but helped the SAS as a Corps to reach its present high prestige and status in the British Army.'¹² Christopher Pugsley wrote that New Zealand's commitments to the CSR in 1955 had little real impact on the Emergency which was in its closing stages.¹³ The above notwithstanding, Holland's decision to establish a Special Forces unit in New Zealand was successful in military, political and diplomatic terms. It laid an essential foundation for subsequent post-World War II service by New Zealand Army Regular units in the South East Asian theatre which was pursued 'with exemplary professionalism.'¹⁴ Tactically and operationally, the SAS Squadron's performance in Malaya established the emphasis on specialised jungle-warfare that remained a constant theme for both the SAS and New Zealand Army over the next four decades.

¹² Christopher Pugsley, *From Emergency to Confrontation: The New Zealand Armed Forces in Malaya and Borneo 1949-1966* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press in association with the New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2003), pp.121-122.

¹³ Pugsley, *From Emergency to Confrontation*, pp.121-122.

¹⁴ See Rabel's review of the Pugsley book on <http://www.mch.govt.nz/history/making-history/emergency-review.html>, viewed on 27 November 2007.

By the end of 1957, New Zealand's contribution to the CSR had increased. The New Zealand SAS Squadron was replaced by a full infantry battalion which became part of the Commonwealth Brigade.¹⁵ However, while New Zealand's Chief of General Staff, Major-General Stephen Weir acknowledged the squadron's 'very fine record,' there was no place for the SAS in the New Zealand Army and in December 1957, the Squadron was disbanded. Paradoxically, nine months earlier, having observed the SAS in Malaya, Australia decided to form a dedicated Special Forces SAS element and the Australian 1st SAS Company was officially established in July 1957.¹⁶

Less than two years later, in October 1959, the New Zealand Department of Defence (DOD) decided to re-form the New Zealand SAS Squadron.¹⁷ Two key factors appear to have contributed to this decision. Successful campaigns carried out by the British SAS in Malaya and Oman (Jebel Akdar) had shown there was a continuing role for conventional, albeit specialist, troops in low-intensity or 'limited' conflicts that were an increasing feature of the political landscape. Ken Connor added that British politicians who had 'written off overseas armed interventions after the Suez Crisis began to have second thoughts as the covert use of the SAS had the combined attractions of being cheap, efficient, successful and deniable.'¹⁸ If the British model had a dedicated Special Forces component, Defence officials were likely to have felt the same should apply to the New Zealand Regular Force Brigade organisation. Any decision to reform the Squadron was firmly supported by its first Commanding Officer (CO), Major Frank Rennie, who by then was the New Zealand Army's Director of Infantry and Training.¹⁹ Perhaps his influence here more than before and during the New Zealand Squadron's time in Malaya, became the most significant factor in enabling the New Zealand SAS to have a future for the remainder of the 1960s.

After the completion of nearly two years of intensive cross-border operations during the Borneo 'Confrontation' in 1965 and 1966, the New Zealand SAS had to endure a further

¹⁵ Pugsley, *From Emergency to Confrontation*, p.123.

¹⁶ Major-General Neville Smethurst, 'The Company Days – 1957-1964' in M.J. Malone, *SAS: A Pictorial History of the Australian Special Air Service, 1957-1997* (Claremont, Western Australia: Access Press, 1997), pp.1-4.

¹⁷ Army "209/3/222/A2, 21 September 1959" in New Zealand Army File 77/2/22 Part 2, ANZ, Wellington.

¹⁸ Connor, *Ghost Force*, p.85.

¹⁹ New Zealand Army, *History of the New Zealand Special Air Service* (Wellington: New Zealand Army, no date), p.1.

two years of waiting before it was notified it was to form a Troop of 26 soldiers to operate with the Australian SAS Squadron as part of the 1st Australian Task Force in South Vietnam. The mission of the New Zealand SAS in South Vietnam was, as with their Australian Squadron counterparts, to ‘assist in providing long range reconnaissance patrols’ that would support the larger infantry elements of the Task Force in defeating the Vietcong and North Vietnamese Army (NVA) enemy.²⁰

The general study of Special Forces from a strategic and analytical perspective has not been particularly thorough to date. Ten years ago, Gray commented that despite the enormous amount of literature on special operations and Special Forces, the genre was almost entirely without any discussion of a genuine ‘strategic commentary.’²¹ This has changed over the last decade, as the works of Gray, Eliot A. Cohen, J. Paul de Taillon, and more recently Alistair Finlan and James Kiras, have used specific case studies to examine the strategic utility of Special Forces in a truly analytical fashion.²² This increase in the academic study of Special Forces strategy has also been strengthened by a body of military practitioners with current Special Forces knowledge and experience contributing journal articles and research papers on the subject.²³

Nevertheless, there remain numerous definitions of Special Forces and special operations forces available in both academic and literary fields, as well as defence and military doctrinal environments. In 1978, the New Zealand SAS was defined as ‘a special action force, ready by virtue of its organisation, training, equipment and mental attitude to

²⁰ Colonel Peter Hamilton, “Directive to the Officer Commanding Troop 1 Ranger Squadron NZSAS, 5 December 1968,” in 5/6/7 Volume 1, AMZAM Commonwealth Strategic Reserve – New Zealand National Directives, September 1964 – April 1969, New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) Archive, Wellington, p.1.

²¹ Colin Gray, ‘Handfuls of Heroes on Desperate Ventures: When Do Special Operations Succeed?’ in *Parameters, US Army War College Quarterly – Spring 1999*. Available at: <http://carlisle-www.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/99spring/gray.html>, pp. 2-24.

²² Eliot A. Cohen, *Commandos and Politicians: Elite Military Units in Modern Democracies* (Boston: Harvard University Center for International Affairs, 1978), J. Paul de Taillon, *The Evolution of Special Forces in Counter Terrorism: The British and American Experiences* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Studies in Diplomacy and Strategic Thought, 2001), Alistair Finlan, *Special Forces, Strategy and the War on Terror: Warfare by Other Means* (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2008) and James D Kiras, *Special Operations and Strategy: From World War Two to the War on Terrorism* (Abingdon: Routledge Publishing Group, 2006).

²³ A selection of these publications includes Colonel Bernd Horn, ‘Force Choice: The Evolution of Special Operations Forces Capability’ in *The Canadian Army Journal, September 22 2004* and ‘When Cultures Collide: The Conventional Military/SOF Chasm’ in *The Canadian Military Journal, Autumn 2004*, Abigail T Linnington, *Unconventional Warfare as a Strategic Foreign Policy Tool: The Clinton Administration in Iraq and Afghanistan* (The Fletcher School, Tufts University, USA, 2004) and Ronny Modigs, *Special Forces Capabilities of the European Union Military Forces* (School of Advanced Military Studies, US Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 2004).

undertake operations outside the normal role of conventional forces.’²⁴ In the most detailed historical account of the Australian SAS to date, *SAS: Phantoms of the Jungle: A History of the Australian Special Air Service*, Australian military historian David Horner defined Special Forces as military personnel with cross-training in basic and specialised military skills, organised into small, multiple purpose detachments with the mission to train, organise, supply, direct and control indigenous forces in guerrilla warfare and counterinsurgency operations and to conduct unconventional warfare operations.²⁵

In *Explorations in Strategy*, Gray suggested that Maurice Tugwell and David Charters have, in a strategic sense, offered the most useful definition of Special Forces.²⁶ They assess Special Forces operations are ‘small-scale, clandestine, covert or overt operations of an unorthodox and frequently high-risk nature, undertaken to achieve a significant political or military objectives in support of foreign policy.’²⁷ A note of qualification is needed here as many definitions describe not just Special Forces but also Special Forces operations and that which constitutes a Special Forces operation. The danger in using a single academic or military definition is that the definition usually mixes or confuses tactics with strategy. Gray argued tactics concern the actual employment of forces of all kinds, while strategy concerns the effect of tactical activity on the course and outcome of a conflict. While the Tugwell and Charters’ definition of Special Forces operations has a stronger strategic sense by describing that Special Forces operations be ‘undertaken to achieve *significant* political or military objectives,’ the reference to ‘unorthodox’ applies more to the tactics or modus operandi Special Forces might employ. As Gray suggested, any ‘enquiry into the strategic utility of special operations has to pay careful attention to the military and political context for those operations.’²⁸ Both are equally important.

²⁴ Special Warfare was also defined as warfare that ‘embraces all the military and paramilitary measures and activities related to unconventional warfare, assistance to indigenous forces and other operations outside the scope of conventional forces.’ New Zealand Army 1/1/1, “*The NZ Special Air Service Basis for Planning*, of 20 March 1978” in 69/1/22 Part 3: Training – Courses Conducted by New Zealand SAS Centre, 1978, ANZ, Wellington, p. 1.

²⁵ David Horner, *Phantoms of the Jungle: A History of the Australian Special Air Service* (New South Wales: Allen and Unwin Pty, 1989), pp. XIV-XV.

²⁶ Colin Gray, *Explorations in Strategy* (London: Praeger Publishers, 1998), p.168.

²⁷ Maurice Tugwell and David Charters, ‘Special Operations and the Threats to United States Interests in the 1980’s’ in Frank R Barnett, Hugh Tovar and Richard H. Shultz (eds), *Special Operations in US Strategy* (Washington D.C.: National Defence University Press, 1984), p.35.

²⁸ Gray, ‘Handfuls of Heroes on Desperate Ventures: When Do Special Operations Succeed?’ pp. 2-24. Other key investigations and analyses of Special Forces and Special Forces theory include Cohen, *Commandos and Politicians*, Alistair Finlan, ‘Warfare by Other Means: Special Forces, Terrorism and Grand Strategy’ in *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Volume 14, Number One, Gray (ed), *Special Operations: What Succeeds and Why? Lessons of Experience, Phase 1 Final Report* (Fairfax, Virginia: National

While much has been written about Australian military experiences in Borneo and Vietnam, including Australian SAS operations, little real analytical research to date has been carried out on New Zealand SAS operational activity in Vietnam.²⁹ Australia's experience of the Vietnam War has produced a considerable collection of unit histories, however volumes specifically dedicated to New Zealand's experiences have taken longer to come about and there still remains to be published an official New Zealand operational history of the Vietnam War. Those works on New Zealand experiences of the Vietnam conflict already published range from personal memoirs to broad generic illustrated histories. There is also an equal share of academic research at masters and doctoral level produced by a handful of students each with a particular interest in one key element of New Zealand participation in the Vietnam conflict.³⁰

Institute for Public Policy, 1992), Thomas Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency, 1919-1960* (London: Macmillan, 1990), and Christopher Tuck, "Borneo 1963-66: Counter-insurgency Operations and War Termination," in *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Volume 15, Number Three, pp. 89-111.

²⁹ Paul Anderson, *When the Scorpion Stings: The History of the 3rd Cavalry Regiment, South Vietnam, 1965-72* (New South Wales: Allen and Unwin, 2002); Australian Army, *9th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment: Vietnam Tour of Duty 1968-1969, On Active Service* (Brisbane: 9RAR Association, 1992); John Church, *Second to None: 2 RAR as the ANZAC Battalion in Vietnam 1970-71* (Mosman, Australia: Australian Army Service Doctrine Centre, 1995); Major A Clunies-Ross (ed), *The Grey Eight in Vietnam: The History of the Eighth Battalion The Royal Australian Regiment November 1969 – November 1970* (Australia: Eighth Battalion Royal Australian Regiment, 1971); Jeff Doyle, Jeffrey Grey and Peter Pierce (eds), *Australia's Vietnam War* (Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 2002); Jeffrey Grey and Jeff Doyle (eds), *Vietnam: War, Myth and Memory: Comparative Perspectives on Australia's War in Vietnam* (New South Wales: Allen and Unwin, 1992); Frank Frost, *Australia's War in Vietnam* (North Sydney: Allen and Unwin Australia Pty Ltd, 1987); Paul Ham, *Vietnam: The Australian War* (Sydney: Harper Collins, 2007); Robert A. Hall, *Combat Battalion: The Eighth Battalion in Vietnam* (New South Wales: Allen and Unwin, 2000); Ian McNeill, *The Team: Australian Army Advisers in Vietnam 1962-1972* (London: Leo Cooper in association with Secker & Warburg Limited, 1984); Ian McNeill, *To Long Tan: The Australian Army and the Vietnam War, 1950-1966 (Part of the Official History of Australia's Involvement in South East Asian Conflicts 1948-1975)* (New South Wales: Allen and Unwin, in association with the Australian War Memorial, 1993); Ian McNeill and Ashley Ekins, *On the Offensive: The Australian Army in the Vietnam War, January 1967-June 1968 (Part of the Official History of Australia's Involvement in South East Asian Conflicts 1948-1975)* (New South Wales: Allen and Unwin, in association with the Australian War Memorial, 2003); Peter Nolan, *Possums and Bird Dogs: Australian Army Aviation's 161 Reconnaissance Flight in South Vietnam* (New South Wales: Allen and Unwin, 2006); Bruce Picken, *Viet Nam Diggers' Language: Abbreviations, Acronyms, Terms and Jargon of the Viet Nam War* (Loftus, Australia: Australian Military History Publications, 2006); Lieutenant J.R. Webb (ed), *Mission in Vietnam: The Tour in South Vietnam of 4RAR/NZ(Anzac) Battalion and 104 Field Battery June 1968 – May 1969* (Singapore: 4RAR/NZ (Anzac) Battalion and Times Printers, 1969); and Captain Nick Welsh, *A History of the Sixth Battalion The Royal Australian Regiment 1965-1985* (New South Wales: Printcraft Press, 1986).

³⁰ Examples include Shane H. Capon, *A Symbolic Presence?: New Zealand's Involvement in the Combatant Training of South Vietnamese and Cambodian Troops, 1968-1972* (PhD, University of Waikato, Hamilton, 1996); David Dickens, *An Evaluation of Australian and New Zealand Army Joint Operations in South Vietnam 1966-1971* (MPA, Victoria University Wellington, 1989); Damien M. Fenton, *A False Sense of Security: The Force Structure of the New Zealand Army 1946-1978* (Wellington: Centre For Strategic Studies (CSS) and The Printing Press, 1998); Major P.J. Fry (ed), *The First Battalion Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment Journal: 25th Anniversary Commemorative Edition* (Singapore: Singapore National Printers (Pte) Ltd, 1982); Michael King, *New Zealanders at War* (New Zealand: Octopus Publishing Group,

Political analysis of New Zealand's involvement is an extremely important component of any study of military activity in South East Asia. From a locally-published perspective, the field is much more widely covered than is the case for New Zealand military history during the same period.³¹ Significant works include David Dickens' 1995 doctoral thesis *New Zealand and the Vietnam War: Official Policy Advice to the Government 1960-1972* and Roberto Rabel's detailed, and officially commissioned, analysis of the political considerations that confronted Keith Holyoake's Governments during the 1960s, *New Zealand and the Vietnam War. Politics and Diplomacy*.³²

Historical study of Australian SAS activity in Vietnam is singularly dominated by Horner's *Phantoms of the Jungle: A History of the Australian Special Air Service*,³³ while

1981); Ian McGibbon (ed), *The New Zealand Army in Vietnam 1964-1972, A Report on the Chief of General Staff's Exercise 1972* (Army 212/11/556/GS, New Zealand Ministry of Defence, Wellington, 1973); Harry Pappafloratos, *Military Lessons of the Vietnam War: A New Zealand Officers' Perspective* (MA, Victoria University Wellington, 1978); James Rock, *Kiwis Under Fire: The New Zealand Armed Forces in Vietnam 1965-72* (MA, University of Auckland, 1995); and James Rolfe, *The Armed Forces of New Zealand* (New South Wales: Allen and Unwin Pty, 1999).

³¹ Margaret Clark (ed), *Sir Keith Holyoake: Towards a Political Biography* (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1997); Ian F. Grant, *Public Lives: New Zealand's Premiers and Prime Ministers, 1856-2000* (Wellington: New Zealand Cartoon Archives, 2003); Barry Gustafson, *The First Fifty Years: A History of the New Zealand National Party* (Auckland: Reed Methuen, 1986) and *Kiwi Keith: A Biography of Keith Holyoake* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2007); Richard Kennaway, *New Zealand Foreign Policy, 1951-1971* (Wellington and London: Hicks Smith and Methuen, 1972); Ian McGibbon (ed), *Unofficial Channels: Letters Between Alister McIntosh and Foss Shanahan, George Laking and Frank Corner, 1946-1966* (Wellington: Victoria University Press in association with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) and the Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs (DIA), 1999); David McCraw, 'The Demanding Alliance: New Zealand and the Escalation of the Vietnam War,' in *Australian Journal of History and Politics*, Volume 34, Number 3 (1989); Mark Pearson, *Paper Tiger: New Zealand's Part in SEATO, 1954-1977* (Wellington: New Zealand Institute of International Affairs (NZIIA) in conjunction with the Ministry of External Relations and Trade (MERT), 1989); Roberto Rabel, 'The Most Dovish of the Hawks': New Zealand's Alliance Politics and the Vietnam War' in Grey and Doyle (eds) *Vietnam: War, Myth and Memory*; John Subritzky, *Confronting Sukarno: British, American, Australian and New Zealand Diplomacy in the Malaysian-Indonesian Confrontation, 1961-5* (London: Macmillan, 2000); and Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*. In addition, key published material from an Australian political perspective includes Glen St J. Barclay, *A Very Small Insurance Policy: The Politics of Australian Involvement in Vietnam, 1954-1967* (St Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1988), Terry Burstall, *Vietnam: The Australian Dilemma* (St Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1993), Peter Edwards, *A Nation at War: Australian Politics, Society and Diplomacy During the Vietnam War 1965-1975* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin in association with the Australian War Memorial, 1997) and Gregory Pemberton, *All The Way: Australia's Road to Vietnam* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin Australia Pty Ltd, 1987).

³² Roberto Rabel, *New Zealand and the Vietnam War, Politics and Diplomacy* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2005) and David C. Dickens, *New Zealand and the Vietnam War: Official Policy Advice to the Government 1960-1972* (PhD, Victoria University of Wellington, 1995).

³³ The book was updated in 2002 (re-titled *SAS Phantoms of War: A History of the Australian Special Air Service*) and again in 2009. The most recent iteration, co-authored by Horner and Neil Thomas was titled *In Action With The SAS*. Both subsequent editions have included Australian SAS operational deployments to Kuwait, Afghanistan and Iraq in 1998, 2001 and 2003 respectively. The updated publications have not contained any additional Borneo or Vietnam-related material.

a selection of memoirs, illustrated histories and collections of interviews and anecdotes – for example, *On Patrol with the SAS: Sleeping with your Ears Open* by Gary McKay - completes the catalogue.³⁴ Publications specific to the New Zealand SAS history are limited to date to two volumes. Published in 1987, William Darrell Baker's *Dare to Win: The Story of the New Zealand Special Air Service* covers the operational history of the unit from its inception in 1955 to the termination of Vietnam operations in 1971. The work does not appear to have been substantially supported with corroborating official documentary evidence; however, it is an illustrated history and therefore not necessarily designed to conduct such inquiry. Although Baker was provided with extensive access to New Zealand SAS Association historical material, it is unlikely he was furnished with complete operational records for both the Borneo and Vietnam deployments.³⁵

Due for public release in August 2009, Ron Crosby's long anticipated and officially sanctioned *NZSAS: The First Fifty Years*, is likely to be far more detailed than Baker's book and is also able to include deployments carried out after 1971.³⁶ These include New Zealand SAS deployments to Malaysia (1976-1977), Bougainville (1997), Kuwait (1998), East Timor (1999-2000) and Afghanistan (2001-2002 and 2004-2005). Again, there is a limit to the depth in which Crosby has been able to explore the Borneo and Vietnam campaigns simply because of space constraints in a volume which covers over half a century, however when one considers the timeframe given to complete the task and despite the necessary political limitations that come with an officially-sanctioned work, there is no doubt that *NZSAS: The First Fifty Years* will ultimately assume a similar position in New Zealand's military history lexicon to that which Horner's *Phantoms of the Jungle* commands in Australia.³⁷

A detailed examination of New Zealand SAS deployments, in particular Malaya and Borneo, is contained in Christopher Pugsley's *From Emergency to Confrontation: The*

³⁴ Malone, *SAS: A Pictorial History of the Australian Special Air Service*, Robert J. Mutch, *Who Dares Grins: The Human Side of the Australian SAS* (Western Australia: Vanguard Press, 1998), Terry O'Farrell, *Behind Enemy Lines: An Australian SAS Soldier in Vietnam* (South Australia: Griffin Press, 2001) and Gary McKay, *On Patrol with the SAS: Sleeping with your Ears Open* (New South Wales: Allen and Unwin, 2007).

³⁵ Baker's volume was never sanctioned or supported by the New Zealand Ministry of Defence (MOD). Bill Meldrum, 'President's Message,' in *Free Glance, September 1986, Volume 4, Number 4*, New Zealand SAS Association Archive, Wellington, p.29.

³⁶ Ron Crosby, *NZSAS: The First Fifty Years* (Auckland: Viking/Penguin Group (NZ), 2009).

³⁷ References to his publication in this research are minimal and due to Crosby's generosity in allowing the author access to selected sections of his completed manuscript.

New Zealand Armed Forces in Malaya and Borneo 1949-1966. While the book is particularly insightful, like Crosby's work, it is limited in its ability to provide in-depth and critical analysis simply because in this, once again officially-sanctioned volume, the SAS chapters compete for space alongside the other key New Zealand military contributions during the same period. Nevertheless, no other published work provides as much detail as the Pugsley book and for that reason it remains a most valuable study. In addition to the Crosby and Pugsley books, only one other volume, Cliff Lord and Julian Tennant's *ANZAC Elite: The Airborne and Special Forces Insignia of Australia and New Zealand*, has received official assistance from the New Zealand Army.³⁸ However, the only primary source document provided for the Lord and Tennant publication was 'an unpublished history' from the New Zealand SAS Group.

Access to primary source documents on the operational activities of the New Zealand SAS has been limited because of the security restrictions that have remained in place on most, if not all, official material relating to SAS operations in the first 25 years of its history. As a result, much of the published literature has been written by former members of the unit with memory and personal papers providing the key sources of research material.³⁹ Most of these publications lack any in-depth analysis, let alone any of the publicly-available primary source material to support what has largely been institutional and anecdotal commentary. Still, they remain important from a secondary source research background perspective.

Works on the British and Australian SAS have contained a passing acknowledgement of the various New Zealand SAS contributions to joint campaigns but have been reluctant to examine the New Zealand SAS in any real depth.⁴⁰ In his book *Special Air Service The*

³⁸ Cliff Lord and Julian Tennant, *ANZAC Elite: The Airborne and Special Forces Insignia of Australia and New Zealand* (Wellington: IPL Books, 2000).

³⁹ For example, see Graham Boswell, 'The Origin of the New Zealand Special Air Service: Part One' in *The Free Glance – Journal of the New Zealand Special Air Service Association*, (Auckland, 2004), Alan Brosnan and Duke Henry, with Bob Taubert, *Soldiering On* (Southaven, Mississippi: TEES, 2002), Deborah Challinor, *Grey Ghosts: New Zealand Vietnam Vets Talk About Their War* (Auckland: Hodder Moa Beckett, 1998), Colin Sisson, *Wounded Warriors: The True Story of a Soldier in the Vietnam War and other Emotional Wounds* (Auckland, 1993), Frank Rennie, *Regular Soldier: A Life in the New Zealand Army* (Auckland: Endeavour Press, 1986) and Little, *Willie Apiata VC: The Reluctant Hero*.

⁴⁰ Geraghty, *This is the SAS*, pp. 138-144; General (Retired) Sir Peter De La Billiere, *Looking For Trouble: SAS to Gulf Command* (London: Harper Collins, 1994) and Philip Warner, *The Special Air Service* (London: William Kimber and Co Ltd, 1971). Other publications, exploiting the 'mystique' of Special Forces and SAS in particular, have simply cut large tracts from historic publications only to be reprinted in

Jungle Frontier: 22 Special Air Service Regiment in the Borneo Campaign, 1963-1966, Peter Dickens found it ‘Particularly sad’ that he had ‘no mandate to tell the New Zealand and Australian SAS stories.’⁴¹ Indeed it is ‘particularly sad,’ especially when one considers that for a period in 1966, as we shall see in Chapter Three, a New Zealander, Major David Moloney, was acting commander of all SAS operations in Borneo – including those of the Australian and British SAS squadrons. A review of selected United States Special Forces literature from the Vietnam period contains only passing references to Australian SAS activities and no mention of any New Zealand SAS exchanges.⁴²

An Explanation of the Conceptual Framework Used

I never got any impression [the Australians] were dissatisfied with the arrangement – it did after all leave them in the driving seat – and I think they liked having our chaps there because they were, as I say, very good soldiers. And I think that they themselves, proportionally, were not doing a tremendous amount more than we were, although they were just big enough to do it independently, as a Brigade group...I think it worked quite well, but you know what our relations with the Australians are like – they are friendly but it's a cousin relationship rather than an allied relationship.⁴³

Lieutenant-General Sir Leonard Thornton

The most taxing part for me of that deployment was that we were deployed with the Australians under a tenuous level of associations though tactical deployments, where the difference between full command and the operational control status - which meant we were there for operational deployments - sometimes came into conflict...At the end of the day we worked very well together but there were just little, I don't know, patriotic type things I suppose that clashed. I think Australians and New Zealanders will always be competitive and we were very competitive, very competitive.⁴⁴

Terry Culley

single volumes. The best example of this is William Fowler, *SAS. Behind Enemy Lines: Covert Operations 1941-2005*, (London: Harper Collins Publishers, London, 2005).

⁴¹ Peter Dickens, *SAS The Jungle Frontier: 22 Special Air Service Regiment in the Borneo Campaign, 1963-1966* (United Kingdom: Arms and Armour Press, 1983), p.242. Dickens book would be republished in 1991 and re-titled *SAS: Secret War in South-East Asia* (London: Greenhill Books, 1991).

⁴² Kevin Dockery and Bud Brutsman, *Navy SEALs: A History Part II: The Vietnam Years* (New York: The Berkley Publishing Group, 2002); Andrew F. Krepinevich Jr, *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); Lieutenant-General Stanley Robert Larsen and Brigadier-General James Lawton Collins Junior, *Vietnam Studies: Allied Participation in Vietnam* (Washington: United States Department of the Army, 1975), Shelby L. Stanton, *Special Forces at War: An Illustrated History, South East Asia 1957-1975* (Charlottesville, Virginia: Howell Press, 1990) and John Stryker-Meyer, *Across the Fence: The Secret War in Vietnam* (Real War Stories, 2003).

⁴³ Copy of Lieutenant-General Sir Leonard Thornton interview by Christopher Pugsley, 30 October 1991, for the NZDF Malayan Oral History Project, held in the NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington.

⁴⁴ Terry Culley audio interview (date unknown), NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington.

The reflections of both the late Lieutenant-General Sir Leonard Thornton, the New Zealand Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) in 1969, and Captain Terry Culley, the first New Zealand 4 Troop Commander in Vietnam, provide an introductory insight to some of the challenges faced by the New Zealand SAS soldiers in Vietnam.

The aim of this research is to examine the New Zealand SAS experience during the Vietnam War period in order to answer four primary questions:

- What were the lessons learned from the challenges of operating small nationally-identified New Zealand Special Forces units in South East Asia in the 1960s and early 1970s?
- How might the success – or otherwise – of New Zealand SAS operations in Vietnam be measured?
- Compare and contrast the experiences of the New Zealand SAS in Borneo between 1965 and 1966 and South Vietnam between 1968 and 1971, and
- To what extent did the experiences of the New Zealand SAS in Borneo influence its operations in South Vietnam?

This research examines these challenges and explores in depth the often complex relationship that the three New Zealand Troops had with their Australian SAS counterparts and how and why an almost non-existent relationship between the two military units before Vietnam continued during and after Vietnam operations ceased. In addition to answering three primary questions, this research will also explore the underlying issue of overall strategic success and value of a small nationally-identifiable and strongly independent military unit that was compelled to operate under the command of larger Special-Forces coalition counterparts and the impact different political, doctrinal, tactical cultural and cognitive characteristics had on such joint-operational deployments.

The primary sources used for this research have been documentary for the most part, supplemented by correspondence and privately-held papers, and semi-structured and open-ended interviews. Most documentary sources have been accessed from Archives New Zealand and New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) Archives, along with Australian

War Memorial (AWM) material. Archives New Zealand material contains Cabinet papers as well as Army Records in a range of government file collections. Files from the Army Department (AD), Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) and Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) containing documents specifically relevant to the New Zealand SAS deployment to Vietnam, and to a lesser extent Borneo, were reviewed. Additionally, records of meetings between senior political and military leaders from New Zealand and its allies, plus briefs and cables from overseas posts were also analysed for key chapters. Special access to restricted NZDF and New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) archives was also granted for the purposes of this research, as was access to the New Zealand Special Air Service Association Archive.

Primary source material held at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra provide a unique and detailed record of Australian SAS operations in South Vietnam; a period that also encompassed the entire operational period of the New Zealand SAS in Vietnam. The Australian SAS Squadron Commanders' diaries – from which much of the primary source material is taken – nevertheless have two inherent weaknesses from a historian's perspective. Firstly, the demands of the tactical situation often meant their records were either compiled from rough notes, signal logs, or memory, days or weeks after events. The sheer volume of patrol activity also meant the New Zealanders – with no more than 26 personnel at any one time and only one dedicated administration clerk, were unable to provide full and in-depth monthly reports. Secondly, the Squadron Commander's diaries were written by the Australian Squadron Commander from an Australian perspective, for an Australian audience. The arrival of the New Zealanders made the Australian Squadron four troops-strong but there would have been limited value in his spending a quarter of his time on the New Zealand perspective.

Interviews were conducted with New Zealand SAS veterans to gain a more in-depth knowledge and insight into the personal attitudes of those involved in the operational deployments. Justifiably, interviewees can be reluctant to discuss certain topics or events for fear of damaging the reputation of fellow soldiers, some confuse dates, events, locations and actions, while others simply cannot remember. However, interviews form an integral component of this research and thanks to access to the primary sources, and any suggestion of personal agenda or error, has been identified to increase the accuracy and objectivity of the work.

Any in-depth analysis of SAS documents, without interviews to support viewpoints, will make for rather one-dimensional reading. Ingrained from the very beginning of their service, operational security has always been a dominant feature among the current and past members of the New Zealand Special Forces community and only recently, particularly with veterans, has this altered. Those authors who have written about the New Zealand SAS have, save for Horner, Crosby and Pugsley, been unable or unwilling to devote time to a detailed analysis of operational deployments in a wider context. This is likely to be more a result of limitations placed by publishers rather than the withdrawal or declared unavailability of sensitive or classified material at the behest of official Unit/Association editorial committees. Complete with thoughtful and candid reflections, interviews with patrol members, Patrol Commanders, Troop Commanders and Squadron Commanders adds to the recently-released documentary material, especially the Vietnam and Borneo patrol reports.

This research examines the New Zealand SAS' operational experience during the Vietnam War and how commitments to the Borneo 'Confrontation' made direct and indirect contributions to the South Vietnam campaign. It is divided into four parts, a total of fifteen chapters in all. In terms of national security doctrine, combat involvement in Vietnam saw New Zealand begin to accept the growing reliance on the United States as the guarantor of its security, and a corresponding, if reluctant, shift in alliance orientation away from the United Kingdom. Part I, 'To Borneo,' examines the key events that saw New Zealand manage the development of competing security demands in Malaysia and Vietnam and how the New Zealand SAS was utilised for this purpose. Chapter One deals with this issue and despite finding an opportunity to become directly exposed to United States Army thinking on South East Asian counterinsurgency as early as 1962, the Keith Holyoake Government maintained that its most pressing defence responsibility was the commitment to Malaysia; a principal focus that was maintained for the next four years.

The SAS CLARET cross-border operations during the Borneo 'Confrontation' began in 1964 and the first of four half-Squadron New Zealand SAS detachments arrived in Brunei in early March 1965. Borneo operations presented the New Zealanders with their first opportunity to operate with the Australian SAS. As will be explained in Chapter Two, the New Zealanders chose to reject this and opted to restore ties with the British SAS first

established in Malaya in 1956. Chapter Three not only examines the New Zealand SAS operations in Borneo between 1965 and 1966 but also considers the relationships that developed between the three Commonwealth Special Forces groups.

Both New Zealand and Australia were forced to contend with the conflicts in Vietnam and Borneo at the same time. Part II, 'To Vietnam,' surveys the continuing build-up of New Zealand forces in South Vietnam after the completion of 'Confrontation' operations. Chapters Four and Five examine the evolution of New Zealand's contributions to the Vietnam War and despite Holyoake's lack of enthusiasm for military commitments, the geopolitical realities of the period gave Australasian foreign policy decision-makers little alternative but to directly support the build-up of Free World military forces.

The experience of the first New Zealand SAS 4 Troop in South Vietnam are the principal focus of attention in Part III, '4 Troop: 1968-1969.' Chapter Six examines the initial patrols carried out by the New Zealanders, the application of patrol tradecraft largely unchanged since Borneo, as well as the initial assessment of their Australian Special Forces counterparts. While the Troop members would adjust to the operational environment in South Vietnam with relative ease, as is explored in Chapters Seven to Ten, their relationship with the Australian Squadron, particularly at command level, presented a challenge that went beyond issues of national identity. This tension, as described in Chapter Eleven, would manifest itself in a single event that disappointingly and irreparably marked the Troop's overall performance.

Two further New Zealand SAS Troop rotations took place before the New Zealand Government withdrew the New Zealand SAS in February 1971. Part IV, '4 Troop: 1969–1971' explores not only the operational activity of the New Zealand SAS during this time and its ability to provide a successful continuity of patrol operations, but also the efforts to restore the reputation of the New Zealand soldiers in the eyes of their Australian counterparts and subsequent issues of command and control.

Despite much having been written about Australian military experiences in Vietnam, limited research has been carried out to date on the New Zealand SAS contribution to the campaign. The aim of this research is to correct this anomaly and provide a credible history of an immensely significant period of New Zealand's Special Forces history. The

four parts of this research are designed to illustrate a chronological progression for the New Zealand SAS through two of its most influential active service campaigns. These campaigns differed for a number of reasons; geographic location, enemy and the political sensitivities surrounding both deployments. For this reason, it has been important to provide some political context around the deployments in order to understand how the Holyoake Governments of the 1960s viewed the strategic utility of their Special Forces capability.

While commitments in Borneo would physically prevent New Zealand SAS from carrying out operations in Vietnam until the end of 1966 at the earliest, it would take two years of officials' manoeuvring after this date before the New Zealand Government authorised the deployment of a New Zealand SAS element to South Vietnam in November 1968. However, unlike the three previous New Zealand SAS deployments – Malaya (1956), Thailand (1962) and Borneo (1965) - the Vietnam deployment was the smallest New Zealand SAS detachment to leave New Zealand shores and did not represent a change in the level of New Zealand's contribution to the Vietnam War. New Zealand SAS Borneo operations were significant for a variety of operational reasons. Additionally, the relationship with the British SAS contributed to the ongoing tension demonstrated during the New Zealanders' time attached to the Australian SAS Squadron in South Vietnam.

With little or no real knowledge or experience of their Australian SAS comrades before 1969, protracted and ongoing issues surrounding 'command arrangements,' coupled with variations to their role as a result of the evolving tactical environment, the different appreciation each Australian Task Force (ATF) Commander had of the SAS' capabilities and the political limitations imposed on operations including their premature withdrawal, a significant number of New Zealand SAS veterans were left largely dissatisfied with the overall performance of the 4 Troop campaign between December 1968 and February 1971.

As will be shown, this was most certainly an unjustified assessment as the New Zealand SAS' operational performance over nearly two and a half years could hardly be faulted. From a statistical perspective – for example number of patrols - the 4 Troop deployments played a proportional role within each of the Australian Squadrons to which they were

attached. However, the strength of New Zealand 4 Troop operations in South Vietnam, both to the Australian Squadron and the Task Force, came from its practical application of unique New Zealand Special Forces methodology and field-craft that had been fundamentally shaped and developed in Borneo. Overall, the importance of the Vietnam campaign for the New Zealand Special Air Service was the opportunity to reconfirm the procedures and techniques, with appropriate modifications, to their renowned jungle-warfare patrolling skills that maintained the 'platform' from which today's highly skilled and enviable New Zealand Special Forces has emerged.

Part I: To Borneo

Chapter 1

New Zealand and Southeast Asia Pre-Borneo: 1961-1964

Roberto Rabel argued that the immediate sequence of events leading to New Zealand's decision to send combat troops to Vietnam may be tracked back to December 1964, when United States President Lyndon Johnson embarked on incremental escalation of American involvement in South Vietnam.¹ Cabinet had agreed, in principle, to a New Zealand military 'combat' contribution to South Vietnam as early as 27 May 1963.² The question of when it should be deployed and what form it should take was not finally settled until May 1965 after the Australian Government had made substantial military commitments to the conflict which forced New Zealand's hand.³ In order to understand the contextual build-up, and importantly, the Australian and American approaches to the early stages of the Vietnam conflict and how this contrasted with New Zealand's initial contributions, this chapter analyses some of the earlier commitments before 1965.⁴

Significant American interest in Vietnam began in the mid-1950s. After the end of World War II, France embarked on reasserting itself as the colonial ruler in Vietnam, a role that had been taken up by Japan between 1940 and 1945. Resistance to a return to French colonial rule in Vietnam culminated in 1954 when French forces were defeated at Dien Bien Phu and the subsequent Geneva Accords temporarily divided Vietnam into two zones at the 17th parallel.⁵ The north, or Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), was controlled by Ho Chi Minh, while the south, the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) was controlled firstly by Emperor Bao Dai and then President Ngo Dinh Diem. The Geneva Accords provided for countrywide elections in July 1956. When Diem refused to conduct

¹ Rabel, *New Zealand and the Vietnam War*, p. 80.

² Secretary of the Cabinet, "Aid to South Vietnam CM (63) 19, 28 May 1963," in Cabinet Minutes (63) 19, Volume One, ANZ, Wellington.

³ Dickens, *New Zealand and the Vietnam War: Official Policy Advice to the Government 1960-1972*, pp.88-89.

⁴ Pugsley, *From Emergency to Confrontation*, pp. 335-337.

⁵ The Geneva Accords took place between 8 May and 21 July 1954, with the Foreign Ministers of the United Kingdom and Soviet Union acting as 'co-chairmen.' Other governments represented included France, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the Republic of Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, the Peoples Republic of China and the United States. Part of the cease-fire agreement saw the creation of an 'International Control Commission (ICC)' composed of representatives from Canada, India and Poland, which would 'control and supervise the implementation of the armistice.' Keesing's Research Report, *South Vietnam: A Political History 1954-1970*, (New York: Charles Scribner and Sons, 1970), pp.6-7.

elections, claiming they were unlikely to be 'free' in the north, the Vietnamese Communists (Vietnam Cong San, or Vietcong, or VC) of the south commenced an armed insurgency with the support of the North.⁶

By the end of 1961, New Zealand diplomats in the United States advised Wellington of the significance of the growing issues in Vietnam and the likely demonstrations of collective responsibility that the United States might wish to see from its key allies. Although New Zealand officials clearly understood the United States was anxious to obtain allied support in any form that would provide assistance to the South Vietnamese, it was felt that any early indications of support should not take the form of 'military personnel to assist with training in South Vietnam.'⁷ Instead Secretary of External Affairs Alister McIntosh recommended that New Zealand should 'as a gesture...accept South Vietnamese military personnel for training in New Zealand.'⁸ Despite McIntosh's view, in mid-December 1961, the New Zealand Military Chiefs of Staff began to outline the key considerations should further military contributions in Vietnam be required. It was their belief that the United Kingdom no longer had the 'capacity to assist in the defence of Australia and New Zealand and the future security of both countries was virtually dependent on the United States.'⁹ The assessment concluded that should the United States disengage in South East Asia and repudiate ANZUS, both 'Australia and New Zealand would be entirely vulnerable.'

The most fundamental issue for both countries was 'not the need to restore stability in South Vietnam, but to preserve our position with the United States as our major ally.'¹⁰ From a practical point of view, New Zealand Defence officials felt it would be possible for the Navy and Air Force to make a contribution to military operations in South Vietnam without direct assistance from the United Kingdom, but as the New Zealand

⁶ McNeill and Grey, 'The Australian Army and the Vietnam War,' p. 17.

⁷ Minutes of the Meeting of the Chiefs Of Staff "(COS (61) M.46), Aid to South Vietnam, 14 December 1961," in PM478/4/6 Part 1, South Vietnam: Political: Military Assistance from Australia and New Zealand, 5 May 1961 – 30 June 1963, ANZ, Wellington.

⁸ Alister McIntosh was Head of the New Zealand Department of External Affairs (DEA) from 1943 to 1966. He was also Permanent Head of the Prime Minister's Department from 1945 to 1966. McGibbon (ed), *Unofficial Channels*, pp.1-10 and Minutes of the Meeting of the Chiefs Of Staff "(COS (61) M.46), Aid to South Vietnam, 14 December 1961," in PM478/4/6 Part 1.

⁹ Minutes of the Meeting of the Chiefs Of Staff "(COS (61) M.46), Aid to South Vietnam, 14 December 1961."

¹⁰ Minutes of the Meeting of the Chiefs Of Staff "(COS (61) M.46), Aid to South Vietnam, 14 December 1961."

Army depended entirely on British resources for logistic support, its absence would make it ‘virtually impossible...to make a significant ground force contribution.’¹¹

From its earliest discussions, the deployment of Free World – including Australian and New Zealand - forces to South Vietnam was inextricably tied to American force commitments and alliance considerations. The United States was sensitive to the charge that ‘American Imperialism’ might be replacing ‘French Colonialism’ so it became immensely important in a political and diplomatic sense to have as many nations as possible standing with the South Vietnamese.¹² The United States did not formally commit American military troops to Vietnam until 1965. Until then, Free World military contributions - primarily American - took the form of advisors to the South Vietnamese Government. The background to these commitments, in particular the counterinsurgency approach taken, is worth limited discussion in order to establish a contextual overview of the environment in which the New Zealand military, including the New Zealand SAS, saw itself placed in the coming decade.

American counterinsurgency action in Vietnam began when Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) officer, Colonel Edward G. Lansdale, under United States Air Force (USAF) cover, arrived in Saigon on 1 June 1954 to establish the Saigon Military Mission (SMM).¹³ His official duties were ‘to undertake paramilitary operations against the enemy and to wage political-psychological warfare.’¹⁴ This initially involved low-intensity operations such as fabricating accounts of atrocities, distributing fake leaflets and contaminating fuel supplies for public transport buses in Hanoi. Lansdale subsequently expanded the SMM’s activities to include providing Free World medical teams, initially from Asian countries such as the Philippines, to assist and train the South Vietnamese in operating public health programmes. Similar action would offer significant counterinsurgency possibilities and the American advisors began to request South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem sanction further schemes by appealing for Free World assistance in the public health sector. Frank Frost has argued that this approach characterised the ‘future pattern

¹¹ Minutes of the Meeting of the Chiefs Of Staff “(COS (61) M.46), Aid to South Vietnam, 14 December 1961.”

¹² McNeill and Grey, ‘The Australian Army and the Vietnam War,’ p. 21.

¹³ Barclay, *A Very Small Insurance Policy*, p. 30.

¹⁴ Barclay, *A Very Small Insurance Policy*, p. 30.

of allied intervention in Vietnam: Washington would decide what form intervention should take and would direct Saigon to ask for it.’¹⁵

The Beginning of US Special Forces Operations in Vietnam

In May 1959, the Central Committee of the North Vietnamese Communist Party had publicly announced its intention to use force to ‘smash’ the Diem Government; the United States responded by deploying 120 Special Forces troops to Laos a month later.¹⁶ The situation in Laos had seen the United States and France reach an agreement to conduct joint-training of the Laotian Armed Forces (LAF). Responsibility was divided between technical training, under American control, and tactical training carried out by the French. Prohibitions within the Geneva Accords forced the Americans to deploy their Special Forces teams covertly, instead of fielding them overtly under the regular control of a military advisory group. All Special Forces members in Laos operated disguised as ‘unarmed civilians.’¹⁷

Despite the growing deployment of Special Forces around the world, the wider United States military still lacked a fundamental understanding of post-World War II counterinsurgency warfare. Ronald Spector has argued that United States military capability in the early 1960s consisted almost entirely of expertise in waging orthodox war ‘at the highest level of technology.’ Counterinsurgency, he has suggested ‘was little studied or understood’ and only a ‘few officers or enlisted men had any practical experience in actual counter-guerrilla operations.’¹⁸ There were opportunities in the early 1960s to rectify this doctrinal hole if the United States military had been prepared to seek assistance. While the French did not have the most successful of records in Indochina, they had just completed a particularly successful counterinsurgency campaign in North Africa which would have provided useful operational lessons. Despite this, the United

¹⁵ Frost, *Australia’s War in Vietnam*, p. 14.

¹⁶ McNeill and Grey, ‘The Australian Army and the Vietnam War,’ p.21, Frost, *Australia’s War in Vietnam*, p.14 and Stanton, *Special Forces at War*, p.21.

¹⁷ The teams were stationed at regional training centres together with French soldiers and taught basic weapons maintenance and proficiency. They also provided specialised training in radio handling. By 1961, there were so many American Special Forces teams in Laos that their ability to remain clandestine became unfeasible. On 19 April 1961, the Programs Evaluation Office was renamed MAAG Laos, and all pretence of deniability was dropped when the teams were renamed ‘White Star Mobile Training Teams.’ Stanton, *Special Forces at War*, pp. 21-22.

¹⁸ Ronald H. Spector, *Advice and Support: The Early Years of the United States Army in Vietnam, 1941-1960* (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1985), p.355.

States military concluded the French experiences in Indochina provided ‘more of a series of cautionary tales than examples to be followed.’¹⁹

It also appeared that the United States felt they had nothing to learn from the British, who by the early 1960s, were in the process of completing counterinsurgency campaigns in Cyprus, South Yemen, Kenya and Malaya. The Malayan Emergency, in particular, had been ‘a model of what could be achieved in an Asian context with administrative rigour, political sophistication, good intelligence, and thorough professionalism.’²⁰ Lansdale did not consider the British experience in Malaya relevant because it was ‘sharply different in many areas’ from the situation in Vietnam. Additionally, the Americans remained concerned there could be ‘a subtle sapping of the American character in this trend toward reliance upon others’ for counterinsurgency advice.²¹ Glen St. John Barclay has suggested that it was not so much the allies had nothing to teach, it was more that the Americans had no enthusiasm to learn - certainly not from past colonial masters.²² Conflict between the United States’ military reluctance to value any military or operational contribution from any of its allies, and its political and diplomatic counterparts’ desperation to ensure international support and involvement, dominated the initial stages of the commitments to Vietnam, particularly in the area of counterinsurgency.

Initial support for British counterinsurgency assistance came from Malaysia. In mid April 1961, the Prime Minister of the Malayan Federation, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra, wrote to British Secretary of State, Duncan Sandys, stressing his concern about the South Vietnamese situation. The Tunku suggested that the United Kingdom might dispatch Robert Thompson, the former Defence Secretary of the Malayan Federation, and considered by the Malaysians to have been the architect of the ‘Emergency’ response strategy which defeated the Communist forces there.²³ In the previous year, Thompson had paid an official visit to Vietnam but had rejected the possibility of becoming an

¹⁹ Donald S. Blaufarb, *The Counterinsurgency Era: US Doctrine and Performance, 1950 to the Present* (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1977), p.49.

²⁰ Barclay, *A Very Small Insurance Policy*, p. 19.

²¹ Spector, *Advice and Support*, p. 356.

²² Barclay, *A Very Small Insurance Policy*, p.20 and Krepinevich Jr, *The Army and Vietnam*, pp.30-57.

²³ Duncan Sandys to Chancellor of the Exchequer, “United Kingdom Assistance to South Vietnam: Proposals by the Foreign Office, July 1961,” in DO 169/109, Appointment of Advisors on Counter-Subversive Methods to Vietnam Government, The National Archives (TNA), London.

adviser to the Vietnamese Government because he disliked being regarded as a 'buccaneer.'²⁴

Despite his reluctance, in August 1961 'a party of five officials and a few clerical staff, headed by Thompson' was sent to South Vietnam.²⁵ The goal of the British Advisory Mission Vietnam (BRIAM) was to offer 'help and guidance to the South Vietnamese authorities in the fields of administration and police activities, mainly intelligence, in order to counter the Communist guerrillas, on the basis of the Malayan experience.'²⁶ While BRIAM cooperated with the United States authorities in Saigon, all military issues were ultimately determined by the Americans.²⁷ Differing from Thompson's Malayan experience, where he had full powers, British diplomats contended that Thompson was therefore subject to both Vietnamese and United States authorities which would largely prevent BRIAM from pursuing anything near to the necessary 'independent strategy.'²⁸

Thompson told his American and South Vietnamese hosts that experiences in Malaya had shown that the emphasis in counterinsurgency 'should always be on quality rather than quantity of forces and to achieve this, training, organisation, and discipline' were the 'first requirements.'²⁹ He argued that up until then the emphasis in Vietnam had been on quantity and believed the South Vietnamese Army was, except for a few elite units, 'completely ineffective in counterinsurgency operations.'³⁰ Thompson also suggested that the key to Vietcong success had been their political subversive underground organisation.³¹ To counter such success, he recommended the implementation of a Strategic Hamlet Programme, integrating 'various economic and social programs into an effective campaign to re-establish [the South Vietnamese government's] influence in the

²⁴ Antonio Varsori, 'Britain and United States Involvement in the Vietnam War during the Kennedy Administration, 1961-63,' in *Cold War History*, Volume Three, Number Two (January 2003), pp.87-88.

²⁵ McNeill, *The Team*, p. 8 and Varsori, 'Britain and United States Involvement in the Vietnam War during the Kennedy Administration, 1961-63,' p.88.

²⁶ Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) London to Kuala Lumpur, "United Kingdom Assistance to South Vietnam, 1 August 1961," in DO 169/109.

²⁷ Thompson's group was composed of the former head and deputy-head of the Malayan 'Special Branch' and the head of British 'intelligence' in Hong Kong. FCO draft telegram to Saigon, "U.K. Assistance to South Vietnam, July 1961," in DO 169/109 and Varsori, 'Britain and United States Involvement in the Vietnam War during the Kennedy Administration, 1961-63,' p.89.

²⁸ Varsori, 'Britain and United States Involvement in the Vietnam War during the Kennedy Administration, 1961-63,' p. 88.

²⁹ Thompson, *No Exit from Vietnam*, pp. 123-124 and 172-173.

³⁰ Thompson, *No Exit from Vietnam*, pp. 123-124 and 172-173.

³¹ Thompson, *No Exit from Vietnam*, pp. 32-33.

heavily populated Mekong Delta.’³² He added that if the underground organisation was advancing and expanding control over the rural civilian population, casualties inflicted on guerrilla units would matter little.³³ The programme, he added, needed to reorganise the entire South Vietnamese government machinery so that it might direct and co-ordinate ‘all action against the communists’ which would ultimately produce an ‘overall strategic operational plan for the country as a whole.’³⁴

Thompson’s basic submission involved the regrouping of villages along the Cambodian border and on the fringe of the Mekong Delta. In the remainder of the delta area ‘strategic villages’ would also be established. Thompson believed if the ‘popular bases’ were captured and held, normally one by one in continuing operations (pacification), then the ‘capacity of the insurgent movement to wage war would automatically decline.’³⁵ It was the understanding of the New Zealand Embassy in Washington that according to ‘American sources in Saigon, both the Americans and Diem [had] reacted favourably to Thompson’s submission.’³⁶

However, almost as soon as he arrived in South Vietnam, Thompson’s opinion clashed with the general American position. Such strategic and political programmes would directly ‘imply a more important role for Diem and his Government, while both the MAAG [United States Military Assistance Advisory Group] and the United States Embassy were in favour of decentralisation of responsibilities and believed the South Vietnamese military leaders had to enjoy more room for manoeuvre.’³⁷ It was always Thompson’s view that it was ‘up to the South Vietnamese to fight the Vietcong’ and despite being cognisant of the ‘failings’ of the Diem Government, he remained convinced that ‘Diem was the only chance left to the West.’³⁸

³² Thompson, *No Exit from Vietnam*, pp. 32-33.

³³ Thompson, *No Exit from Vietnam*, pp. 32-33.

³⁴ Frost, *Australia’s War in Vietnam*, pp. 28-29 and Varsori, ‘Britain and United States Involvement in the Vietnam War during the Kennedy Administration, 1961-63,’ p.95.

³⁵ Thompson, *No Exit from Vietnam*, p. 34.

³⁶ New Zealand High Commission Canberra, “28 January 1962,” in PM278/4/6 Part 1.

³⁷ Thompson recounted in 1969 that the question of control was obviously much easier for Malaya and the United Kingdom where both countries ‘had a close past relationship and a history of co-operation... There was no such past relationship in the case of the United States with South Vietnam, and neither country had much experience of a previous similar situation on which to draw.’ Thompson, *No Exit from Vietnam*, p.156 and Varsori, ‘Britain and United States Involvement in the Vietnam War during the Kennedy Administration, 1961-63,’ p. 95.

³⁸ Varsori, ‘Britain and United States Involvement in the Vietnam War during the Kennedy Administration, 1961-63,’ pp. 96-97.

Unfortunately, by the end of 1962, support for Diem was in an irreversible decline. A CIA report mid December 1963 stated the situation in Vietnam ‘continued to be marked by a lack of forward motion on the part of the country’s new rulers in getting on with the many-sided struggle against the Vietcong Cong...’³⁹ Thompson’s Strategic Hamlet programme was destined to fail from the outset. It lacked any consistent support from any of the principal participants and the Vietcong had been ‘quick to move into this vacuum of authority.’⁴⁰ The hamlet programme had been the essential element in the counterinsurgency strategy proposed by BRIAM, because it had been the essential element in the success of the United Kingdom’s own campaign in Malaya. The difference, according to Barclay, was that the programme had been operated efficiently and intelligently by an honest administration in Malaya, under the leadership of a pragmatic and able military who represented almost everything the South Vietnamese were not.⁴¹ According to Robert Whitlow, the United States Marines’ official historian, the strategic hamlet programme had been ‘mismanaged and poorly coordinated from the outset’ and ‘failed to fulfil even the most moderate American and South Vietnamese expectations.’⁴²

New Zealand SAS Commitment to Thailand: 1962

Because of ‘unrest’ in the north-eastern areas of its country believed to be emanating from Laos, the Thai government in early 1962 requested military assistance from the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand under the auspices of the South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO).⁴³ SEATO had been set up as a result of the South-East Asia Collective Defence Treaty which New Zealand had signed on 8 September 1954 together with Australia, France, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, the United Kingdom, and the United States, to provide a ‘shield’ against external communist aggression towards any of the South East Asian member countries. New Zealand officials

³⁹ United States CIA Information Report “Vietnam, 16 December 1963,” quoted in Barclay, *A Very Small Insurance Policy*, pp.38-39.

⁴⁰ Barclay, *A Very Small Insurance Policy*, pp. 38-39.

⁴¹ Barclay, *A Very Small Insurance Policy*, p. 39.

⁴² Robert H. Whitlow, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The Advisory and Combat Assistance Era, 1954-1964*, (1977), p.121, quoted in Barclay, p.39.

⁴³ William Darrel Baker, *Dare to Win: The Story of the New Zealand Special Air Service* (Melbourne: Lothian Publishing Company, 1987), p. 68.

generally supported military involvement in Thailand primarily as an expression of visible support for United States efforts to maintain security in the region. This also supplemented the British commitments to Malaya.

On 17 May, Prime Minister Keith Holyoake agreed to dispatch a ‘token’ contribution of 30 New Zealand SAS troops from New Zealand and two Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF) Bristol Freighters from Singapore. The United States committed some 6,000 personnel and the British and Australians each provided a fighter squadron from Singapore and Malaysia respectively.⁴⁴

During its time in Thailand, the New Zealand SAS detachment was led by Major Mal Velvin and remained under the command New Zealand Army Force Far East Land Forces (FARELF).⁴⁵ Velvin had spent considerable time in early July with senior United States commanders to ensure the New Zealanders made significant use of their close proximity to the Americans. By the middle of the month individual Troops of the detachment had spent time training with the 3rd United States Marine Landing Team in the Udorn area, as well as Reconnaissance and Logistics Companies from the Marine Battle Group and, more importantly, he made their first contact with elements of the United States Special Forces presence in Thailand. For some New Zealanders, the initial impressions of the American soldiers – as we shall see during their time in Vietnam – were mixed:

The Special Forces in Thailand were good, you know, they were real professional soldiers. But as far as the infantry goes in Thailand, we never had much to do with them – but I wouldn’t have liked to either. You know you could see it was a ‘black versus white’ thing there.⁴⁶

The New Zealand Government withdrew the detachment on 16 September 1962.⁴⁷ Although the ‘perceived military threat’ to Thailand did not materialise – and it could be argued the response of Thailand’s allies may have nullified the crisis – the SAS detachment’s deployment to Thailand was a marginally useful learning experience. While posted on ‘active service’ Velvin’s SAS group was never involved in any

⁴⁴ Pugsley, *From Emergency to Confrontation*, pp. 185-187.

⁴⁵ Commander New Zealand Army Force FARELF “NZF/1506/AQ NZ SAS SPECIAL FORCE THAILAND DIRECTIVE, 30 May 1962,” in 256/16/23, Directives to NZSAS and RNZE Special Force Thailand, ANZ, Wellington.

⁴⁶ Danny Wilson, interview conducted on 18 July 2008.

⁴⁷ Pugsley, *From Emergency to Confrontation*, p. 187.

counterinsurgency operations.⁴⁸ Christopher Pugsley correctly assessed that sending the New Zealand SAS detachment ‘was a political gesture of solidarity...on what was hoped would be a limited time-scale.’⁴⁹ Pugsley also wrote that the SAS deployment ‘lacked tactical cohesion...its command elements were equally untidy and confusing...’⁵⁰

Elements within the New Zealand Army, as well as External Affairs and the Prime Minister’s Department, viewed the Thailand deployment as nothing more than a token show of presence as opposed to being a genuine force component or an element that could be utilised in any strategic sense. Operationally, some New Zealand SAS soldiers felt the same way:

I had only heard stories about really but it must have been a fairly gung-ho really cowboy-ish stuff. Mel Velvin was the CO – he was a chap without any SAS background at all, there was a pretty heavy US-influence in Thailand... So to that end it was a good, little practical extra bit of knowledge for us to put to one side, but I don’t believe that it served, I don’t believe, too much real purpose.⁵¹

William Darrell Baker wrote that the training and exchanges provided a ‘valuable learning experience for both the Americans and New Zealanders since both gained insights into each other’s operational methods and the thoughts behind them.’⁵² The deployment gained wide press coverage, was valuable in terms of familiarisation with the area, and had enabled the first close contact with United States infantry and Special Forces units. Velvin felt the SAS was now much better ‘fitted to carry out operations in this theatre.’⁵³

Between being advised of the deployment to Thailand and actually arriving took less than 10 days.⁵⁴ The deployment to Thailand, as a group of highly trained, jungle warfare and counterinsurgency instructors and advisers, was a template from which the New Zealand Army and Holyoake Government could have based early or initial military commitments

⁴⁸ Commander New Zealand Army Force FARELF “NZF/1506/AQ NZ SAS SPECIAL FORCE THAILAND DIRECTIVE, 30 May 1962.”

⁴⁹ Pugsley, *From Emergency to Confrontation*, pp. 185-187.

⁵⁰ Pugsley, *From Emergency to Confrontation*, pp. 185-187.

⁵¹ Copy of Brigadier Ian Burrows interview by Christopher Pugsley, 23 October 1991, for the NZDF Malayan Oral History Project, held in the NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington.

⁵² Baker, *Dare to Win*, pp.69-71.

⁵³ Major Mal Velvin, “General Report Det 1 (New Zealand) SAS Squadron (Thailand) 17 May 62 – 20 September 62,” Army S.15/11 Volume 1, NZDF Archive, Wellington.

⁵⁴ Velvin, “General Report Det 1 SAS Squadron 17 May 62 – 20 September 62” and Baker, *Dare to Win*, p. 68.

to Vietnam. After its return, it is not clear how thoroughly the deployment was assessed, or if indeed any analysis was conducted. Velvin did write an eight-page post deployment report and detailed what he believed was a 'very valuable operation in all aspects,' specifically mentioning it had been the first encounter with non-Commonwealth forces for most of the detachment.⁵⁵ He concluded his report by stating the deployment 'proved that an ounce of first hand local knowledge is worth more than a pound of theory and remote guesswork.'⁵⁶ It remained to be seen whether New Zealand political and military officials took notice of such advice in advance of subsequent SAS deployments.

Vietnam and Borneo - decisions to be made: 1962-1964

Towards the end of 1963 a United Kingdom Foreign Office (FO) official that wrote the Vietnam War was now an 'all American show and that Britain had no practical suggestion to offer the new United States administration.'⁵⁷ By 1965, BRIAM had been disbanded. It had, according to the British, been 'enough to demonstrate the existence of the 'special relationship' and to guarantee Britain's influence' without having to publicly acknowledge any substantial provision of military support to Vietnam.⁵⁸ From now on any significant counterinsurgency contribution to the conflict in Vietnam, modelled on previous British or Commonwealth campaigns, would come from Australia or New Zealand.

Frost suggested that the 'process of Australian military involvement in the Vietnam conflict began in October 1961 when the Australian Government became aware the United States was sufficiently concerned with the situation in South Vietnam to be considering military intervention.'⁵⁹ Peter Edwards added that Australia had little option but to respond to American overtures that supported United States policy on South Vietnam to ensure the Americans – at least in Australia's mind - retained a preparedness to commit forces should a threat from Indonesia manifest itself at Australia's borders;

⁵⁵ Velvin, "General Report Det 1 SAS Squadron 17 May 62 – 20 September 62."

⁵⁶ Velvin, "General Report Det 1 SAS Squadron 17 May 62 – 20 September 62."

⁵⁷ Varsori, 'Britain and United States Involvement in the Vietnam War during the Kennedy Administration, 1961-63,' p. 103.

⁵⁸ Varsori, 'Britain and United States Involvement in the Vietnam War during the Kennedy Administration, 1961-63,' p. 98.

⁵⁹ Frost, *Australia's War in Vietnam*, p. 14.

Australia felt a responsibility to demonstrate they were more than ‘just paper allies.’⁶⁰ By mid December 1961, Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies indicated, via diplomatic representatives in Washington, that Australia might be willing to provide small arms and ammunition and a ‘token contribution’ of jungle warfare instructors.⁶¹

Australian diplomats in Washington assured Canberra it would make Australia's mark with the Kennedy Administration if even a handful of instructors could be sent to Vietnam. Barclay argued that the size of the contingent was not the key issue for the Menzies Government; the United States administration wanted to be joined by troops from other countries, not so much for the military assistance they could provide but for the political support that their presence would demonstrate.⁶² The provision of counterinsurgency and jungle warfare advisers was ‘one field in which Australia could make a highly relevant contribution with a minimal effort.’⁶³

The first Australian Army Training Team Vietnam (AATTV) of 30 men arrived in Saigon in early August 1962.⁶⁴ Twenty instructors were allocated to two training establishments near Hue in the far north of the country, two to Tourane (also in the north), four near Ninh Hoa in Central Vietnam, and the balance - including commander, Colonel Fred P. Serong, served in Saigon.⁶⁵ By 1965, the AATTV contribution had expanded to over 100 advisers, deployed throughout South Vietnam, and would later become the ‘most highly decorated unit of its size in the Australian Army.’⁶⁶ New Zealand remained apprised of the AATTV’s early activities as copies of monthly reports were provided through FARELF.⁶⁷ A similar New Zealand contribution had been mooted in May 1962 at the

⁶⁰ Peter Edwards, ‘Some Reflections on the Australian Government’s Commitment to the Vietnam War’ in Doyle, Grey and Pierce (eds), *Australia’s Vietnam War*, p.xvi and pp.7-8.

⁶¹ The Australian Ambassador in Saigon put the offer to the United States MAAG representatives in Vietnam but was told they required no ‘token’ assistance, either personnel or materiel. The United States Secretary of State Dean Rusk intervened to ‘retract this rebuff to the only ally who had actually offered anything’ and MAAG grudgingly accepted the Australian offer. Barclay, *A Very Small Insurance Policy*, p. 28.

⁶² Barclay, *A Very Small Insurance Policy*, p. 28.

⁶³ Barclay, *A Very Small Insurance Policy*, p. 28 and McNeill, *The Team*, p.5.

⁶⁴ McNeill, *The Team*, p. 8

⁶⁵ Serong would also subsequently serve as ‘special adviser on counterinsurgency matters’ to MACV Commander General Paul D. Harkins during his time in South Vietnam. McNeill, *The Team*, p. 21, Australian Department of External Affairs, “Australian Army Training Team, Vietnam – Notification To International Control Commission, 21 August 1962,” PM478/4/6 Part 1, and Larsen and Collins Jr, *Vietnam Studies: Allied Participation in Vietnam*, p. 8.

⁶⁶ McNeill, *The Team*, p. 21.

⁶⁷ “Directive to Commander, Australian Army Training Team Vietnam, July 1962,” in PM478/4/6 Part 1.

ANZUS Council Meeting in Canberra when United States Commander in Chief Pacific (CINCPAC), Admiral Harry Felt, wrote to the New Zealand representative, Chief of Naval Staff (CNS) Admiral Peter Phipps:

Can you give me any idea as to what military you might send up to Viet Nam to assist in the training? Perhaps a group of your Army...experienced in the Malayan jungle to join our fellows and perhaps some Aussies?

Phipps replied in similar unofficial note form:

As you know New Zealand had a battalion in Malaya throughout the greater part of the emergency. Thus there does exist in N.Z. a sizeable number of personnel experienced in jungle actions against terrorists. In my opinion it would be possible to help in this way – subject to political approval.⁶⁸

A subsequent memorandum prepared by the Joint Planning Committee for the New Zealand Minister of Defence later that month made reference to the informal discussion between Phipps and Felt and recommended ‘with the concurrence of the Prime Minister’ that New Zealand should send to South Vietnam a small party of advisers ‘with a background of Malayan service...’⁶⁹ The Chiefs of Staff appear to have obfuscated or ignored the specific requirement for jungle warfare instructors because they ultimately recommended that any contingent be ‘drawn from all three services.’⁷⁰ They argued that while the initial discussions between Phipps and Felt mentioned personnel with experience in Malaya - thus implying jungle warfare - no indication had been given for any other type of assistance. Therefore options not specifically mentioned could be offered because they had neither been explicitly rejected nor omitted outright.

The Chiefs recommended to Cabinet that a Naval hydrographic team, an Army engineering and services unit and an Air Force team of communications specialists, aircraft tradesmen and a possible C-47 crew make up the contribution.⁷¹ The justification for the make-up of the contribution became all too familiar in the following years. The memorandum advised their considerations had been guided by the following factors:

⁶⁸ PM478/4/6 Part 1 (no date).

⁶⁹ Chiefs of Staff Committee, “Joint Planning Committee JPC (62) 41 Memorandum: New Zealand Military Assistance to South Vietnam, 30 May 1962,” in PM478/4/6 Part 1.

⁷⁰ Chiefs of Staff Committee, “Joint Planning Committee JPC (62) 41 Memorandum: New Zealand Military Assistance to South Vietnam, 30 May 1962.”

⁷¹ Chiefs of Staff Committee, “Joint Planning Committee JPC (62) 41 Memorandum: New Zealand Military Assistance to South Vietnam, 30 May 1962.”

- a) The recognition the United States would be more interested in the physical presence of a New Zealand contribution than in its precise composition.
- b) The desirability of providing assistance and instruction in the fields practical and useful to the South Vietnam authorities.
- c) The necessity to send troops who will not require specialised and expensive equipment from New Zealand, and who can use, and instruct in, material and equipment likely to be available in theatre.
- d) The desirability of providing experience in South East Asia conditions to Arms and Services not normally included in New Zealand's overseas forces.⁷²

When a more astute Assistant Secretary of External Affairs Richard Hutchins commented that the initial discussions raised during the ANZUS Council Meeting were based on the assumption the New Zealand contribution could best take the form of personnel experienced in jungle warfare, and asked why the report did not consider this type of contribution, Army Chief of General Staff (CGS) Major-General Leonard Thornton responded 'that New Zealand was already maintaining a considerable infantry contribution in Malaya' and 'no formal request had been made for a specific type of contribution...'⁷³ External Affairs official Ralph Mullins reported back to McIntosh the contingent suggested by the Army appeared 'sensible and practical, but they really have nothing to go on.'⁷⁴ Of the other two service commitments, Mullins said the suggested Naval and Air Force contributions were only made 'to keep face: they are hardly to be taken seriously.'⁷⁵ With the SAS in Thailand, the Army's choice for genuine jungle warfare experts was always limited at this time, but these initial offerings do suggest that no one in New Zealand was yet prepared to seriously consider providing key New Zealand capabilities in support of United States efforts in Vietnam.

Holyoake saw things entirely differently from Phipps, Felt or even the Chiefs of Staff. In a note to the Minister of Defence in early June 1962, Cabinet Secretary Ray Perry noted:

The Prime Minister directed that the proposals outlined in the above memorandum should be amended to provide for the despatch of no more than ten men.⁷⁶

⁷² Chiefs of Staff Committee, "Joint Planning Committee JPC (62) 41 Memorandum: New Zealand Military Assistance to South Vietnam, 30 May 1962."

⁷³ Minutes of the Meeting of the Chiefs Of Staff "(COS (62) M.24), Military Assistance to South Vietnam, Item Three, 31 May 1962," in PM478/4/6 Part 1.

⁷⁴ Mullins to McIntosh, "Assistance to South Vietnam, 31 May 1962," in PM478/4/6 Part 1.

⁷⁵ Mullins to McIntosh, "Assistance to South Vietnam, 31 May 1962."

⁷⁶ Cabinet Secretary Ray Perry to Minister of Defence, "New Zealand Forces For South Vietnam, 7 June 1962," in PM478/4/6 Part 1.

McIntosh advised the Chiefs of Staff on 14 June that in view of the ‘contribution [of SAS and Bristol Freighters] already made to Thailand and the present situation in South Vietnam’ Holyoake would much prefer to provide further aid in a ‘non-military form’ – specifically perhaps a ‘medical team.’⁷⁷ By mid 1962, it appeared that any recommendation supporting Army counterinsurgency advisors to Vietnam would not be favourably received by the New Zealand Prime Minister. The subject of New Zealand advisers was not raised at official level again that year even though one month later Mullins reported that it was ‘fairly plain that as far as the United States State Department was concerned any presence of New Zealand military would be welcome...we would find value in sending some of our SAS people from Thailand and/or some of our infantry battalion people from Malaya to Vietnam for short periods as observers.’⁷⁸ By the end of 1962, there were 9,800 American and 30 Australian military advisors in South Vietnam.⁷⁹

Throughout the second half of 1962 and the beginning of 1963, the lobbying of allies by the United States, either directly or via the South Vietnamese, intensified. At this point it was suggested by the United States that New Zealand's efforts to provide both military and civil aid to South Vietnam ‘though highly appreciated...did not measure up to those of the Australians.’⁸⁰ In a minute written in early February 1963, Deputy Secretary of External Affairs and Deputy Head of the Prime Minister’s Department, Foss Shanahan acknowledged McIntosh’s previous discussion with the Vietnamese Ambassador, particularly a reference to the possibility of New Zealand SAS taking part in jungle fighting in Vietnam.⁸¹ Shanahan, in turn, recounted his recent discussion with United States Ambassador Anthony Akers ‘who, while denying that he was acting on instructions from Washington, canvassed the possibility of putting [New Zealand] forces into Vietnam.’⁸²

While both Australia and New Zealand recognised security in the Asia-Pacific region rested upon the United States, it was still hoped the United Kingdom would retain a significant role in the South East Asian region. Early Cold War arrangements predicated

⁷⁷ Minutes of the Meeting of the Chiefs Of Staff “(COS (62) M.26), Military Assistance to South Vietnam, Item Ten, 14 June 1962,” in PM478/4/6 Part 1.

⁷⁸ Mullins to Charles Crow, 17 July 1962, in PM478/4/6 Part 1.

⁷⁹ Keesing’s Research Report, *South Vietnam: A Political History 1954-1970*, p.190.

⁸⁰ George Laking, “Number 174, 3 April 1963” in PM478/4/6 Part 1.

⁸¹ Note for file, “FS:DJL to A. McIntosh, 15 February 1963,” in PM478/4/6 Part 1.

⁸² Notes of conversation between Shanahan and Akers, “8 February 1963,” in PM478/4/6 Part 1.

New Zealand and Australia would commit forces to the Middle East in times of future global conflict without any absolute guarantee sufficient British forces would, in turn, defend the Malaysian peninsula against a significant communist threat. A satisfactory commitment had finally been arranged in 1955 with the creation of the Commonwealth Strategic Reserve (CSR).⁸³

On 27 May 1963, Cabinet agreed to authorise discussions with United States and South Vietnamese authorities regarding a New Zealand military contribution of '15-20 men' to Vietnam. Cabinet also agreed that if possible, the contribution should be made up of 'personnel from the New Zealand forces assigned to the CSR Malaya'⁸⁴ even though McIntosh had written to Holyoake on 23 May, advising it 'would not be possible to draw a New Zealand team from the battalion in Malaya.'⁸⁵ At the same time, concerns about Indonesian threats to the 'Borneo territories' became increasingly pressing as the United Kingdom began to request direct military assistance that New Zealand officials felt could only be supplied at some expense to SEATO commitments.⁸⁶ McIntosh duly added that any reduction of the size of New Zealand's forces in Malaya for commitment to South Vietnam 'would not be understood by the British and the Malaysians.'⁸⁷

Still, the United States persisted. A cable from Washington to Wellington in early June 1963 forwarded a message from the American Embassy in Saigon 'welcoming [the] prospect of New Zealand military assistance to Vietnam' and reiterated to Wellington that the exact nature of assistance was 'not nearly so important as tangible expression of New Zealand support for [the] Vietnamese Government.'⁸⁸ The Embassy's first preference was for 10 Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF) pilots.⁸⁹ Its 'second preference' was 'for an engineer road construction advisory assistance team of up to 20 men' that

⁸³ The CSR was initially made up of one infantry brigade, with air and naval units, specifically positioned to counter 'communist terrorists' in Malaya and, more broadly, deter any other communist aggression from beyond South East Asia.

⁸⁴ Cabinet Memo CM (63) 19, "Aid to South Vietnam, 28 May 1963," in PM478/4/6 Part 1 and McNeill and Grey, 'The Australian Army and the Vietnam War,' pp. 16-17.

⁸⁵ Cabinet Memo CM (63)19 from Prime Ministers Office to Minister of External Affairs, "Aid to South Vietnam, 28 May 1963," in PM478/4/6 Part 1.

⁸⁶ McNeill and Grey, 'The Australian Army and the Vietnam War,' p. 17.

⁸⁷ Sir Alister McIntosh, "Aid to South Vietnam, 23 May 1963," in PM478/4/6 Part 1.

⁸⁸ Laking, "Vietnam, 3 June 1963," in PM478/4/6 Part 1.

⁸⁹ Laking in Washington advised Wellington that they had told their American counterparts that they 'again...doubted whether this would be acceptable to you.' Laking, "Vietnam, 3 June 1963."

would work in both military and civilian road-building operations.⁹⁰ The Embassy in Washington added that such a form of non-combatant contribution would have the ‘advantage, apart from practical usefulness, that the team would need to travel a good deal and the New Zealand presence would be widely observed.’⁹¹

Debate still continued as to the exact make-up of the first New Zealand contribution. In mid-July 1963, McIntosh outlined to Holyoake what he saw as the options for the Prime Minister. The choice appeared to lie between ‘instructors to train hamlet militia (or to train Vietnamese instructors of hamlet militia), or an engineer team to work with a Vietnamese unit on roads and bridges.’⁹² McIntosh felt that both were ‘genuinely training and advisory roles’ but pointed out the New Zealand Army still probably knew ‘rather more about guerrilla and jungle fighting than they do about road or bridge construction in South East Asia.’⁹³ He believed that the success of the hamlet programme was ‘critical for both the future security of South Vietnam and the welfare of the mass of the population,’ while the contribution of engineers, on the other hand, ‘would constitute assistance with reconstruction and development.’⁹⁴ McIntosh also knew Thornton would ‘probably prefer to send engineers’ because the Army was keen the Engineer Corps ‘should get some experience in the South East Asia theatre.’⁹⁵ McIntosh concluded by stating that the Department of External Affairs preference was for ‘instructors of hamlet militia.’ Holyoake did nothing more than initial the memorandum.⁹⁶

The New Zealand Prime Minister continued to procrastinate and by mid October, had made it clear that there was no prospect of a decision until the beginning of 1964 at the earliest.⁹⁷ What Holyoake was not to know was that by the end of 1963, the Buddhist Uprising would take place, President John F. Kennedy would be assassinated and the

⁹⁰ Laking, “Vietnam, 3 June 1963.”

⁹¹ Laking, “Vietnam, 3 June 1963.”

⁹² McIntosh advised Holyoake the first option had been mentioned by the South Vietnamese Secretary of Defence, and the second by Diem himself. According to Ambassador Weir, Diem had said to him ‘I am winning the war and reconstruction weighs heavily on me. Anything your military force could do to help reconstruct my country I would deeply appreciate.’ Alister McIntosh, “Aid to South Vietnam, 16 July 1963,” in PM478/4/6 Part 2, South Vietnam: Political: Military Assistance from Australia and New Zealand, 1 July 1963 – 24 April 1964, ANZ, Wellington.

⁹³ McIntosh, “Aid to South Vietnam, 16 July 1963.”

⁹⁴ McIntosh, “Aid to South Vietnam, 16 July 1963.”

⁹⁵ McIntosh, “Aid to South Vietnam, 16 July 1963.”

⁹⁶ McIntosh, “Aid to South Vietnam, 16 July 1963.”

⁹⁷ Foss Shanahan, “Military Aid to Vietnam, 16 October 1963,” in PM478/4/6 Part 2 and Edwards, ‘Some Reflections on the Australian Government’s Commitment to the Vietnam War,’ p. 22.

Diem Regime overthrown. Despite such significant regional and international upheaval, Holyoake remained reluctant to commit military to Vietnam. Similarly, he continued to provide little justification for his unwillingness to make a decision. In early April 1964, McIntosh had prepared a further memorandum in advance of the forthcoming SEATO Security Council Meeting and indicated the likelihood of troop contributions being raised. McIntosh said he needed the Prime Minister's views to complete the document. In response, Holyoake replied he was 'not in favour of contributing military aid to Vietnam. The difficulty' he added 'of administration and logistic support of a small group would not be repaid by any contribution they could make.'⁹⁸

According to subsequent cables on file, no specific approaches appear to have been made by the Americans at the SEATO meeting in Manila, although General Nguyen Khanh was told by Holyoake, during the Prime Minister's visit to Vietnam after the meeting, that 'Malaysian preoccupation would now have priority.'⁹⁹ However, by mid-1964, the United States nevertheless made it patently clear to its allies what was required of them. In a letter to Holyoake, Herbert Powell, the United States Ambassador to New Zealand wrote that he had been:

instructed to convey to you the utmost importance which the United States of America attaches to a strong 'show of flags' in Vietnam by nations of the Free World.¹⁰⁰

Powell also reminded Holyoake of the commitment SEATO had made in Manila that 'called upon the members...to be prepared to take further steps in fulfilment of their obligations under the Treaty.'¹⁰¹ The United States remained committed to the situation in Vietnam; by the end of 1964 there were approximately 23,000 American personnel in country. It was now time for the United States Government to 'call upon other nations of the Free World to express their support for the Vietnamese Government and provide evidence of that support in the form of practical and material contributions.'¹⁰² Attached to the letter was a list of desired 'military, economic and technical assistance

⁹⁸ Alister McIntosh, "SEATO Council Meeting Brief: South Vietnam New Zealand Military Contribution, 3 April 1964," in PM478/4/6 Part 2.

⁹⁹ Alister McIntosh to Major-General Leonard Thornton, "20 April 1964," PM478/4/6 Part 2.

¹⁰⁰ Herbert Powell to Keith Holyoake, "6 May 1964," in PM478/4/6 Part 3, South Vietnam: Political: Military Assistance from Australia and New Zealand, 4 May – 24 August 1964, ANZ, Wellington.

¹⁰¹ Powell to Holyoake, "6 May 1964."

¹⁰² Powell to Holyoake, "6 May 1964."

requirements.’¹⁰³ Through the note, the United States clearly stressed the importance it attached ‘to the display of the New Zealand flag in South Vietnam’ and pressed for the New Zealand Government to commit a non-combatant contribution as soon as possible.¹⁰⁴

McIntosh advised his Prime Minister that despite ‘little military advantage for the United States and South Vietnamese in obtaining token military assistance from other countries,’ the ‘political arguments were held to be overriding,’ and he should offer to contribute a unit in a non-combatant role.¹⁰⁵ On 11 May, Cabinet finally agreed to contribute no more than 20 Army troops for service in a non-combatant role in South Vietnam.¹⁰⁶ The decision was made public two weeks later.¹⁰⁷

The announcement appeared timely. It seems New Zealand became aware of Australian intentions to further increase troop levels as early as 12 May 1964 when High Commissioner Luke Hazlett advised Wellington that the Australians were considering how they might increase military aid to South Vietnam.¹⁰⁸ The increases included an additional 30 Army Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) for service with the AATTV, a dental unit, a driving and servicing instruction team and three Caribou transport aircraft with associated crew.¹⁰⁹ Wellington was also made aware that the role of the AATTV would be extended to permit their employment in operations even though ‘Australian casualties’ were expected.¹¹⁰

The New Zealand Army Detachment Vietnam

The sapper Squadron was sent in 1964 – that was the first, I won’t say pressure but the first persuasion, from the US for New Zealand to be represented with

¹⁰³ This list included ‘Forward air controllers and personnel for tactical air control centers; Army liaison personnel at regimental/division level and advisors at battalion and lower levels; Assignment of air defence training units to Republic of Vietnam: Liaison personnel at Republic of Vietnam Air Force service schools and major training centers; Medical and dental teams; Pilots; Reconnaissance aircraft; Training detachments for Republic of Vietnam Air Force and paramilitary training centers; Communications engineers; and Shipyard advisors.’ Powell to Holyoake, “6 May 1964.”

¹⁰⁴ Powell to Holyoake, “6 May 1964.”

¹⁰⁵ The document was stamped ‘seen by the Prime Minister’ 12 May 1964. Alister McIntosh, “Aid to South Vietnam, 8 May 1964,” in PM478/4/6 Part 3.

¹⁰⁶ Cabinet Minute, “CM (64) 18, 13 May 1964,” in PM478/4/6 Part 3.

¹⁰⁷ DEA, “Aid to Vietnam, 26 May 1964,” in PM 478/4/6 Part 3.

¹⁰⁸ Luke Hazlett, “South Vietnam, 12 May 1964,” in PM478/4/6 Part 3.

¹⁰⁹ Luke Hazlett, “South Vietnam, 12 May 1964,” in PM478/4/6 Part 3.

¹¹⁰ Australian High Commission Wellington, “South Vietnam, 29 May 1964,” in PM 478/4/6 Part 3.

troops there. The Sappers were an easy way out for the Government because, okay they were combat troops but they were not in a combat role.¹¹¹

New Zealand's first military contribution to Vietnam, the New Zealand Army Detachment Vietnam (NZADV), was established almost as soon as the Government's decision had been made on 11 May. Its task was defined in general terms only, although some understood that the detachment's initial efforts would focus on road and bridge reconstruction.¹¹² Cabinet's Defence Committee had advised the Government that the group 'could be available in Vietnam by the beginning of July.'¹¹³ True to its word, the Army made sure the detachment arrived in Saigon on 29 June 1964.¹¹⁴

Administratively, the detachment was commanded by a small New Zealand headquarters in Saigon. Operational control was vested in General William Westmoreland through MAAG and tasking came from the Vietnamese Ministry of Works. Due to strict and lengthy financial controls, delays in receiving supplies were frequent, and the system also had practical limitations as the team was 'entirely dependent on [MAAG] and the Vietnamese for logistic support.'¹¹⁵ Other than personal clothing, a medical box, some stationery and two New Zealand flags, the detachment took no equipment to Vietnam. While a range of plant and vehicles were supplied and the major pieces of equipment were awaiting the unit on its arrival, tool kits did not arrive until some six months later. To overcome this gap, the necessary hand tools were bought by team members in the Saigon markets using money provided by the Vietnamese Ministry of Works.¹¹⁶

¹¹¹ Thornton interview by Christopher Pugsley, 30 October 1991, for the NZDF Malayan Oral History Project, held in the NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington.

¹¹² McGibbon, *The New Zealand Army in Vietnam 1964-1972*, p. 58.

¹¹³ Cabinet Defence Committee, "D (64)4: Military Assistance to Vietnam, 19 May 1964," in PM478/4/6 Part 3.

¹¹⁴ Those initially selected held the trade of either 'field engineer, carpenter and joiner, or instructor.' Even though the Cabinet Defence Committee had stated an engineer detachment of 'two officers and twenty other ranks could be produced from the Regular Force and would be capable of undertaking small engineer tasks,' there was in fact no suitable Regular Force unit that could be deployed for the role. It was therefore necessary to bring together personnel from a number of Regular Force units, and at Linton Camp in early June 1964, 30 officers and men assembled at the School of Military Engineering (SME). They spent some two weeks together revising knowledge of weapons handling, mine warfare and booby traps, demolition and improvised bridging skills. McGibbon, *The New Zealand Army in Vietnam 1964-1972*, pp. 58-59 and Cabinet Defence Committee, "D (64)4: Military Assistance to Vietnam, 19 May 1964." Also in July 1964, an Australian twelve-man civic action team arrived to assist in 'rural development projects. See Larsen and Collins Jr, *Vietnam Studies: Allied Participation in Vietnam*, p. 88.

¹¹⁵ McGibbon, *The New Zealand Army in Vietnam 1964-1972*, p. 60.

¹¹⁶ The United States military authorities looked after personal requirements in respect of quarters, messing, medical transport and mail. McGibbon, *The New Zealand Army in Vietnam 1964-1972*, p. 59.

Initially, the team completed a number of significant construction projects including the building of several bridges and five kilometres of road and by September, the value of their presence was being fed back to Wellington. On 14 September, the New Zealand Ambassador in Washington, George Laking, reported that in discussions with President Johnson, the United States Ambassador in Saigon, Maxwell Taylor, had ‘praised the work and bearing of the New Zealand Army Engineering detachment in the very highest terms.’¹¹⁷ By contrast, McIntosh wrote to Holyoake in December 1964 with an update of the group’s activity, and advised it had ‘met with a number of difficulties, mainly of an administrative and financial nature’ that restricted its work. As a consequence, the major activity of the team was directed towards the carrying out of much smaller ‘civic action’ projects.¹¹⁸

In 1972, the New Zealand Army concluded that the difficulties of mounting even a small force, the uncertain details of tasks, and the rather broad aims were key sources of frustration for the NZADV.¹¹⁹ In a signal from the New Zealand Embassy in Bangkok two months earlier, Ambassador Sir Stephen Weir made reference to some of these smaller ‘civic action’ projects that McIntosh had spoken of to Holyoake in December 1964. They included construction of a ‘new market place on the north-east outskirts of Thu Da Mot, a pig sty for the Chieu Hoi (surrendered Vietcong) and a brick house for the security guard of the Province Chief.’¹²⁰ A rather disparaging remark written on the cable highlighted some of the frustrations borne from a force that remained far too small to be of any real operational or political value:

It worries me that the [NZADV] Force Commander is only a Lieutenant Colonel. The construction of a pig sty would – in my view – have warranted the appointment of a Brigadier.¹²¹

Ultimately, the team’s non-combatant status prevented it from being employed in full-time work.¹²² Weir reiterated this to Wellington after he visited Vietnam in February 1965 when he reported that the detachment ‘were not satisfied with the type of work

¹¹⁷ George Laking, “Vietnam, 14 September 1964,” in PM 478/4/6 Part 4: South Vietnam: Political: Military Assistance from Australia and New Zealand, 1st September 1964 – 31st March 1965, ANZ, Wellington.

¹¹⁸ Alister McIntosh, “4 December 1964,” in PM 478/4/6 Part 4.

¹¹⁹ McGibbon, *The New Zealand Army in Vietnam 1964-1972*, p. 62.

¹²⁰ Sir Stephen Weir, “NZADV, 14 October 1964,” in PM478/4/6 Part 4.

¹²¹ Weir, “NZADV, 14 October 1964.”

¹²² McGibbon, *The New Zealand Army in Vietnam 1964-1972*, p. 62.

which they were doing' and most of the tasks in which they were engaged were of 'rather a low level of engineering skill.'¹²³

Concluding Notes

Assessments and reviews of the Australian advisers' experiences in Vietnam continued to be provided to New Zealand military officials throughout 1963. In June of that year, the New Zealand Army Liaison Officer in Canberra provided a report of the AATTV to Army Headquarters Wellington outlining the makeup of the Australian group and its operational activities since arriving in South Vietnam.¹²⁴ The report indicated that the Australian team had generally 'proved successful' and no problems had been encountered in integrating with the United States MAAG organisation.¹²⁵ Also attached to the report was a copy of an additional note titled *Replacement of Personnel – AATTV* in which Serong commented that the proportion of 'ex-SAS' personnel within the Training Teams needed to be maintained.¹²⁶ Of the 30 members of the first AATTV, nearly a quarter were from the Australian SAS Regiment.¹²⁷

In discussions with the Australian Minister of External Affairs, Sir Garfield Barwick, in early June 1963, Shanahan was told that Serong's comments and views had 'been sought on other aspects of the military and anti-subversion campaign in Vietnam and entertained with respect by both the Vietnamese and the Americans.'¹²⁸ Sir Garfield added that the Australian Government believed the assistance provided by the advisers in Vietnam was

¹²³ Weir, "NZADV, 14 October 1964."

¹²⁴ The AATTV provided monthly reports to Canberra. These were condensed by the New Zealand Liaison Officer in Canberra to a single report covering the most salient points and forwarded on to Wellington. New Zealand Army Liaison Officer Canberra, "Australian Army Training Team – Vietnam, 4 June 1963," in PM478/4/6 Part 1.

¹²⁵ The report also noted that although 'officially' Australian officers and Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) were not permitted to take part in operations or patrols, some had in fact done so. It went on to caution that when officers and NCOs were attached to defended villages or took part in exercises away from larger training centres they were 'vulnerable to [Vietcong] VC attack.' As a result, some of the Australian advisers had 'been very close to participating in "operations."' New Zealand Army Liaison Officer Canberra, "Australian Army Training Team – Vietnam, 4 June 1963."

¹²⁶ Colonel F.P. Serong, "Replacement of Personnel – AATTV, 11 February 1963," in New Zealand Army Liaison Officer Canberra, "Australian Army Training Team – Vietnam, 4 June 1963."

¹²⁷ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 57.

¹²⁸ The New Zealand Army Liaison Officer report from Canberra had also made reference to the fact that Serong had been to the United States 'lecturing to Special Forces on jungle warfare.' New Zealand Army Liaison Officer Canberra, "Australian Army Training Team – Vietnam, 4 June 1963," and Shanahan's notes of discussions held with Sir Garfield Barwick, "12 June 1963," in PM478/4/6 Part 1.

of considerable use in that ‘the sale of defence equipment to the Australian forces had [also] been influenced’ by the AATTV deployments.¹²⁹

The Australian experiences in Vietnam, by the middle of 1963, provided New Zealand officials with an opportunity to enhance its military capability with exposure to a further South East Asian counterinsurgency already acknowledged as being ‘different’ from the Malayan experience. It also presented an opportunity to build on operational relationships established with the United States military in Thailand in 1962 and enable the New Zealand military to work more closely with their Australian counterparts. However, New Zealand Defence and External Affairs officials were largely guided by Holyoake and the Prime Minister showed little genuine interest in following an Australian model – such as Serong’s AATTV group - or even by simply making another detachment from Velvin’s New Zealand SAS Squadron available to work as advisers in South Vietnam.

As a relatively new organisation, the New Zealand SAS was still struggling to define itself and find its role and position within the New Zealand Army:

We were floundering to a degree as to what the role of that particular unit was – you didn’t have a role, didn’t have a defined mission, then you had trouble in what it was you trained for and what it was you were equipped for, and we tried to cover a pretty broad field – too broad a field.¹³⁰

Although the potential success the NZADV could have achieved in 1964 was considerable, like the SAS deployment to Thailand, its real value was marginal at best. Any examination of the merit of the detachment’s activities in Vietnam remained limited because the growing threat from Indonesia posed a more pressing concern for the Holyoake Government. President Johnson’s request for additional assistance in December 1964 put Holyoake in a difficult position as the Borneo ‘Confrontation’ escalated before the United States made its requests for further New Zealand military assistance. David Dickens added that ‘Commonwealth military planning for Borneo was

¹²⁹ Shanahan’s notes dated “12 June 1963.”

¹³⁰ Copy of Lieutenant-General Sir John Mace interview by Christopher Pugsley, 4 November 1992, for the NZDF Malayan Oral History Project, held in the NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington.

more advanced than United States preparations for Vietnam and the need to commit forces to Borneo was [therefore] more immediate.’¹³¹

However, even if American requests had been received well in advance of the developing situation between Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia, it is extremely unlikely New Zealand would have seriously entertained the idea of responding to Washington with anything more than it did. The Australian view was similar. By the second half of 1964, Australian Defence officials became increasingly concerned they might need to commit ground forces to two or more areas simultaneously. ‘Confrontation’ with Indonesia would likely necessitate a commitment of Australian forces to Malaysia and Papua New Guinea (PNG). Additionally, the Vietnam requirement for extra forces continued.¹³² Cables from Wellington to Washington in early December apprised the Embassy of New Zealand’s likely response to any further requests, and invited the Embassy to relay to their American interlocutors ‘our resources are distressingly meagre and that we have to consider requirements in Malaysia, where the Commonwealth has the primary responsibility and where the outlook is far from rosy.’¹³³

Holyoake's mind was made up. At its 14 December 1964 meeting, Cabinet agreed that because the defence of Malaysia constituted ‘the first priority within New Zealand’s defence commitments and obligations in South East Asia,’ it ‘could not properly commit forces for combat service in South Vietnam.’¹³⁴ Upon receipt of the letter from Johnson, handed via Ambassador Powell on 15 December 1964, pressing New Zealand for further aid to Vietnam, Holyoake wrote to McIntosh:

Tell US that we can not send further aid to Vietnam – Malaysia.¹³⁵

McIntosh drafted accordingly, emphasising that for ‘historical, geographic and other reasons...the defence of Malaysia – to which we are already committed – has been and

¹³¹ Dickens, *New Zealand and the Vietnam War: Official Policy Advice to the Government 1960-1972*, p. 137.

¹³² Faced with this need to rapidly expand their Army, the Australian Government decided to revive National Service and dispense with the large ‘Pentropic’ organisation in favour of smaller more conventional battalions. McNeill and Grey, ‘The Australian Army and the Vietnam War,’ p. 20.

¹³³ Alistair McIntosh, “Vietnam, 11 December 1964,” PM478/4/6 Part 4.

¹³⁴ Cabinet Minute (64) 49, “Situation in South East Asia, 17 December 1964,” in PM478/4/6 Part 4.

¹³⁵ Lyndon Johnson, 15 December 1964, in PM478/4/6 Part 4 and Subritzky, *Confronting Sukarno*, pp.140-141.

must remain a responsibility of the highest priority for New Zealand...'¹³⁶ As John Subritzky wrote, 'New Zealand's increased involvement in Borneo would be the means by which the government would restrict, as much as possible, the nation's role in Vietnam.'¹³⁷ For the New Zealand SAS, Malaysia – in particular Borneo - would certainly remain its highest priority for the next two years.

¹³⁶ Alister McIntosh, "Vietnam, 22 December 1964," in PM478/4/6 Part 4.

¹³⁷ Subritzky, *Confronting Sukarno: British, American, Australian and New Zealand Diplomacy in the Malaysian-Indonesian Confrontation, 1961-5*, p.141.

Chapter 2

The Borneo ‘Confrontation’

The event that is believed to have set off the Borneo ‘Confrontation’ was an abortive, Muslim-inspired revolt against the Government of Brunei in 1962.¹ In an effort to develop further nationalistic fervour after the revolt had been suppressed, Indonesian President Achmed Sukarno embarked upon in a strategy designed to allow him to assume control of the region which had, up until the end of World War II, been the domain of several colonial powers, including the United Kingdom, France and the Netherlands. The British responded to events by sending forces to Brunei as early as January 1963 and among those sent was ‘A’ Squadron from 22 SAS Regiment. At first, Sukarno’s assaults were largely verbal but when he saw his strategy frustrated by the planned formation of a Malaysian Federation in September 1963 he began to lay plans to intervene militarily in the projected Federation States.² By December 1963 it was confirmed that Indonesian Army regulars were operating across the Malaysian border in Kalimantan, necessitating additional British forces and a request for Commonwealth troops.³

Cross-border raids by Indonesian regular troops in late 1963 and early 1964 were designed to force British and Malaysian troops back far enough to allow the Indonesians to establish ‘liberated zones.’ In the uninhabited areas, the objective was to set up camps ‘a few miles north of the border and by residing in these camps for propaganda and morale purposes’ the Indonesians could claim they were occupying East Malaysia. The frequency of the attacks across the border, as well as unsuccessful assaults on the Malayan Peninsula was sufficient to raise the fear of full-scale invasion. The first British cross-border operations were designed to collect operational intelligence on Indonesian camps and lines of communication in the areas of Kalimantan, close to the Sarawak town of Kuching, where the largest concentrations of Indonesians were thought to be.⁴

¹ CINCFE 9/67, “The Joint Report on the Borneo Campaign, 27 January 1967,” in DEFE 5/172, Ministry of Defence Chief of Staffs Committee Serial 16, TNA, London, pp.8-10.

² Baker, *Dare to Win*, pp. 74-75, Warner, *The Special Air Service*, pp. 223-227 and Connor, *Ghost Force*, pp. 129-133.

³Baker, *Dare to Win*, pp. 74-75.

⁴ New Zealand High Commission, Kuala Lumpur, “Malaysia, 31 December 1964,” in London B106/2/7 Part 3, New Zealand High Commission London, Defence – Commonwealth: Malaysia: Defence Aspects, 1 September – 31 December 1964, ANZ, Wellington.

Attempts were also made to secure the border by building a 'chain of forts at key points, manned by infantry companies, protected by light artillery, mortars, claymore mines and pungee traps.'⁵ British forces were initially allowed to cross into Kalimantan up to a depth initially of 5,000 - later 10,000 - metres for specific operations and at first only Gurkha battalions could be used.⁶ The ethnic make-up of the Gurkha battalions offered some semblance of 'deniability' for the British should these troops be killed or captured across the border. In addition, no unit was to mount more than one raid at any one time. Tactically, the limit was partly to keep within range of supporting artillery fire and partly to allow the excuse that the British forces had crossed the poorly defined border because of 'map-reading errors.'⁷ Strategically, minimum force, preventative action and avoidance of escalation were the primary objectives.⁸ The aim of deniable offensive cross-border patrol operations was to regain the initiative along the frontier border, lower the morale and damage the prestige of the enemy by making it more difficult for them to move on their side and, at the same time, restore the confidence of the local population and villages, thereby safeguarding 'a valuable source of information.'⁹

Even before the Brunei revolt, Indonesia had been engaged in limited subversive activity in Sarawak and Sabah. Raids across the border using local Sarawak volunteers had begun in April 1963. These early raids were of limited effectiveness and responsibility for

⁵ The traps (also known as 'punji' or 'panji'), which would be used extensively by Vietcong forces in South Vietnam, were an effective booby-trap consisting of razor-sharp bamboo stakes hidden in concealed pits. See Connor, *Ghost Force*, p. 133, J. P. Cross, *Jungle Warfare: Experiences and Encounters*, (London: Guild Publishing, by arrangement with Arms and Armour Press, 1989), p. 167, and Picken, *Viet Nam Diggers' Language*, p. 65.

⁶ Initially, the limit was set at 3,000 yards, however, patrolling to this range did not give sufficient room to manoeuvre or achieve any real surprise. In the Central Brigade area of the border, it was determined that the mountainous and rugged nature of the area had forced the Indonesians to position themselves at a greater distance away from the border. Similarly, in the East Brigade area, the principal enemy communications lay along the complex river systems. It was argued that the extension was required in order to bring more Indonesian river, road and track communication routes into the range of ambush and reconnaissance patrols. Connor writes that no restrictions were placed on the depth of penetration in covert SAS operations across the border, save for the 'overriding imperative: not to get caught.' See United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff Committee, "Military Measures to Counter Indonesian 'Confrontation', 30 December 1964," London B106/2/7 Part 2, Defence – Commonwealth: Malaysia: Defence Aspects, 1 September – 31 December 1964, Appendix 1 to Annex to COS 321/64, pp. 1-2, ANZ, Wellington and Connor, *Ghost Force*, p. 133.

⁷ New Zealand High Commission, Kuala Lumpur, "Malaysia – 'Confrontation', 22 April 1964," in London B106/2/7 Part 2.

⁸ Cross, *Jungle Warfare: Experiences and Encounters*, p.167.

⁹ Air Vice-Marshal J. H. Lapsley, "[United Kingdom] Chiefs of Staff Committee: Military Measures to Counter Indonesian 'Confrontation', 30 December 1964," in London B106/2/7 Part 2, Appendix 1 to Annex to COS 321/64, p.1.

control of the border raiding was subsequently passed on to the Indonesian armed forces and progressively, through their direct participation, the frequency and effectiveness of the cross-border attacks increased.

During mid-1964 the United Kingdom decided to take action against these incursion points and authorised the British SAS to mount CLARET operations. The operations involved crossing the border, locating enemy staging areas and then calling strikes by other British and Commonwealth infantry forces.¹⁰ CLARET operations were not only risky from a military perspective, but also politically sensitive. Neither the United Kingdom, the Commonwealth, nor Malaysia, were technically at war with Indonesia and it was important that they not appear to the rest of the world to be escalating the conflict.¹¹ British and Malaysian forces had to frustrate Indonesia's incursions without sparking a general war.

Reluctance on the part of Australia and New Zealand to deploy troops, including the New Zealand SAS, to Borneo persisted for nearly ten months before additional military assistance was finally pledged. On 10 April 1964, the British Prime Minister Sir Alec Douglas Home sent requests to both Australian and New Zealand Prime Ministers Sir Robert Menzies and Keith Holyoake for assistance in what he described as a 'new threat to British and Malaysian forces in Borneo.'¹² Douglas Home had asked for the Australian and New Zealand battalions from the CSR, as well as SAS troops from both countries. He justified his request for military assistance by arguing that Indonesia was now using regular army troops in Borneo and their operations were 'noticeably better planned and coordinated' than previously observed.¹³

To the British, both the Australian and New Zealand response back to Douglas Home was less than satisfactory. Australasian policy makers initially felt that the British were exaggerating the situation in Borneo and argued no troops should be deployed ahead of a

¹⁰ Pugsley, *From Emergency to Confrontation*, pp. 255-256.

¹¹ Baker, *Dare to Win*, p. 78 and De La Billiere, *Looking For Trouble*, pp. 242-248.

¹² Douglas Home also advised that the British CINCFE, Admiral Sir Varyl Begg, would soon authorise 'hot pursuit' operations, allowing forces to engage infiltrators for up to 3,000 yards past the Indonesian border. Commonwealth Relations Office, "Text of Message from Prime Minister to Mr. Holyoake, 10 April 1964," in London B106/2/7 Part 2.

¹³ Subritzky, *Confronting Sukarno*, p. 106.

genuine need.¹⁴ Holyoake himself sent a lengthy reply to Douglas Home on 12 April in which he agreed with the British military assessment of the situation and was prepared to allow the New Zealand CSR Battalion to be used in operations on the Malayan Peninsula but had ‘doubts as to the value of very limited action such as crossing the border in hot pursuit.’¹⁵ Holyoake – perhaps demonstrating just how ‘consultative’ his Government was – concluded his message by stating that he did not think his Cabinet would agree to New Zealand CSR forces being used across the border but would consult in due course nevertheless.¹⁶

Further hostile activity by the Indonesians in May 1964 prompted another British request for troops.¹⁷ Once again, senior British commanders, including the Director of Operations in Borneo (DOBOPS), Major-General Walter Walker, requested SAS troops as well as the commitment of the entire CSR.¹⁸ Despite the escalating situation, the Australian Government felt that Borneo was an isolated situation and could be contained using existing British and Malaysian forces. Australian policy makers were becoming more concerned about the growing situation in South Vietnam and their desire for the United States to maintain a presence. They argued that by committing forces to South Vietnam, any subsequent escalation in the conflict with Indonesia might be resolved with American assistance.¹⁹ In mid-June 1964, Australian External Affairs Minister Paul Hasluck told Prime Minister Menzies the Borneo issue was a manageable and isolated one:

Existing methods, possibly on an increased scale, will suffice to keep it under control. My personal feeling is that the greatest urgency and major importance at

¹⁴ New Zealand High Commission, Canberra, “Malaysia – Reply to Douglas Home’s Message, 14 April 1964,” in London B106/2/7 Part 2, and “Defence Committee Meeting of 8 May 1964” quoted in Subritzky, *Confronting Sukarno*, pp. 106-107. Similarly, the Australians believed that Major-General Walker was ‘talking in terms of theoretical Indonesian capabilities rather than assessments of likely Indonesian actions.’ New Zealand High Commission, Canberra, “Threat to Eastern Malaysia, 24 April 1964,” and New Zealand High Commission, Singapore, “Situation in Borneo, 25 April 1964,” both in London B106/2/7 Part 2.

¹⁵ Holyoake was in Manila attending a SEATO Council Meeting at the time he wrote the note. United Kingdom Foreign Office, “Telegram No.155, 12 April 1964,” in London B106/2/7 Part 2.

¹⁶ United Kingdom Foreign Office, “Telegram No.155, 12 April 1964.”

¹⁷ On 22 May 1964, a Gurkha regiment was attacked by ‘Indonesian infiltrators’ in the Lundu district of West Sarawak, prompting *The Times* to describe the attack as the ‘biggest onslaught on security forces since cross-border clashes began.’ Subritzky, *Confronting Sukarno*, pp. 107-108.

¹⁸ Subritzky, *Confronting Sukarno*, pp. 107-108.

¹⁹ Subritzky, *Confronting Sukarno*, pp. 107-111.

this stage is in Laos and South Vietnam, where existing methods are not sufficient to control the situation or even to check a steady deterioration.²⁰

By mid-1964, Australian Defence and External Affairs officials believed that the single most important strategic threat was not from Indonesia, but the Peoples' Republic of China (PRC) and North Vietnam. It was also believed that if Australian elements of the CSR were committed to Borneo, it would 'severely limit' Australia's ability to provide direct assistance to Washington in the event military intervention became necessary in Vietnam. The New Zealand view was similar and debate centred upon commitments 'between the insurgency in Borneo and the conflict in South Vietnam,' even though it was now acknowledged that 'only the United States' - and not the United Kingdom - 'was capable of repelling a major communist challenge' in South East Asia.²¹

By the beginning of September 1964, the crisis in Malaysia had worsened, and on 2 September, Indonesian paratroopers landed on the Malay Peninsula in Johore.²² New Zealand and Australia both responded to Tunku Abdul Rahman's request for assistance and the New Zealand CSR Battalion was immediately deployed to round up the remnants of the Indonesian parachutists the following day. However, such a swift response took place only because the New Zealand Battalion was the only CSR unit in close proximity to the Indonesian landings.²³

John Subritzky has asserted that during this post World War II period, 'New Zealand was comfortable in its dependency on the British, and while this remained was incapable of deploying its armed forces [anywhere] in any meaningful way independently of London.'²⁴ Such an approach furnished Holyoake with a legitimate excuse that he could not commit to providing military assistance to American operations in South Vietnam. Importantly though, Holyoake had committed New Zealand forces to neither at this stage. He would have to do so soon – one way or the other.

²⁰ Hasluck to Menzies in a cablegram dated 16 June 1964 quoted in Subritzky, *Confronting Sukarno*, p. 110.

²¹ Subritzky, *Confronting Sukarno*, pp. 111-112.

²² DEA, "Malaysia/Indonesia: Background Paper, 20 January 1966," in PM 420/2/3 Part 34, Malaysia: Political Affairs: Confrontation: Political Aspects, 1 June – 31 July 1966, ANZ, Wellington, p. 19-20.

²³ Hunter Wade, "Malaysia 'Confrontation', 3 September 1964" and "[United Kingdom] Chiefs of Staff Committee: Military Measures to Counter Indonesian 'Confrontation', 30 December 1964," both in B106/2/7 Part 3.

²⁴ Subritzky, *Confronting Sukarno*, pp. 111-112.

Towards the end of 1964 Sukarno, having earlier promised to crush Malaysia by 1 January 1965, committed even larger numbers to 'Confrontation.' The newly elected British Prime Minister Harold Wilson responded on 2 January 1965 to a request from the Tunku for the British to provide further military assistance to counter the 'Indonesian build-up in Borneo.'²⁵ In his reply, Wilson agreed that it was necessary to 'take all prudent precautions in light of this development and the continuing raids on Western Malaysia' and advised he would take 'immediate action to reinforce the forces in Sarawak.'²⁶

By early 1965, it was estimated an additional 14,000 Indonesian troops and supporting units had been deployed to the Kalimantan-Sarawak border area and 6,000 more troops to northern Sumatra.²⁷ According to New Zealand DEA officials, there was a clear assumption that the Indonesians would use these additional forces to 'intensify their 'Confrontation' activities.'²⁸ The Malaysians had also advised the United Nations Security Council of the increasing Indonesian build-up. As will be expanded upon later, most of this information is likely to have been provided, or at least confirmed to the Malaysians, by a variety of 'sensitive' British means.²⁹ Simultaneously, local media also indicated that 'Australia and New Zealand were expected to follow Britain's example by sending reinforcements to bolster Malaysia's defence...'³⁰ It must have been clear to Holyoake what further requests he was about to receive.

Cabinet agreed, on 26 January 1965, to offer Royal New Zealand Navy crews (60 officers and ratings) to man two Royal Navy minesweepers and a New Zealand SAS detachment of 40 men which 'should be available for service in Borneo, including operations across the border such as reconnaissance and patrols on the understanding that detailed

²⁵ Both these letters were forwarded to Holyoake on 4 January 1965.

²⁶ Ian McLennan "Letter dated 31st December 1964 from Tunku Abdul Rahman to Mr Harold Wilson" and "Reply dated 2nd January 1965, from Mr Harold Wilson to Tunku Abdul Rahman's Message, 4 January 1965," in PM 420/2/3 Part 28, Malaysia: Political Affairs: Confrontation: Political Aspects, December – 25 January 1965, ANZ, Wellington.

²⁷ DEA, "Malaysia: New Zealand Military Assistance, 26 January 1965," in Cabinet Minute CM (65)1, 26 January 1965, ANZ, Wellington.

²⁸ DEA, "Malaysia: New Zealand Military Assistance, 26 January 1965."

²⁹ The Malaysians had reported that 'credible information at its disposal' had indicated that the Indonesians were 'reinforcing its regular forces on the Borneo border by several brigades.' United Kingdom Foreign Office telegram, "D.23.19, 7 January 1965," in PM 420/2/3 Part 28 and New Zealand High Commission Singapore, "458, 25 December 1964," in London B106/2/7 Part 3.

³⁰ *Dominion* (Wellington), "Vietnam-Bombers Standing By For Malaysian Alarm Signal," January 6, 1965, in London B106/2/7 Part 3.

limitations on the employment of the detachment would be discussed with the British and Australian authorities.’³¹ Again, as was the case for the first CSR deployment to Malaya in 1955, and also the request for military assistance from Thailand in 1962, the New Zealand Government determined its SAS Squadron would be the first New Zealand ground forces committed to this latest overseas operation.

New Zealand DEA officials had also recommended to Cabinet an Army ‘artillery battery (120 troops)’ be sent to Borneo. Cabinet subsequently rejected this proposal but nevertheless authorised the battery to go to Vietnam – New Zealand’s first combatant commitment to that conflict – later the same year. Defence officials had commented in the January Cabinet submission the SAS and artillery proposals for Borneo ‘could be provided without affecting current or prospective army activities in Thailand and South Vietnam.’³² Had Holyoake and Cabinet agreed to send both units, it is interesting to speculate what options Defence officials could have provided when further requests for assistance to South Vietnam were later presented.

It was largely thanks to the DEA that Holyoake’s reluctance to allow the New Zealand SAS to operate inside Indonesian territory, a condition that had been placed on their use in January, was removed the following month.³³ Diplomats were able to see the strategic value of deployment would far outweigh the ‘risk of political embarrassment, domestic and international, if any of our servicemen are taken prisoner’ even if their Prime Minister had not necessarily shared a similar grasp.³⁴ They also accepted the British view that such operations were undeniable if Indonesia chose to protest but worth the risk.³⁵ In recommending the deployment of SAS to Borneo, DEA wrote:

In the light of both of the increased threat and the effort being made by our allies, it is incumbent on New Zealand also to increase the level of its assistance...It must be noted that the SAS detachment is sought for employment in Borneo, where the military authorities wish to use it in cross-border operations, such as reconnaissance and patrols. It would not appear feasible to preclude such employment: we either make our SAS unit available on the same basis as the

³¹DEA, “Malaysia: New Zealand Military Assistance, 26 January 1965.”

³²DEA, “Malaysia: New Zealand Military Assistance, 26 January 1965.”

³³ Keith Holyoake, “Note For Cabinet: Malaysia: Employment of New Zealand Army Units, 12 February 1965,” in Cabinet Minute CM (65) 4, 15 February, 1965, ANZ, Wellington.

³⁴ Holyoake, “Note For Cabinet: Malaysia: Employment of New Zealand Army Units, 12 February 1965,” CM (65) 4.

³⁵ Pugsley, *From Emergency to Confrontation*, pp. 256-257.

British, or not at all. It would be a most welcome contribution, and its value would be out of proportion to its size.³⁶

The important role Holyoake played in defence and foreign-policy decision-making during his tenure as Prime Minister continued throughout the 1960s. In his official history *New Zealand and the Vietnam War: Politics and Diplomacy*, Roberto Rabel argued that because Holyoake had not been in the armed forces during World War II - as a tobacco farmer in Motueka he was exempt from service despite lobbying the military to have the decision overturned - Holyoake may have felt a reluctance to send men into battle.³⁷ Nonetheless, Rabel added that most commentators and historians agree Holyoake played the leading role in seeking to present New Zealand's approach as a balanced one; an objective best illustrated by his 'almost obsessive concern to be seen to support all initiatives for a negotiated peace.'³⁸ Regardless, Holyoake's reluctance to send more than the 'bare minimum' was also consistent throughout his Prime Ministerial tenure, and mirrored the frustration amongst officials that this 'parsimonious theme' brought about.

David Dickens wrote that the Australian Government agreed to provide a regular infantry battalion and a Squadron of SAS for service in Borneo, on 27 January 1965, only a day after the New Zealand decision had been made.³⁹ Still, it appears the decision to make the Australian forces available did not, in fact, formally take place until early February 1965. Records indicate that at a working lunch held by Wilson at 10 Downing Street on 1 February 1965, the British Defence Minister Denis Healy spoke to both Holyoake and Menzies and expressed his 'gratitude for the New Zealand offer of 40 Special Air Service troops, and hoped that the Australians would be able to contribute a further 60...' adding CLARET operations greatly 'helped to find out what Indonesian intentions were.'⁴⁰

As if imitating Holyoake's famously cautious approach to force increases, Menzies responded to Healy stating the last thing Australia wanted was war in Asia. He was

³⁶ DEA, "Malaysia: New Zealand Military Assistance, 26 January 1965."

³⁷ Rabel, *New Zealand and the Vietnam War*, pp. 351-352.

³⁸ Further evidence of this assessment can be found in Clark (ed), *Sir Keith Holyoake: Towards a Political Biography*, Gustafson, *Kiwi Keith: A Biography of Keith Holyoake*, Kennaway, *New Zealand Foreign Policy, 1951-1971* and Subritzky, *Confronting Sukarno*. Rabel, *New Zealand and the Vietnam War*, pp. 351-352.

³⁹ Dickens, *New Zealand and the Vietnam War: Official Policy Advice to the Government 1960-1972*, pp. 140-141.

⁴⁰ Sir Tom McDonald, "Note For File: Malaysia: Mr Wilson's Working Lunch Held At 10 Downing Street on 1 February 1965, 8 February 1965," in PM 420/2/3 Part 29, Malaysia: Political Affairs: Confrontation: Political Aspects, 26 January - 9 March 1965, ANZ, Wellington.

concerned there was a ‘danger of being too genteel about cross-order operations’ and had come to the conclusion that the right way to avoid war was to show the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand were not frightened of one.⁴¹ Although Menzies was sure a positive response would be forthcoming, the necessary decisions had not been fully processed in Canberra and he hoped to be able to give Healy and Wilson a formal answer the following day.⁴² It was highly unlikely Australia was not going to commit forces⁴³ but the key dilemma facing them at the time was the worrying likelihood that they may be compelled to deploy military forces in three separate areas of conflict simultaneously; Borneo, Vietnam and the possibility of incursions across Australia’s only land border between West New Guinea - controlled by Indonesia - and the Australian-administered territories in eastern New Guinea (later to be named Papua New Guinea).⁴⁴

New Zealand SAS preparations for CLARET begin: January 1965

In early 1964, Major William (Bill) Meldrum took command of the New Zealand SAS Squadron from Major Mal Velvin. During a visit to Wellington that same year he had been provided with a list of objectives for the New Zealand SAS which outlined three roles:

The first was long-range reconnaissance, which was a typical SAS function, particularly from the days when the unit was formed in the Western Desert; the second was close co-operation with brigade-divisional formations (whereas normally we operated on a wider scale than that); and the third was the training of indigenous troops or guerrillas’ such as those in Malaya or the Montagnards in Vietnam.⁴⁵

Collectively, Meldrum, his officers and senior Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) considered the three roles and a detailed priority training programme for the rest of the

⁴¹ New Zealand High Commission, London, “Note For File: Malaysia: Mr Wilson’s Working Lunch Held At 10 Downing Street on 1 February 1965, 8 February 1965,” PM 420/2/3 Part 29.

⁴² McDonald, “Note For File: Malaysia: Mr Wilson’s Working Lunch Held At 10 Downing Street on 1 February 1965, 8 February 1965.”

⁴³ According to David Horner, the Australian SAS CO Major Alf Garland had been sent to Canberra at the beginning of 1964 and advised the British had made formal requests for an Australian SAS squadron to assist in operations in Borneo. Garland was told the Australian Government had decided on adopting a ‘graduated response to the British request,’ and he should begin preparing the Australian SAS company for operations in Borneo in the near future, even though Menzies did not formally commit the Australian SAS to Borneo until early February 1965. Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 66.

⁴⁴ Edwards, ‘Some Reflections on the Australian Government’s Commitment to the Vietnam War,’ pp. 2-13.

⁴⁵ Major (retired) W.J.D. Meldrum, *NZSAS Unpublished Memoirs* (no date provided), NZSAS Association Archives, Wellington, p.2.

year followed.⁴⁶ Most field exercises were carried out in the Hunua, Coromandel and Waitakere Ranges, close to the New Zealand SAS Headquarters in Papakura, south of Auckland, and concentrated mainly on reconnaissance. In Meldrum's own words:

We would act as advance guard guide and route finders for the group we were escorting; we would carry out a reconnaissance of the enemy and generally help the group to achieve their objectives.⁴⁷

This training work would prove to be immensely beneficial when New Zealand SAS CLARET operations commenced in Borneo twelve months later.

Quickly the Squadron became adept at movement by night in both open and close (bush) country. Concurrently, it was developing drills for withdrawal and extraction of wounded under fire, and four-man patrol operations. The make-up of the patrols was so constructed that, for most of the time, each had a demolitions expert, a medically trained specialist (training was principally carried out at the Emergency Department at Middlemore Hospital in Auckland), a weapons expert and a signals expert. The Squadron also worked towards getting one patrol member trained in languages indigenous to South East Asia (Malay or Vietnamese).⁴⁸

After much practice, patrol drills were developed to a very high level and enabled Squadron members to 'live fire over the top of people with considerable skill.'⁴⁹ Meldrum also wanted to emphasise accuracy and developed a 'shotgun style of firing.' This allowed soldiers to 'sight quickly and fire off two or three shots in a minimum of time and with both eyes open,' thereby covering not only the immediate target but also the surrounding area. In Meldrum's own words, 'When you were operating in jungle where you only got fleeting glimpses of an enemy, you had to make the most of every second available.'⁵⁰ Meldrum took this technique from the 'Wooster Method' of shooting which had been devised by Captain Jack Wooster. Moving target technology (old tires running down hills) and grenades were also used in close proximity to

⁴⁶ General Staff Policy Statement 1/64, "1 Ranger Squadron NZSAS – Training Directive 1965/1966, Annex 'C' to 1 Inf Bde Gp 94.24, 22 October 1965," in New Zealand Army 15/15, SAS (Ranger Sqn) – FE, October 1965 – December 1972, Volume I, NZDF Archive, Wellington.

⁴⁷ Meldrum, *NZSAS Unpublished Memoirs*, p.2.

⁴⁸ Meldrum, *NZSAS Unpublished Memoirs*, p.2. However, there is no supporting evidence to indicate that professional language lessons were embarked upon by Squadron members at this time.

⁴⁹ Meldrum, *NZSAS Unpublished Memoirs*, p.2.

⁵⁰ Meldrum, *NZSAS Unpublished Memoirs*, p.4.

soldiers.⁵¹ Live firing drills were principally carried out at the Ardmore Rifle Range near Papakura.

Extraction of the wounded was a well-practised exercise. One main concern for all Squadron, Troop and Patrol Commanders engaged in CLARET operations was the withdrawal of casualties. Without the use of helicopters, Patrol Commanders would be faced with the task of manhandling wounded men through very rough country whilst being pursued by enemy. In most contacts, the front man, or scout, was the most likely to be hit. Extracting him would involve the use of smoke and superior and accurate fire. The purpose of these drills, in Meldrum's view, was 'to take and save lives – to take the oppositions and save our own.'⁵²

In late February 1965, the New Zealand Squadron Commander was called to Wellington and told about the proposed New Zealand SAS deployment to Borneo. The detachment was to consist of 40 soldiers and, after a month of training at Tutong in Brunei, commence operations in Sarawak. Meldrum was immediately tasked to travel to the Australian Defence Headquarters in Canberra and establish working arrangements that would see the New Zealanders attached to a full Australian SAS Squadron, which had also been committed to Borneo.

Meldrum recalled that he felt 'most uncomfortable with the arrangements made by the Australians who wanted absolute control of the New Zealand SAS troops in terms of military law.'⁵³ The Australians also suggested to Meldrum that any New Zealand operational directive should include that his half-Squadron be under the command of the Australian Squadron Commander, and while Meldrum would have the right to 'complain where national interests [were] prejudiced,' he would not 'in respect of a military task.'⁵⁴ Meldrum also discovered that the Australian SAS squadron commander would be Major Alf Garland. 'Possessed of a strong and determined personality,'⁵⁵ Garland had been a

⁵¹ Meldrum, *NZSAS Unpublished Memoirs*, p.4.

⁵² Meldrum, *NZSAS Unpublished Memoirs*, p.4.

⁵³ Major W Meldrum, "Annex C: Deployment of Aust and New Zealand SAS in Malaysia, Minutes of Meeting held 0930 Hrs, 5 February, 7 February 1965," in New Zealand Army 34/9/4 Volume 1, Aid to Malaysia February 1965 – March 1965, NZDF Archive, Wellington.

⁵⁴ Meldrum, "Annex C: Deployment of Aust and New Zealand SAS in Malaysia, Minutes of Meeting held 0930 Hrs, 5 February, 7 February 1965."

⁵⁵ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 63.

class ahead of Meldrum at the Australian Royal Military College in Duntroon, and was not 'well regarded' by the New Zealander. Meldrum was unhappy with the prospect of working under the command of Garland and after returning from Australia duly reported this back to his CGS, Major-General Leonard Thornton, in Wellington.

Meldrum's assessment of the Australian SAS formation and command structure most definitely contributed to the New Zealand decision to abandon any thoughts of attaching their contingent to any Australian Squadron in Borneo. Pugsley suggested that while Australia was willing, the proposal foundered because of British concerns the combined squadron would be 'larger than the British squadron and difficult to employ.'⁵⁶ Horner made no specific reference to the discussions that took place in Canberra during Meldrum's visit in early 1965 but commented that despite the New Zealand 'half-squadron' originally being designated to work with 1 SAS Squadron and undertaking in-country training together, 'for a number of reasons' the New Zealanders were eventually deployed to Sarawak with the British.⁵⁷

Further analysis suggests historical linkages provided a more accurate explanation of why New Zealand did not pursue an ANZAC Special Forces alignment in Borneo, and instead opted to re-establish the Anglo-New Zealand SAS link created in Malaya in 1956. In Meldrum's opinion, the Australian SAS was going through 'quite a sorting out as to just what its role was,' and their style of operation was more that of an American Ranger Group than traditional smaller SAS-type patrolling tactics.⁵⁸

According to Meldrum, Thornton 'wouldn't wear a bar of working with the Australians' and it was decided the New Zealanders would be employed within the existing structure of the British SAS, firstly as part of a British Squadron and later as an independent detachment answerable to the British SAS Headquarters.⁵⁹ It also assisted the New Zealanders greatly that the original New Zealand SAS Squadron establishment had been written by the Commanding Officer (CO) of 22 SAS in Malaya in 1955. That commander was Lieutenant-Colonel George Lea, who, in mid-1965, took over from

⁵⁶ Pugsley, *From Emergency to Confrontation*, pp. 260-290.

⁵⁷ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 83 and 463.

⁵⁸ Meldrum, *NZSAS Unpublished Memoirs*, p.13.

⁵⁹ New Zealand Army FARELF signal, "Personal for CGS from General Jolly, 8 February 1965," in New Zealand Army 34/9/4 Volume 1.

Walker as DOBOPS.⁶⁰ In Borneo, it appeared that the British SAS were keen to continue the tradition of the ‘previous affiliation’ between themselves and the New Zealand Squadron.⁶¹

In early 1965 the United Kingdom Commander in Chief Far East (CINCFE), Major-General Allan Jolly, recommended that British and New Zealand SAS units carry out border surveillance and hearts and minds tasks in the mid West Brigade area, while the Australian Squadron would carry out similar in the Central Brigade area. The Australian Army subsequently agreed that placing the New Zealand Squadron under the command of the British, as opposed to Australian command and control, was the ‘proper solution.’⁶²

On 25 February 1965, the first detachment of New Zealand SAS soldiers for Borneo departed Whenuapai aboard a Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF) transport aircraft. Thanks to some last-minute reflection on the part of his Prime Minister that had come about via a cable from Hunter Wade in Kuala Lumpur which reported another ‘genuine peace feeler’ to ‘Confrontation,’ Alister McIntosh was almost forced to request a delay in the deployment. Recounting the incident in a letter to George Laking, McIntosh wrote:

The Prime Minister rang me and said that, under the circumstances, we should not send our SAS...but should wait until another crisis occurred. He agreed that the peace feeler might come to nothing and, in fact, would inevitably be followed by another crisis; but we would be much better advised, he felt, to wait because at that point we would be asked for more and it would be wiser to hold these people until that time instead of having to provide others as well. Fortunately the SAS boys were to leave this morning and, by the time the Prime Minister spoke to me, their heavy kit was being put on the plane.⁶³

⁶⁰ Graham Boswell, “The Origin of the New Zealand Special Air Service – Part One,” *The Free Glance: The Official Journal of the New Zealand Special Air Service Association Incorporated*, November (2004), p.4.

⁶¹ The arrangement was not as cumbersome or complicated as it may have seemed. Not long after it was formally established in 1955, the New Zealand Squadron requested that in light of the close association that it would shortly have with the British SAS in Malaya, it was desirable in the eyes of the New Zealand Army that the squadron should ‘have the benefit of an alliance with its British counterpart.’ The British welcomed the proposal and in early June 1956 Her Majesty the Queen gave her formal approval of the formation of an ‘alliance between NZSAS and the Special Air Service Regiment of the United Kingdom.’ Army Secretary, “Regimental Alliances: New Zealand Special Air Service, 19 December 1955,” and Brigadier L.F Brooker, “Regimental Alliances - New Zealand Special Air Service, 13 July 1956,” both in Army 238/15/42, Alliance: N.Z. SAS with British SAS Regiment, ANZ, Wellington, and New Zealand Army FARELF signal, “Personal for CGS from General Jolly, 8 February 1965.”

⁶² Army HQ signal, “9 February 1965,” in New Zealand Army 34/9/4 Volume 1.

⁶³ McGibbon (ed), *Unofficial Channels*, p. 321.

Because of the supposed extreme sensitivity of the CLARET operations, the first detachment travelled in disguise by wearing standard green New Zealand infantry berets. The guise would have retained its operational security value had the detachment continued wearing these berets all the way to Borneo, but they changed into 'proper uniform' – including maroon New Zealand SAS berets - when they reached Singapore on 28 February 1965.⁶⁴

Both the New Zealand and Australian SAS detachments were quartered in the same barracks in Tutong, approximately 50 miles south-west of Brunei. The Australians were under the command of Captain Ian Gollings⁶⁵ as Garland had, according to Meldrum, 'taken himself off to establish his Headquarters.'⁶⁶ Meldrum did not recall ever seeing Garland visit the Australian Squadron in the month both groups were training at Tutong.⁶⁷ Based on his own particularly high standards and perhaps without their Squadron Commander present, Meldrum found the Australians ill-disciplined:

They all had ammunition with their weapons with them all the time. In the evenings, they drank a lot and I wasn't very happy about the set-up at all; in fact, I took control after a couple of weeks and imposed our own discipline on them - certainly got rid of all the ammunition...The Australians didn't appear to have any coordinated training, but I didn't want to worry about them, I was more concerned about my own troops.⁶⁸

Even Horner conceded that while Garland had changed the emphasis of the role of Australian SAS to reconnaissance and reduced the size of operational patrols the previous year, the squadron still lacked a fundamental understanding of small-group jungle operations and relied upon infantry minor tactics.⁶⁹ Horner added as a result of these limitations the Australians began to receive training from the British SAS to upgrade their patrol skills.⁷⁰

⁶⁴ Det 1 New Zealand Ranger Sqn (Far East), "Monthly Report: 4 -31 March 65, 12 April 1965," NZSAS Association Archives, Wellington, p.4 and Meldrum, *NZSAS Unpublished Memoirs*, p.15. The first British SAS squadron had also arrived in Singapore covertly, in April 1963, under the 'codename Layforce 136.' Connor, *Ghost Force*, p. 125. Horner recounts that the day after the main body of the Australian SAS squadron arrived in Singapore, an Indonesian radio station had announced that a 'Parachute Regiment had arrived in Singapore for service in Borneo,' red berets being the headdress of the British Parachute Regiment. Horner, *SAS: Phantoms of the Jungle*, pp. 84-85.

⁶⁵ Horner, *SAS: Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 85.

⁶⁶ Meldrum, *NZSAS Unpublished Memoirs*, p.17.

⁶⁷ Pugsley, *From Emergency to Confrontation*, pp. 260-290.

⁶⁸ Meldrum, *NZSAS Unpublished Memoirs*, p.17.

⁶⁹ Horner, *SAS: Phantoms of the Jungle*, pp. 8-85.

⁷⁰ Horner, *SAS: Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 86.

After he succeeded Walker in the middle of 1965, Major-General George Lea stepped up CLARET operations in an attempt to dominate both sides of the border area. In January and February 1965, British SAS patrols crossed the border in search of Indonesian staging camps and river lines of communication. Lea subsequently authorised the SAS patrols to 'take offensive action during the last two days of each patrol, provided they were reasonably assured of success and no incriminating documents were left behind.'⁷¹ In 1976, Walker wrote that he believed domination of the jungle in Borneo would be achieved via the ambush which was 'the guerrillas' and our most potent weapon.'⁷² Ambushing, he added, required not only an 'eye for country, tracking skills, marksmanship, guile, cunning, and above all, self-discipline,' it also required constant training and rehearsal. In addition to ambushing river craft, SAS patrols in Borneo also laid ambushes along jungle tracks.

For the first New Zealand SAS detachment, training at Tutong consisted of two hours of 'shotgun style' shooting drills each morning, as well as various jungle exercises carried out by each of the eight patrols which made up the half-squadron. Meldrum allowed each patrol to take a section of the jungle and practise live-firing drills. On one particular exercise, Meldrum tested the detachment's navigation skills by instructing his Intelligence NCO to cut the centre from the patrol maps and fill the gaps with only sketches of creeks, simulating the maps that would be used on actual operations.

New Zealand and British SAS SOPs and Drills in Borneo

Throughout March, the New Zealand patrols continued to improve their drills, and by the end of the training period the quality, speed, accuracy and 'sheer fearlessness shown by the patrols' was singularly impressive.⁷³ When the New Zealanders arrived in Borneo they also adopted Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and drills the British SAS were using on operations. The detachment Second-in-Command (2IC) Major Brian Worsnop advised Meldrum's replacement as OC 1 Ranger Squadron, Major John Mace, in April 1965 that it had been 'necessary to change some of the drills contained in the New

⁷¹ Cross, *Jungle Warfare: Experiences and Encounters*, pp.175-178.

⁷² Cross, *Jungle Warfare: Experiences and Encounters*, pp.175-178 and Robert Jackson, *The Malayan Emergency: The Commonwealth's Wars, 1948-1966* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 133.

⁷³ Meldrum, *NZSAS Unpublished Memoirs*, p.17.

Zealand Squadron's SOPs. He forwarded to Mace copies of the British procedures to ensure the following detachments would also be trained 'on the correct lines.'⁷⁴ Like the Australians, conversion to British methods was assisted with help from a British D Squadron patrol commanded by Sergeant 'Smudge' Smith.⁷⁵ Worsnop commented the success of the detachment's training at Tutong was mainly due to the assistance given by Smith and his patrol.⁷⁶

Towards the end of their training period, the Australian SAS squadron subalterns began seeking out the New Zealanders to ask about their training and how it was conducted. It was Meldrum's view that the Australians had suddenly realised they had little structure and in fact their preparation for operations had neither been planned nor co-ordinated properly. In the last week before the two detachments moved to their respective operational areas, the Australians spent considerable time 'with our young officers and senior NCOs asking questions about how we tackled our tasks.'⁷⁷

By the end of March 1965, the first New Zealand SAS detachment - there would be four - began operations in the West Brigade area of Borneo with their British counterparts from their base in Kuching. All British and New Zealand SAS activities were controlled by the British SAS Squadron Commander, Major Roger Woodiwiss, who was directed by the Regimental Headquarters in Labuan (Brunei) commanded, at the time, by either the Commanding Officer (CO) of 22 SAS Lieutenant-Colonel Michael Wingate Gray, or his second-in command, Major John Slim.⁷⁸

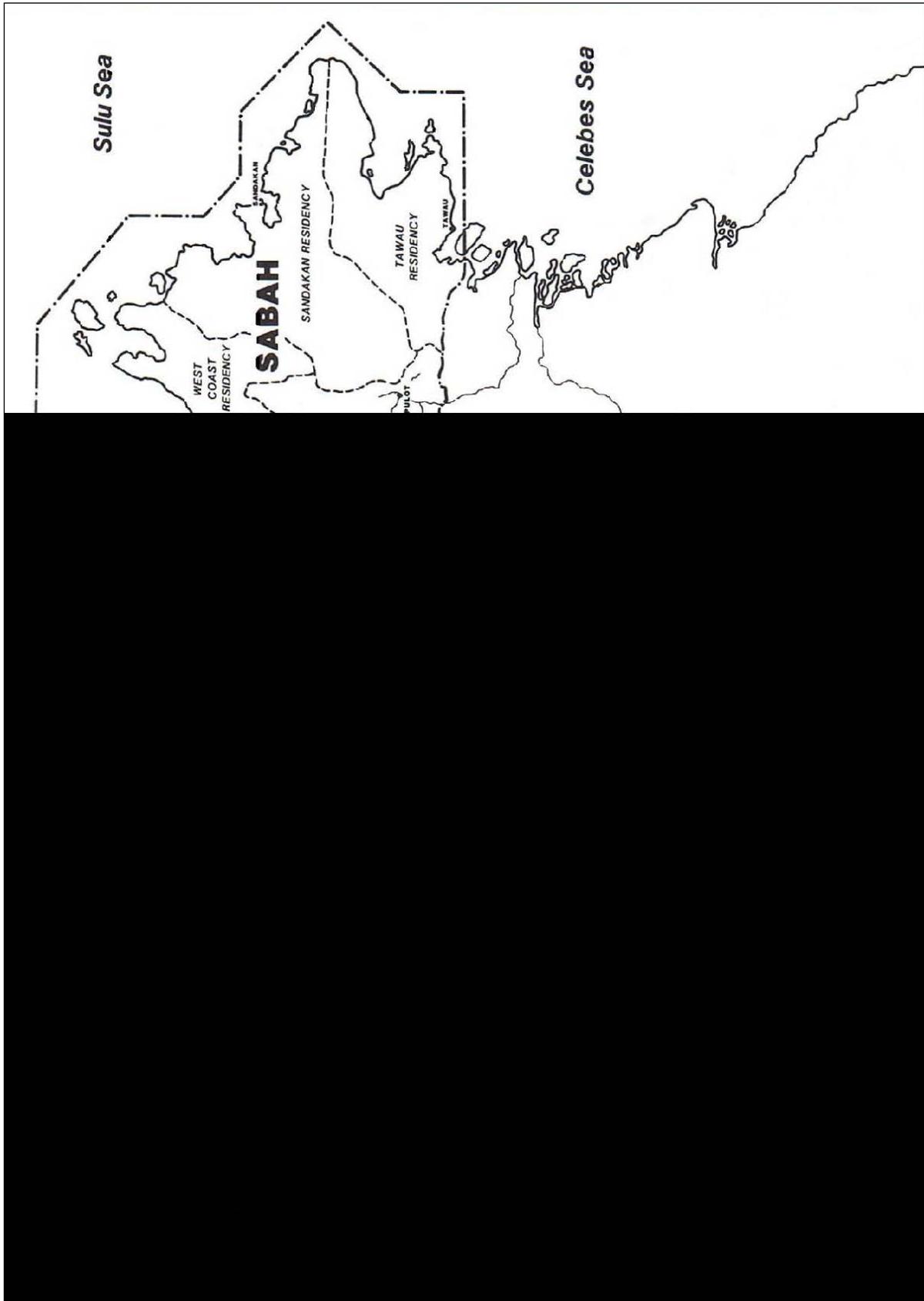
⁷⁴ Major Brian Worsnop, "Monthly Report: 4-31 March 65 Det 1 New Zealand Ranger Squadron (Far East), 12 April 1965," p.2 and D Squadron, United Kingdom 22 Special Air Service Regiment, "Standing Orders for Borneo, 10 September 1964," both in NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington.

⁷⁵ Pugsley, *From Emergency to Confrontation*, p. 262.

⁷⁶ Worsnop, "Monthly Report: 4-31 March 65 Det 1 New Zealand Ranger Squadron (Far East), 12 April 1965," p.2.

⁷⁷ Meldrum, *NZSAS Unpublished Memoirs*, p.19.

⁷⁸ Pugsley, *From Emergency to Confrontation*, p. 263, Dickens, *SAS: Secret War in South-East Asia*, p. 240 and De La Billiere, *Looking For Trouble*, p. 242.



Map 1: Borneo Divisional Areas, 1965-1966⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, Map 1.

The British themselves felt the New Zealand detachment command structure was ‘embarrassingly top heavy,’ as it was set up for a three-Troop half-squadron.⁸⁰ It would have been more appropriate to have one Captain as ‘OC responsible for the command and administration’ and it was suggested that Meldrum might spend a month observing operations and then return to New Zealand in order to train subsequent replacement detachments.⁸¹ Meldrum agreed the existing command establishment was a bit of a ‘nonsense’ and needed revision because of the obvious problems that could present themselves if there were two Majors (the British Squadron OC, Woodiwiss and Meldrum) based in Kuching.⁸²

Before this could take place, Meldrum was recalled to New Zealand and command of the detachment handed over to Worsnop. Worsnop was promoted to Acting Major and ran the detachment until it was replaced by Major Rod Dearing’s second New Zealand SAS group in August 1965. Worsnop had a particular command style that appealed to many:

When ‘Punchy’ took over he sort of more or less left the patrols to themselves you know? Which is a good way – he knew what was going on and he didn’t sort of come down and make you do drill and keep you on when you got your warning order...but he knew everybody and he kept a close eye - behind the scene eye - on you. He was very good – he ah, one of the things was you would go out into the bush – jungle for what, how many days? Twelve, thirteen...you had to have a shave before you came out you see? So we had a piece of soap that would have been about [holding thumb and index-finger together] paper thin! And we never had such a thing as throw-away razors then – it was blades and someone had to carry the razor. ‘Punchy’ decided that he would go on patrol – as a patrol member – and he went with Danny Wilson [patrol OPS/90/54 between 27 April and 7 May 1965]. Danny said ‘I am going to fix this bastard.’ Five I think it was went out in that group – and they went out. When they came out to the LZ [Landing Zone] to get picked up – and shaved before then you see - ‘Punchy’ waited for the razor and Danny said ‘well you are the new boy here - you are last!’ And by the time he got the razor – and the whiskers were all about this long – blunt as! And after that he said ‘you can all come out unshaven – but you have to have a shave within the first hour that you are back...’ No he was good.⁸³

Meldrum’s recall from Borneo ultimately cost him his military career. At a Court of Inquiry in late April 1965, Meldrum was accused of making unauthorised comments to a *New Zealand Herald* reporter in Singapore which appeared in a *Weekly News* article and

⁸⁰ New Zealand Army NEWZARM signal, “1 March 1965,” in New Zealand Army 34/9/4 Volume 1.

⁸¹ New Zealand Army NEWZARM signal, “1 March 1965.”

⁸² Major W. Meldrum, “Establishment and Manning: 1 Det, New Zealand Ranger Squadron (FE), 17 March 1965,” in New Zealand Army 34/9/4 Volume 1.

⁸³ Ernie Stead, interview conducted on 13 June 2008.

referred to SAS 'cross-border activities' in Borneo.⁸⁴ While the article did mention British and Australian SAS 'probing at the Indonesians across the border,' it made no specific reference to the New Zealand detachment's pending involvement in cross-border operations in Borneo, although it would seem logical that if the British and Australian SAS were already carrying out such operations, the New Zealanders, who were also known to be in the theatre, would also be engaged in similar activity. According to Meldrum, he had been cleared to speak to the reporter by Major Ron Harding from the New Zealand Force Headquarters. Harding later denied that he gave the reporter permission to visit the barracks in Singapore where the detachment was in transit or to speak with Meldrum.⁸⁵

A second security breach involving the first New Zealand detachment took place only two weeks later when a British security check discovered a New Zealand SAS soldier had 'disclosed to a civilian woman in Kuching [the] correct destination and route of [a] future SAS patrol.'⁸⁶ The soldier responsible was never identified although the British were able to narrow it down to one of eight members of the detachment. Lieutenant-Colonel Tony Kermode, Commander FARELF, wrote that as a result of the Meldrum affair and the second breach, the 'security reliability of New Zealand Ranger Detachment [was] now gravely suspected by the United Kingdom.'⁸⁷ He also reported were it not for the 'requirement to attract the minimum attention to the article published...and for the need to reduce to a minimum the attention to SAS activity in Borneo' Kermode would have recommended Meldrum face more formal charges.⁸⁸

Despite the Court of Inquiry being unable to prove a security breach had been committed, Meldrum's career essentially ended on 9th June 1965 when the Director of Military Intelligence recommended that because he had 'behaved in a way which demonstrated a

⁸⁴ *New Zealand Weekly News (Auckland)*, "Jungle War Can Be Grim," 24 March 1965, p. 3 and Meldrum, *NZSAS Unpublished Memoirs*, pp. 14-22.

⁸⁵ The reporter himself, Lee Martin, would later write that Meldrum provided none of the information referred to in the article – most was picked up from Singaporean taxi drivers – and that Harding was aware of Martin and Meldrum conversing on at least two occasions in Singapore. New Zealand Army S.39/9/4/1 Volume 1, Security Breach – SAS March – June 1965, NZDF Archives, Wellington.

⁸⁶ Lieutenant-Colonel Kermode, "For Col GS from COMD, 31 March 1965" and NEWZARM signal to Command Christchurch, "Exclusive for Col GS, 9th April 1965," in Army S.39/9/4/1 Volume 1.

⁸⁷ Lieutenant-Colonel Kermode, "Security – Major WJD Meldrum, 2 April 1965," in New Zealand Army S.39/9/4/1 Volume 1.

⁸⁸ Kermode, "Security – Major WJD Meldrum, 22 April 1965," in New Zealand Army S.39/9/4/1 Volume 1.

serious disregard for the requirement of security,' Meldrum should be denied a Top Secret security clearance for the next twelve months.⁸⁹ This course of action was subsequently agreed to by Thornton's replacement as CGS, Major-General Walter McKinnon.⁹⁰

Concluding Notes: CLARET Security

One interesting question worth further examination is why the CLARET operations in Borneo were so sensitive that they could not be discussed even long after Confrontation concluded. The New Zealanders themselves had experience of this first hand when Meldrum was recalled in April 1965. Even so, British media reports which disclosed the cross-border activities only began to emerge in 1969.⁹¹ Knowledge of the Australian SAS operations in Borneo similarly became publicly known only in 1989 after articles were written in advance of the release of Horner's *SAS: Phantoms of the Jungle*.⁹²

There is no doubt that there was considerable sensitivity surrounding cross-border operations which clearly contravened national sovereignty and international law, even if the opposition had reciprocated. Throughout 'Confrontation,' Britain, Malaysia, Australia and New Zealand appeared to be almost desperate not to escalate the situation into a full-scale military conflict. By early 1965, the United Kingdom had advised Australia and New Zealand – and one presumes Malaysia - an additional 20,000 Indonesian troops had been deployed to the Kalimantan-Sarawak border in Borneo, and northern Sumatra. It seemed clear the Indonesians would use these additional forces to 'intensify their 'Confrontation' activities.'⁹³ The Malaysians had also reported to the United Nations 'credible information at its disposal' that indicated Indonesia was 'reinforcing its regular forces on the Borneo border by several brigades.'⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Lieutenant-Colonel Noel Ingle, "Proceedings of a Court of Inquiry, 28 April 1965" and Kermode "Exclusive for Ingle from Kermode, 6 May 1965," in New Zealand Army S.39/9/4/1 Volume 1.

⁹⁰ Director of Military Intelligence, "Court of Inquiry – Major Meldrum, 9 June 1965," in New Zealand Army S.39/9/4/1 Volume 1.

⁹¹ Major-General Sir Michael Carver, "Biography of Sir Walter Walker, 24 April 1973," in DEFE 24/648, Publications – Biography of Sir Walter Walker, TNA, London, p.1.

⁹² David Jenkins (*Sydney Morning Herald*), "Disclosed: Our Killer Raids into Sukarno Territory" and "Australia's Indonesian Incursion," 22 June 1989, in National Army Museum, Chelsea, London.

⁹³ DEA, "Malaysia: New Zealand Military Assistance, 26 January 1965," in Cabinet Minute CM (65)1, 26 January 1965, ANZ, Wellington.

⁹⁴ United Kingdom Foreign Office telegram, "D.23.19, 7 January 1965," in PM 420/2/3 Part 28 and New Zealand High Commission Singapore, "458, 25 December 1964," in London B106/2/7 Part 3.

The phrase ‘credible information at its disposal’ – reported to Wellington by London-based DEA representatives – provides the first suggestions to support the theory that one of the principal reasons CLARET operations were so sensitive was that a great proportion of this information, on the Indonesian intentions and movements, was being picked up from the British interception of Indonesian radio communications and other forms of signals intelligence – or SIGINT.

In late 1964, at the time the British were advising Australia and New Zealand of the increases in Indonesian troop strength, they were also advising that Indonesian command structure was being rearranged, airfields and air defences improved, helicopter pads constructed (especially in Kalimantan) and air transport support forces expanded. This last piece of information was understood to be ‘defensive in purpose,’ but the British nevertheless believed that it also provided limited offensive capability which ‘could be used to increase harassment of Malaysia and Singapore.’⁹⁵ The British are unlikely to have known about these intentions or activities without the support of SIGINT or other Human Source (HUMINT) intelligence operations.

In 1967 the British Military concluded one of the main factors contributing to the successful prosecution of the Borneo campaign was the availability of first-class intelligence. As a result, commanders were able to deploy their forces into positions which took into account the current threat posed by the Indonesians. The British added that ‘without such intelligence there would have been an inevitable demand for more reinforcements to avoid forward troops being caught off balance.’⁹⁶ The point was put more succinctly by the former British CINCFE Sir Michael Carver in 1973:

...the security sensitivity of these operations is that they were all based on SIGINT.⁹⁷

There seems to be no recorded evidence to suggest that New Zealand officials had access to, or knowledge of, the British interception operations. Nevertheless, some of the New

⁹⁵ DEA, “Malaysia/Indonesia: Background Paper, 20 January 1966,” in PM 420/2/3 Part 34, p.20.

⁹⁶ CINCFE. 9/67, “The Joint Report on the Borneo Campaign, 27 January 1967,” p. 2.

⁹⁷ Carver was speaking after a biography of Sir Walter Walker was written in early 1973 by Tom Pocock. The author had also written an article in the British *Evening Standard* in 1969 that for the first time identified the cross-border operations carried out during ‘Confrontation.’ Major-General Sir Michael Carver, “Biography of Sir Walter Walker, 24 April 1973,” in DEFE 24/648, p. 1.

Zealand SAS soldiers such as the commander of the second detachment Major Rod Dearing were most definitely aware of their presence in Brunei:

and the [British] headquarters of the SAS of course festooned with aerials and the like...The headquarters element was a big air-conditioned building, part of which was off-limits to New Zealanders and that included myself. Quite clearly they were into radio intercept and that's where the information came back on the success or otherwise, of what operations we had – so they were listening in to the Indonesian net.⁹⁸

As will be seen in the following chapter, some New Zealand SAS patrols had a more intimate role in clandestine British Intelligence operations in Borneo.

The initial concerns raised by Meldrum in early 1965 with regard to operating under the command of an Australian SAS Squadron appear to have been somewhat justified by their conduct in Tutong and elements of subsequent patrol operations. Late in July 1965, Lieutenant-Colonel Robin Holloway, the New Zealand Defence Liaison Officer (DLO) in Kuala Lumpur, accompanied an Australian contingent of the Australian, New Zealand and Malaysia (ANZAM) Joint Planning Committee (JPC) on a visit to Borneo where they received a briefing from Garland on the 'general employment of his squadron and...a more detailed account of [Australian] SAS operations.' Holloway reported to Wellington that it appeared the Australian SAS operations had been 'moderately successful but marred by certain incidents which could be attributed to lack of training and experience.'⁹⁹

It is entirely likely Garland's assessment, as given to the visiting ANZAM delegation, was significantly influenced by the circumstances earlier in the month surrounding the death of Private Paul Denehey. Denehey had been gored by a rogue bull elephant and died as a result of injuries sustained in the attack. According to Horner, Garland believed that the patrol lacked 'specialist radio training necessary to ensure good communications,' nor had it been 'given sufficient medical training to deal effectively with such a serious

⁹⁸ Copy of Lieutenant-Colonel Rod Dearing interview by Christopher Pugsley, 23 October 1992, for the NZDF Malayan Oral History Project, held in the NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington.

⁹⁹ Lieutenant-Colonel R.H.F. Holloway, "Visit to East Malaysia and Brunei by the ANZAM Joint Planning Committee: 22-28 July 1965," in Ministry of Defence 3/5/18 Volume 1, Commonwealth Defence Malaysia/Singapore/Insurgency, Borneo, NZDF Archive, Wellington.

wound over a long period of time.’¹⁰⁰ Despite these limitations and the long distance from the Borneo border to where the incident took place, it is unlikely there would have been an alternative outcome such was the ‘freakishness’ of the attack.¹⁰¹

The initial preparations carried out by Meldrum and 1 Ranger Squadron held the New Zealand detachments in good stead for CLARET operations during ‘Confrontation.’ This coupled with some knowledge passed on by the British SAS, enabled the New Zealanders to experience a relatively straightforward transition into Borneo jungle operations within a very short time. For the next two years, as will be discussed in the following chapter, the New Zealanders demonstrably carried out an ‘efficient and professional’ Special Forces campaign in Borneo.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Holloway, “Visit to East Malaysia and Brunei by the ANZAM Joint Planning Committee: 22-28 July 1965.”

¹⁰¹ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, pp. 110-121.

¹⁰² Gary Walker, interview conducted on 12 June 2008.

Chapter 3

New Zealand Special Air Service Operations in Borneo: 1965-1966

I'm not saying the SAS were expendable but they were regarded as very robust sort of chaps who tended to operate in very small units - I mean the SAS patrols - and so it was felt that they could look after themselves. They tended to operate in a rather, I won't say clandestine, but covert kind of way and so there was not the concern that the public would say 'what are we doing - there are ten of our men getting into trouble in Borneo' or something like that. We, I think, were able to take a broader view. It was a sort of an in-family thing that the SAS could look after themselves.¹

It was the declared role of the SAS in Borneo to detect and report Indonesian military incursions; to win the support of the border tribes and then gain intelligence from them; to site and arrange construction of tactical Landing Zones (LZs) and tracks; to gain topographical information; to guide Commonwealth infantry reinforcements on cross-border operations and 'harass the enemy when it fits in with the tactical plan.'² Each of the four New Zealand detachments were generally responsible for all facets of their operations from the finding of tasks, their clearance through the British DOBOPS, preliminary liaison and reconnaissance, and mounting, briefing, controlling and subsequently debriefing the patrols themselves.

The general daily routine of a standard SAS patrol ensured all patrol members were up by first light and in a position to move off by 0730 hrs.³ Patrols were extraordinarily draining but the aim was to ensure no member was ever so physically 'shattered' that his senses became dulled and reactions slowed. It was recommended that 'six-hours' daily patrolling, excluding halts and breaks should be the standard measure. Speed of movement was reduced to an absolute minimum and, unless circumstances dictated otherwise, patrols halted at least once every half hour. This was also done to take into account the large weights patrol members carried. Both British and New Zealand SAS

¹ Copy of Thornton interview by Christopher Pugsley, 30 October 1991, for the NZDF Malayan Oral History Project, held in the NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington.

² D Squadron, United Kingdom 22 Special Air Service Regiment, "Standing Orders for Borneo, 10 September 1964," NZSAS Association Archives, Wellington, p.3.

³ Patrol overnight locations were commonly referred to as 'bashas.' The morning routine also required that 'bashas' would be put down and all kit packed and be ready to move before first light - 0530hrs. Any breakfast cooking would not start before 0600hrs. D Squadron, "Standing Orders for Borneo, 10 September 1964," p.3 and p.19.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) added that normally no more than seven-days of rations be carried by a patrol; the remainder could be ‘hidden and picked up later.’⁴ With many patrols required to walk to their border insertion point, full rations were seldom taken. This resulted in most patrol members eating far less than necessary.⁵ Weight restrictions for helicopter travel – a 45 pound limit was imposed but excluded weapons – as well as general patrolling meant food was often sacrificed for ammunition, radios, medical supplies, search and rescue (SARBE) beacons and sleeping equipment.⁶ If a patrol was required to move with 14 days rations, for example, the British employed local porters. Porters could be hired at any time, but were only allowed to carry surplus rations – not personal kit – and never the patrol’s radio. The only British SAS argument against using porters, apart from issues of non-availability, was they increased the size of the patrol which made concealment much more difficult.⁷ Similarly, regardless of the pre-deployment practice and rehearsal of halt procedures and contact drills, there was no guarantee that the porters would follow such procedures.⁸ Neither the Australians nor the New Zealand SAS utilised porters in Borneo.

Most New Zealand SAS patrols lasted on average just over ten days – only nine out of 91 recorded operational patrols carried out by the New Zealanders in Borneo extended beyond 14 days. The longest, OPS/90/103, a four-man patrol commanded by Sergeant Danny Wilson and the last operational patrol carried out by Major Brian Worsnop’s first detachment, lasted 17 days.⁹ For the New Zealanders, any resupply requirements necessitated the patrol returning to the border area on foot and being replenished by helicopter, either air-landed on to a landing zone (LZ) or lowered by winch or rope. Not only were LZs in Borneo limited because of terrain, they were also high-value targets for the enemy. To minimize the risk to the patrol, aircraft and crew, LZs were usually some

⁴ D Squadron, 22 SAS, “Standing Orders for Borneo, 10 September 1964,” p.14.

⁵ De La Billiere, *Looking For Trouble*, p. 243.

⁶ The New Zealand SAS detachments found out early that the British ration packs were too heavy to carry the full pack for periods in excess of seven days. The British packs contained ‘two dehydrated meat blocks’ that weighed 3 ½ pounds. Patrol members would break the ration packs down before deploying on operations. Major Brian Worsnop, “Monthly Report: 4-31 March 65 Det 1 New Zealand Ranger Squadron (Far East), 12 April 1965,” and “Monthly Report: May 1965 Det 1 New Zealand Ranger Squadron (Far East), 15 June 1965,” both in NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington, p.1 and p.4 respectively, and Pugsley, *From Emergency to Confrontation*, p. 274.

⁷ D Squadron, 22 SAS, “Standing Orders for Borneo, 10 September 1964,” p.15.

⁸ D Squadron, 22 SAS, “Standing Orders for Borneo, 10 September 1964,” p.15.

⁹ Major Brian Worsnop, “OPS/90/103,” Army Non-File Material ANFM732, SAS Borneo Patrol Reports: 1 Detachment, NZSAS Squadron, NZDF Archive, Wellington.

distance from the area in which the patrol had been operating.¹⁰ The SOPs provided by the British illustrated their preference to conduct lengthy patrols, often lasting months. Australian SAS patrols in Borneo were also of a longer duration and to support these patrols, caches were utilised.¹¹ The New Zealand SAS did not use caches.

Operational dress or uniform in Borneo was standard issue OGs – or Olive Greens – with sleeves down and jungle hats always worn. A coloured identification band was sewn into the inside of the hat and the hat was reversed whenever SAS patrols operated with, or near, other SAS patrols or Commonwealth forces within the same area.¹² British SAS veterans commented that much of the army-issued equipment was ‘totally unsuitable or rotted and fell apart in jungle conditions,’ and new or modified equipment had to be made by local craftsmen and paid for by the soldiers.¹³ The British 1944 pattern waist belts were not strong enough to carry all of the necessary equipment – emergency rations (two day’s worth), a magazine pouch which could hold two 7.62mm Self-Loading Rifle (SLR) magazines,¹⁴ water bottles and a pouch that needed to be big enough to fit ‘hexamine [cooking] stove with fuel, spare matches, Paludrine [water purification tablets], wire-saw, insect repellent, rifle cleaning kit, binoculars and/or camera, shell dressings, morphine syrettes, parachute cord, knife, compass and SARBE radios.¹⁵ The waist belts either had to be substantially strengthened or replaced with an ‘acquired’ local pattern belt.

The first New Zealand detachment found that Bergen packs and ‘Trapper’ rucksacks brought from New Zealand were unsuitable as they were too large, too heavy (the Bergen was seven pounds empty) and too noisy (pack frames would ‘squeak’).¹⁶ Soldiers experimented with smaller ‘Barangs,’ a local load-carrier made from rattan and United States Army nylon packs with frames. Worsnop also wrote back to 1 Ranger Squadron in New Zealand in early April 1965 that most of the clothing the detachment had brought from Papakura was unnecessary and recommended future reinforcements travel to Borneo

¹⁰ The SOP dictated that the patrol should arrive at the LZ no earlier than the afternoon before resupply day. D Squadron, 22 SAS, “Standing Orders for Borneo, 10 September 1964,” p.14.

¹¹ D Squadron, 22 SAS, “Standing Orders for Borneo, 10 September 1964,” p.14.

¹² Whi Wanoa, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

¹³ Connor, *Ghost Force*, p. 126.

¹⁴ Sixty rounds of SLR ammunition, carried in three magazines, was the minimum amount to be carried by a patrol member. The lighter Armalite rifle ammunition determined that 80 rounds – in four magazines – could be carried per soldier. D Squadron, 22 SAS, “Standing Orders for Borneo, 10 September 1964,” p.5.

¹⁵ D Squadron, 22 SAS, “Standing Orders for Borneo, 10 September 1964,” p.4 and p.17.

¹⁶ Worsnop, “Monthly Report: 4-31 March 65 Det 1 New Zealand Ranger Squadron (Far East), 12 April 1965,” p.6.

‘in civilian clothing.’¹⁷ They also used the British OG uniform rather than New Zealand jungle-green (JG) clothing.

The New Zealanders faced continuous shortages of operational equipment throughout their participation in the Borneo operations. Compasses were in short supply, not only did the issue of 35 Omega wrist watches purchased for the first detachment have to be doubled to allow Dearing’s second detachment to carry out pre-deployment training while Worsnop’s group continued operations, the watches themselves proved ‘neither robust nor waterproof,’ more SARBE beacons had to be ordered, and there were significant delays in receiving ordered Armalite (M-16) rifles.¹⁸

By the time the first New Zealand detachment arrived in Borneo, the preferred jungle weapon of most British SAS forces was the United States-manufactured Armalite rifle. Extremely light compared with the SLR, it also had the advantage of rapidity of fire over what many would regard the ‘first-choice weapon’ in the Malayan campaign; the sawn-off repeater shotgun. As the result of a New Zealand FARELF trial conducted in early 1965 it was assessed the Armalite was in terms of ‘carriage, handling, cleaning and accuracy at short range (between 40 and 100 yards)...a better weapon than the SLR and Sterling Sub Machine Gun (SMG) in jungle warfare.’ The first detachment received no instruction on the handling characteristics of the Armalite until July 1965 and for most part, New Zealand SAS soldiers utilised the SLRs in the early stages of ‘Confrontation.’¹⁹ Many scouts carried out a totally illegal modification of the SLR by filing down part of the firing mechanism of the weapon which allowed it to fire fully automatically.

¹⁷ Worsnop, “Monthly Report: 4-31 March 65 Det 1 New Zealand Ranger Squadron (Far East), 12 April 1965,” p.6.

¹⁸ A further 8 SARBE Mark2A beacons were requested for the second detachment in mid-September 1965. NEWZARM, “Sarbe Beacons Mark 2A, 15 September 1965,” and “Equipment Requirements – 2 Det” (no date) both in New Zealand Army 34/9/4 Volume 1, Aid to Malaysia February 1965 – March 1965, NZDF Archive, Wellington.

¹⁹ Major Brian Worsnop, “Monthly Report: July 1965 Det 1 New Zealand Ranger Squadron (Far East) “G” Matters, 8 August 1965 and “Supply of Arms, 19 April 1965,” both in Army 34/9/4 Volume 1, and Connor, *Ghost Force*, pp.126-127.



Photograph 1: A New Zealand SAS patrol member observes a track in Borneo circa 1965.²⁰

Worsnop reported to Wellington in May 1965 that the British Squadron was obtaining the Armalite as ‘the main patrol weapon’ and that trials - Worsnop did not specify whether

²⁰ NZSAS Association Archives, Wellington.

they were British or carried out by his detachment - had been successful. The lightness, robustness and simplicity of maintenance made it 'an ideal weapon' for patrol operations.²¹ Worsnop advised representations had been made for his detachment to be supplied with Armalite rifles, and 35 weapons finally arrived in June 1965.²² For many in Dearing's second detachment, the Armalite also became the weapon of choice:

...well we were quite taken with those because we had the SLRs when we went there but we had Armalite – and they were pretty novel to us and were very powerful and did what we wanted them to.²³

The New Zealanders in Borneo had to rely significantly on their British counterparts to supplement outstanding equipment. Thirty-three Armalite rifles and ten SR128 radios were loaned to the second detachment when it first arrived in Borneo in September 1965.²⁴ Lightweight shelters were replaced by British ponchos and it was hoped that if any of the SR128 radios became unserviceable during the deployment, spares or replacements might be provided by the British or Australian Squadrons.

For a unit which could make itself available for deployment at short notice, and in fact had been deployed to Borneo because it could get there much faster than a battalion, it was inevitable that it would arrive in an operational area without some essential equipment. But the 'limited' response to requests for replacement equipment seemed to be mainly the fault of New Zealand SAS as a result of the way requests were phrased. There was no suggestion either 1 Ranger Squadron in New Zealand or the detachments in Borneo would demand the equipment; rather in identifying the shortages, it was suggested the equipment could be sourced from British 22 SAS stores in country.²⁵ It appears that New Zealand Army General Staff or New Zealand Army Malaya

²¹ Worsnop also reported the weapon had 'increased "hitting" power,' although it has been argued by other detachment members, as well as those who subsequently operated in Vietnam, that the "hitting" power of the SLR could not be matched by any other rifle that the New Zealand SAS had at their disposal during the 1960s. Major Brian Worsnop, "Monthly Report: April 1965 Det 1 New Zealand Ranger Squadron (Far East) "G" Matters, 10 May 1965," NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington, p.3.

²² Major Brian Worsnop, "Monthly Report: May 1965 Det 1 New Zealand Ranger Squadron (Far East) "G" Matters, 15 June 1965," NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington, p.2.

²³ Gary Walker, interview conducted on 12 June 2008.

²⁴ Major Rod Dearing, "Monthly Report: 2-30 September 65 2 Det New Zealand Ranger Squadron (Far East), 12 October 1965," NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington, p.3.

²⁵ Once the British SAS Squadron left Borneo, some of these problems intensified. Major David Moloney wrote in early August 1966 that the committing of Detachment patrols on operations had been delayed because of a 'lack of serviceable bergen' packs. Moloney added that the shortage was 'theatre-wide.' Major David Moloney, "Monthly Report: 1-31 July 1966 Det 1 New Zealand Ranger Squadron (FE) Government Matters, 1 August 1966," in New Zealand Army A.15/15/1 Volumes I and II, Operation Reports SAS Far East (4Tp Vietnam), NZDF Archives, Wellington.

(NEWZARM) thus inferred such requests as problems that did not deserve much effort on their part to solve.

New Zealand SAS Patrol Procedures in Borneo

...we took our own [SOPs] initially and that they were modified as a result of the first two detachments and if there had been any British, and they may well have had a bit of an Australian input...but I doubt that. So they would have been, I think pretty much, our own.²⁶

SAS patrolling methods, save for the size of the patrols, were virtually identical to those that had been proven effective in Malaya. When an SAS patrol discovered a track, it would assess the sign left by enemy soldiers and either establish an observation point (OP) or ambush (depending upon the mission parameters and the time available) or follow the track in the hope of discovering an enemy camp. To use the track itself was to invite an ambush, risk triggering a booby-trap, or coming into contact with the enemy. Instead, patrols would make a series of loops through the jungle, aiming to intersect the track every few hundred yards. This was known as cross-graining. As with the British SAS, the New Zealanders also utilised their significant experience in Malaya and applied these jungle warfare skills to the environment in Borneo. The security of an SAS patrol was based on ‘concealment of tracks and camps, silence, being unpredictable to the enemy and avoidance of tracks liable to ambush.’²⁷

Basic patrol make-up was commonly a four-man arrangement. This was accepted as the minimum that could allow the extraction of a wounded patrol member.²⁸ It was policy to allow Indonesian incursions, when discovered, to infiltrate across the border without being harassed or ‘molested.’²⁹ The first British SAS Squadron in Borneo, A Squadron, had developed a drill called a ‘Step-Up.’ This provided for the quick deployment of larger infantry forces, usually by helicopter, to act as a ‘cut-off’ force for such incursions.³⁰

²⁶ David Ogilvy, interview conducted on 27 February 2008.

²⁷ D Squadron, 22 SAS, “Standing Orders for Borneo, 10 September 1964,” p.5.

²⁸ Although several patrol operations were of larger size (either multiple patrols or Troop-strength operations) during the New Zealanders time in Borneo.

²⁹ D Squadron, 22 SAS, “Standing Orders for Borneo, 10 September 1964,” p.7.

³⁰ The ‘Step Up’ system was also utilised by the British SAS during their ‘hearts and minds’ operations with local Iban villagers; ‘In Brunei a platoon of Gurkhas was on stand-by, day and night...and we deliberately exploited the magic of our radio sets to impress the Ibans. ‘Right,’ we would tell them. ‘All we have to do is send a message up into the sky, and help will come very quickly. Just watch.’ In twenty

As soon as an incursion was discovered by, or reported to, an SAS patrol, the patrol would radio the details back to the Squadron Headquarters. The patrol would then receive and guide the infantry support to likely ambush points. British SAS SOPs dictated that this was one of the few occasions when a four-man patrol might be split; two patrol members to guide the infantry, the other two to maintain observation of the Indonesians.³¹

Indonesian Forces

In briefing the New Zealanders on the opposition they were likely to encounter, the British SAS understood that the Indonesian forces comprised elements of their Regular Army (Tentara Nasional Indonesia or TNI) which included the Resemen Para Komando Angkatan Darat (RPKAD) or Indonesian Special Forces,³² Parachute and Raider Battalions, regular trained infantry and 'Air force Quick Action Troops,' Marine Commandos and Police Mobile Brigades (MOBRIG).³³ The SAS knew the TNI troops wore a mixture of camouflage suits and 'American webbing.' TNI forces were also armed with a variety of weapons; Garand rifles, Browning Automatic Rifles (BARs), Armalites and various Russian-made 7.62mm weapons - Siminov Carbines, Kalashnikov Submachine guns and Degtyarev Light Machine Guns (LMG). The TNI were also armed with 60mm and 81mm mortars and rocket launchers.³⁴

The guerrilla forces that supported TNI operations in Borneo were commonly known as Indonesian Border Terrorists (IBT).³⁵ These volunteers were supposedly recruited from Brunei and other areas in East Malaysia and trained in Indonesia. The IBT wore Olive Green (OG) uniforms and jungle hats. They had access to some American sourced webbing and weapons, and they were mainly armed with 'No. 4 rifles and sten' guns.³⁶ The SAS were aware that TNI forces would often dress as IBT in conventional OG

minutes or so helicopters full of armed Gurkhas would be landing in the settlement, and everybody was tremendously heartened.' De La Billiere, *Looking For Trouble*, p. 231.

³¹ D Squadron, 22 SAS, "Standing Orders for Borneo, 10 September 1964," p.7.

³² CINCFE. 9/67, "The Joint Report on the Borneo Campaign, 27 January 1967," DEFE 5/172, p. 8.

³³ The MOBRIG forces were a para-military unit organised into battalions but used for internal security and as garrison troops. D Squadron, 22 SAS, "Standing Orders for Borneo, 10 September 1964," p.2.

³⁴ D Squadron, 22 SAS, "Standing Orders for Borneo, 10 September 1964," p.2.

³⁵ D Squadron, 22 SAS, "Standing Orders for Borneo, 10 September 1964," p.2.

³⁶ D Squadron, 22 SAS, "Standing Orders for Borneo, 10 September 1964," p.2.

fatigues and often parties of TNI had IBT with them. However, the most certain means of identification was by boots; TNI troops wore the leather jungle boots with ‘vibram-type soles’ and the IBT, when not bare-footed, wore hockey or studded boots.³⁷ The SAS believed that TNI forces were ‘well-trained and aggressive;’ the IBT were not. Consequently, IBT forces were regularly led by TNI elements. The enemy had a number of objectives in Borneo. Firstly, the TNI wanted to infiltrate parties of IBT into Brunei or Malaysia where they could ‘lie low and train sympathisers until another Brunei revolt [was] hatched or the time [was] ripe for armed insurrection.’³⁸ Secondly, the Indonesians wished to carry out raids and lay ambushes against Commonwealth Security Forces. The SAS understood that the Indonesians would deliberately use soldiers as ‘bait’ in order to entice Security Forces forward towards their ambushes.³⁹

Contact Drills in Borneo

When comparing operations and environments, the New Zealand Commander of the third detachment to Borneo and Troop Commander with the original New Zealand SAS Squadron in Malaya, David Ogilvy, felt Malaya and Borneo were ‘very similar:’

...operating in deep jungle, operating against an enemy that we didn’t really know his strength in any particular location...[It] was our task to find out the strengths and where they were.’⁴⁰

Clearly some techniques had been refined but debriefing patrols in Borneo remained particularly important. When it came to post-operational reviews, Ogilvy conducted two debriefs after each patrol; one with the entire patrol and one ‘specifically of the patrol commander.’⁴¹ In Ogilvy’s view, ‘if you interview only one person you only get one slant on the patrol results whereas if you debrief all then you get a different viewpoint.’ Other detachment Commanders, like Dearing, had a different approach:

As soon as the patrol came back they would give an immediate debrief anyway to the local commander and then they would be whisked by helicopter back to Labuan. And if I wasn’t able to get out to meet them at the Brigade, then I would

³⁷ D Squadron, 22 SAS, “Standing Orders for Borneo, 10 September 1964,” p.2.

³⁸ D Squadron, 22 SAS, “Standing Orders for Borneo, 10 September 1964,” p.3.

³⁹ D Squadron, 22 SAS, “Standing Orders for Borneo, 10 September 1964,” p.3.

⁴⁰ David Ogilvy, interview conducted on 27 February 2008.

⁴¹ David Ogilvy, interview conducted on 27 February 2008.

have to do it back at Labuan, and the Patrol Commander would come in and we would go through every jolly thing.⁴²

One of the more significant changes that were introduced to SAS CLARET operations when Major-General Walter Walker was replaced by Major-General George Lea in March 1965, was the sanctioning of offensive action, in the form of ambushes during the last 48-hours of a patrol operation.⁴³ Some New Zealand SAS members were obviously enthusiastic about opportunities to engage the enemy when a chance presented itself. Others such as Ogilvy were not:

That, to my mind, wasn't really SAS-type work...as soon as you do that you compromise the fact that you are actually in the area. I would rather the patrols that found the opposition camps, came back and were able to draw sketches, showing the routes to the camps to be attacked, how many people were there, what they were carrying what they were wearing - I always thought that more significant. They took a hell of a risk and on occasions you have to defend yourself but as a matter of going over there and 'banjoing' someone, I don't really think that was the role.⁴⁴

The first patrol member, or scout, navigated to keep the patrol heading in a direction determined by the Patrol Commander, usually the second patrol member, and attempted to negotiate his way through the bush or jungle without leaving signs. The rest of the patrol order would usually consist of the signaller and another rifleman or 'Tail-end Charlie.' The scout covered the area ahead of the patrol as far back as the periphery of his vision allowed, the Patrol Commander looked right, the Signaller left, and 'Tail-end Charlie' covered the rear, usually walking backwards. Distances between patrol members had to be large enough to ensure they would not be hit by firing directed at the scout, but close enough to maintain contact and return fire if necessary.

If involved in an unavoidable contact with the enemy, the British policy was to 'shoot and scoot,' engaging the enemy only long enough to effect a withdrawal.⁴⁵ In a contact, the direction of fire was dictated by the actions of the patrol member who initiated or responded to the contact and the objective was quite simply to 'shoot' an intense and concentrated barrage to convince the enemy they faced a much larger force, then 'scoot' as

⁴² Copy of Lieutenant-Colonel Rod Dearing interview by Christopher Pugsley, 23 October 1992, for the NZDF Malayan Oral History Project, held in the NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington.

⁴³ Pugsley, *From Emergency to Confrontation*, p. 264.

⁴⁴ David Ogilvy, interview conducted on 27 February 2008.

⁴⁵ Connor, *Ghost Force*, p. 134.

fast as possible away from the scene without being hit.⁴⁶ The patrol would seek to join up at a 'rallying point' (RV) approximately 100 yards back along the route the patrol had taken, or closer depending upon available cover. If time allowed, a signal would be radioed to Squadron Headquarters apprising it of the situation, current circumstances and possible intended course of action:

Our code for any emergency was 'ZDAO' so you just put that through on morse key – they then would clear all communication lines...they would have been alerted, then we moved further on – it would have been another half an hour, then we stopped. And then were able to code a proper message and put through what had happened...We really only communicated twice a day – and sometimes once a day...⁴⁷

If a patrol member did not return to the designated RV, there were two possibilities; he may have become lost, or might be wounded or dead as a result of the contact. For the former, the patrol assumed that the missing member would make for the 'Emergency RV,' a pre-arranged point of which all patrol members were aware. For the latter, SOPs suggested it would be 'extremely unlikely that the enemy will run after you, if at all, for more than 50 yards,' so once firing stopped it was considered a patrol was clear of the contact and the remaining patrol members returned to the contact site with extreme caution.⁴⁸

If the patrol was fired upon again, it would be clear that the enemy had not withdrawn and the outstanding patrol member was assumed to have been captured. In this situation, the patrol could only withdraw and carry out normal 'Emergency RV' drill in the event the soldier had escaped.⁴⁹ Other British SAS patrol members wounded in contacts with the Indonesians were able to withdraw to 'rallying points' and await reinforcements. These contact drills and procedures, to a certain extent, were flexible in that the circumstances of the contact determined the Patrol Commander's actions.

While engagements with the enemy were the exception rather than the rule, adherence to the SOPs in both instances of contact and lost person procedure nevertheless ensured the

⁴⁶ Connor, *Ghost Force*, p. 135.

⁴⁷ Gary Walker, interview conducted on 12 June 2008.

⁴⁸ D Squadron, 22 SAS, "Standing Orders for Borneo, 10 September 1964," pp. 8-9.

⁴⁹ It is understood that during 'Confrontation,' one British SAS patrol member – Trooper James Condon – was wounded and then captured in March 1964. It was subsequently discovered that Condon had been interrogated and tortured, and because his wounds prevented him from walking, had been executed by the Indonesians. Dickens, *SAS: Secret War in South-East Asia*, p. 127.

New Zealand SAS did not lose any soldiers during the ‘Confrontation’ period and only three British SAS soldiers were killed as the result of enemy action in the time that the Regiment operated in Borneo.⁵⁰ Of the 91 recorded patrols which involved the New Zealand SAS troops in Borneo, only 12 had contacts with Indonesian forces and of those, only six were planned ambushes or larger-scale assaults. These contacts, in chronological order, were OPS/90/61, commanded by Lieutenant Eru Manuera, on 20 May 1965; OPS/90/62, commanded by Sergeant Danny Wilson, on 21 May 1965; OPS/90/A/5, ambush commanded by British SAS D Squadron 2IC Captain Gilbert Connor, on 23 May 1965; OPS/90/88, commanded by Sergeant Len Wilson, on 10 August 1965; OPS/90/92, commanded by Sergeant Ken Schimanski, on 22 August 1965; OPS/90/100, also commanded by Schimanski, on 20 September 1965; OPS/90/101, commanded by Lieutenant Murray Winton, on 20 September 1965; OPS/90/108, a Gurkha Rifles operation supported by a New Zealand patrol commanded by Captain Len Grant, on 27 October 1965; OPS/90/123, Sergeant Arthur Steele’s patrol as part of a Squadron-sized assault commanded by the British Squadron Commander Major Terry Hardy, on 3 February 1966; OPS/90/CENT/41, a two-patrol ambush commanded by Grant, on 3 February 1966; OPS/90/EAST/9, commanded by Staff Sergeant Paul McAndrew, on 28 March 1966 and OPS/90/EAST/11, commanded by Lieutenant Russell Martin, in April 1966.⁵¹

The New Zealand SOPs, including those elements incorporated from the British, illustrated that the drills used by New Zealand patrols were effective. One particular incident during a New Zealand patrol in April 1966 demonstrably showed ‘that the training that the fellows had undertaken worked.’⁵² Patrol OPS/90/EAST/11 - RED

⁵⁰ Trooper Condon, Sergeant ‘Buddha’ Bexton in June 1964, and Trooper Billy ‘Chalky’ White in August 1964. During ‘Confrontation’ a total of 114 British and Commonwealth troops were killed and 181 wounded. Three Australian SAS soldiers were killed in Borneo. The first, Lance Corporal Paul Denehey, was gored by a rogue elephant on 2 June 1965 and died on, or about 5/6 June. According to Horner, one of the reasons that it took so long to reach Denehey was that the attack has taken place ‘up to 10 kilometres further inside Indonesian territory than the patrol had thought.’ The two other Australian SAS soldiers are believed to have drowned while crossing a flooded river in March 1966. Dickens, *SAS: Secret War in South-East Asia*, pp. 134-139, pp. 174-180, p. 350 and pp. 111-126, and Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, pp. 110-121.

⁵¹ Manuera received a Military Cross (MC) for OPS/90/62 and Sergeant Schimanski and Corporal Niwa Kawha were both awarded Mention in Dispatches (MIDs) for their work on OPS/90/100. New Zealand Army Non-File Material ANFM732, “SAS Borneo Patrol Reports: 1 Detachment, NZSAS Squadron,” and ANFM734, “SAS Borneo Patrol Reports: 2 Detachment, NZSAS Squadron,” both in NZDF Archive, Wellington. Fuller accounts of these contacts can be found in Pugsley, *From Emergency to Confrontation*, pp. 267-290 and Crosby, *NZSAS: The First Fifty Years*, pp. 145-152.

⁵² David Ogilvy, interview conducted on 27 February 2008.

HOTEL, commanded by Lieutenant Russell Martin, was carrying out a reconnaissance patrol when the New Zealanders were ‘mortared’ by the Indonesians. Patrol members Trooper Peter Glendenning and Corporal Ken Hudson were able to return to the patrol’s designated RV but Martin and Trooper Whi Wanoa became separated. Based on procedures, Martin met up with Glendenning and Hudson, and a platoon of British Royal Green Jackets, the following morning at their designated RV. Wanoa reached the safety of the border two days after the contact.⁵³ While the contact had been reported to Labuan shortly after events had taken place, the Detachment Commander, Ogilvy, had to wait two days before he received confirmation all members of the patrol were safe:

I had received this message that the patrol had been in contact - three of them had made their way back to the border and that Wanoa was missing...I found when we got to Borneo that Wanoa was a 1 star Trooper while everybody else I think was a 2 star, and for some reason he hadn’t got his second star because he hadn’t passed the test in navigation and map reading. I’d applied to [FARELF] to have this, essentially a mistake, overlooked and for him to get his second star and consequently to receive the appropriate amount of pay...Because he hadn’t passed the course...I got a signal back saying that he wouldn’t be upgraded to his second star...Now to come back to the patrol young trooper Wanoa a very young...new soldier virtually. He managed over a couple of days to get his way back to the border unscathed going through all the various RV procedures that he’d been taught...I was subsequently able to write to [FARELF], give the patrol report and say based on this patrol report this youngster has shown navigation and map reading skills and I think he should be upgraded to second star. And they were gracious enough to approve that.⁵⁴

New Zealand SAS and British Intelligence in Borneo

The British SAS believed the only real source of intelligence regarding the enemy, apart from the SAS patrol itself, came from the border tribes. They were classified as either ‘Locals’ (those living in East Malaysia who could be asked to look for information north of the border, particularly if they were crossing into Indonesia to visit friends or relatives, although on no account were Locals sent across deliberately to get information), ‘Line-Crossers’ (those who lived in Indonesia but crossed the border to visit), and ‘Refugees’

⁵³ Lieutenant Russell Martin, “OPS/90/EAST/11,” in New Zealand Army Non-File Material ANFM730, SAS Borneo Patrol Reports: 3 Detachment, NZSAS Squadron, NZDF Archive, Wellington and Pugsley, *From Emergency to Confrontation*, pp. 287-288.

⁵⁴ In addition to serving in Borneo with Ogilvy’s third Detachment, Wanoa was a member of the first and third 4 Troops sent to Vietnam and was appointed Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM) of 1NZSAS Group in 1985, a position he maintained until 1989. David Ogilvy, interview conducted on 27 February 2008 and Howard Chamberlain, *Service Lives Remembered: The Meritorious Service Medal in New Zealand And Its Recipients 1895-1994*, (Wellington: GP Print Limited, 1995), p. 495.

(those who had lived formerly in Indonesia but had now settled north of the border - they could be questioned 'but not interrogated').⁵⁵

Another source of information was Agents. Agents were specifically handled by British 'Special Branch' officers and were deliberately sent across the border to collect intelligence. SAS SOPs forbade patrols from recruiting and despatching their own agents, although they could 'talent-spot' potential agents and report these details on.⁵⁶ The SOPs also suggested patrols, as a rule, could be told in advance if an agent was being sent into their patrol area, although 'not necessarily be told of his mission.'⁵⁷ Special Branch Officers in Borneo were members of the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS), or MI6, and many of their recruited agents worked as Border Scouts.

Border Scout agents and their handlers worked closely with British and New Zealand SAS patrols. Border Scouts were used in Borneo as trackers accompanying patrols, as contact men with longhouses (sometimes being sent off on their own while the patrol was elsewhere), and also carry out simple unaccompanied intelligence collection tasks such as inspecting tracks for signs of use. The Border Scouts were discouraged from wearing uniforms or military equipment in order to maintain an element of 'deniability' if captured or questioned by enemy forces.⁵⁸

The most well-known SIS agent-handler was Richard (Dick) Noone. An anthropologist by training, Noone arrived in Malaya in 1939 to live with and study the indigenous tribes. During World War II Noone, and his brother Patrick, organised agent networks among the Malays against the Japanese. After 1945 Dick Noone became the Head of the Malayan Department of Aborigines and organised tribes into paramilitary forces to

⁵⁵ D Squadron, 22 SAS, "Standing Orders for Borneo, 10 September 1964," pp. 9-10.

⁵⁶ The SOPs noted that if there was disagreement or an unacceptable risk to the patrol in the eyes of the Patrol Commander, a decision would need to be signalled from SAS Squadron Headquarters. The Patrol Commander would tell the Special Branch Officer that he was doing this and why, but there was to be 'no heated arguments with him.' D Squadron, 22 SAS, "Standing Orders for Borneo, 10 September 1964," p.10.

⁵⁷ D Squadron, 22 SAS, "Standing Orders for Borneo, 10 September 1964," p.10.

⁵⁸ Interestingly, in a post-Borneo analysis written by Headquarters FARELF in 1969, it was argued that even though the employment of Border Scouts was essential, they should have been issued with adequate communications (a 'simple wireless set') because 'much time was wasted because Border Scouts in possession of information usually had to go on foot through thick country to pass [intelligence] to where it was required.' The analysis was written without any input from any Commonwealth SAS unit force. See G Operational Requirements and Analysis Branch, HQ FARELF, "Report No 1/69 Lessons Learned from Borneo Operations," in ANZ, Wellington, p. 22.

combat the Communist insurgency during ‘Emergency.’ It was here that New Zealand SAS first became aware of the anthropological spy.⁵⁹ Ultimately Noone’s work extended to command and control of SIS Border Scout operations during ‘Confrontation.’⁶⁰ Describing him as a ‘funny old bloke,’ David Moloney, the fourth New Zealand detachment Commander knew that Noone:

...was the MI6 man there and they had access to a lot of information...Every now and again they would say ‘well you know this is happening’ and...[we would say] ‘thank you, as long as we know.’⁶¹

While there is no currently accessible official record to confirm the operational relationship between New Zealand SAS detachments and British Intelligence in Borneo, it appears likely the two were providing intelligence to each other as part of their respective roles. In August 1966, Moloney wrote that one of his patrols (commanded by Captain David Slocombe) had been ‘given a valuable brief on the area to be patrolled by Mr R.D. Noone of the Sabah Border Scouts at Black 957.’⁶² At one time, thanks to the close relationship between the British SAS and MI6, Moloney was able to access a large assortment of equipment, including ‘deniable’ weapons which Noone and his Border Scouts had used on operations in Borneo:

Following the tour in Borneo, the Detachment was asked to join 28 Commonwealth Brigade for a final exercise for the Scots Guards. The problem was that much of the kit had been returned in Labuan before departure so when discussing the issue with the MI6 Station Chief, he offered to help with some gear that Dick Noone had used with the Border Scouts. He said, ‘well look, you meet me outside Gate 10 at the Base Ordnance Depot’ in Singapore in three days time. So Dave Slocombe and I met him and were taken to a large shed full of some modern kit, most of which was deniable, and we got radios and one or two other pieces of gear for the exercise. When we got to the Commonwealth Brigade we were met by Major Rob Williams, the Brigade Major, who questioned where we had obtained the gear to which I replied, ‘don’t ask.’ I finally explained to him that we had been lent it by MI6, which shocked him. It was clear that he had little idea of what the SAS were doing in Borneo.⁶³

⁵⁹ David Ogilvy, interview conducted on 27 February 2008.

⁶⁰ After Borneo, Noone became a counterinsurgency adviser to SEATO. He died in Bangkok in 1973. Stephen Dorril, *MI6: Inside the Covert World of Her Majesty’s Secret Intelligence Service*, (New York: Free Press, 2000), p.718.

⁶¹ David Moloney, interview conducted on 20 February 2008.

⁶² Major David Moloney, “Patrol Report – The Gap, August 1966,” in New Zealand Army A.15/15/1 Volumes I and II.

⁶³ David Moloney, interview conducted on 20 February 2008.

Further evidence suggests that New Zealand SAS patrols were involved in other 'deniable' or particularly sensitive operations in Borneo. In his 'Tour Report' completed in mid February 1966, Rod Dearing recorded that during the second detachment's tour, it 'mounted 15 different operations involving 28 operational patrol groups.'⁶⁴ Copies of 24 of those patrol reports are contained on file; the reports missing from the archive include, according to Dearing, the four New Zealand patrols which took part in a 'combined operation with Mr Noone, Borders Scouts ('E' Group)' in the border area east of Sepulot.'⁶⁵ This series of patrols appears to have taken place between mid-December 1965 and mid-January 1966 when the detachment was supposedly carrying out training in Brunei and Singapore. At least one element of one of these operations as recounted by Gary Walker, took place over Christmas 1965 when Walker and his Patrol Commander Sergeant Eric Ball were sent to a village in Sabah to provide a communication relay to another SAS patrol operating in the area.⁶⁶ In addition to providing a radio link, the two were also tasked to carry out a covert surveillance operation:

Eric and myself were sent up to a place called Kalabakan which is way up the north of Sabah...Now also in that village, which was the second part to the [job], was – and I forget the guys name but he was [2IC to] Chin Peng who was the leader of the Malayan Emergency. Now he supposedly had been brain-washed and was living in Kalabakan. They were not sure how he was performing so one of our secondary roles was to observe this guy because we could see it from where we were up in the hill, or the area that he operated in – just observe if he was doing anything untoward that we could see...⁶⁷

Preparation and Continuation Training

The British SAS felt there was a tendency to overlook training when on operational detachments. In their view, the argument that the 'real thing was quite sufficient' demonstrated unreasonable thinking because the 'real thing' happened infrequently.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Major Rod Dearing, "Tour Report – 2 Detachment 1 New Zealand Ranger Squadron Far East, 13 February 1966," in Army Non File Material ANFM734.

⁶⁵ Dearing, "Tour Report – 2 Detachment 1 New Zealand Ranger Squadron Far East, 13 February 1966."

⁶⁶ There is no reference to this operation in Dearing's final 2 Detachment report. Interestingly, Walker states that the pair stayed at an Iban camp for the duration of the operation. Gary Walker, interview conducted on 12 June 2008 and Dearing, "Tour Report – 2 Detachment 1 New Zealand Ranger Squadron Far East, 13 February 1966."

⁶⁷ As will be extrapolated in further chapters, Sgt Ball plays a particularly prominent role in the initial New Zealand SAS contribution in South Vietnam. In order to ensure the integrity of the research maintains the appropriate degree of personal detachment and academic objectivity, it is important to declare that Eric Ball is the late father of the author. Gary Walker, interview conducted on 12 June 2008.

⁶⁸ D Squadron, 22 SAS, "Standing Orders for Borneo, 10 September 1964," p.16.

The New Zealand SAS detachments believed that shooting and contact drills needed to be practised in detachment-strength at least once each month. Each of the four New Zealand detachments carried out lengthy training, both in advance of operational deployment and during the period the detachments were on active service. Worsnop's first detachment spent six weeks in June-July 1965 carrying out refresher training (Malay language, signals and medical courses as well as a final 14-day exercise) and the other detachments carried out similar programmes.⁶⁹ In December 1965 and January 1966 Dearing's second detachment was involved in a variety of training exercises, including a diving and small boating course with a British Special Boat Squadron (SBS) detachment based at Tawau.⁷⁰ This is likely to have been the New Zealanders first post-World War II experience with the SBS; the British sister-Special Forces organisation of 22 SAS Regiment.⁷¹

The Australian SAS Regiment in Borneo

...we did not learn anything from [British] B Squadron that wasn't known before.
Fact – not cockiness!⁷²

It was assumed by the New Zealanders that the Australian SAS similarly adhered to British SOPs in Borneo but because the two groups were never again co-located after early 1965, no accurate confirmation of this can be made. There can be no doubt the New Zealanders – and to a degree the British too – felt no great affinity with the Australian Squadrons at any time during 'Confrontation.' Between March 1965 and early October 1966, there was a continual New Zealand SAS presence in Borneo. Admittedly, this was only a half-squadron contribution, but there were times during handover periods when the in-coming and out-going New Zealand detachments were in Borneo simultaneously.

The Australian SAS operated in Borneo between March and July 1965 and February and July 1966. During 1965 they spent 'one month training, another month on hearts and minds operations, and three months on cross-border operations...During their tour the

⁶⁹ Worsnop, "Monthly Report: May 1965 Det 1 New Zealand Ranger Squadron (Far East), 15 June 1965," p.1.

⁷⁰ Dearing's detachment began on 27 August 1965 and concluded on 14 February 1966. Like the others, it came under operational command of 22 SAS Regiment Far East, administrative command of HQ New Zealand Army Forces FARELF and operational control of the various Brigade Headquarters on whose front its patrols were deployed to support. See Dearing, "Tour Report – 2 Detachment 1 New Zealand Ranger Sqn Far East, 13 February 1966."

⁷¹ Dearing, "Tour Report – 2 Detachment 1 New Zealand Ranger Squadron Far East, 13 February 1966." The SBS would be renamed Special Boat Service in 1987.

⁷² Major Jim Hughes, quoted in Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 153.

Australians mounted 23 reconnaissance, 7 reconnaissance/ambush, 2 ambush, 4 surveillance, 1 special and 13 hearts and minds patrols,' ranging between 2 to 89 days.⁷³ In comparison, between 8 April and 27 September 1965, Worsnop's first detachment appears to have carried out 32 operational patrols. The average length of those patrols was just over 10 days – the shortest was six and the longest 17.⁷⁴ Horner wrote that 'the tour in Borneo provided a unique experience for the men of 1 Squadron. All hand-picked by [Major Alf] Garland during 1964...the men had shown that they could match the skill and flair of the more experienced British SAS, and they had been willing to develop their own style of operation.'⁷⁵ The statement is significant and provides a further opportunity to explore and explain the cultural relationships and differences between the three Commonwealth SAS, especially within the Borneo context.

While recording the activities of the second Australian squadron between February and July 1966, Horner wrote that its CO, Major Jim Hughes, 'was surprised to find that [Major Terry Hardy's British Squadron] appeared to have little idea of how to operate as a normal infantry company as required during its final operation,' Operation FOUR SQUARE, carried out between 30 January and 4 February 1966.⁷⁶ Both the British Troop-strength operations (Operation FOUR SQUARE), and the Australian 'infantry-style' SAS operations contrasted sharply with that of the New Zealand SAS approach, where the smaller four-man patrols would assist infantry units by way of guiding, providing forward reconnaissance or flank security for these larger assault parties. The provision of both strategic and tactical intelligence by way of small group reconnaissance patrols remained the stated mantra of the New Zealand SAS in Borneo.

Operation KITE, for example, was the last series of patrols carried out by the New Zealand SAS in Borneo.⁷⁷ Moloney's fourth detachment had been advised in early August 1966 that intelligence indicated an Indonesian 'incursion into the Gap area of

⁷³ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 134 and pp. 135-136.

⁷⁴ While there may be an expectation that a full Australian squadron should have conducted at least twice as many patrols as their New Zealand half-squadron counterpart, the type of patrol – particularly, its duration – is more likely to be a factor in explaining any differences. Most Australian patrols were longer rather than shorter.

⁷⁵ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 134.

⁷⁶ See Dickens, *SAS: The Jungle Frontier*, pp. 334-341 for a British perspective on Operation FOUR SQUARE.

⁷⁷ Major David Moloney, "Operation 'Kite', 20 August 1966," in New Zealand Army A.15/15/1 Volumes I and II.

Central Brigade.⁷⁸ In anticipation, five New Zealand SAS patrols were deployed to carry out reconnaissance of the border and likely incursion routes.⁷⁹ This was the first time patrols from Moloney's detachment had operated under the command of a regular force Commonwealth Battalion; the 2/6 Gurkha Regiment. Moloney reported the arrangement did not prove 'particularly satisfactory' and the capabilities of his patrols 'were not used to the full.' He believed that despite the SAS being in Borneo for nearly three years, still only a few Battalion Commanders truly understood the SAS 'mode of operations.' He wrote that in future, it would be preferable that SAS patrols be placed in support of Battalions rather than under their command, and co-ordination of patrols be carried out by an SAS Liaison Officer (LO) attached to the Battalion Commander's Headquarters, allowing patrols to become the Battalion Commander's 'eyes and ears' reconnaissance force on the border.⁸⁰ Moloney added:

That was a problem all round, the Brigade staff changed regularly and came in and I am sure others have said it, but you get groups of people who think Special Forces are an absolute and utter waste of time and they take too many resources and they don't achieve...⁸¹

Moloney's fourth detachment was not required for operations again until August 1966 when further intelligence indicating possible Indonesian incursions saw the detachment deployed with 1/7 Gurkha Rifles.⁸² Specifically, the detachment was given two primary tasks: 'to patrol astride the two major incursion routes in the Bakelalan area to give early warning of another suspected incursion, and to position a patrol close to two large kampongs in the Trusan Valley to prevent the remaining four members of another known incursion party getting food.'⁸³ Again, the smaller-sized New Zealand patrols had a much better chance of remaining undetected in this type of role. Only one patrol, Staff Sergeant Niwa Kawha's RED GOLF group, saw enemy during the operation.⁸⁴ On 5 August, the patrol observed 'two enemy dressed in jungle hats with no identification bands, light grey uniforms and carrying Armalite rifles, moving in a tactical manner with

⁷⁸ Moloney, "Operation 'Kite', 20 August 1966."

⁷⁹ The five patrols were commanded by Lieutenants' Kiwi and Winton, Staff Sergeant Kawha, Sergeant Rautao and Corporal Fox (22 SAS). Major David Moloney, "OPS/10/66/1 Operation KITE, 20 August 1966," in New Zealand Army A.15/15/1 Volumes I and II.

⁸⁰ Moloney, "Operation 'Kite', 20 August 1966."

⁸¹ David Moloney, interview conducted on 20 February 2008.

⁸² Major David Moloney, "Monthly Report – 1-31 October 1966 Det 1 New Zealand Ranger Sqn (FE), 7 November 1966," in New Zealand Army A.15/15/1 Volumes I and II.

⁸³ Major David Moloney, "Monthly Report – 1 – 30 September 1966 Det 1 New Zealand Ranger Sqn (FE) Government Matters, 3 October 1966," in New Zealand Army A.15/15/1 Volumes I and II, p.1.

⁸⁴ Moloney, "Annex 'E' Patrol Report – Operation 'KITE,' 20 August 1966."

their weapons at the ready.’⁸⁵ It was assessed the two were most likely an enemy reconnaissance party but any subsequent follow-up was cancelled after Indonesia and Malaysia signed a peace treaty on 12 August and all patrols were withdrawn.⁸⁶ The detachment finally became non-operational on 10 October 1966.⁸⁷

Relationships in Borneo

...I can get a bit jaundiced about the Aussies but they don’t do themselves any favours in terms of relationships with people, particularly the Brits and to a lesser degree us.⁸⁸

The British SAS left Borneo in February 1966 and was not replaced until D Squadron returned in July. From March onwards, the Australian and New Zealand SAS, with British SBS and independent patrol companies provided the Special Forces CLARET role in Borneo for the remainder of the ‘Confrontation’ period. Throughout the early stages of the Borneo campaign there had been a call to establish a third British SAS Squadron to augment the existing two. Knowing the time and resources required to establish, select and train a fully independent third Squadron, Walker instead directed the British Parachute Brigade’s Guards Independent (Pathfinder) Company be trained in SAS jungle-warfare techniques to supplement the existing Special Forces elements in Borneo. The 2nd Battalion, Parachute Regiment and a Gurkha Independent Parachute Company were also trained for SAS-type operations in Borneo.⁸⁹ To the New Zealanders, the performance of the independent companies was mixed:

...we had the Paras were there doing CLARET operations and the Royal Marines, SBS, who were very good, but the Paras were large and noisy and not particularly skilful - and as we were lumped together as Special Forces – they gave us all a bad name.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Moloney, “Annex ‘E’ Patrol Report – Operation ‘KITE,’ 20 August 1966.”

⁸⁶ On 23 May 1966 an Indonesian ‘goodwill’ mission went to Kuala Lumpur and ‘Confrontation’ officially ended at noon on 11 August 1966. Cross, *Jungle Warfare: Experiences and Encounters*, p. 172 and Major David Moloney, “Monthly Report – 1-31 August 1966 Det 1 New Zealand Ranger Sqn (FE), 1 September 1966,” in Army A.15/15/1 Volumes I and II.

⁸⁷ Moloney, “Monthly Report – 1-30 September 1966 Det 1 New Zealand Ranger Sqn (FE), 3 October 1966.”

⁸⁸ David Moloney, interview conducted on 20 February 2008.

⁸⁹ The Guards Company would subsequently form the nucleus of a third British SAS Squadron – G Squadron. Pugsley, *From Emergency to Confrontation*, p. 262, Dickens, *SAS: Secret War in South-East Asia*, pp. 108-109 and p.351, and Geraghty, *Who Dares Wins*, p. 52.

⁹⁰ David Moloney, interview conducted on 20 February 2008.

Meldrum's aversion to operating with the Australian SAS appeared to be a consistent attitude maintained by the New Zealanders – and also to a large degree the British SAS - throughout the entire campaign.⁹¹ Much of this bias initially had more to do with the historic linkages of the British and New Zealand Special Forces organisations. There is no doubt that Lea, a former commander of the SAS in Malaya, 'had a great regard for New Zealanders.'⁹² The British affinity for the New Zealanders' capabilities was also predictable because all New Zealand SAS personnel, including officers, had, as the British, undergone and passed a selection course before being posted to an SAS squadron. This contrasted with the Australians whose personnel undertook only a cadre training course before being posted. Standards of skills remained the most important measure in the eyes of the New Zealanders and the British. Similarly, the acknowledged lack of training and experience observed by Lieutenant-Colonel Robin Holloway during the ANZAM Joint Planning Committee (JPC) visit to Garland's Australian Squadron in July 1965, was again observed in 1966:

...the differences or relationship between us and the Australians wasn't as good, or as tight, as it might be because we were privy...to their [the Australians] sit-reps and patrol reports...We didn't believe they were the same standard, and therefore – in my time, always got to say 'in my time' – did never want to work with them. We had, sort of, social interaction with them. We played footy against them and that sort of stuff at different times...but in terms of operational opportunities, I would not have wished to operate with them because I wouldn't have thought that they were good enough.⁹³

Christopher Pugsley also noted that the New Zealanders believed the Australians lacked the skills and discipline the New Zealanders took for granted and were seen as a 'bunch of cowboys.'⁹⁴ David Ogilvy quoted one particular example in 1966 to support this view:

The Australians were down in Kuching and we were based out of Labuan and we used to get 'sit-reps' from the Australians and they were always quoting the number of kills and so on. And a sit-rep came in saying how many they'd killed and what they'd done and so on – and Peter [Walters, the British Squadron 2IC], he just sent back a very succinct 'Bullshit.' So the relationship of the Brits to the Australians and to us I think was probably different – certainly in that case.⁹⁵

⁹¹ David Ogilvy, interview conducted on 27 February 2008.

⁹² David Moloney, interview conducted on 20 February 2008.

⁹³ David Ogilvy, interview conducted on 27 February 2008.

⁹⁴ Pugsley, *From Emergency to Confrontation*, p. 262.

⁹⁵ David Ogilvy, interview conducted on 27 February 2008.

On 21 March 1966, the Australian Squadron lost two members, Lieutenant Keith Hudson and Private Robert Moncrieff, when the pair drowned while attempting to cross a flooded river. According to Horner, it was never clarified why 'Hudson had decided to cross the river without a safety line, even when 'his training should have told him differently.'⁹⁶ One of the two surviving members of the patrol, Private Frank Ayling, was awarded a Mention in Despatches (MID) for saving the fourth patrol member.⁹⁷ There is little doubt Ayling was deserving of the award but it could be questioned whether or not British or New Zealand patrol members would have further 'discussed' Hudson's decision to reject SOPs before contemplating the river crossing without a safety rope, as articulated by New Zealand SAS veteran Neville Kidd:

Our patrol crossed a monsoon-swollen river a few weeks before an Australian SAS patrol crossed a river in the same general area. Our patrol crossed there and back without any serious problems but the Australians lost the Patrol Commander and a Trooper – from memory neither of the bodies were recovered. We practised river crossings and our basic SOPs for crossing rivers were - first man swims across with a rope around him and secures the rope to a tree on the far side of the river. The others use the rope to cross except the last man who ties the rope around himself and is pulled across by the others on the far bank. The patrol takes the rope with it as it has to re-cross the river again. You don't cross rivers in daylight when you have observed enemy activity – you go over at night. When the patrol came to a river, it had to make an assessment – do we cross the river or not? We came to one river that was so swift that the patrol's safety would have been in jeopardy had we crossed it – so we aborted. Our SOPs were developed through experience. We followed the SOPs carefully as we did not want to lose lives needlessly – as our record in Borneo, and later Vietnam, proved.⁹⁸

Another example of the decision not to follow SOPs by the Australians also took place in mid-1966:

Tony Danilenko, who I knew as a cadet and he was missing. In fact it was a radio thing so we went in and found him – we had someone nearby and found him. But [Major Jim] Hughes wasn't worried; he wasn't going to do anything about it. I said 'are you following the SOPs?' which, you know, there were certain things that you had to do, and he said 'oh no, he'll turn up.' If it were me, I'd be bloody worried you know...⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Horner mistakenly names Keith Hudson as 'Ken Hudson.' See *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 155 and p. 161.

⁹⁷ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 480.

⁹⁸ Neville Kidd, interview conducted on 16 July 2008.

⁹⁹ Lieutenant Tony Danilenko had graduated from Duntroon at the end of 1963. Two years later, he joined the Australian SAS and commanded H Troop in Borneo in 1966. In April 1968, while attached to the AATTV, Danilenko was killed while commanding a Montagnard Mobile Strike Force that came into contact with a NVA Division crossing from Laos into Vietnam. Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 145 and p. 238 and David Moloney, interview conducted on 20 February 2008.

For a period during 1966, David Moloney commanded all SAS operations in Borneo, including both British and Australian CLARET patrols. It was clear to Moloney that Hughes ‘never understood’ there was not a British officer in command, nor did he appear to be particularly effective in running the Australian Squadron:

...he was more interested in his laundry bill that he had to send to AUSTARM Far East than his operational stuff – two or three of us were sitting there with our mouths open...he was there running the place but it didn’t gel...the officers didn’t seem to do too much at all.¹⁰⁰

Despite some of the New Zealanders believing the Australians themselves had a ‘jaundiced view’ about operating with British forces, the British SAS command in Borneo was nevertheless comfortable with the Australian Squadron operating ‘independently’ of the British and New Zealand SAS during their two Squadron deployments in 1965 and 1966.¹⁰¹ It is interesting to speculate whether or not the separation was of simple necessity – in order to provide SAS patrol coverage across the entire border area – or convenience? Perhaps the appointment of Moloney as Acting-Commander of all SAS operations for a period in 1966, answers the question.

New Zealand SAS in Borneo: An Assessment

The political security (in terms of reduction of risk) the New Zealand SAS afforded the New Zealand Government ran parallel with the New Zealand Department of External Affairs (DEA) comments in January 1965 when they argued the New Zealand SAS contribution would – from a strategic sense – be ‘out of proportion to its size.’¹⁰² In 1998, leading strategic studies commentator Colin Gray asserted that Special Forces can limit the scope and intensity of a conflict and they can control escalation.¹⁰³ New Zealand, British and Australian SAS operations against Indonesia during ‘Confrontation’ exemplified the use of force by dampening an increasing threat while still meeting objectives.

¹⁰⁰ David Moloney, interview conducted on 20 February 2008.

¹⁰¹ David Moloney, interview conducted on 20 February 2008.

¹⁰² DEA, “Malaysia: New Zealand Military Assistance, 26 January 1965,” in CM (65)1, 26, ANZ, Wellington.

¹⁰³ Gray, *Explorations in Strategy*, pp. 178-179.

The Borneo operations were successful by proportionately inflicting many more casualties on the enemy than they suffered themselves. Cultures differ in their attitudes towards casualties. Nonetheless, the small-scale, tight focus, and precision of the SAS operations guaranteed losses (and media profiles for that matter) on opposing sides were low. The British Government in 1964 required its armed forces, and those of its Commonwealth allies, to defeat the Indonesians with a ‘low-profile, low casualty strategy.’ London, Canberra, and by default Wellington, were determined not to initiate large-scale initiatives against Indonesia. Their strategy was based on a desire to maintain both conventional deterrence of major escalation by Indonesia and deny Jakarta evidence of provocative acts which might increase the international profile of ‘Confrontation.’ Conflicts on all scales can provide unattractive conditions for the use of regular forces. That Special Forces operations can be promoted in this situation as a politically safer instrument of choice was ably demonstrated in Borneo. Pugsley added that the reason why the conflict may have stayed within the limits and never developed into something more extensive was because it was ‘settled by a firm, but intelligent, use of military force.’¹⁰⁴ The general character of Special Forces – of finesse, stealth, and precision – provided a military option for policy makers when no other alternative was likely to have been both effective and low in casualties. It was this that the Commonwealth SAS provided in Borneo:

The main lesson learned was overall value of SAS in covering a wide front with very few troops, providing Infantry are available to conduct “step up” operations against incursions when located. During the time of SAS deployment in a purely surveillance role there were no major incursions which were not located by SAS with the subsequent prevention of penetration by Infantry.¹⁰⁵

Special Forces prosper when conventional operations are prohibited by political factors, ruled out as too expensive, or otherwise deemed inappropriate.¹⁰⁶ In commenting on the SAS in Borneo, Walker considered ‘seventy troopers of the SAS (one squadron) as being as valuable to him as seven hundred infantry in the roles of hearts and minds, border surveillance, early warning, stay behind, and eyes and ears with a sting.’¹⁰⁷ William Darrel Baker added that David Stirling’s old axiom from World War II that ‘small was

¹⁰⁴ Pugsley, *From Emergency to Confrontation*, pp. 260-290.

¹⁰⁵ CINCFE. 9/67, “The Joint Report on the Borneo Campaign, 27 January 1967,” p. 35.

¹⁰⁶ Gray, “Handfuls of Heroes on Desperate Ventures: When Do Special Operations Succeed?,” pp. 2-24.

¹⁰⁷ Julian Thompson (ed), *The Imperial War Museum Book of Modern Warfare: British and Commonwealth Forces at War 1945-2000*, (London: Pan Books in association with the Imperial War Museum, 2002), p.220-221.

elegant and cost-effective' was again underlined by the SAS record during 'Confrontation.'¹⁰⁸ As was the case in Malaya and Thailand, New Zealand SAS operations in Borneo provided the New Zealand Government with an 'economy of force' that ensured military, diplomatic and political objectives were met - but only just.¹⁰⁹ This 'only just' however was a recurring theme in the history of New Zealand's post-war defence policy.

When Meldrum took command of the Squadron in 1964, New Zealand Army General Staff policy had detailed a role for the Squadron which covered 'every facet of Special Force soldiering,' even though it was considered to be beyond the capacity of an 'independent SAS Squadron with the limited manpower, equipment and administrative backing available in New Zealand.'¹¹⁰ The 'Cold War' mission of the New Zealand SAS Squadron in 1964 was to provide an immediate response to counterinsurgency operations and involved 'Internal Security, Training and/or operations with indigenous forces in South East Asia in guerrilla or anti-guerrilla warfare, as well as conducting 'independent anti-guerrilla operations' and providing 'medium reconnaissance for the Brigade Group.'¹¹¹ This last element entailed reconnaissance to the front and flanks of the Brigade Group, other specialist reconnaissance up to a 'depth of 100 miles' behind the enemy's main area of operations, and harassment operations by parties of up to two troop strength, positioned by air, sea or land-borne infiltration means. The Squadron was also required to be on '72-hour standby' to mobilise.¹¹²

The policy paper determined that whilst the Squadron had a reconnaissance role and an offensive capability in limited warfare, it could also, if fully manned, meet 'one major

¹⁰⁸ Baker, *Dare to Win*, p. 85.

¹⁰⁹ Gray argues that Special Forces need to operate within a framework of strategic purpose if they are to have positive strategic utility. This utility is best manifested in two key qualities, 'economy of force' (special operations can achieve very good results with limited forces) and 'expansion of choice' (special operations can make a broader span of options available to political and military leaders). Gray, *Explorations in Strategy*, p. 15.

¹¹⁰ General Staff Policy Statement 1/64, "Roles of 1 Ranger Squadron, NZSAS, Annex 'A' to 1 Inf Bde Gp 94.24, 22 October 1965," in New Zealand Army 15/15, SAS (Ranger Sqn) – FE, October 1965 – December 1972, Volume I.

¹¹¹ General Staff Policy Statement 1/64, "Roles of 1 Ranger Squadron, NZSAS, Annex 'A' to 1 Inf Bde Gp 94.24, 22 October 1965."

¹¹² Interestingly, also, its internal security roles determined that the New Zealand SAS would be capable of 'proving riot squads and assist with local Government including Police, local civic authorities and intelligence services.' General Staff Policy Statement 1/64, "Roles of 1 Ranger Squadron, NZSAS, Annex 'A' to 1 Inf Bde Gp 94.24, 22 October 1965."

commitment in peace.’¹¹³ By October 1965 it had become clear that this ‘one major commitment in peace,’ taking place in Borneo, was exacerbating the shortages and lack of continuity in key Squadron administrative and training staff and was forcing the unit to concentrate on the provision of replacing detachments at the expense of conducting operational and administrative training for both the Regular Force (RF) and Territorial Force (TF) components of the Squadron.¹¹⁴

Problems were foreseen in detachment turnarounds; some Squadron members would have as little as four months before returning to Borneo on subsequent deployments which would impact on ‘detachment spirit – essential for a successful tour’ and lead to a possible reduction of the high standards, and result in increased casualties:

Borneo...couldn’t have gone on indefinitely – it might have been able to go on to perhaps the fifth one. But by then you would have been recycling one, two and three Detachments for the...probably some of them for the second, third time...I don’t think it would have gone on much longer than that. I mean, you can only go to the well so many times can't you?¹¹⁵

It was recommended that in order to extract ‘maximum national and unit value from the overseas tour’ an annual five month tour of a full New Zealand Squadron be established to ‘ease the strain, ensure continuity and maintain administrative and training commitments.’¹¹⁶ Difficulties placed upon the Squadron during Borneo were considerable as the unit only had a base establishment of 85 all ranks, although another 40 were added as a temporary measure for ‘Confrontation’ operations. By February 1966 the Army considered the SAS commitment to Borneo had to be altered to ‘a 100 man Squadron for four months operations once per year’ with a small base or depot element remaining in New Zealand when overseas.¹¹⁷ Lieutenant-Colonel Kim Morrison

¹¹³ General Staff Policy Statement 1/64, “Roles of 1 Ranger Squadron, NZSAS, Annex ‘A’ to 1 Inf Bde Gp 94.24, 22 October 1965.”

¹¹⁴ Training planned for 1965 and 1966 was scheduled to include the following subjects: range work (day and night), map reading and aerial photography, mobilisation, internal security, radio training, patrol and IA drills, anti-road ambush drills, air movement and aircraft loading, airdrop training, basic parachute and continuation courses, cliff climbing, small boating, unarmed combat, ground parachute training, living off the land, driving, mines and booby traps, street fighting, language training, current affairs and first aid. Specialist training would focus on signals (including voice procedure, cipher, antenna use and morse – 12-20 words per minute), medical, intelligence collection and analysis, and demolitions. General Staff Policy Statement 1/64, “1 Ranger Squadron – Training Directive 1965/1966, Annex ‘C’ to 1 Inf Bde Gp 94.24, 22 October 1965.”

¹¹⁵ David Ogilvy, interview conducted on 27 February 2008.

¹¹⁶ Officer Commanding (OC) Northern Military District (NMD), “1 Ranger Squadron NZSAS – Establishment, 22 October 1965,” in New Zealand Army 15/15.

¹¹⁷ DSD to DCGS, “Org – 1 Ranger Squadron, 15 February 1966,” in New Zealand Army 15/15.

supported the change which would allow the ‘unit to achieve the most effective and economic result with our limited resources.’¹¹⁸ He went so far as to advocate a second squadron be established to ‘assist in deployment and subsequent operations’ for the 1 Infantry Brigade Group (1 Inf Bde Gp):

Our organisation should be geared to accept this task and other similar “fire brigade” tasks that might arise, but it must be organised primarily to engage in operations in support of Brigade Group deployments.¹¹⁹

Morrison believed that the new organisation should have a Headquarters component, designed to carry out regimental functions, selection and training of recruits and reinforcements remaining in New Zealand, as well as two ‘Ranger Squadrons;’ one squadron would perform the anti-‘Confrontation’ role, or become part of an ‘ANZUK SAS Regiment in other theatres if necessary,’ and the second would be designated a ‘Brigade Group’ unit.¹²⁰

The above recommendations put into question whether Moloney’s fourth detachment would leave altogether as there was a belief at NEWZARM that a full squadron would be deployed to Borneo in March 1967.¹²¹ The British in Borneo were similarly keen for a full New Zealand Squadron option. In a letter to McKinnon in March 1966, British Lieutenant-General Sir Alan Jolly said on the advice of Lea, SAS CLARET operations in Borneo could be met with a minimum of two squadrons.¹²² While the British now had four SAS squadrons available, Jolly was nevertheless keen for the New Zealand Squadron to ‘take an occasional tour in Borneo, where it has established such a fine reputation,’ and free-up British SAS forces for deployment elsewhere.¹²³ Jolly suggested from the end of the third detachment, that New Zealand agree to ‘provide a full squadron for a four months tour in Borneo not more than once a year.’¹²⁴

¹¹⁸ Lieutenant-Colonel Morrison, “1 Ranger Squadron Organisation & Employment, 28 January 1966,” in New Zealand Army 15/15.

¹¹⁹ Morrison, “SAS Organisation.”

¹²⁰ Morrison, “SAS Organisation.”

¹²¹ NEWZARM Singapore to Army HQ dated 2 March 1966, in New Zealand Army 15/15.

¹²² The British view as early as March 1965 was that if it had ‘less than two squadrons our operational intelligence would be substantially reduced and a requirement for one or more additional battalions in Borneo would be likely to arise.’ Colonel M.B. Matheson, “Special Air Service and Special Patrol Squadrons, 30 March 1965,” in New Zealand Army S.34/9/4 Volume One, Aid to Malaysia – SAS (and RN), February – March 1965, NZDF Archive, Wellington.

¹²³ Lieutenant-General Sir Alan Jolly to Major-General Walter McKinnon dated 7 March 1966, in New Zealand Army 15/15.

¹²⁴ Jolly to McKinnon dated 7 March 1966.

McKinnon replied to Jolly on 22 March reconfirming the ‘best we could do’ was to maintain two forty-man detachments per year. McKinnon added he was ‘sorry’ he could not do any better, but ‘this conclusion has only been arrived at after considerable thought.’¹²⁵ Lea’s response to the proposal was more forthright. Via NEWZARM in Singapore, Army Headquarters in Wellington was told that a ‘Half squadron size detachment [was] not much use in providing relief to UK/Aust Squadrons’ and the ‘minimum useful contribution’ would be a light squadron of between 80-85 troops which could ‘provide 16 patrols.’¹²⁶

Despite efforts to impress the need for a full squadron, or indeed a two-squadron New Zealand SAS organisation, officials were not swayed, and Morrison’s proposal was filed without further discussion. Both Defence Minister Dean Eyre and his Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) Thornton, met with Jolly in Singapore in March 1966 and the subject of future New Zealand SAS detachments was discussed. By the following month it had been confirmed that the British had ‘accepted’ the next group, to arrive in early June 1966 (Moloney’s detachment), would ‘have the same strength’ as the previous three.¹²⁷ Any increase could not have been made without Cabinet agreement, and it is unlikely the Army would have been particularly focused on this sort of ‘battle,’ especially as increasing demands for resources in Vietnam were soon to loom.

To some within the New Zealand Army, the SAS was seen as a ‘parasitic Corps which maintain[ed] its RF numbers at the expense of other units.’¹²⁸ The New Zealand SAS had certainly been over-extended during intense periods of operational activity in Borneo but the Squadron still appeared to offer no great strategic value in the eyes of the wider New Zealand military or Government:

They didn’t employ us properly you see, which indicated – if you look at some of the Army exercises and so on throughout that period – they either let us exercise by ourselves, and that was good because we could run our own exercises and do the things we wanted to do – but more often that not, we were employed as the enemy, or if we weren’t employed as the enemy, we were used as a

¹²⁵ Major-General Walter McKinnon dated 22 March 1966, in New Zealand Army 15/15.

¹²⁶ NEWZARM Singapore to Army HQ Wellington dated 25 March 1966, in Army 15/15.

¹²⁷ Major-General Walter McKinnon, “SAS Detachment, April 1966” and Major-General Anthony Lascelles, Headquarters Far East Land Forces, dated 6 April 1966, both in New Zealand Army 15/15.

¹²⁸ DSD to DCGS, “Org – 1 Ranger Squadron, 15 February 1966,” in New Zealand Army 15/15.

reconnaissance-type troop. Never ever anything strategic...History shows that exercise or command of Special Forces should be taken at the highest level. Certainly it wasn't in New Zealand in those days.¹²⁹

Pugsley quite rightly asserted that after its reformation in 1959, the New Zealand SAS Squadron spent several years 'searching for a role;' being attached to the British SAS in Borneo not only 'gave them the operational experience to develop expertise and specialist skills that were 'subsequently maintained and refined,' but provided them with the opportunity to David Ogilvy so independently.¹³⁰ Nevertheless, while the New Zealand SAS performed admirably in the eyes of their British counterparts and, more importantly, in their own estimation, there still remained a pressing need to define the SAS' value and place for the rest of the New Zealand Army and the New Zealand Government.

Even though it may not have concerned them at the time, Wellington had been made aware as early as March 1965 there was 'no certainty' the Australian Squadron, scheduled to complete its first tour at the end of July 1965 would be replaced by another Australian Squadron. In fact, Garland's first Squadron was not replaced in Borneo until Hughes arrived in February 1966.¹³¹ The British requirement was for a minimum of two SAS squadrons operating in Borneo simultaneously. The fact that the New Zealand half-Squadron, thanks largely to significant work carried out in New Zealand by Mace and despite manpower limitations, were able to provide ongoing deployments during the same period, must have endeared them even more to their British SAS counterparts.¹³²

The close association in which Australian, New Zealand and British SAS worked in Borneo, in particular the New Zealanders who were placed under direct command for all purposes of 22 SAS, did much to achieve common tactics, organisation and standards, to the mutual advantage of all concerned.¹³³

¹²⁹ David Ogilvy, interview conducted on 27 February 2008. See also De La Billiere, *Looking For Trouble*, p. 229.

¹³⁰ Pugsley, *From Emergency to Confrontation*, p. 292.

¹³¹ NEWZARM Singapore, "Periods of Employment of Det 1 New Zealand Ranger Sqn FE, 31 March 1965," in New Zealand Army 34/9/4 Volume 1.

¹³² On the recommendation of Kermode in Singapore, Morris had supported the view that Worsnop's first Detachment should conduct operations for the rest of April and May 1965, complete a period of rest back in West Malaysia for two months and then return to operations in August and September. At the same time, Dearing's second Detachment would travel to Borneo in August and conduct pre-deployment training before becoming operational. From then, it was envisaged that a replacement detachment would be deployed every four months after. Lieutenant-Colonel Morris, "SAS – Periods of Deployment," (no date) in New Zealand Army 34/9/4 Volume 1.

¹³³ CINCFE. 9/67, "The Joint Report on the Borneo Campaign, 27 January 1967," p. 36.

In Borneo, the Australian SAS at two separate times had two relatively new squadrons with different sets of members – none of whom had undergone what the British or New Zealand SAS regarded as minimum pre-SAS selection or training. To the British and New Zealanders, the value of operational experience and adherence to well-proven small unit, strategic, jungle warfare operational procedures could not be overstated. No New Zealand SAS soldiers were either killed or seriously wounded in Borneo.

Nevertheless, what the New Zealanders had learned in Borneo and what the Australians had experienced in their two years in Vietnam from 1966, was what lay ahead for the first 4 Troop Detachment in December 1968. However, Part II will show that not only would it take eight formal Cabinet submissions between early 1967 and September 1968 before the Holyoake Government finally agreed to deploy the New Zealanders to South Vietnam, the initial relationship between the Australian and New Zealand SAS would be, as Pugsley wrote, marked by ‘tension, inflexibility and professional rivalry,’¹³⁴

¹³⁴ Pugsley, *From Emergency to Confrontation*, pp. 260-290.

Part II: To Vietnam

Chapter 4

New Zealand's Vietnam Build-up: 1965-1967

If South Vietnam falls to the Communists, it will be the turn of Thailand and Malaysia and every other small country in the area. In this eventuality, the threat to New Zealand would be that much closer to home and if we are not prepared to play our part now, can we in good conscience expect our allies to help later on? Communist terrorism must be halted...New Zealand's vital interests are at stake in this war.

Keith Holyoake, 1965¹

Both Australia and New Zealand were forced to consider the conflicts in Vietnam and Borneo at the same time. However, Australia appeared far more advanced in its understanding of the escalating threat and its impact upon wider collective security considerations, and by the beginning of 1965, acceptance of further military contributions to Vietnam was relayed to Wellington; a battalion would be made available in Vietnam if requested in order that Australia could demonstrate its 'willingness to put ground forces in...'²

On 7 February 1965 the Vietcong attacked the American base at Camp Holloway, just outside Pleiku. The raid, which destroyed 122 aircraft also killed nine Americans and wounded 128.³ Three days later, the American base at Qui Nhon was attacked and this resulted in the deaths of a further 22 military advisers.⁴ The attacks prompted the United States Commander in South Vietnam (COMUSMACV), General William Westmoreland, to request a two-battalion Marine brigade to protect the airfield and support installations at Da Nang, approximately 250 kilometres north of Qui Nhon.⁵ Some four weeks later, on 6 March, and with the agreement of South Vietnamese Prime Minister Phan Huy Quat, American Marines landed at Da Nang. While the arrival of the Marines did not

¹ Challinor, *Grey Ghosts*, p. 29.

² DEA Cable from Wellington to London, "29 January 1965," in PM478/4/6 Part 4: South Vietnam: Political: Military Assistance from Australia and New Zealand, Archives New Zealand, Wellington, and McNeill and Grey, 'The Australian Army and the Vietnam War,' p. 26.

³ Stanton, *Special Forces at War*, p. 87.

⁴ McNeill and Grey, 'The Australian Army and the Vietnam War,' p. 26.

⁵ Westmoreland's plan also allowed for the release of those South Vietnamese forces guarding the American bases in order to engage in offensive operations against the Vietcong. Krepinevich, Jr, *The Army and Vietnam*, p.70. See also Stanton, *Special Forces at War*, p. 87 and McNeill and Grey, 'The Australian Army and the Vietnam War,' p.27.

necessarily guarantee further American build-up, Ian McNeill suggested that their presence did ease ‘the way for subsequent decisions.’⁶ On the same day that Camp Holloway had been attacked, the United States and South Vietnamese Air Forces crossed the 17th Parallel to carry out the first bombing raid on North Vietnam. According to Robert Thompson, this development saw the war in Vietnam enter a new phase. The United States was now directly involved in the fighting and the war had been ‘extended outside South Vietnam.’⁷

In Wellington, Prime Minister’s Department and External Affairs head Alister McIntosh continued to press Keith Holyoake for a genuine New Zealand military commitment.⁸ McIntosh acknowledged New Zealand’s immediate and primary responsibility was Malaysia but impressed that ‘on political grounds’ New Zealand should ‘respond to the American request in some way,’ for to ‘decline to do anything would be taken as a lack of sympathy and support for their present sacrifices...’⁹ Holyoake’s response to McIntosh’s note was to write at the end of the memorandum: ‘Try drafting a letter incorporating these views.’¹⁰ By mid February 1965 Holyoake had still not formally responded to President Lyndon Johnson’s December 1964 request. On 19 February, McIntosh again wrote to the Prime Minister and reminded him the New Zealand Ambassador to South Vietnam, Sir Stephen Weir, had reported earlier that month a further request for New Zealand combat advisers from Westmoreland. McIntosh acknowledged the ‘political disadvantages’ of involving New Zealanders directly in combat operations but recommended perhaps Holyoake might nevertheless consider expanding the NZADV engineer detachment with additional engineers already in Thailand.¹¹

⁶ McNeill and Grey, ‘The Australian Army and the Vietnam War,’ p. 27.

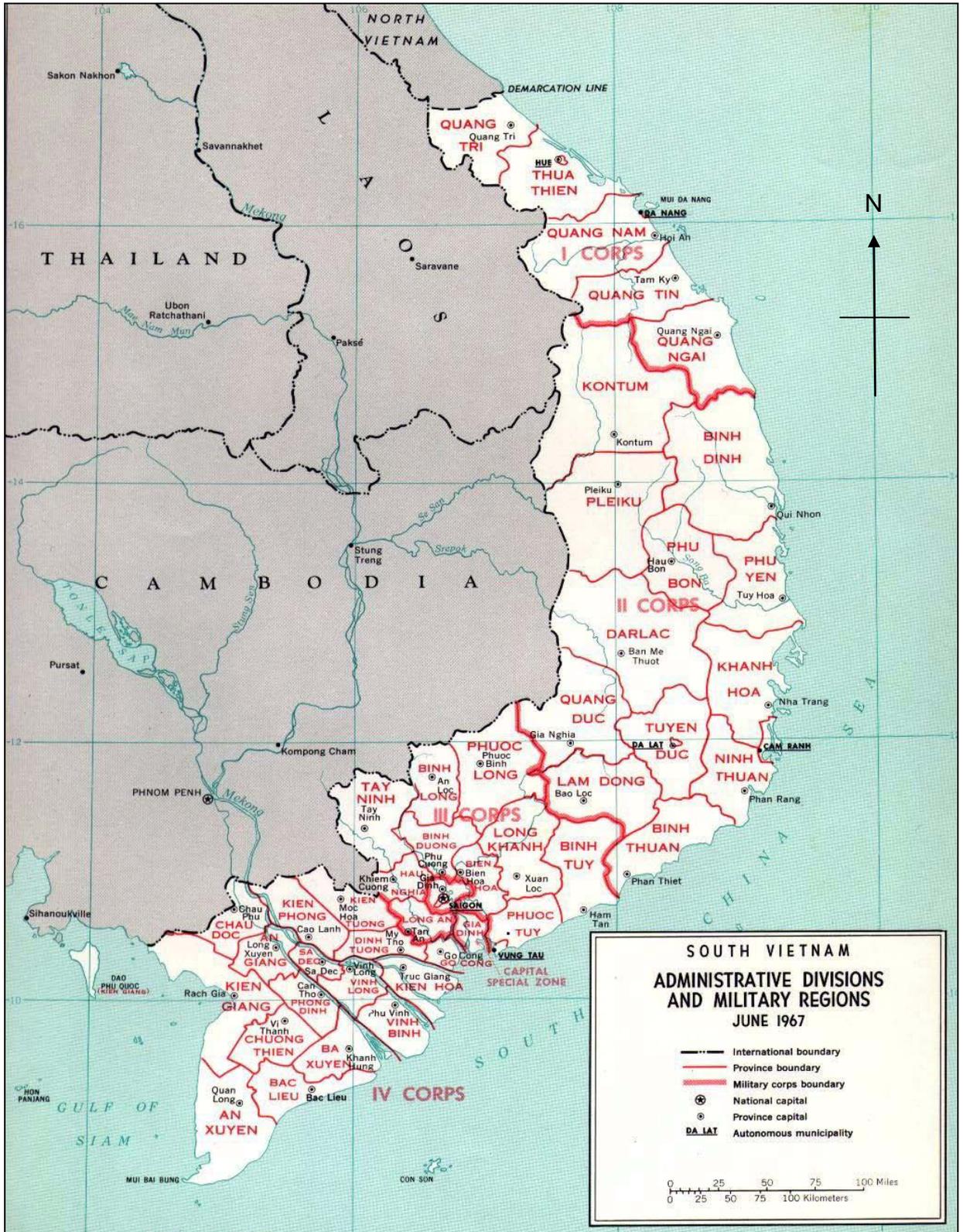
⁷ Thompson, *No Exit from Vietnam*, p. 13.

⁸ Alister McIntosh, 9 February 1965, in PM 478/4/6 Part 4.

⁹ McIntosh, 9 February 1965.

¹⁰ McIntosh, 9 February 1965.

¹¹ An Army Engineer unit for Thailand had been authorised by Cabinet in December 1962. The Plant Troop 2 Construction Squadron was finally despatched on 7 March 1964 as ‘a contribution to a Commonwealth project to construct an airfield’ near Mukdahan. The project was known as Operation CROWN. Directive to the Officer Commanding Plant Troop – 2 Construction Squadron (no date), Cabinet Paper CP (64)54, ‘Mukdahan Airfield Project, 31 January 1964,’ and Sir Alister McIntosh, 19 February 1965, all in PM 478/4/6 Part 4.



Map 2: South Vietnam 1967¹²

¹² Map courtesy of Don Blankenship. Available at www.rivervet.com/mapprovinces.htm, Copyright 1999-2008, viewed on 3 January 2009.

Events began to swing heavily towards increasing contributions to Vietnam and on 1 March McIntosh advised Holyoake that New Zealand had been asked to join the Americans and Australians in forthcoming military talks in Hawaii.¹³ McIntosh reminded his Prime Minister that Australia was likely to make ‘a battalion available’ to encourage the ‘Americans to maintain a robust line.’¹⁴ It was clear to him the Americans would ‘take advantage of Australian indications of backing,’ leaving Holyoake in a most difficult position.¹⁵ He advised Holyoake that New Zealand had no option but to attend and would need to be prepared to offer some form of military contribution by the time the conference commenced.¹⁶

New Zealand was represented at the talks in Hawaii by Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) Rear Admiral Peter Phipps. Upon his return, Phipps advised Holyoake that ‘a very considerable interdiction effort against North Vietnam and the Vietcong’ would shortly be carried out by the Americans and a formal request for a New Zealand combatant contribution could soon be expected.¹⁷ Phipps also forewarned Holyoake that participation in Vietnam was going to be anything but a short-term affair; New Zealand forces were ‘likely to be required for five to ten years.’¹⁸ The CDS concluded his remarks by stating he did not think New Zealand military participation was ‘necessary to ensure that the U.S. seek to uphold South Vietnam, but the political cost of a failure to show solidarity must be assessed.’¹⁹ Sir Stephen Weir had similar views. While the country had to ‘honour our commitment to Malaysia,’ New Zealand, he told McIntosh, needed to ‘show it appreciates the massive United States effort and supports its ANZUS partner in deeds as well as words.’²⁰ George Laking, in a personal note to McIntosh in late April 1965, similarly subscribed to this course of action:

...I assume that Menzies has made the quite simple decision that in due course they may be looking for American help either in Malaysia or New Guinea and feels what they propose to do in Vietnam is a necessary quid pro quo...Having said all this I

¹³ McNeill and Grey, ‘The Australian Army and the Vietnam War,’ pp. 27-28.

¹⁴ Alister McIntosh, 1st March 1965, PM 478/4/6 Part 4. See also McNeill and Grey, ‘The Australian Army and the Vietnam War,’ p. 27.

¹⁵ McIntosh, 1st March 1965.

¹⁶ McIntosh, 1st March 1965.

¹⁷ Vice Admiral Peter Phipps, “Contingency Planning for Vietnam, 5 April 1965,” in PM478/4/6 Part 5 South Vietnam: Military Assistance from Australia and New Zealand 1st April – 31 May 1965, ANZ, Wellington.

¹⁸ Phipps, “Contingency Planning for Vietnam, 5 April 1965.”

¹⁹ Phipps, “Contingency Planning for Vietnam, 5 April 1965.”

²⁰ Sir Stephen Weir, “Vietnam, 15 April 1965,” in PM478/4/6 Part 5.

still see the Government confronted with a very difficult decision indeed. A failure to respond to the American request can have unfortunate consequences in the future as regards our relations both with this country and with Australia.²¹

McIntosh combined all this advice into a memorandum for Holyoake that recommended New Zealand commit a battery of artillery to South Vietnam and withdraw the NZADV engineers. The battery deployment was, in McIntosh's view, 'the most suitable one we could make in present circumstances.' It would not remove any forces from Malaysia, it would fit well with Australian intentions, maintain a 'pattern established in Korea' and 'satisfy the wish of the United States for fighting troops to take their place alongside American soldiers in the field.' Most significantly, the artillery battery would ensure that 'casualties should be comparatively low.'²² McIntosh accepted that while Cabinet had agreed the defence of Malaysia did constitute 'the first priority within New Zealand's defence commitments and obligations,' it would be 'mistaken...to consider 'first' to mean 'only.' The battery, he concluded, 'would be...an acceptable price to pay.'²³

At the same time that McIntosh was drafting his memorandum to Holyoake, Phipps had written to Defence Minister Dean Eyre on 13 May with a summary of New Zealand forces which could be deployed to South Vietnam. Phipps reiterated to Eyre that infantry troops could not be provided from New Zealand without significantly impacting upon the Army's capacity to maintain the battalion in Malaysia, nor would it be possible to detach a company from that battalion because of Borneo commitments. He added that because of 'Confrontation,' even the Australians were not enthusiastic about a New Zealand company being attached to an Australian battalion. An independent New Zealand infantry company in Vietnam would similarly be 'logistically impossible.'²⁴

Combat engineers and armoured options were considered but Phipps told Eyre engineers were not wanted, a tank unit 'would have a very limited role' and an 'armoured reconnaissance unit would only be acceptable if equipped with a costly type of

²¹ George Laking, "Vietnam, 29 April 1965," in PM478/4/6 Part 5.

²² Alister McIntosh, "Vietnam, 1st May 1965," in PM478/4/6 Part 5.

²³ McIntosh, "Vietnam, 1st May 1965."

²⁴ Speculation that a commitment was imminent received widespread discussion in domestic circles. At a public meeting in Henderson on 12 May, the Junior Government Whip Mr. A. E. Allen (Franklin) suggested if New Zealand did decide to send troops to South Vietnam, it would be a political gesture rather than a military one and would be only 'a token force of 30 to 40 SAS men.' *Auckland Star* (Auckland), "Only a token force for Vietnam likely," 13 May 1965.

amphibious vehicle' which the Army did not have.²⁵ Phipps agreed with McIntosh that an artillery battery could be sent without limiting commitments in Malaysia. Phipps told Eyre that the battery was 'equipped with the best Field Gun (105mm Italian pattern) in use in the allied Armies today' and was believed to be superior to guns being used by the American Army for similar roles.²⁶ The Australians, he added, were also 'most anxious' to have the battery and Phipps mentioned that the Royal New Zealand Air Force's (RNZAF) recently acquired C-130 Hercules transport aircraft could ferry the unit to South Vietnam. Phipps told Eyre that both the Army and the Air Force would 'obtain substantial training value out of a movement of this nature' and it would also, in a political sense, 'indicate to the public of New Zealand that the Government had been prudent and farsighted in acquiring the C-130s...'²⁷

At its meeting on 1 June 1965, Cabinet confirmed the NZADV would be withdrawn and fly back to New Zealand in the same RNZAF C-130s which had taken the battery to Vietnam. Neither Cabinet nor officials had been swayed by a recommendation from Weir to postpone the return because the construction engineer detachment was now engaged in 'their correct role of providing the managerial and technical skill while training Vietnamese labour.' In fact, the engineers were employed building beds and mess tables. McIntosh wrote back to Weir two days later suggesting he doubted 'whether Government would be prepared to reconsider the decision solely on the grounds that the engineers have now started making barracks furniture.'²⁸

New Zealand combat forces were officially committed to Vietnam on the evening of 27 May 1965, when Holyoake announced, in the House of Representatives, that New Zealand had agreed to provide an artillery battery of approximately 120 men.²⁹ Chief of General Staff Walter McKinnon subsequently gave an account of a meeting that took

²⁵ Vice Admiral Peter Phipps, "Combat Army Unit: Vietnam, 13 May 1965," in PM478/4/6 Part 5.

²⁶ Phipps, "Combat Army Unit: Vietnam, 13 May 1965."

²⁷ Phipps, "Combat Army Unit: Vietnam, 13 May 1965."

²⁸ Alister McIntosh, "31 May 1965," and Cabinet Minute CM 65/19/26, "Vietnam, 1st June 1965," both in PM478/4/6 Part 6 South Vietnam: Military Assistance from Australia and New Zealand 1st – 18 June 1965, ANZ, Wellington.

²⁹ On 14 March 1966, Cabinet agreed to the recommended additions (of 2 guns and 37 men) to the battery. About the same time, the Government resolved to increase the staffing of the New Zealand surgical team from seven to 13. Cabinet did not, however, act on a proposal from the military authorities that the army provide ten headquarters personnel, 57 field engineers and a 24-man field ambulance unit. Instead, it stood by its decision to approve the bare minimum required to meet Johnson's request (of additional resources from the United States allies). Rabel, *New Zealand and the Vietnam War*, pp. 142-143.

place earlier that day, in which officials put the case for a combat contribution to Holyoake for the last time. McKinnon's insights well illustrate the political context and personality dynamics which saw Holyoake finally decide to commit the battery. McKinnon was appointed CGS on 1st April 1965 and from his personal notes it seems clear where his views on New Zealand's wider geo-strategic alliance responsibilities lay:

Although we had treaties relating to the United Kingdom and South East Asia, the ANZUS Treaty, which was in effect the 'pay off' for our signing a peace treaty with Japan, was the ultimate source of protection. This was therefore 'our club.' Not much had been paid in the way of 'club fees' up to that date but it was quite clear that these would soon be deemed due and would possibly be demanded by our senior partner – the USA...³⁰

McKinnon believed that not all his counterparts felt a similar sense of commitment. He wrote that 'Phipps showed little interest' in the combat proposal as did the Chiefs of Navy and Air Force 'who, of course, were not involved in what was to be solely an Army contribution.'³¹ McKinnon also believed that Secretary of Defence Jack Hunn, who he described as having a 'marked pacifist outlook - a quality I thought quite unsuited to a Secretary of Defence,' was clearly against a military commitment of any type. With obvious enthusiasm, McKinnon recounts that a report prepared by Hunn advising against despatching a combat element to Vietnam was met with serious objection when finally read by the then acting Defence Minister, Ralph Hanan, who regarded it as quite improper for a Secretary of Defence to report on such 'pacifist lines.' For example, Hunn had written in his report that the 'Vietcong enemy, except for certain regular formations, are harmless peasants and villagers by day and guerrillas by night' and that New Zealand's 'small orthodox units would make no difference to the course of this kind of warfare.'³² Regarding his Prime Minister, McKinnon understood Holyoake was 'sensitive' about his own lack of military service and 'felt a reluctance to send men into battle' because of this. This was in contrast to Holyoake's deputy Prime Minister, John Marshall, and Deputy

³⁰ Major General Walter McKinnon (Retired), "New Zealand Military Involvement in Vietnam, December 1980," in *McKinnon Papers (Papers Relating to the Vietnam Conflict 1965, 1981-1989)*, National Library of New Zealand, Wellington.

³¹ McKinnon, "New Zealand Military Involvement in Vietnam, December 1980."

³² McKinnon said that Hannan was so incensed with the report from Hunn that he even considered 'tearing it up and flushing it down the toilet.' McKinnon, "New Zealand Military Involvement in Vietnam, December 1980," and Jack Hunn, "Vietnam, 29 April 1965," in MD23/4/1 Volume 1 Defence Aid to South Vietnam: General 29 April 1965 – 10 July 1967, NZDF Archives, Wellington.

Defence Minister Hanan, who had both been 'Infantry Company Commanders in World War II.'³³

Holyoake's ongoing search for opportunities to delay the departure of the battery continued to annoy his senior Cabinet colleagues throughout the middle of 1965. On hearing in July that British Prime Minister Harold Wilson had suggested that the battery might be delayed in order to give the North Vietnamese an opportunity to respond to a Commonwealth Peace Mission proposal, Marshall was perturbed enough to write that to put off the departure 'would mean that we would be likely to get the worst of both worlds: that is, we would have suffered and would continue to suffer the attacks of those who oppose military involvement, and at the same time would forfeit to some extent the confidence of our supporters in New Zealand.'³⁴

Marshall was equally scathing of Holyoake's habit of waiting until the very last moment to proceed with military deployments. As a former soldier, he felt it was 'asking altogether too much of wives and families to keep them in suspense until literally a few hours before the departure time' and strongly believed that 'morale' would 'suffer.'³⁵ He concluded his message to Holyoake by urging the Prime Minister to 'end the general uncertainty in New Zealand by announcing the battery will go' in order to avoid 'the charge that we have not kept faith with our allies.' However, Marshall was not prepared to send the final statement to Holyoake and elected instead it be forwarded to McIntosh for onward distribution as the Secretary of External Affairs saw fit. Lloyd White agreed with Marshall and told McIntosh on 8 July:

the Prime Minister's various statements around the world about possible delay in sending the battery have been over-publicised here and it has got to the point where they are doing more harm than good both politically and in respect of the physical arrangements for the troops. They are even the subject of ridicule in many quarters...³⁶

Despite Hunn's enthusiasm for a limited contribution which focused on 'hospitals and schools or helping build roads and suchlike,' and the fact the Prime Minister desperately

³³ McKinnon, "New Zealand Military Involvement in Vietnam, December 1980."

³⁴ John Marshall, "8 July 1965," in PM478/4/6 Part 7 South Vietnam: Military Assistance from Australia and New Zealand 1 July – 29 October 1965, ANZ, Wellington.

³⁵ Marshall, "8 July 1965."

³⁶ Marshall, "8 July 1965."

wished this to be the option he could take, it was clear to McKinnon nothing less than a genuine combat unit would be acceptable to New Zealand's allies.³⁷ The suggestion that the existing construction unit be redesignated a combat force was also mooted. McKinnon was able to remind the Prime Minister of the increased risk to a unit of this type and it was likely to be more exposed to the enemy rather than less.³⁸

Further pressure from the United States during this period is likely to have removed any real flexibility Holyoake and his Secretary of Defence felt they had. On 24 May, Eyre reported back to Wellington on his discussions with United States Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara earlier that day. According to Eyre, McNamara had spoken 'directly and bluntly...in a way he felt possible only between close friends' reminding his New Zealand counterpart that Australia had 'begun to realise the seriousness of the situation and had taken some substantial steps to increase their defence effort' by contributing a battalion to Vietnam. The United Kingdom had also 'backed up their words about staying in Malaysia with extra forces.'³⁹ McNamara told Eyre that New Zealand 'needed to do more,' in particular 'increase the defence budget if it was to be sure of the continued presence of the United States over the next ten years and more.'⁴⁰

A White House memorandum dated 28 June 1965 gave an interesting insight into Holyoake's own assessment of the Vietnam situation. The memorandum detailed a conversation between Holyoake, President Johnson, Assistant Secretary of State William Bundy and the United States and New Zealand Ambassadors on the subject of New Zealand forces in Vietnam. When asked by the President about the domestic reaction to the decision to deploy combat troops, the memorandum recorded that Holyoake said:

...the man in the street had only a very dim idea of what Vietnam stood for, but implied the Government would take a different view...The Prime Minister said that New Zealand opinion seemed to be moving in a more favourable direction, although the overwhelming bulk of the New Zealand people were emotionally

³⁷ McKinnon, "New Zealand Military Involvement in Vietnam, December 1980."

³⁸ McKinnon would not agree to change the designation of the engineer team and not increase its defensive capability. The unit would have to be withdrawn to a secure American or Australian area where it could be protected and could be given building tasks. Then McKinnon told Holyoake that he did not think that even the Prime Minister was 'entitled to ask me as Head of the Army to make our combat task the construction of cookhouses and latrines for our allies.' McKinnon, "New Zealand Military Involvement in Vietnam, December 1980" and Laurie Barber, *Red Coat To Jungle Green: New Zealand's Army in Peace and War*, (Wellington: INL Print, 1984), p.163.

³⁹ DEA, "Vietnam, 21 May 1965," in PM478/4/6 Part 5.

⁴⁰ DEA, "Vietnam, 21 May 1965."

opposed to any war and it took a good deal to replace this emotion by the logic of the situation. He said that leading newspapers were now generally behind the Government, although they had some trouble with universities and the clergy. He said that there should be no doubt that the Government itself was 100% in accord with United States policy.⁴¹

161 Battery was formally welcomed to South Vietnam on 28 July 1965.⁴² It was deployed by RNZAF C-130 Hercules aircraft and was the first occasion in which a New Zealand unit had moved by air, fully-equipped, into a war zone. A total of 11 C-130 sorties were used to move the battery including its logistic support element (two of these were for the advance party).⁴³

If Holyoake believed a single battery of guns would satiate the United States for the remainder of 1965, he was to be disappointed. In a personal letter written on 26 July, President Johnson asked Holyoake for further military contributions and offered to make Ambassador Herbert Powell 'available for consultation as to the types of additional assistance' sought.⁴⁴ Holyoake wrote back to Johnson on 2 August complaining of the considerable difficulties New Zealand would have in providing any further military contributions.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, two days after Holyoake received the note from Johnson further exploratory discussions commenced as to what New Zealand might be able to offer as additional forces.

On 28 July the New Zealand Chiefs of Staff Committee agreed to make further approaches to their Australian counterparts to discern what may be required but cautioned New Zealand representatives in Canberra that Wellington was 'perilously close to the bottom of the barrel.'⁴⁶ It was possible that the battery could be brought up to its full strength of six guns but while its commitment to Malaysia remained New Zealand's primary focus, there was 'very little scope indeed' to provide anything more.⁴⁷ The Australians had advised the United States they would be in no position to consider

⁴¹ William Bundy, 28 June 1965, quoted in Dickens, *New Zealand and the Vietnam War: Official Policy Advice to the Government 1960-1972*, p.10.

⁴² Sir Stephen Weir, "Victor Force, 6 August 1965," in PM478/4/6 Part 7.

⁴³ Aircraft loads had to be planned so that the personnel and equipment arrived in logical and balanced sequence, so that if necessary the Battery could become operational immediately. McGibbon, *The New Zealand Army in Vietnam 1964-1972*, pp. 65-66.

⁴⁴ President Lyndon Johnson via US Embassy in Wellington, "26 July 1965," in PM478/4/6 Part 7.

⁴⁵ Keith Holyoake, "Vietnam, 3 August 1965," in PM478/4/6 Part 7.

⁴⁶ Chiefs of Staff Meeting (COS (65) M.18), "Vietnam, 28 July 1965," in PM478/4/6 Part 7.

⁴⁷ DEA, "Vietnam, 28 July 1965," in PM478/4/6 Part 7.

despatching a further battalion to Vietnam until February/March 1966 but before then it could put together 'ancillary units' (including a six-gun battery, light helicopters and fixed-wing observation aircraft and armoured corps and engineer elements) totalling about 300 men.⁴⁸ Holyoake and his Defence advisers had therefore been provided a window of nearly six months in which to prepare for further contributions. There were opportunities to provide more as his Ministers and advisers advocated in the coming months but once again, Holyoake took all of that time to make the most meagre of additional contributions.

In 1965 New Zealand finally committed a combat contingent to Vietnam. Holyoake's decisions had mainly been dictated by New Zealand's collective security alliance responsibilities. The Prime Minister had little real alternative. Of all the options, Roberto Rabel accurately assessed that the commitments made in 1965 were token and a 'bare minimum that could have been credibly sent.'⁴⁹ By the end of 1965, it seemed clear officials in Wellington believed alliance commitments pertaining to Vietnam were of sufficient importance to seriously consider reducing New Zealand's military contribution in Malaysia. While any withdrawal of forces from Malaysia, even if only for temporary duty in Vietnam, would in all likelihood draw a most concerned reaction from both Malaysia and the United Kingdom, there was little choice. Close monitoring of Australian policy thinking made it clear to New Zealand how its ANZAC partner was going to respond. After visiting Canberra in early October 1965, newly promoted CDS Lieutenant-General Leonard Thornton returned to New Zealand and advised that Australia was 'unanimous that the United States request for the employment of the Australian battalion anywhere within the confines of the III Corps area and of the Australian battery anywhere in Vietnam should be acceded to.'⁵⁰ Thornton also revealed that barring a change in the direction in which the Borneo 'Confrontation' was progressing, it was probable Australia would send a second battalion to Vietnam by the middle of 1966.⁵¹

At the end of February 1966 the New Zealand High Commission in Canberra advised Wellington that Australia shortly planned to increase their contribution in South Vietnam

⁴⁸ DEA, "Vietnam, 28 July 1965."

⁴⁹ Rabel, *New Zealand and the Vietnam War*, pp. 136-137.

⁵⁰ Lieutenant-General Leonard Thornton, "Visit to Australia, 5 October 1965," in PM478/4/6 Part 7.

⁵¹ Thornton, "Visit to Australia, 5 October 1965."

from a second battalion to a 'Task Force (Brigade) Organisation'.⁵² The Australians firmly believed that a Task Force was the 'most suitable minimum Australian contribution' in the event of further forces being deployed to South Vietnam.⁵³ The benefits for New Zealand of such a course were not lost on its military planners. The High Commission commented that a Task Force would provide an ideal platform from which to integrate 'sub-units of New Zealand arms or services' should Wellington wish to later increase its military to South Vietnam.⁵⁴ The opportunity to increase the contribution was raised by Thornton in early March when he proposed the artillery battery might be integrated into the Task Force and a further token contribution of Headquarters personnel for a joint regiment be offered to the Australians.⁵⁵

On 8 March, Australian Prime Minister Harold Holt publicly announced that a self-contained Task Force totalling approximately 4,500 personnel would replace the single Australian battalion in Vietnam. Holt added that the Task Force would contain, in addition to its headquarters, two infantry battalions, logistic support units, as well as a flight of eight Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Iroquois helicopters, and an SAS Squadron. The 100 AATTV advisers would also remain.⁵⁶ The Task Force would allow the Australians to independently operate in South Vietnam for an indefinite period, using their own operational concepts and procedures. Although it would necessarily function under Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) operational control, the Task Force would be a wholly identifiable Australian effort which would satisfy both political and military requirements.⁵⁷

By the end of March 1966, Wellington had been advised the Australians had also been allocated their own tactical area of operational responsibility (TAOR) in Phuoc Tuy province.⁵⁸ The strategic importance of the province was its dominant position in relation

⁵² DEA, "Vietnam, 24 February 1966," in PM478/4/6 Part 8 South Vietnam: Military Assistance from Australia and New Zealand 9 November 1965 – 31 October 1966, ANZ, Wellington.

⁵³ McNeill and Grey, 'The Australian Army and the Vietnam War,' p. 30.

⁵⁴ DEA, "Vietnam, 24 February 1966."

⁵⁵ Lieutenant-General Leonard Thornton, "Increase of Strength of New Zealand Battery in Vietnam, 4 March 1966," in PM478/4/6 Part 8.

⁵⁶ Harold Holt to the Australian House of Representatives, "8 March 1966," in PM478/4/6 Part 8.

⁵⁷ McNeill and Grey, 'The Australian Army and the Vietnam War,' p. 30.

⁵⁸ COMAFV would place the operational elements of his force under the operational control of the American II Corps Commander but was also responsible to the Australian Government for the safety of the force and therefore had the authority to 'scrutinise' all operations involving Australian forces before they took place. McNeill and Grey, 'The Australian Army and the Vietnam War,' p.36

to both the port of Vung Tau and Route 15. The highway between the port and Saigon would also be useful for resupplying the Task Force and, should the event present itself, a tactical withdrawal route.⁵⁹

The province was also situated in an area conducive to brigade-sized operations. Two thirds of the area was covered in rainforest and secondary jungle, so the terrain and vegetation was also believed to suit Australian operating methods. Mountains were located in the south-western, south and north-eastern areas of the province and demographic patterns in Phuoc Tuy also favoured the separation of enemy units from the general population - their source of replenishment. The majority of the population was Buddhist with a smaller proportion Roman Catholic. Most of the province was in communist control save for the capital Baria and the narrow strip connecting it to the Vung Tau peninsula. Strategically, the province was vitally important to hold because under Vietcong control, it would 'contribute to the isolation of Saigon.'⁶⁰ Wellington was also made aware that operations in support of Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) and United States Forces outside of Phuoc Tuy province could be carried [out] if agreed to between Commander Australian Forces and General Westmoreland.'⁶¹

McIntosh wrote to Holyoake that same month urging increases to once again satisfy Australian and United States expectations. The best solution, in McIntosh's view, was to simply add the two guns (and 27 men) that would bring the artillery battery 'up to its normal complement.'⁶² McKinnon had put to his Chiefs of Staff Committee a similar proposal. The Australians incorporated a six-gun battery into their Artillery regiment,

⁵⁹ McNeill and Grey, 'The Australian Army and the Vietnam War,' p.36

⁶⁰ McNeill and Grey, 'The Australian Army and the Vietnam War,' p.31 and Newman, *The ANZAC Battalion: A Record of the Tour of the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment 1st Battalion, The Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment (The Anzac Battalion) in South Vietnam, 1967-1968, Volume One*, p.45.

⁶¹ The Australian Government had provided their artillery with a different directive from that of the rest of the Task Force, which enabled the batteries to be used anywhere in Vietnam in support of American or Vietnamese forces if the Task Force Commander approved the proposed employment. However, no operations could be undertaken by the New Zealand battery, away from the Task Force, without specific permission from Wellington. It appeared, nevertheless, that most were happy with the establishment of the Task Force and a specific area of responsibility. During a visit to Saigon in April 1965, Defence Minister Eyre was told by Lt Gen. Nguyen Van Thieu, the Chairman of the South Vietnamese National Leadership Committee, that he welcomed the idea of an Australian Task Force being given its own area of tactical responsibility, adding that 'frankly Australians and New Zealanders were more adaptable to jungle warfare than Americans.' New Zealand Embassy Bangkok, "12 April 1966" and New Zealand High Commission Canberra, "Employment of Australian Forces in Vietnam, 31 March 1966," both in PM478/4/6 Part 8.

⁶² Alister McIntosh, "Vietnam: Increased Military Aid, 11 March 1966," in PM478/4/6 Part 8.

and although Borneo commitments prevented him from providing ‘a troop for the Special Air Services Squadron or a troop of construction engineers,’ McKinnon did recommend an increased contribution ‘totalling 118 personnel could be made up of additional battery personnel (27), ten personnel for regimental Task Force and other headquarters, a troop of a Field Engineer Squadron (57) and a section of a Field Ambulance (24).’⁶³ The proposal was brave and in a hand-written note to McIntosh, scribbled on the proposal, Head of Department of External Affairs’ Defence Division Ian Stewart wrote:

Army (supported by Chiefs) are proposing almost doubling the force in Vietnam. I understand Mr Eyre will be putting this forward in Cabinet, I suppose today. This looks to me rather too ambitious.⁶⁴

He was correct. On 14 March 1966, Cabinet agreed to the recommended additions to the battery but rejected the proposal to provide the headquarters personnel, field engineers or ambulance unit. The decision was not made public until several weeks later.

In mid-June 1966, Holyoake visited Australia. The Prime Minister’s principal message re-iterated that New Zealand’s major military commitment continued to be Malaysia and although some slight benefit might accrue from the cessation of active ‘Confrontation’ operations, it ‘would not make it any easier to supply additional forces to South Vietnam.’⁶⁵ Holyoake was able to state that while it might be ‘technically possible to provide additional very small units’ such as transferring the SAS detachment from Borneo, or other limited specialist personnel, New Zealand was still not in a position to supply anything comparable to an infantry battalion to Vietnam, which was what was assumed the Australians were looking for.⁶⁶

Despite such continued resistance to consider anything more than the most limited of contributions, changing geopolitical circumstances from mid-1966 prevented the ‘Malaysia commitments’ default argument from being used with any justifiable credibility again. On 15 June the British Prime Minister Wilson advised his Labour Caucus of the United Kingdom’s planned military withdrawal from the Far East of ‘every

⁶³ Chiefs of Staff, “COS/M (66) 6), 11 March 1966,” in PM478/4/6 Part 8.

⁶⁴ Lieutenant-General Leonard Thornton, “Additional New Zealand Army Contribution to South Vietnam, 11 March 1966,” in PM478/4/6 Part 8.

⁶⁵ Keith Holyoake, “Prime Minister’s Visit to Canberra Discussions with Mr Holt Military Involvement in Vietnam, 17 June 1966,” in PM478/4/6 Part 8.

⁶⁶ Holyoake, “Prime Minister’s Visit to Canberra Discussions with Mr Holt Military Involvement in Vietnam, 17 June 1966.”

unit whose continued presence there ceases to be necessary.’⁶⁷ Both Australia and New Zealand had been desperate to avoid withdrawal of forces from the Commonwealth Strategic Reserve (CSR) which might hasten the withdrawal of British forces from the area but Wilson’s announcement in June finally confirmed to both Australia and New Zealand that they had much less influence in encouraging the retention of a United Kingdom presence in the Far East than they had previously thought or hoped.

For the Australians, the ‘alliance shift’ came as less of a shock than it did to those in Wellington. Glen St. John Barclay wrote that for the first time in its history Australia was not only committed as the ally of a foreign country to a war in which the United Kingdom was unable to take part, but it was also a conflict about which Australian officials seemed to have formed views on significantly different from those of their most traditional allies.⁶⁸ For Australia the transition from old major ally to new major ally appeared to be taken in its stride; a ‘new relationship was ripening between Australia and the United States at the expense of those previously existing between both of them and the United Kingdom...’⁶⁹

In contrast, New Zealand’s involvement with the United Kingdom in its South East Asian defence commitments had come about as a result of long standing cultural and ideological linkages. New Zealand was far more dependent, through these historical ties, United Kingdom defence facilities for the maintenance of New Zealand forces in the area. By the end of ‘Confrontation’ the increasing tempo of United States activity in South Vietnam and the inability of the British to commit forces to operations in Thailand or South Vietnam, New Zealand was forced to consider the very real issue of providing military support to the new ‘ultimate guarantor of its security.’⁷⁰ It was something New Zealand officials may have been expecting for some time, but there seems to have been little genuine effort to accept the practical realities of such a fundamental change in alliance strategy and co-ordination. The continued realisation of the United Kingdom’s withdrawal from South East Asia still remained a cause for much anxiety in both Australia and New Zealand but particularly so for Wellington officials. George Laking

⁶⁷ Barclay, *A Very Small Insurance Policy*, p. 137.

⁶⁸ Barclay, *A Very Small Insurance Policy*, pp. 140-141.

⁶⁹ Barclay, *A Very Small Insurance Policy*, pp. 140-141.

⁷⁰ A.J.A. Cooper, Defence Planning Staff, DPS(66)52 “Part One – Factors Affecting New Zealand Contributions to the Defence of South East Asia, 5 October 1966,” in PM478/4/6 Part 8.

and the Department of External Affairs (DEA) were no less concerned about the predicament in which New Zealand and Australia were being left as a result of future British plans. Laking, who had returned from Washington to take up the position of Secretary of External Affairs, still felt it prudent to exercise caution before deciding any further increases in troop contributions to Vietnam. He argued:

...Assuming that the Government intends to maintain the long-standing policy of a forward posture in defence, which involves our contributing to the best of our ability to an allied effort in South East Asia, it seems impracticable to decide whether anything more can be done in Vietnam unless and until we know what our future obligations will be in Malaysia and Singapore.⁷¹

In the matter of CSR commitments to Malaysia and Singapore, Laking said there was an 'historic tendency for the Australians, in making decisions about their own situation, to act on assumptions of their own about the kind of contribution New Zealand might make' and it would be vital for the two Prime Ministers – or at the very least Defence Ministers – to speak first to ensure any future decisions or deployments be carried out in a more co-ordinated fashion.⁷²

It was felt Australia, with larger forces at her disposal, had been able to maintain a dual position by providing significant military contributions to both allies. Australia had been able to demonstrate it could in fact deploy a substantial proportion of her forces to South Vietnam without having to withdraw from her ANZAM commitment to the CSR or SEATO obligations. New Zealand had avoided making any increased contribution to South Vietnam by using the 'Malaysia commitment' default argument to ensure its ability to act, in association with the United Kingdom, in any SEATO or ANZAM context was not seriously impaired. There was no question New Zealand would permanently withdraw its forces from the CSR; this was unlikely to be in the best interests of the United States, Australia or New Zealand.

What was being considered by New Zealand, and the only realistic option open to officials with few alternatives, was a temporary withdrawal of forces from Malaysia for

⁷¹ George Laking, "New Zealand Military Contribution in Vietnam, 11 August 1967," in PM478/4/6 Part 10 South Vietnam: Military Assistance from Australia and New Zealand 1 May – 23 November 1967, ANZ, Wellington.

⁷² Laking, "New Zealand Military Contribution in Vietnam, 11 August 1967."

service in South Vietnam. It was, in fact, 'the only satisfactory course open.'⁷³ This required the acquiescence of the United Kingdom (for logistic support) on the one hand and Malaysia and Singapore (for the continuing use of bases in addition to the reduction of troops) on the other.⁷⁴ Officials felt with the cessation of 'Confrontation,' it should be possible to persuade these countries that the main external threat to their security now came from Vietnam. From now on, New Zealand officials would utilise this argument when justifying decisions to deploy further military resources to South Vietnam.

Once proposed, planning had to take place to determine what forces New Zealand might offer to send to South Vietnam. In 1966, the October 'Seven Nation' talks in Manila provided the obvious forum at which New Zealand would be asked to consider making additional contributions, and Defence and DEA officials examined the options.⁷⁵ Naval possibilities included the deployment of the Royal New Zealand Navy (RNZN) CSR frigate to the South Vietnamese coast for two to three months at a time. Defence officials understood that the United States regarded such a contribution as 'being militarily useful' and would provide valuable operational experience unavailable to the navy since its commitment to the Korean conflict had ended in 1954.⁷⁶ A naval frigate also provided a nationally identifiable contribution. The appeal of a frigate option was that it could operate from the CSR base in Singapore. However, if Singapore was not available, then the warship would have to operate from the United States Navy's Subic Bay facility in the Philippines which entailed the added expense of setting up a base support organisation 'backed by air-transported stores from New Zealand.'⁷⁷

⁷³ Cooper, "Part One – Factors Affecting New Zealand Contributions to the Defence of South East Asia, 5 October 1966."

⁷⁴ Cooper, "Part One – Factors Affecting New Zealand Contributions to the Defence of South East Asia, 5 October 1966."

⁷⁵ The conference, which included the seven leaders of all Free World Forces' Nations took place, in Manila, between 24-25 October 1966. A.J.A. Cooper, Defence Planning Staff, DPS(66)52 "Part Two – Possible Additional Military Contributions to South Vietnam, 5 October 1966," in PM478/4/6 Part 8.

⁷⁶ Matthew Wright, *Blue Water Kiwi: New Zealand's Naval Story* (Auckland: Reed Books, 2001), p.168.

⁷⁷ Cooper, "Part Two – Possible Additional Military Contributions to South Vietnam, 5 October 1966." Even though DEA would later support a naval contribution on the grounds of advertising national identity, by the middle of 1967, the logistical implications of the Australian experiences of deploying a naval vessel for service in Vietnam dictated that the COS Committee would only recommend that the New Zealand Government offer a frigate for service in Vietnam on the proviso that it not be 'substantially employed in a gunfire support/shore bombardment role.' It appeared that the Navy could not afford to use too many rounds of ammunition. Chiefs of Staff Committee COS/M(67)30, "Australian Naval Contribution to Vietnam, 31 July 1967," in PM478/4/6 Part 10, Archives New Zealand, Wellington.

The RNZAF could provide either a 'Strike Contribution' of four medium bombers and a detachment of three Medium Range Transport (MRT) aircraft or even possibly the entire MRT squadron of Bristol Freighters, from within the existing CSR forces. Alternatively, Defence officials thought that the RNZAF could send up to six Canberra bomber-crews to man USAF B-57 aircraft and 40-50 supporting crew directly from New Zealand.⁷⁸

From an Army perspective, Defence officials believed that to keep the Malaysian-based Battalion on station when the prime requirement emphasised by both the United States and Australian Task Force was for infantry forces in South Vietnam, could have serious 'morale, recruiting and operational efficiency' implications.⁷⁹ It was recognised that New Zealand infantry units could participate in South Vietnam either by the direct transfer of the New Zealand Battalion from the CSR, or the attachment - in rotation - of a rifle company to an Australian battalion within the Australian Task Force.⁸⁰ It was argued that the rifle company option gave added operational flexibility to the strengthened Australian battalion. The Army was also prepared to investigate the feasibility of sending a troop of armoured personnel carriers, a troop of engineers, or a section of Army dump trucks.⁸¹

The only other Army option that 'could most readily be made available for service in South Vietnam' was an SAS detachment. Defence officials who were at the time considering 1 Ranger Squadron's future, understood the SAS was high on the list of Australian and United States requirements in South Vietnam and because detachments had been made available for Borneo since early 1965, it would be relatively straightforward to transfer any future deployment from Malaysia directly to South Vietnam. Any New Zealand SAS contribution would most likely be attached to the Australian SAS Squadron in the Task Force. It was also understood that no more than 40 soldiers were needed to meet the Australian requirements.⁸² While it was acknowledged that some problems of equipment compatibility would need to be overcome, it was not altogether problematic for a half-squadron contribution. More importantly, it was

⁷⁸Cooper, "Part Two – Possible Additional Military Contributions to South Vietnam, 5 October 1966."

⁷⁹Cooper, "Part Two – Possible Additional Military Contributions to South Vietnam, 5 October 1966."

⁸⁰Cooper, "Part Two – Possible Additional Military Contributions to South Vietnam, 5 October 1966."

⁸¹Cooper, "Part Two – Possible Additional Military Contributions to South Vietnam, 5 October 1966."

⁸² In fact Defence officials believed that the personnel required for service in South Vietnam would probably be less than the present strength (40) of the detachment in Borneo. COS Committee and Defence Planning Committee, Annex B to DPC(66)52, "Possible Additional Military Contribution to South Vietnam, 7 October 1966," in PM478/4/6 Part 8.

claimed an SAS detachment could be deployed at relatively short notice and be made available in addition to any subsequent rifle company contributions.⁸³

New Zealand Infantry to South Vietnam

The United States began 1966 with approximately 180,000 troops in South Vietnam and ended with 380,000.⁸⁴ American forces supporting the war effort but not based physically in Vietnam included nearly 60,000 men aboard warships operating off Vietnam and an estimated 35,000 servicemen in neighbouring Thailand. South Vietnamese soldiers (as of mid-August 1966) numbered 705,000, equally divided between regular army units and police, irregular and regional defence units. South Korean forces were increased by 25,000 to a total of approximately 46,000. Other troop contributions by the end of 1966 included 5,500 Australians, 1,000 support forces from the Philippines, 180 Thais and 150 New Zealanders.⁸⁵

After a visit to South Vietnam at the end of 1966, Thornton reported on 20 December that the Australian Task Force's first Commander, Brigadier Oliver Jackson, had specifically requested more New Zealand soldiers because he considered his force's effectiveness was hampered by insufficient infantry. Thornton added that during a meeting with General Westmoreland, the American commander had also specifically asked for both New Zealand SAS and New Zealand infantry.⁸⁶ Thornton commented that these most recent requests for a greater New Zealand effort came as a result of American awareness of the country's reduced commitments in Malaysia.⁸⁷

The suggested recommendations to add to New Zealand's existing artillery contribution were also endorsed by diplomatic officials. George Laking, by now McIntosh's replacement as Secretary of External Affairs and Permanent Head of the Prime Minister's Department, clearly believed an increased commitment was very much in the national

⁸³ Cooper, "Part Two – Possible Additional Military Contributions to South Vietnam, 5 October 1966."

⁸⁴ Lester A. Sobel and Hal Kosut (eds), *South Vietnam: U.S.-Communist Confrontation in South East Asia, Volume Two, 1966-1967*, (New York: Facts On File Inc, 1969), p.75.

⁸⁵ Sobel and Kosut (eds), *South Vietnam: U.S.-Communist Confrontation in South East Asia*, p.75 and Rabel, *New Zealand and the Vietnam War*, p. 202.

⁸⁶ Lieutenant-General Leonard Thornton, "Chief of Defence Staff – Visit to South Vietnam December 1966, 20 December 1966," in PM 478/4/6 Part 9 South Vietnam: Military Assistance from Australia and New Zealand 1 November 1966 – 25 March 1967, ANZ, Wellington.

⁸⁷ Thornton, "Chief of Defence Staff – Visit to South Vietnam December 1966, 20 December 1966."

interest and on 13 February 1967 he presented Holyoake with a formal recommendation to that effect. He argued that it was vital 'to provide a force which in total numbers represents a more adequate national contribution' and suggested adding an infantry contingent of about 184 (to be drawn mainly from New Zealand troops already in Malaysia), a 40-man New Zealand SAS unit and 40 Army engineers would be the best contribution.⁸⁸ On 20 February, Cabinet agreed that New Zealand could offer only the single infantry company.

On 11 May, a Rifle Company of 134 soldiers from the 1st Battalion, Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment (1 RNZIR), based in Malaysia with the CSR, arrived at Nui Dat and came under the command of the Australian Task Force. Commanded by Major John Mace, the New Zealanders provided an additional fifth rifle company for 2 Royal Australian Regiment (2RAR). The company numbers had to be increased from 90 soldiers to 134 in order to match the size of the Australian rifle companies. Victor One (V1) Company – as the rifle company became known - had already served in Malaya and Borneo and would complete the final six months of its two-year overseas tour in South Vietnam.⁸⁹

Despite the V1 deployment, pressure on Holyoake was maintained to provide further contributions during a visit to Wellington by the American Ambassador in Vietnam, General Maxwell Taylor, and Clark Gifford, Chair of President Johnson's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board.⁹⁰ The option to deploy a small New Zealand SAS detachment again was mooted by officials. The New Zealand High Commission in Canberra reported on 10 August that the Australians had once again 'indicated active interest in our intentions on our SAS [SQN] because of Australian experience of the usefulness of theirs.'⁹¹ Laking also suggested to Holyoake that such an increase of forces

⁸⁸ George Laking, "27 January 1967," in PM 478/4/6 Part 9

⁸⁹ McGibbon, *The New Zealand Army in Vietnam 1964-1972*, pp. 71-72 and McNeill and Ekins, *On the Offensive: The Australian Army in the Vietnam War, January 1967-June 1968*, p.162.

⁹⁰ Sobel and Kosut (eds), *South Vietnam: U.S.-Communist Confrontation in South East Asia*, p. 352. On 27 July, in advance of the visit, Laking wrote to Holyoake that if pressed, Defence officials felt that New Zealand might be able to spare naval personnel to man United States patrol craft; an SAS detachment of 40 men; two army helicopter pilots; a 60-man transport platoon, or a 40-man engineer troop or a 40-man armoured personnel carrier troop (provided 14 APCs were bought); and RNZAF 30-man helicopter contribution (including 3 Iroquois) and an Orion detachment (1 aircraft and 34 men). George Laking, "Notes for Discussion with Mr Clark Gifford and General Maxwell Taylor on Vietnam, 27 July 1967," in PM478/4/6 Part 10, ANZ, Wellington.

⁹¹ New Zealand High Commission Canberra, "Number 866, 10 August 1967," in PM478/4/6 Part 10.

could be carried out quickly without receiving 'too much attention.'⁹² Holyoake ignored the suggestion.

In early October 1967 Thornton presented to his Minister an outline of Australian thinking and New Zealand's 'alternatives.' Thornton told David Thomson the Australians were scheduled to announce on 18 October an additional 'battalion and up to a squadron of medium tanks' would join the Task Force by the end of November.⁹³ Thornton added he had been advised that irrespective of whether or not New Zealand was to send additional forces to South Vietnam, the Australians 'strongly' urged New Zealand continue with its physical presence in Malaysia. Any withdrawal of the New Zealand battalion, added Thornton, would gravely impact upon the Australians' 'own ability to remain in Malaysia.'⁹⁴ When it came to the question of additional military contributions, Thornton reported that the Australians had again expressed a desire for 'additional land forces in the Australian Task Force, especially SAS and infantry' and in that order of priority.⁹⁵

There had been initial resistance to the idea of a joint Australian/New Zealand battalion made up of two Australian and two New Zealand companies. However, Thornton reported it had finally been agreed that should New Zealand wish to contribute further infantry, the Australians would be 'comfortable' with an additional rifle company from the battalion in Malaysia, provided that reinforcements could be found from New Zealand or elsewhere if a subsequent 'counterinsurgency situation had to be met' thereafter.⁹⁶ Thornton concluded by telling Thomson he would prepare a paper by the end of the year giving the New Zealand Defence Council priorities for possible additional military contributions, as well as likely costs. Provisional figures included the following:

⁹² George Laking, "New Zealand Military Contribution in Vietnam, 11 August 1967," in PM478/4/6 Part 10.

⁹³ Lieutenant-General Leonard Thornton, "New Zealand Contributions In South East Asia, 6 October 1967," in PM478/4/6 Part 10.

⁹⁴ Thornton, "New Zealand Contributions In South East Asia, 6 October 1967."

⁹⁵ Thornton, "New Zealand Contributions In South East Asia, 6 October 1967."

⁹⁶ Thornton also said that the Australians had agreed that both New Zealand companies in Vietnam should serve in the same unit and would meet their own objection by dropping one Australian company so that the two New Zealand companies would serve with three Australian companies in an 'ANZAC Battalion.' Thornton, "New Zealand Contributions In South East Asia, 6 October 1967."

<u>Our Priorities</u>		<u>Overseas Costs \$(Mill)</u>	
		<u>Capital</u>	<u>Recurring</u>
1.	SAS half-squadron	.05	.11
2.	Rifle Company from Malaysia	.152	.162
3.	RNZAF Canberra crews	-	.17
4.	RNZN Frigate	.01	.218
5.	Engineer troop	.05	.11

Table 1: New Zealand Defence Council Costs, December 1967.⁹⁷

Thornton suggested to Thomson that the SAS and additional rifle company priorities be recommended to Cabinet for immediate approval but it would also be necessary to inform British and Malaysian authorities of the intention to transfer a further company from Malaysia.⁹⁸ External Affairs also agreed with Thornton's recommendations.⁹⁹ A week later, Defence officials revised the estimated cost of the SAS detachment's deployment. Officials suggested to deploy a full squadron of SAS (6 officers and 64 other ranks) for a 12-month tour required additional annual recurring costs, not provided for within the existing Defence Vote, of approximately \$154,250, an extra \$250,000 in 'Overseas Fund Content' and other one-off capital costs of \$30,000.¹⁰⁰ Officials believed some of the estimated costs could be reduced because of the availability of certain items of equipment, accommodation stores and clothing, already in Vietnam with the Australian squadron.¹⁰¹

Interestingly, by comparison, a Frigate option would cost in excess of \$322,000 in additional annual costs not provided for in the Defence Vote. While there would no doubt be a far more nationally identifiable presence in Vietnam with the Frigate (made up of 17 Officers and 233 ratings), this option would require a second warship to be

⁹⁷ Thornton, "New Zealand Contributions In South East Asia, 6 October 1967."

⁹⁸ Thornton, "New Zealand Contributions In South East Asia, 6 October 1967."

⁹⁹ George Laking, "Additional Forces for Vietnam, 11 October 1967, in PM478/4/6 Part 10.

¹⁰⁰ Defence Paper D (67)10, "Revised Costings: Additional Force for Vietnam, 11 October 1967," in PM478/4/6 Part 11 South Vietnam: Military Assistance from Australia and New Zealand 6 December 1967 – 23 December 1968, ANZ, Wellington.

¹⁰¹ Even though the New Zealand Squadron could be employed immediately with its currently held equipment, officials cautioned 'sooner or later' it would need to replace incompatible items with Australian equipment. It was also hoped that items destined for 1 Ranger Squadron and included in the 1967/68 Army Capital Equipment Programme, could be obtained from the Australians and Americans, on 'a loan/replacement basis until they come to hand under the Programme purchase.' Defence Paper D (67)10, "Revised Costings: Additional Force for Vietnam, 11 October 1967."

despatched to Singapore – with the same number of personnel - for service within the CSR while the first Frigate operated with the United States 7th Fleet. Similarly, the Canberra bomber crew option (15 officers and 47 other ranks), politically unrealistic, would add an additional \$137,000 to the annual Defence Vote.¹⁰² More importantly, in none of the proposal documents does it state that a complete New Zealand Squadron deployment to South Vietnam could only be a ‘one-time’ deployment as New Zealand only had a single SAS Squadron; it could not be rotated.

By 9 October Cabinet had agreed in principle ‘that New Zealand should increase its military assistance’ and invited Thomson to once again submit ‘his recommendations on the form the additional contributions should take.’¹⁰³ Cabinet and Holyoake had still not made up their minds. However, this did not stop Holyoake from drafting a note to Holt inviting the Australian Prime Minister to ‘defer’ his announcement of an increased Australian contribution ‘for a week or so to enable simultaneous (although of course not identical) statements to be made in Canberra and Wellington.’¹⁰⁴

Holyoake indicated to his Australian counterpart that further New Zealand military forces would shortly be authorised and expected to make a public announcement on 24 October. He even suggested there would be mutual benefit in a joint communiqué declaration which would ‘provide a most useful reassurance that our two countries shared the same outlook and were working closely together.’¹⁰⁵ He then added ‘a New Zealand announcement which followed by a week or so an Australian one would be likely to be represented by the opponents of our involvement in Vietnam as evidence that New Zealand was simply being dragged along in the wake of its larger allies – an impression which I am understandably anxious should not gain currency.’¹⁰⁶ It seems rather presumptuous of Holyoake that he ask Holt to put off any announcement in order to assist the New Zealand Prime Minister with what he most likely considered was a rather unpalatable chore, without giving the Australians any specifics as to the numerical make up of the additional New Zealand contribution.

¹⁰² Defence Paper D (67)10, “Revised Costings: Additional Force for Vietnam, 11 October 1967.”

¹⁰³ Cabinet Minute CM 67/39/30, “Vietnam: Military Assistance, 10 October 1967, in PM478/4/6 Part 10.

¹⁰⁴ Laking, “Draft Message from Mr Holyoake to Mr Holt, 10 October 1967,” in PM478/4/6 Part 10.

¹⁰⁵ Laking, “Draft Message from Mr Holyoake to Mr Holt, 10 October 1967.”

¹⁰⁶ Laking, “Draft Message from Mr Holyoake to Mr Holt, 10 October 1967.”

At its meeting on 16 October 1967, Cabinet approved the deployment of a second infantry company to South Vietnam.¹⁰⁷ Within the same proposal, however, it rejected the deployment of an SAS Squadron, rejected the recommendation that discussions take place to enable RNZAF crews be deployed, and rejected the deployment of a troop of Army construction engineers.¹⁰⁸ Cabinet's decision was made despite Thomson's emphasising that the Australian military authorities had made it clear that they would give first preference to the addition of 'SAS and further infantry to the Australian Task Force.'¹⁰⁹ The Defence Minister added SAS operations in the Australian Task Force area had 'proved particularly effective,' United States military authorities had indicated the SAS and infantry would be welcome, and that a New Zealand SAS Squadron of 70 troops was available 'on 7 to 10 days notice [and] could be deployed directly from New Zealand and sustained indefinitely.'¹¹⁰ Rabel opined that the commitments made on 16 October suggested Holyoake's Government was 'even more intent on frugality in raising the premium.'¹¹¹ If this was the case, then it appears remarkable they did not opt for the cheaper and smaller SAS option, unless Cabinet was well aware that the SAS Squadron proposal was a 'one-off' option that could not be sustained ongoing.

The 16 October 1967 Cabinet decision came the same day the Australian Government advised New Zealand that an additional battalion group with helicopter support would be provided for the Task Force. This third battalion group would, according to Holt, 'have the effect of almost doubling the offensive capability' of the Task Force and 'add considerably to its operational effectiveness.'¹¹² The additional forces would raise the number of Australians in Vietnam to over 8,000. Australia would now have, concluded Holt, 'the most powerful and effective defence force it has ever had short of war-time mobilisation.'¹¹³

¹⁰⁷ Holyoake simply crossed out the New Zealand SAS option from Thomson's list of recommendations. Cabinet Paper CP (67) 894, "Additional Forces for Vietnam, 12 October 1967," in Cabinet Minute CM (67) 40, Cabinet Meeting, 16 October 1967, ANZ, Wellington.

¹⁰⁸ Cabinet Paper C 67/40/4, "Additional Forces For Vietnam, 16 October 1967," in Cabinet Minute CM (67) 40.

¹⁰⁹ Cabinet Minute CM (67) 40 of 16 October 1967.

¹¹⁰ David Thomson, "Minister of Defence Memorandum for Cabinet Defence Committee, 10 October 1967," in Cabinet Minute CM (67) 40.

¹¹¹ Rabel, *New Zealand and the Vietnam War*, pp. 215-216.

¹¹² Holyoake had been made aware on 13 October that Holt would announce Australia's further increases four days later. New Zealand High Commission Canberra, "Australian Forces in Vietnam, 17 October 1967," in PM478/4/6 Part 10.

¹¹³ The additional forces included a Centurion tank squadron (about 250 all ranks), additional helicopters with crews and servicing personnel for the Iroquois squadron, additional engineers and increased

On the evening of 16 October, Holyoake publicly announced the deployment of the second 170-man rifle company – known as Whiskey One (W1).¹¹⁴ Simultaneously, hurried signals were prepared and sent to London, Canberra and Kuala Lumpur. In these Wellington advised its High Commissions ‘a need to come to an early decision has made it impossible...to give as much advanced notice as we would have wished.’¹¹⁵ Because of the situation in Vietnam, the Government argued that it had little option but to make additional calls on the New Zealand Battalion in Malaysia – its ‘only real source of trained regular troops.’ The High Commission in Kuala Lumpur was also asked to stress the decision did ‘not imply any weakening’ in its support for Malaysia, but that the ‘need in Vietnam’ was ‘real.’¹¹⁶

Wellington also asked Kuala Lumpur to impress New Zealand had made it clear to Australia and the United States that it reserved the ‘right to withdraw both companies’ if Malaysia was subsequently threatened.¹¹⁷ Once again, the decision made by the Holyoake Government compelled its diplomatic representatives to carry out short-notice, damage-control presentations in the hope Malaysia and Singapore would understand New Zealand's decision. Was it necessary? Could Holyoake have deployed a nationally identifiable unit, not at the time otherwise committed that would have satisfied military requests and operational objectives of key allies, and leave its Malaysian-based forces intact (at least for the meantime) at minimal cost? By declining to send the SAS Squadron, had Holyoake and his Cabinet once again, missed an opportunity?

Concluding Notes

...not only New Zealand, the other allies, the Australians, the Filipinos and the South Koreans – they were all being asked to show the flag in a combat way.

Headquarters personnel, as well as the lending of a small number of Skyhawk pilots and maintenance crew to the United States Marines in South Vietnam. New Zealand High Commission Canberra, “Australian Forces in Vietnam, 17 October 1967.”

¹¹⁴ DEA to Washington/Canberra, “Additional Forces for Vietnam, 16 October 1967,” in PM478/4/6 Part 10.

¹¹⁵ DEA to London, Washington, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur and Canberra, “Additional Forces for Vietnam, 16 October 1967,” in PM478/4/6 Part 10.

¹¹⁶ DEA to London, Washington, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur and Canberra, “Additional Forces for Vietnam, 16 October 1967.”

¹¹⁷ DEA to London, Washington, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur and Canberra, “Additional Forces for Vietnam, 16 October 1967.”

Well, I think that was very unwelcome to Keith Holyoake, who was as I said, looking for trees to climb all the time, to get away from this pressure.¹¹⁸

As introduced in Chapter Two, never was there a period when officials were more frustrated with Holyoake's cautious approach to the commitment of New Zealand military forces than during the second half of the 1960s. Some may argue that the Prime Minister was holding back from making formal commitments in an attempt to be able to shuffle his meagre resources to the key points on the South East Asian map that required immediate attention.¹¹⁹ The continuing requirement to placate New Zealand's two most significant security allies – the United States and the United Kingdom – was always foremost in Holyoake's mind. However, his lack of enthusiasm for the military and his 'parsimonious' approach to commitments consistently rendered him both unable and unwilling to make decisions on military contributions until there was little or no alternative.

The Holyoake Government justified its military involvement in Vietnam by claiming that it was in the national interest of New Zealand to prevent the spread of communism by supporting alliance commitments to the United States (ANZUS) and SEATO.¹²⁰ A failure to make even a token contribution to the allied effort in Vietnam would have brought into question the basic assumptions underlying New Zealand's post-war national security policies. Throughout most of the Vietnam War period, and notwithstanding the considerable pressure the United States Government brought to bear on New Zealand, the Holyoake Government strove to keep New Zealand's involvement at the minimum level deemed necessary to meet its allies' expectations. It remained sceptical of the likely outcome of external military intervention in Vietnam. New Zealand's meagre military resources, the significant troop contribution in Malaysia, and the absence of any political will to introduce conscription were all obstacles to a more substantial effort, as were the anxieties of financial costs and domestic criticisms.

¹¹⁸ Copy of Thornton interview by Christopher Pugsley, 30 October 1991, for the NZDF Malayan Oral History Project, held in the NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington.

¹¹⁹ Rabel, *New Zealand and the Vietnam War*, Dickens, *New Zealand and the Vietnam War: Official Policy Advice to the Government 1960-1972* and Pugsley, *From Emergency to Confrontation* at numerous times point out these frustrations.

¹²⁰ It was also claimed that New Zealand was helping a small nation against outside interference. Rabel, *New Zealand and the Vietnam War*, p. 26-27.

Although local critics failed to diminish official support for United States policy, rising domestic criticism did prompt the Holyoake Government to mount a detailed public defence of its stance on Vietnam. For almost a decade, after first sending non-combatant military assistance in 1964, the Government was remarkably consistent in depicting New Zealand's Vietnam policy as a principled response within an alliance framework to a case of external communist aggression. After deciding to send the battery the Government stressed that it was acting in conformity with treaty obligations and was upholding the principles of collective security which New Zealand had been committed to since World War II.

In 1983, George Laking wrote:

Whatever his public image, Holyoake was a man of great subtlety of mind, who saw not only the connection between external and internal policy, but also that with changing times a New Zealand Prime Minister by making an impact on the world stage, enhanced his stature at home.¹²¹

Rabel correctly ascertained that any analysis of the evolution and development of New Zealand's defence and foreign-policy response during the Vietnam War period must acknowledge the decisive influence of both Holyoake and leading officials.¹²² Nevertheless, it was Holyoake, more than his officials, who remained the constant throughout the 1960s and the turbulence that characterised this post-colonial period. Policy was brokered between the Prime Minister and Government advisers, with other National Party politicians playing little or no part. Holyoake was the dominant personality as so well described by former Cabinet member Hugh Templeton; '...All members had their say, but inexorably the caucus would move to the conclusion the Prime Minister wanted.'¹²³ His 'pragmatism, frugality and sensitivity to domestic political criticism' ensured he worked to limit New Zealand's military contributions, not only to Vietnam, but also to Thailand and Borneo.¹²⁴ Not having been in the armed forces during World War II, he may also have 'felt a reluctance to send men into battle in light of his own lack of similar service,' and this experience, or lack thereof, is likely to

¹²¹ Keith Eunson, *Mirrors on the Hill: Reflections on New Zealand's Political Leaders* (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 2001), pp. 89-95.

¹²² Rabel, *New Zealand and the Vietnam War*, pp. 351-352.

¹²³ Ian Grant, *Public Lives: New Zealand's Premiers and Prime Ministers, 1856-2003* (Wellington: New Zealand Cartoon Archives, 2003), p.126.

¹²⁴ Grant, *Public Lives*, p.126.

have shaped Holyoake's strategic culture more so than commentators have previously acknowledged.¹²⁵

Despite Holyoake's lack of enthusiasm for military commitments, the geopolitical realities of the period gave foreign policy decision-makers little alternative than to align themselves with their three principal regional allies. If it declined to contribute, as Rabel correctly pointed out, New Zealand 'would be isolated and might have to rethink its whole stance in the region – and perhaps the world.'¹²⁶ It was this reality that dominated deliberations about military commitments throughout the period. One way in which Holyoake, and his defence policy-makers, could have achieved the combined objectives of 'economy of force' and 'expansion of choice' would have been a more strategic use of New Zealand's Special Forces.¹²⁷ Additional circumstances, domestic considerations, requirements to provide operational experience to other arms of the military meant that by the time officials established Holyoake's 'military and strategic tolerances,' it would be too late to deploy a New Zealand SAS contribution of any credible size, much less one that might be nationally identifiable. Chapter Six will show that from having been the first foreign-policy contribution sent overseas in 1956, 1962 and 1965, the New Zealand SAS would become the last military unit to be deployed to Vietnam at the end of 1968.

In November 1967, V1 Company was replaced with Victor Two (V2), also from Malaysia. On 16 December, W1 arrived in South Vietnam from New Zealand, via a short period in Malaysia, for a twelve-month tour which mirrored the length of Australian rifle company tours. It also joined 2RAR and became its sixth rifle company with a total of 350 New Zealand infantry soldiers that brought the total regiment strength to 900 troops.¹²⁸ Despite a history of 'ANZAC' collaboration from Gallipoli during World War I, this was the first time infantry soldiers of both countries were officially combined into a

¹²⁵ McKinnon, 'New Zealand Military Involvement in Vietnam, December 1980.'

¹²⁶ Grant, *Public Lives*, pp. 93-95.

¹²⁷ In *Explorations in Strategy*, Colin Gray argues that Special Forces need to operate within a framework of strategic purpose if they are to have positive strategic utility. This utility is best manifested in two key qualities, 'economy of force' (special operations can achieve very good results with limited forces) and 'expansion of choice' (special operations can make a broader span of options available to political and military leaders). Gray, *Explorations in Strategy*, p.15 and Modigs, *Special Forces Capabilities of the European Union Military Forces*, pp. 46-47.

¹²⁸ McGibbon, *The New Zealand Army in Vietnam 1964-1972*, pp. 71-72 and McNeill and Ekins, *On the Offensive*, p.162.

single fighting battalion. It was also the first time New Zealand soldiers were under the direct command of Australian battalion commanders.¹²⁹

Between May 1967 and December 1971 there would be six Victor Company and three Whiskey Company deployments to South Vietnam. By the end of 1967, and despite several proposals, there was still no place for a New Zealand SAS contribution. However, with further pressure placed upon the New Zealand Prime Minister as well as additional and persistent lobbying, principally on the part of the Army's Chief of General Staff Major-General Robert Dawson, in twelve months time this would change.

¹²⁹ The integration of the two countries' troops into a single battalion was formalised on 1 March 1968 when 2RAR was formally retitled 2RAR/New Zealand (ANZAC). The battalion name would continue – with successive rotations – until it was withdrawn from South Vietnam at the end of 1971. McNeill and Ekins, *On the Offensive*, pp. 162-164.

Chapter 5

New Zealand Special Air Service Vietnam Preparations: 1967-1968

...like being a bus conductor without the ability to clip tickets. We were the only guys in the Army that didn't have any involvement in Vietnam.¹

Despite Cabinet's decision on 16 October 1967 to reject an SAS contribution, Major-General Robert Dawson, the Army CGS, still remained determined to see his New Zealand SAS Squadron, or at least an element of it, benefit from operational service in South Vietnam. During the 19 October Defence Council meeting, Dawson – who had replaced Major-General Walter McKinnon in April 1967 - questioned the 'priorities' that Cabinet had considered in deciding to deploy a second infantry company when the Australians had once again placed priority on more SAS. Dawson indicated he was still keen to offer a 'certain number of SAS' should the opportunity present itself in the near future.²

Defence Minister David Thomson told Dawson he felt Cabinet would most likely be willing to consider 'a proposal on these lines' so long as 'the same total numbers could be deployed without escalation of costs' and to this end the Defence Council agreed another proposal be readied.³ By the middle of the following month Dawson reported that his Australian counterpart had again reiterated 'from an operational point of view a limited squadron or a half squadron of New Zealand SAS would be most acceptable to the Australian Task Force' (ATF) and Australia was willing to take over some of New Zealand's contributing logistic support effort in order to allow a deployment take place.⁴

At the first Defence Council meeting of 1968, Thomson made it clear Cabinet was not opposed to using the SAS in Vietnam. Despite its obvious political and operational merits, he and his colleagues had on 16 October 'chosen not to do so for financial reasons.'⁵ The New Zealand SAS deployment had been assessed to cost approximately

¹ Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

² Defence Council Meeting "DC (67) M.13, 19 October 1967," in PM478/4/6 Part 10.

³ Defence Council Meeting "DC (67) M.13, 19 October 1967."

⁴ Defence Council Meeting dated 15 November 1967, in PM478/4/6 Part 10.

⁵ Defence Council Meeting dated 19 January 1968, in PM478/4/6 Part 11 South Vietnam: Political: Military Assistance from Australia and New Zealand, 1 December 1967 – 1 December 1968, ANZ, Wellington.

NZ\$127,000, whereas sending a second Infantry Company (170 in total - and of those 150 would be from Malaysia) would cost only NZ\$60,000 more (NZ\$187,000). While there is no suggestion the infantry soldiers were any less professional and effective as soldiers, clearly by 1968 quantity trumped quality. However, the logic offered by Cabinet here appears to contradict everything Holyoake previously said about his reluctance to contribute – and expose - any more soldiers than he had to. Surely a New Zealand SAS deployment, with fewer personnel, and less cost, would have ensured that the politicians and officials achieved their objectives? Despite the previous success of SAS deployments in Malaya and Borneo, the clear operational need from the Australian Task Force, and the CGS's persuasive recommendation, the opportunity to use this 'spare force' was not taken.

A closer analysis of correspondence during most of 1968 suggests that senior DEA officials were not convinced sending an SAS contribution to Vietnam would provide a large enough and nationally identifiable presence to satisfy perceived alliance requirements. George Laking's DEA representative in Saigon, Paul Edmonds, visited the Task Force in December 1967. He reported to Laking that there appeared 'little doubt the absence of an operationally definable New Zealand military unit' was impacting upon the morale of New Zealand troops.⁶ Edmonds added that both the COMAFV, Major-General Tim Vincent and the Task Force Commander, Brigadier Ron Hughes, equally eager to have such an identifiable New Zealand unit, also broached the subject of a third rifle company. This notwithstanding, Edmonds reported that he understood Vincent maintained a preference for a New Zealand SAS contribution.⁷

In mid January 1968, Dawson told his Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) Lieutenant-General Leonard Thornton that there remained a shortage of SAS personnel in the Task Force and Australia was unable to meet this need.⁸ He was confident a New Zealand SAS element could be sustained within the Australian Task Force 'within approved ceilings and

⁶ Paul Edmonds, "New Zealand Troops in South Vietnam, 3 January 1968," in PM478/4/6 Part 11.

⁷ Edmonds, "New Zealand Troops in South Vietnam, 3 January 1968."

⁸ Major-General Robert Dawson, "New Zealand Army Units in Vietnam, 8 January 1968," in MD23/4/1 Volume 2 Defence Aid to South Vietnam: General 10 July 1967 – March 1968, NZDF Archives, Wellington.

finances.’⁹ Accepting Dawson’s proposal, Thornton was similarly convinced it could be achieved because both infantry companies would serve in a single ‘ANZAC’ battalion, allowing a ‘reduction in administrative and tactical support personnel, if required’ and suggested on 16 January 1968 the Defence Council recommend ‘a sub-unit of 30 to 40 from 1 NZ Ranger Squadron...be included in NZV Force in Vietnam at some time during the next four months.’¹⁰ Both he and Dawson were confident that ‘this very proficient unit would make a most significant military and national contribution.’¹¹ Furthermore, it was unlikely the ‘attrition rate would be high.’ The Australian experience in Vietnam was that their SAS casualty rate had been ‘lower than that of infantry.’¹²

A formal proposal from the Secretary of Defence William Hutchings to Cabinet, via Thomson, recommending the SAS for Vietnam, was written in late January. Defence officials referred to the Cabinet decision given on 16 October 1967 and proposed that Cabinet approval now ‘be modified’ to include an SAS detachment ‘in substitution for certain infantry personnel.’¹³ The Hutchings memorandum reminded Cabinet that at the time they had approved the second infantry company, the Australians had indicated their first preference had been ‘for the addition of SAS.’ This preference had since been re-emphasised to Dawson.¹⁴ Even though Treasury had indicated there would be no additional cost involved, it seems difficult to accept with the proposal phrased as it was how this iteration would receive a positive response from Holyoake’s Government.

No SAS to Vietnam – but perhaps a Frigate?

Not all officials were convinced of the value of the proposal and it appears that in the space of five days Laking managed to convince Thornton that the SAS option put forward by the Defence Secretary was not the best course of action. In a memorandum written on 1 February Thornton apprised Thomson of his most recent discussions with the Secretary of External Affairs. Both concluded any further military contributions should ‘desirably

⁹ Dawson, “New Zealand Army Units in Vietnam, 8 January 1968” and Lieutenant-General Leonard Thornton, Defence Council DO (68) 2, “New Zealand Army Units – Vietnam, 16 January 1968,” both in PM478/4/6 Part 11.

¹⁰ Thornton, Defence Council DO (68)2, “New Zealand Army Units – Vietnam, 16 January 1968.”

¹¹ Thornton, Defence Council DO (68)2, “New Zealand Army Units – Vietnam, 16 January 1968.”

¹² Thornton, Defence Council DO (68)2, “New Zealand Army Units – Vietnam, 16 January 1968.”

¹³ William Hutchings, “Variation in Composition of V Force, 26 January 1968,” in PM478/4/6 Part 11.

¹⁴ Hutchings, “Variation in Composition of V Force, 26 January 1968.”

establish a nationally identifiable presence' and the best way to achieve this would be by attaching an entire infantry battalion to the Task Force or making a frigate available.¹⁵ Thornton told Thomson he believed an SAS component would be 'incorporated into an Australian unit' and would therefore lose any value from a national identity perspective. Neither, added Thornton, could the Army provide both a battalion and an SAS component any time in the future.¹⁶

While Thomson was digesting Thornton's latest advice, Laking forwarded a copy of Edmonds' December 1967 memorandum to Holyoake which argued for a truly nationally-identifiable contribution.¹⁷ In this note, Laking did not offer any solutions to any of the issues Edmonds had raised, although, there appears to be an undercurrent of 'I told you so' in his comments to the Prime Minister:

...The second point Edmonds makes is that the number of troops we have sent to South Vietnam and their integration in the Australian Task Force have meant that New Zealand has not got from its commitment political mileage among our allies commensurate with the domestic problems that commitment has created in New Zealand...it is difficult to resist the conclusion that, simply in terms of our relations with the United States and the other nations alongside whom we are fighting in Vietnam, we would have reaped a better return had we been able to send an operationally definable New Zealand unit such as a battalion.¹⁸

The memorandum to Holyoake is significant in that there is almost a sense that Laking is laying the foundations for his subsequent 'Frigate Proposal' here. That and reaction to the North Vietnamese Tet Offensive in January 1968 saw Laking recommend that Holyoake consider a much larger additional contribution as a more suitable gesture from New Zealand. The communists commenced Tet Offensive operations on 30-31 January and succeeded in penetrating most target cities before Free World forces regained control and drove the Vietcong/NVA forces out within a few days. In Saigon and Hue the process took somewhat longer, but by 11 February the Offensive had been repelled. Although the United States Army and Free World forces killed more enemy during Tet than in any other period during the war (estimated at 37,000 killed and 6,000 captured),

¹⁵ Lieutenant-General Leonard Thornton, "Additional forces For South Vietnam, 1 February, 1968," in PM478/4/6 Part 11.

¹⁶ The Army would have to 'cannibalise' 1 Ranger Squadron of experienced SAS Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) in order to establish any subsequent battalion. Thornton, Defence Council DO (68)2, "New Zealand Army Units – Vietnam, 16 January 1968."

¹⁷ Paul Edmonds, "New Zealand Troops in South Vietnam, 3 January 1968," in PM478/4/6 Part 11.

¹⁸ George Laking, "New Zealand Troops in South Vietnam, 2 February 1968," in PM478/4/6 Part 11.

the domestic political situation was such that it ultimately had a negligible impact on the United States prospects for victory.¹⁹

In another note to the Prime Minister in February 1968, Laking acknowledged that an SAS deployment was militarily sound but 'politically unattractive,' and although the deployment would 'reap some political benefit,' it 'would be too small to constitute a gesture of real solidarity with the United States.'²⁰ Laking added:

...It seems to me therefore that the Government should give urgent consideration to the possibility of announcing its readiness to send a frigate...The essential point is whether the Government is prepared to put this extra amount of money into its Vietnam commitment. If it is, then a greater political return will be won if the investment is made now, spontaneously, rather than a little later in response to a request from the Americans.²¹

Despite Laking's posturing, Hutchings and Thomson's 26 January proposal was nevertheless tabled in Cabinet on 12 February. Once again Holyoake dithered; the proposal was not accepted but rather than completely reject it, Cabinet decided it would be better to defer any decisions about further military contributions, including the approval of deploying four RNZAF helicopter pilots with the RAAF 9 Squadron in South Vietnam, until Thomson had completed his forthcoming visit to South Vietnam.²²

During his visit, Thomson (who was accompanied by Thornton) sent instructions to Hutchings which indicated their next Cabinet submission for additional New Zealand forces to Vietnam would include (in order of priority) 'SAS, Helicopter pilots, and [RNZAF] Canberra [bomber] crews.'²³ After discussions with General Westmoreland who told the New Zealand Minister that he had an 'adequate naval force' in Vietnam, Thomson ended any plans for a frigate contribution. The Minister was now convinced

¹⁹ Employing 100,000 troops, the Vietcong and NVA launched simultaneous assaults on Saigon as well as 36 of the 43 provincial capitals, five of the six autonomous cities and 64 of the 242 district capitals in South Vietnam. Krepinevich Jr, *The Army and Vietnam*, pp. 239-241.

²⁰ George Laking, "Additional New Zealand forces For Vietnam, 9 February 1968," in PM478/4/6 Part 11.

²¹ Laking, "Additional New Zealand forces For Vietnam, 9 February 1968."

²² Cabinet would later agree to 12-month tours for the four RNZAF helicopter pilots on 29 April 1968. Cabinet Secretary Ray Perry, "CM 68/4/20, Variation in Composition of V Force, 12 February 1968," "RNZAF Helicopter Pilots – Service in Vietnam, 26 February 1968" and "RNZAF Helicopter Pilots – Service in Vietnam, 29 April 1968," all in PM478/4/6 Part 11.

²³ Lieutenant-General Leonard Thornton, "Vietnam Contribution, 29 February 1968," in PM478/4/6 Part 11.

that New Zealand could not afford to spend such a substantial sum ‘on a contribution not really required even if it would achieve national identity.’²⁴

Hutchings replied to Thomson advising that Dawson had begun to formulate the concept of a New Zealand ‘three-rifle company battalion proposition’ that could operate with or without the continued contribution of 161 Battery. It was also possible, he added, that if a ‘forty man SAS detachment’ was sent immediately, thus satisfying the Minister’s current priority, it still could later be absorbed into the battalion, provided the Government agreed from the outset to establish a battalion. Any SAS component could be subsequently reduced to a 25-man unit should the battalion option be approved.²⁵

Hutchings reported that he had discussed these options with the temporary Defence Minister (and Deputy Prime Minister) John Marshall who thought the emphasis should be placed on an immediate SAS deployment. Marshall quite correctly cautioned that any linking of an SAS detachment deployment with the battalion concept risked further delay.²⁶ Thomson replied back to Hutchings on 1 March advising that the battalion proposal was not the ‘best course’ and instructed his Defence Secretary to proceed with the 40-man SAS proposal. Thomson added that while financial considerations and the need to urgently respond to the request were critical for any proposal, the size of the SAS contribution was not.²⁷

By the middle of March 1968, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) had prepared a further proposal that Cabinet should despatch a 70-man SAS detachment to Vietnam.²⁸ The memorandum again reminded Holyoake's Cabinet the most pressing need in Vietnam was additional ground forces, in particular SAS troops. Admittedly it would not have a

²⁴ Thornton, “Vietnam Contribution, 29 February 1968.” Laking did not agree with this assessment and drafted a note to Holyoake on 20 March which stated that he was ‘not entirely convinced’ that Washington would agree with Westmoreland’s views, but he did concede the immediate need for an early gesture of support. Laking said that he saw no ‘great political attraction’ in sending RNZAF Canberra crews to Vietnam but did appear to support the SAS deployment. Interestingly enough, Laking did not send the memorandum to his Prime Minister. Laking, “Additional New Zealand Forces For Vietnam, 20 March 1968,” in PM478/4/6 Part 11.

²⁵ An alternative would be to send what Dawson described as a ‘maximum sustainable SAS detachment’ of 70 all ranks, but this would prevent the deployment of the battalion in the short term. William Hutchings, “Vietnam Force Contributions, 28 February 1968,” in PM478/4/6 Part 11.

²⁶ Hutchings, “Vietnam Force Contributions, 28 February 1968.”

²⁷ Thornton, “Vietnam Contribution, 29 February 1968.”

²⁸ Office of the Minister of Defence (Hutchings), “Memorandum for Cabinet Defence Committee: Additional Forces for Vietnam, 18 March 1968,” in PM478/4/6 Part 11.

similar national identity to a battalion but it could be readily absorbed into the existing Australian squadron already within the Task Force and ‘would be welcomed for its undoubted operational value.’²⁹ Again, nowhere within the proposal did Defence officials acknowledge that such a deployment could be only for a maximum of twelve months before the Squadron had to return to New Zealand. In 1968, the unit strength of 1 Ranger Squadron was 68 soldiers in total.³⁰

Perhaps sensing an SAS deployment was the ‘next best thing’ to a frigate, Laking supported the 18 March Defence Committee recommendation for a full SAS Squadron deployment to Vietnam.³¹ However, the proposal, which advocated an increase in both troop numbers (70 in total) and budget at a time when the domestic debate was gaining considerable momentum, did not go beyond the Cabinet Defence Committee.

Despite this latest rejection, Dawson maintained pressure on his Minister and CDS and by the end of June, Thomson again pressed for Cabinet to authorise, this time, a 26-man New Zealand SAS detachment.³² Thomson reported to Holyoake that the Australians had once again restated their ‘wish’ to have a New Zealand SAS contribution attached to the Task Force. Interestingly, though, Dawson had been advised by Brigadier Hughes that although keen to have the New Zealand Troop, there was a current shortage of winch-equipped helicopters (brought about by an operational fault) that was restricting ‘full scale operations by the Australian [SAS] Squadron.’³³ Currently there was insufficient air support for simultaneous extractions and although this shortage was expected to be overcome later in the year, such a problem would ‘restrict the Troop’s useful employment...until about October or November 1968.’ Hughes stated that he would prefer the SAS be despatched then.³⁴

²⁹ The memorandum also advised the maximum SAS force of no more than 70 would cost an additional annual \$145,000 and a one-off capital cost of \$30,000 to purchase equipment compatible with that of the Australians. Office of the Minister of Defence (Hutchings), “Memorandum for Cabinet Defence Committee: Additional Forces for Vietnam, 18 March 1968.”

³⁰ NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington.

³¹ George Laking, 20 March 1968, in PM 478/4/6 Part 11.

³² The proposal went to Cabinet on 8 July 1968. Office of the Minister of Defence, “Variation in Composition of New Zealand Army Force, Vietnam, 28 June 1968,” in PM478/4/6 Part 11 and Dickens, *New Zealand and the Vietnam War: Official Policy Advice to the Government 1960-1972*, pp. 283-283.

³³ Major Brian Wade, “Problem Areas r.e. Attachment of NZSAS Troop to 2 SAS Squadron, 8 May 1968,” in New Zealand Army S.C59.6, Deployment: NZSAS, 4 November 1968 – 20 November 1969, and Major-General Robert Dawson, “SAS Troops for Vietnam, 15 May 1968,” MD23/4/1 Volume 3, both in NZDF Archives, Wellington.

³⁴ Dawson, “SAS Troops for Vietnam, 15 May 1968.”

Dawson's June 1968 proposal allowed for the Army to substitute New Zealand SAS soldiers for New Zealand Army administrative and support personnel attached to the Task Force. Dawson justified his proposal on two grounds; firstly, the Australians wanted them, and secondly, it would enhance the Army's operational mission. While he understood the Australian Army was 'anxious' to have a New Zealand SAS element within the Task Force, he was more concerned by the lack of opportunity for operational employment and consequently, the future of 1 Ranger Squadron.³⁵ For the purpose 'of morale and training' it was therefore vital that the SAS be given a 'clear indication of their future role.'³⁶ Dawson was also keen to issue a directive, as early as May, to the SAS Squadron requiring them to be 'prepared by October to have a Troop of 30 all ranks at as high a state of training as possible,' in preparation for deployment to South Vietnam. If Cabinet did not agree to send the Troop then Dawson planned to send selected Troop members to Vietnam as individual infantry reinforcements.³⁷

To allow sufficient time for a detachment to be made ready in accordance with Australian SAS Squadron requirements, Thomson indicated that Cabinet needed to urgently decide so that appropriate preparations and training could be made in New Zealand without attracting further negative or undue publicity. Consideration of the domestic political environment was not lost on Thomson and the Cabinet proposal was presented by acknowledging that it was certainly not an 'opportune time to consider increasing the overall level' of New Zealand's military contribution to Vietnam.³⁸

On 8 July Cabinet decided to defer for another week any decision to deploy an SAS Troop.³⁹ No reason was given why there may have been a need to 'further consider' the proposal but it must have been incredibly frustrating for Thomson's Defence officials. The following week, Thomson's proposal was again 'deferred' by Holyoake and this time

³⁵ Major-General Robert Dawson to NZ V Force Commander, "NZ SAS, 1 May 1968," in New Zealand Army S.C59.6.

³⁶ Major-General Robert Dawson, "SAS Troops for Vietnam, 15 May 1968," in MD23/4/1 Volume 3.

³⁷ Major-General Robert Dawson, "Special Air Service Troops for Vietnam, 20 May 1968," in MD23/4/1 Volume 3.

³⁸ Thornton advised Dawson in a handwritten note on 20 May, that Thomson 'wishes to submit a proposal, in low key...' Lieutenant-General Leonard Thornton dated 20 May 1968, in MD23/4/1 Volume 3 and Office of the Minister of Defence, "Variation in Composition of New Zealand Army Force, Vietnam, 28 June 1968," in PM478/4/6 Part 11.

³⁹ Cabinet Secretary Ray Perry, "Variation in Composition of New Zealand Army Force, Vietnam, 8 July 1968," in PM478/4/6 Part 11.

the message seemed to have got through.⁴⁰ It appeared there was now no expectation of the Minister of Defence presenting a New Zealand SAS proposal any time soon. It now seemed as though the New Zealand SAS' Vietnam door had been firmly closed.

New Zealand SAS Lobbying 1967-1968

New Zealand SAS troop levels had fluctuated throughout the entire decade and by 1968 there was a real concern that the Army could lose its ability to deploy a Special Forces component of any credible size. Unlike the Australian SAS, the New Zealand Squadron had not been deployed to Vietnam immediately after Borneo. As a consequence, there was a fear within the unit that soldiers were missing out on any subsequent operational deployments in Vietnam. Many considered, and opted, to return to infantry units that had been committed to Vietnam that previous year. During the height of operations in Borneo, New Zealand SAS numbers totalled approximately 85 and in 1967 this had increased to 102; by the beginning of 1968 numbers had dwindled to less than 65.⁴¹

The previous year, in 1967, a certain amount of uncomfortable public pressure had also been brought to bear upon the Holyoake Government by way of a series of media articles identifying low morale within the New Zealand SAS Squadron as well as suggestions the unit was about to be disbanded.⁴² In the middle of 1967, two Returned Services Association (RSA) *Review* writers, Cedric Mentiplay and Nevile Webber, wrote particularly strongly-worded pieces.⁴³ In the initial article, Mentiplay asked why 'such bad fortune has dogged attempts to form Special Forces within New Zealand?' and speculated the Squadron was once again near to being disbanded and its soldiers sent to

⁴⁰ On that same date, Cabinet Secretary Perry wrote to Thomson reminding the Minister that he needed to advise Perry should he 'wish to have this item included again in the agenda for Cabinet.' Perry, "Variation in Composition of New Zealand Army Force, Vietnam, 8 July 1968," and Cabinet Paper CP (68) 609, "Variation in Composition of New Zealand Army Force, Vietnam, 5 July 1968," in Cabinet Minute CM (68) 26 Volume One, 15 July 1968, both in ANZ, Wellington.

⁴¹ Thanks to Wayne Holah, Official Archivist and Historian, NZSAS Association, Wellington, for this material.

⁴² NZSAS Association, Wellington.

⁴³ The articles appeared after a demonstration by a 1 Ranger Squadron detachment in Wellington during a national reunion of former members of the 1st and 2nd New Zealand Independent Companies of World War Two, in June 1967. Cedric R. Mentiplay, *Review: The Official R.S.A Journal* (Wellington), "Special Forces in New Zealand: They Fear Political Axe – Not Jungle Enemy," Volume XLV, Number 8, June 1967 and Nevile Webber, *Review: The Official R.S.A Journal* (Wellington), "Political Axe Threatens Future of SAS," Volume XLV, Number 9, July 1967.

other units as reinforcements, 'either to the infantry company in Vietnam or to the attenuated two-company battalion...Malaysia.'⁴⁴

Webber was no less scathing about the potential loss of the Squadron and its lack of operational activity since returning from Borneo in 1966. In what appeared to be a particularly well-sourced piece, Webber added 'generally the company is being run down in men and morale...Little wonder there is a feeling of despondency and frustration!'⁴⁵ Webber also made reference to the success the Squadron had achieved in Malaya and Borneo:

Twice in recent times (in Malaya and Borneo) the New Zealand SAS has done wonderful work...They have had a most rigorous and extensive training and have proved convincingly during operations in Borneo against Indonesia that they are superlatively efficient...The small contingent of 40-odd men in Borneo made a contribution to winning this war that has not been fully recognised or publicised in New Zealand. It seems clear that they did a job which would have taken conventional units of far greater numbers to accomplish.⁴⁶

Webber also wrote that Westmoreland had 'made a strong bid for a New Zealand SAS force' and suggested the Government was simply 'prepared to let the SAS fade away.'⁴⁷ Mainstream media reporting in July 1967 also suggested that should Holyoake increase the number of troops to Vietnam, then it was likely that an SAS component would be made available.⁴⁸ A report in the *Auckland Star* on July 15 appeared even more well-informed:

The Star's military reporter says that if the Rangers go, they will probably work with the 100-man Australian SAS Squadron...Their training has received a noticeable boost over the past six months, particularly in parachuting. A programme of forthcoming operations includes:

- The first fully-operational parachute jump from an RNZAF Hercules transport next month (late last month 64 men took part in the biggest single-run descent undertaken in New Zealand).
- A small boat navigation course with the Navy, starting on Tuesday.

⁴⁴ Mentiplay, 'Special Forces in New Zealand: They Fear Political Axe – Not Jungle Enemy,' p.1 and 16.

⁴⁵ Webber, "Political Axe Threatens Future of SAS," p. 1.

⁴⁶ Webber, "Political Axe Threatens Future of SAS," p. 1.

⁴⁷ Webber, "Political Axe Threatens Future of SAS," p. 1.

⁴⁸ Parliamentary Reporter, *Evening Post* (Wellington), "NZ May Boost Vietforce In Light Of American Policy," 15 July 1967.

- On August 12, 14, 18 and 19, the men will operate with the British submarine Tabard, launching rubber dinghies from the craft and landing on Great Barrier Island.

Some members of the Squadron are now undergoing diving training at the Navy Diving School, Devonport.⁴⁹

Such detail as reported by *The Auckland Star* seems to call into question whether operational security had been compromised to maintain lobbying momentum. Clearly, there was an effort to maintain activity within the Squadron, as David Ogilvy, the then Squadron CO reiterated:

In that intervening period between Borneo and Vietnam it was a very hard period to keep people motivated. The type of people that come to SAS want to be on active service, want to take part where the action is...So there was a long period between Borneo and Vietnam and those fellows that hung in, in the unit over that period of time, were just so well motivated to last that long...⁵⁰

It is not clear who was responsible for the media stories in mid-1967, or even if there was a deliberate attempt by the Army or New Zealand SAS to encourage wider debate about the future prospects for the Squadron. What the articles did achieve was to force Thomson to publicly refute the claims the SAS was to be disbanded in August 1967.⁵¹ Despite these reports and Ogilvy's own fears the Squadron lacked motivation, the soldiers themselves believed they were sufficiently busy:

Oh yeah, I was a corporal, I did the climbing courses, helicopter – I mean we did that in Borneo but we did that in a different way, canoeing – did hell of a lot of canoeing, hell of a lot of climbing courses. More things to get the newer fellows into the idea of what the Unit was a bit like – we weren't that good because we had...working on fuck-all money – all you had was your rope and a karabiner and you went out climbing. If we had any accidents – we would have all been in the shit...⁵²

Perhaps the previous year's lobbying had a carry-over affect. Once more, in early September 1968, Thomson forwarded to Holyoake a draft paper recommending 'a troop of SAS' to Vietnam.⁵³ The paper had been put together by Hutchings and provided to

⁴⁹ Wellington Correspondent, *The Auckland Star* (Auckland), "Cabinet Set To Review Our Viet Forces," 15 July, 1967.

⁵⁰ David Ogilvy, interview conducted on 27 February 2008.

⁵¹ Wellington Correspondent, *The Auckland Star* (Auckland), "Minister Denies Report of Disbandment," August 1967.

⁵² Ernie Stead, interview conducted on 13 June 2008.

⁵³ Thomson also added on his cover note: 'Before submitting the paper to Cabinet for consideration I would appreciate your approval.' There were no marks or signatures on the document indicating Holyoake's

Thomson three days earlier. What Thomson did not forward to his Prime Minister were the comments made by Hutchings highlighting his concerns about the future of the SAS if a detachment was not deployed.⁵⁴ Hutchings cautioned that if Cabinet did not agree to the proposal, then the alternative would be to post Squadron members back ‘to Infantry and send them overseas as part of the Victor and Whiskey [Rifle] Companies.’ He concluded his memo by warning:

This would undoubtedly mean that a number of SAS personnel would seek their discharge. It would be preferable to use the men in the role for which they have been trained and are eager to operate.⁵⁵

Thomson was compelled to try an almost ‘last ditch’ approach to get Cabinet to agree to an SAS deployment, which would save the SAS Squadron from probable disbandment. Earlier in the year he had tabled a note for Cabinet on manpower level problems within the Army.⁵⁶ By way of background, in late 1967 Cabinet approved the ceiling strength for the Regular Force (RF) be increased to just under 13,500 by August 1968. Of those numbers, the Army ceiling was set at 5825 against an establishment of 6250. These figures were approved as early as 1963 and confirmed in the 1966 Defence White Paper. Since then, the Army had been required to meet ‘additional commitments in Vietnam’ by reducing the strength of the battalion in Malaysia and diverting other regular force personnel from New Zealand.⁵⁷ As a result, not only was the battalion so reduced in strength that it was ‘neither tactically nor numerically acceptable for deployment in a SEATO Plan 8 situation (communist insurgency in Thailand),’ it was unable to spread its manpower evenly.⁵⁸

In presenting his September 1968 proposal to Cabinet, Thomson contended that because of these manpower issues, infantry replacements for operational deployments in Malaysia and Vietnam had ‘not come forward as rapidly as expected.’⁵⁹ As a result, there would be

response. David Thomson, “Variation in Composition of New Zealand Army Force – Vietnam, 5 September 1968,” in PM478/4/6 Part 11.

⁵⁴ William Hutchings, “Variation in Composition of New Zealand Army Force – Vietnam, 2 September 1968,” in PM478/4/6 Part 11.

⁵⁵ Hutchings, “Variation in Composition of New Zealand Army Force – Vietnam, 2 September 1968.”

⁵⁶ Cabinet Paper CP (68) 205, “Army Manpower, 22 March 1968,” in Cabinet Minute CM (68)10, 25 March 1968, ANZ, Wellington.

⁵⁷ Cabinet Paper CP (68) 205, “Army Manpower, 22 March 1968.”

⁵⁸ Cabinet Paper CP (68) 205, “Army Manpower, 22 March 1968.”

⁵⁹ Office of the Minister of Defence, “1 RNZIR Relief: SAS Inclusion, 26 September 1968,” Cabinet Minutes CM (68)37 Part One, 30 September 1968, ANZ, Wellington.

a need for the Army to transfer soldiers from other Corps, besides infantry and including SAS, to fill requirements. Thomson argued it made more sense for the New Zealand SAS Squadron to 'be usefully employed in Vietnam directly in the role in which they have been trained,' and there would be no alteration to the total number of replacements for the Battalion and no increase in costs.⁶⁰ This approach worked. Finally, on 30 September, after seven formal proposals over eighteen months, Cabinet agreed to deploy a New Zealand SAS detachment of 26-soldiers for service in South Vietnam.⁶¹ The New Zealand SAS was at last on its way to Vietnam.

New Zealand SAS 1966-1968: Opportunities, Options and Influences

David Dickens wrote that in an interview with the late Sir Robert Muldoon, the former Cabinet Member said Holyoake explained to the National Party Caucus that he was 'reluctant to have units that would sustain high casualties because the impact of high casualties on public opinion would be adverse.'⁶² Christopher Pugsley opined that Holyoake always recognised New Zealand's military commitments were of little military significance in the context of the total commitment by the Commonwealth against 'Confrontation' in Borneo or by the United States and its allies in Vietnam. What was important for New Zealand was getting the maximum political and diplomatic value from the timing and nature of each commitment. Additional resources were approved only when pressure became unsustainable.⁶³

But why did the New Zealand Government choose not to utilise the SAS' strategic 'economy of force' when the 'Confrontation' began to wind down? The withdrawal of the fourth New Zealand SAS detachment from Borneo in late 1966 provided Holyoake with new options and resources to meet American and Australian requests for clearly identified assistance. It was the perfect opportunity but, despite efforts to utilise this defence capability, it deferred authorisation until the end of 1968.

⁶⁰ Office of the Minister of Defence, "1 RNZIR Relief: SAS Inclusion, 26 September 1968."

⁶¹ Cabinet Secretary Ray Perry, "1 RNZIR Relief: SAS Inclusion, 30 September 1968," in PM478/4/6 Part 11.

⁶² Dickens, *New Zealand and the Vietnam War: Official Policy Advice to the Government 1960-1972*, p. 161.

⁶³ Pugsley, *From Emergency to Confrontation*, pp.335-337.

From as early as the beginning of 1967, officials continued to stress to the Government the strategic importance of making New Zealand Army elements available for Vietnam. It is too simplistic to conclude the New Zealand SAS did not go to South Vietnam until the end of 1968 solely because of Holyoake's resistance, although this was no doubt a factor. Other influential advocates, in particular senior military personnel, with specific backgrounds, not insignificantly influenced the order in which the Army deployed its assets to South Vietnam.

Underpinning the recommendations for forces to Vietnam was the desire to enhance the operational experience of all New Zealand's Armed Forces. As Ian McGibbon wrote in *The New Zealand Army in Vietnam 1964-1972, A Report on the Chief of General Staff's Exercise*, 'Since the return of the 16th Field Regiment from Korea, only infantry battalions had been deployed on active service.'⁶⁴ The 'artillery influence,' for example, impacted upon the New Zealand SAS during this period:

Oh, hell yes. There was a very strong 'artillery mafia' – I can't remember all the artillery Generals - and a lot of their senior staff, because the Generals knew them, were gunners. And to break through, we were on the 'hind tit' for a long, long time...⁶⁵

Ogilvy's comments are significant but it is unclear whether or not they really illustrate a fundamental lack of understanding, or willingness to understand, the value of the New Zealand Special Forces' capability by senior military officers, as opposed to a genuine bias in favour of other Corps, in this case the Artillery Corps. Certainly those highlighting such misunderstanding and advocating a need to provide better knowledge of New Zealand's Special Forces were often dismissed. For example, in June 1967, Colonel Jock Aitken, then commanding 1 Infantry Brigade Group Headquarters, wrote to Army Headquarters advising that the lack of understanding of the wider role, organisation and capabilities of 1 Ranger Squadron amongst 'a considerable number of RF officers' could

⁶⁴ McGibbon, *The New Zealand Army in Vietnam 1964-1972*, pp.7-8.

⁶⁵ The 'artillery mafia' included Sir Stephen Weir, 'one of New Zealand's foremost artillery men', Lieutenant-General Leonard Thornton, 'commissioned into the Royal New Zealand Artillery in 1937,' Major-General Walter McKinnon, 'attended artillery and radar courses in the United Kingdom between 1938 and 1940,' Major-General Richard Webb, a 'leading artillery man of the post-war New Zealand Army' and '2IC of 16th Field Regiment that went to Korea in December 1950,' and Brigadier Ron Hassett who 'after graduating from [Duntroon] in December 1942' was 'commissioned into the Royal New Zealand Artillery'. David Ogilvy, interview conducted on 27 February 2008 and McGibbon (ed), *The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Military History*, (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.598, 531, 287, 596 and 216.

be remedied if formal instruction on SAS roles and techniques was included in the appropriate courses at Army Schools in Waiouru.⁶⁶ Despite the ‘strongest recommendation’ from Aitken, the proposal was rejected the following month because Army Headquarters believed the Squadron’s ‘considerable unit training commitments’ that year would make it difficult to provide such instruction.⁶⁷ A further reference in McGibbon also illustrates this point:

...since the Army was organised into three brigades/districts, each with its own Regular and Territorial infantry brigade units, it was not well placed to provide small, non-standard and/or specialised units for Vietnam-type operations.⁶⁸

The decision to establish a New Zealand Special Forces unit was made following the Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Conference in London in February 1955 in response to a United Kingdom request that New Zealand send an infantry battalion to Malaya as part of the newly established Commonwealth Strategic Reserve (CSR). New Zealand Prime Minister Sidney Holland refused to commit a battalion, explaining New Zealand’s Korean commitment prevented such, and instead counter-offered a New Zealand SAS Squadron. The original SAS Squadron was New Zealand’s first contribution to the CSR and, much more importantly, the first regular professional unit in the history of the post-World War II New Zealand Army to be deployed overseas in peacetime.⁶⁹

During his visit to the Conference, Holland had been provided a copy of a film showing an earlier visit by his British counterpart Anthony Eden to Malaya in which the British Prime Minister observed a ‘display of troop lifting and parachute techniques evolved by the Royal Navy and the SAS.’⁷⁰ On their way back from London, Holland and his Chief of General Staff (CGS) Major General William Gentry joined Defence Minister Thomas MacDonald to observe the British SAS in Malaya first hand. Of the visit, the accompanying press wrote:

⁶⁶ Colonel D.J. Aitken, “Instruction on NZSAS Organisation and Role, 13 June 1967” in Army Department 209/3/222, Organisation and Formation – 1 Ranger Squadron – Special Air Service, 1959 - 1972, ANZ, Wellington.

⁶⁷ Aitken, “Instruction on NZSAS Organisation and Role, 13 June 1967” and Army HQ reply dated 19 July 1967, both in Army Department 209/3/222.

⁶⁸ McGibbon, *The New Zealand Army in Vietnam 1964-1972*, p.8.

⁶⁹ This research separates the deployment to Malaya from contributions to the Korean War conflict, which was a ‘Police Action’ under United Nations (UN) auspices. Rennie, *Regular Soldier*, p.132.

⁷⁰ Imperial War Museum (2006): *ADM 1529 (1955): Sir Anthony Eden Visits 848 Squadron*. Available online at: <http://www.iwmcollections.org.uk/qryFilm.asp>.

Mr Holland, and the Minister of Defence, Mr MacDonald, while at Kuala Lumpur yesterday saw a demonstration by a special air service regiment of the latest technique for parachuting into jungle on anti-terrorist drives...Mr Holland and Mr MacDonald said they were “tremendously impressed” by the thorough efficiency of the regiment and by the scope of its operations.⁷¹

It is open to speculation just how enthusiastic senior military commanders were to the concept of developing a Special Forces capability within the New Zealand Army at the time. Pugsley wrote that raising a sub-unit of squadron or company size to form an integral part of a larger British unit ‘was the antithesis of everything the New Zealand military had striven for since the Gallipoli experience in 1915.’⁷² There was a strong belief that if the New Zealanders became part of the British Regiment, the Squadron would lose its identity and lack the proper administration best achieved under national arrangements. This had been New Zealand’s ‘bitter experience in two world wars’ and, according to Pugsley, Gentry was not going to surrender his position lightly. However, despite his protestations, Holland authorised the creation of the unit and the New Zealand SAS Squadron was attached to their British counterparts in Malaya. Pugsley concluded that Gentry reluctantly agreed to this subordination and integration. In a note to his Defence Minister, Gentry wrote:

It would have been an advantage from a national point of view if the Squadron could have been independent, but I feel that the Commander-in-Chief’s arguments are strong. As you know it is particularly important to ensure that the Squadron is employed wisely and that it is well administered during operations. The proposed arrangement should make sure of these matters and also is much more economical in officers, a considerable advantage.⁷³

William Gentry was replaced by Stephen Weir in August 1955. There is no evidence to suggest that either Gentry or Weir were enthusiastic advocates of the establishment of a Special Forces element within the New Zealand Army. Conversely, there appears an attempt to distance senior military officials from the decisions Holland made in early 1955. Interesting, in his biography *Regular Soldier: A Life in the New Zealand Army*, Frank Rennie wrote that after confirming his appointment as CO of the new SAS

⁷¹ NZPA Special Correspondent, *Dominion Post* (Wellington), “Mr Holland Sees Men Of Special Air Service Force Take Part In Manoeuvres,” 1 March 1955.

⁷² Pugsley, *From Emergency to Confrontation*, p. 91.

⁷³ Major-General William Gentry, dated 22 March 1955, in Army Department S.45/11/6/G, Organisation and Formation of SAS Squadron Malaya, 22 March 1955, NZDF Archive, Wellington.

squadron, Adjutant General Brigadier R.C Queere told him ‘...after all this, if it doesn’t work it must be your fault, right?’⁷⁴

Notwithstanding its performance in Malaya, which as described by the commander of the British SAS Regiment Colonel George Lea, ‘not only show[ed] again that New Zealand soldiers are second to none, but helped the SAS as a Corps to reach its present high prestige and status in the British Army,’ and Weir himself acknowledging the Squadron’s ‘very fine record,’ the New Zealand SAS was disbanded in December 1957 only to be reformed two years later.⁷⁵ After the Squadron was re-established in October 1959, resistance to its role and place within its structure and an ignorance of its operational and strategic value continued throughout the Army for the following decade. According to Ogilvy:

I was always [made] aware – by a number of officers – that we were tolerated, we were there but because we didn’t have a particular role, I think it was, that was one of the things – didn’t have a particular role to play and they didn’t know how to use us on exercise...I think that attitude has changed but it was manifest for years and years. It was more than just rivalry; there was a perception that we were being spoilt...I think there was a perception that we were ‘prima-donnas’ and we had to have all of this [equipment for example]...and therefore if anybody could put the ‘kibosh’ on it, they would.⁷⁶

New Zealand SAS Options - United States Army or Australian Army

[SAS] should not be used as superior infantry – I have a nasty feeling that that was the case with the SAS in Vietnam...⁷⁷

As early as 1967, evidence indicates the United States wanted to utilise a New Zealand SAS contribution in South Vietnam beyond that of the Australian Task Force. The Americans believed a New Zealand SAS Squadron would ‘help fill the need for long-range patrols and reconnaissance,’ and although it could be used effectively in any Corps area, it was preferred to be used in the III Corps Tactical Zone under the operational control of the United States II Field Force headquarters.⁷⁸ Furthermore, the Americans had plans that the New Zealand SAS would not only be ‘employed alone’ but also operate in unspecified ‘remote areas’ observing and reporting on enemy numbers, positions and

⁷⁴ Rennie, *Regular Soldier*, p. 134.

⁷⁵ Pugsley, *From Emergency to Confrontation*, pp. 121-122.

⁷⁶ David Ogilvy, interview conducted on 27 February 2008.

⁷⁷ The Viscount Slim, interview conducted on 1 July 2008.

⁷⁸ Larsen and Collins Jnr, *Vietnam Studies: Allied Participation in Vietnam*, pp. 107-108.

activities, within the III Corps tactical area.⁷⁹ This significant geographic area encompassed not only Phuoc Tuy and other key provinces but also a substantial portion of the Vietnam-Cambodia border.

Although there is no documentary evidence to suggest that New Zealand Government had been made aware of such American intentions, it is entirely likely the Holyoake Government would have vetoed any recommendation advocating the use of an SAS contribution in such a way. Tolerance of New Zealand forces under the command of a larger Australian Task Force contingent was one thing; New Zealand forces under direct command of the United States Army and potentially operating illegally across the border into Laos and Cambodia, was quite another. As far as the New Zealanders were concerned if the American option was unacceptable, perhaps an attachment to the Australian Special Forces elements in Vietnam was an option?

At the end of October 1966, Major John Mace, then a company commander with Lieutenant-Colonel Brian Poananga's 1 RNZIR Battalion which had just completed a six-month deployment in Borneo, arrived in Vietnam to carry out a six-day provisional assessment of Australian SAS Squadron operations.⁸⁰ Mace's visit, at the behest of his CGS, Major-General McKinnon, was based upon 'brief observations, discussions and the reading of patrol reports.'⁸¹ The report itself was anything but brief.⁸² Mace was hosted by the Australian Squadron Commander, Major John Murphy, and was told 3 Squadron, the first Australian Squadron to be deployed to Vietnam, was 100 all ranks. Of those, 65 had previous operational experience and 40 had served in Australian SAS squadrons in Borneo. It is understood that the proportion of 3 Squadron members with 'Confrontation' experience could have been higher, but David Horner wrote that before deployment, Murphy had replaced 'a number of Borneo veterans who were not flexible enough to accept that they were preparing for a different sort of war.'⁸³

⁷⁹ Larsen and Collins Jnr, *Vietnam Studies: Allied Participation in Vietnam*, p. 108.

⁸⁰ After commanding 1 Ranger Squadron in 1965 and 1966, Mace had commanded D Company, 1 RNZIR, in Borneo between May and October 1966. Pugsley, *From Emergency to Confrontation*, p. 326.

⁸¹ Major John Mace, "Visit to 3 SAS Sqn, 1ATF, 17 October 1966," in New Zealand Army 15/15, SAS (Ranger Sqn) – FE, October 1965 – December 1972, Volume I, NZDF Archive, Wellington, p.4.

⁸² David Ogilvy described Mace as 'a prolific writer...when he came [in as OC of the Squadron], the amount of paper that he generated was unreal and he then pulled me in as the Admin Officer and I can recall, he was one of those bosses who never let your In-Tray get empty.' David Ogilvy, interview conducted on 27 February 2008.

⁸³ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 174.

In *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, Horner wrote that Murphy had ‘the ideal background for the task of establishing the role of the SAS in Vietnam.’⁸⁴ In August 1963, he had been part of the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam (AATTV) and for eight months in 1964, commanded the ‘first team to operate with the US Special Forces at Nha Trang.’ The most valuable experience Murphy brought to 3 Squadron was likely to have been that he had served as a Company Commander with 2 and 3 Royal Australian Regiment (RAR) for ‘over three years.’ His Commanding Officer in 3 RAR had been Colonel Oliver Jackson who was now a Brigadier and the Australian Task Force Commander. If there was any initial confusion about the role of the SAS in Vietnam, as Horner suggested, then Murphy’s previous relationship with Jackson would possibly circumvent some of this, but then again Murphy’s own lack of a detailed understanding of the true role of SAS operations was likely to have further clouded the situation.

According to Horner, Murphy was ‘clear in his own mind’ that the SAS’ major role would be surveillance, even though the Australian Director of Military Operations and Plans, Lieutenant-Colonel Colin East, had farewelled him with the parting words: ‘We do not know what you are going to do but we do know that you are not going to be the Palace guard.’⁸⁵ After arriving in Vietnam in June 1966, Murphy discussed with Jackson the exact role of his Squadron. Jackson was keen to know the ‘whereabouts, movements and habits’ of the enemy in Phuoc Tuy province and nearby areas and thought the SAS would be ‘quite invaluable in gaining this sort of intelligence’ rather than carrying out any ‘offensive or harassing’ operations.⁸⁶

Interestingly, the Australian SAS Squadron had initially received orders from Army Headquarters that they were ‘not to patrol in strengths of less than ten men.’⁸⁷ Murphy objected to this by arguing not only were the American Special Forces in Vietnam trialling patrols with five members, the Australian SAS themselves had experienced and preferred to patrol with much smaller numbers. Lack of understanding of SAS methodology again was demonstrated in Vietnam. According to Horner, Murphy

⁸⁴ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, pp. 173-174.

⁸⁵ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 179.

⁸⁶ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 180.

⁸⁷ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 180.

believed that ‘the Deputy Director of Military Operations ‘was personally opposed to the Special Forces ethos, as were many other senior officers at that time.’⁸⁸

Until Mace’s visit, the primary task of Murphy’s SAS Squadron had been ‘reconnaissance, providing 1ATF with operational intelligence’ and a secondary task of ‘offensive operations restricted to “soft” targets such as isolated enemy observation posts or wireless stations.’⁸⁹ Mace understood that further ‘latitude had been given to Murphy by his Task Force Commander’ and four six-man “hunter killer” patrols had been recently deployed. Mace reported that these patrols, the first of their kind, ‘probably demonstrated a greater future use of the SAS’ in Phuoc Tuy province.⁹⁰

Mace added that the Australian patrols operated ‘to a maximum depth of about ten miles for about three to seven days and that current SOPs for a patrol being seen by the enemy or engaged in a contact was – albeit based on the patrol commander’s decision - for the patrols to be ‘withdrawn as soon as possible.’⁹¹ Mace also knew the Squadron’s range and duration of patrolling would increase accordingly as the Task Force began to mount operations within the province further from Nui Dat, however, there was little likelihood of SAS operations in Vietnam being conducted over such distances as those in Borneo.

Even as early as late 1966, in Mace’s mind the Australian Squadron’s employment was restricted to what he accepted as infantry tasks and doubted whether the SAS soldiers’ ‘specialist capabilities’ were being ‘utilise[d] to the full.’⁹² From his visit, which included calls on other Task Force elements, Mace understood the ‘accuracy’ of the Australian SAS patrol reports and the information they had provided had been ‘disputed, to a degree by at least one battalion,’ although he himself could see ‘no exaggeration or fabrication evident in reading the patrol reports.’⁹³ Even though the Squadron had thus far been confined to reconnaissance patrols, their operational success expressed in kills – admittedly ‘not altogether a satisfactory criterion’ in Mace’s eyes - exceeded those of one

⁸⁸ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 180.

⁸⁹ Mace, “Visit to 3 SAS Sqn, 1ATF, 17 October 1966,” p.2.

⁹⁰ Mace, “Visit to 3 SAS Sqn, 1ATF, 17 October 1966,” p.2.

⁹¹ Mace, “Visit to 3 SAS Sqn, 1ATF, 17 October 1966,” p.2.

⁹² Mace, “Visit to 3 SAS Sqn, 1ATF, 17 October 1966,” p.1.

⁹³ Mace, “Visit to 3 SAS Sqn, 1ATF, 17 October 1966,” p.1.

of the two Australian battalions.⁹⁴ He concluded that these results were ‘better than could be produced by infantry patrols with the same mission.’⁹⁵ Interestingly enough, these comments were supported by Mace’s CO Poananga, but for slightly different reasons, and in a letter to the Commander of the New Zealand Forces in Vietnam, Colonel Peter Hamilton, nearly twelve months later, Poananga wrote:

I can understand the desire to maintain the SAS in being – more emotional than practical in my opinion. They have had great success in 1 ATF but I am sure this is a direct result of shortage of infantry. I don’t think anyone would contest that they are being misemployed in a purely infantry role – they are certainly not being employed in an SAS role. However, that aside, the introduction of SAS is just another case of dispersion of effort. Even if included in the light battalion as a Recce Platoon they must by virtue of their role be used at TF level. I would advise against sending SAS except as an integral part of the battalion – not to be sucked off into TF tasks.⁹⁶

In his completed report to McKinnon, Mace recommended that the best alternatives for a New Zealand SAS contribution to South Vietnam ‘appeared to be one troop with a clerk attached to the Australian Squadron HQ for New Zealand administration or a number of Troops, preferably two, with the appropriate supplementation for Squadron HQ.’⁹⁷ Mace added that either of these two options would be acceptable to the Australian Squadron Commander but Murphy had expressed a preference for the first. The Australian Squadron’s normal establishment was to have four Troops; 3 Squadron had been restricted to three in South Vietnam, so a New Zealand Troop would make up this deficiency. Murphy also told Mace the New Zealand Troop Commander should be junior to him in rank and it could be possible for the appointments of Squadron 2IC and Operations Officer filled alternately by Australians and New Zealanders. Mace reported that this ‘would make for a happier command structure and national interests could be protected by an appropriate directive to the New Zealand Commander.’⁹⁸ Interestingly, Murphy had told Mace that when his Squadron had arrived in South Vietnam it did not possess a written unit directive.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ See Appendix Five for further detail in relations to SAS/Infantry Contact Statistics in Vietnam between 1966 and 1971.

⁹⁵ Mace, “Visit to 3 SAS Sqn, 1ATF, 17 October 1966,” p.1.

⁹⁶ Lieutenant-Colonel Brian Poananga to Colonel Peter Hamilton, dated 30 October 1967, in New Zealand Army Non File Material A289, V-Force Limited Distribution, NZDF Archive, Wellington, p.4.

⁹⁷ Mace, “Visit to 3 SAS Sqn, 1ATF, 17 October 1966,” pp. 6-7.

⁹⁸ Mace, “Visit to 3 SAS Sqn, 1ATF, 17 October 1966,” p.7.

⁹⁹ Mace, “Visit to 3 SAS Sqn, 1ATF, 17 October 1966,” p.2.

One of the most significant aspects of the report was what Mace did not say. There was no concluding recommendation whether or not a New Zealand SAS detachment should be attached to the Australian SAS Squadron.¹⁰⁰ It may not have been part of Mace's mandate but before forwarding the report to McKinnon, Colonel Peter Hamilton, Commanding Officer of New Zealand Army (NEWZARM) Far East Land Forces (FARELF), wrote that the report answered 'all the questions you asked and without sending an officer out on patrol or having one formally attached to the Australian SAS I do not think we can get more detail.'¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, the absence of a specific recommendation from a former New Zealand Squadron Commander and one so heavily involved in the Borneo commitment, is quite intriguing. It will be recalled that in January 1965, Meldrum had expressed a distinct reluctance for his first New Zealand SAS Detachment to be attached to an Australian Squadron in Borneo. Thornton had also 'balked' at the idea and immediately made plans for the New Zealand half-Squadron to link up with the British SAS instead. While the situation was similar, the question of a New Zealand SAS detachment joining one of two Special Forces groups, by 1968 there was only one real option; attachment to the Australian SAS Squadron in South Vietnam.

Concluding Notes

New Zealand combat forces were finally committed to Vietnam on 27 May 1965, when Holyoake announced that New Zealand had agreed to provide a field artillery battery of 120 men. From all perspectives, save the Prime Minister's, it appeared the artillery battery was the most appropriate combat unit to send. The guns were readily available, were acceptable to the American forces and would be welcomed by the Australians. Sending a battery was the best way for the New Zealand Government to satisfy alliance commitments without incurring high domestic political or economic cost.¹⁰²

In *Explorations in Strategy*, Colin Gray suggested that the strategic utility of Special Forces depends at least as much on the imagination and competence of their political and

¹⁰⁰ The visit can not have been that significant an event as Murphy's Squadron Commanders' Diary makes no reference to it even though Mace visited Murphy on 1, 4 and 8 October. See Major J.M. Murphy, Commanders Diary Narrative, 3 SAS Squadron, October 1966, in AWM95, 7/12/5: October 1966, Narrative, Duty Officer's log, Annexes, AWM, Canberra, p.1.

¹⁰¹ Colonel Peter Hamilton, "Visit to 3 SAS Sqn, 1ATF, 17 October 1966," in Army 15/15, SAS (Ranger Sqn) – FE, October 1965 – December 1972, Volume I.

¹⁰² Rabel, *New Zealand and the Vietnam War*, pp. 93-95.

military masters as it does their tactical effectiveness. He added 'special-forces have the potential for great strategic utility, but political leaders and strategists must understand how to realise that potential.'¹⁰³ There are individual examples to support this hypothesis from both the United Kingdom and United States, but can the same be said in a New Zealand Special Forces context?

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill's concept of forming the Special Operations Executive (SOE) contributed to a fundamental alteration of the way in which states used limited military force to achieve foreign policy objectives. Fertilised by the idea of the SOE, elements within the British Army turned towards the creation of irregular forces, trained and equipped to operate inside enemy territory. These first units became the Royal Marine Commandos and Parachute Regiments. The SOE, Commando and Parachute Regiment concept, combined with the experiences of Colonel T.E. Lawrence ('Lawrence of Arabia') in the previous war, later inspired a number of British Officers in the Middle East during 1940-42 to convert a small number of professional soldiers into irregular fighters. The outcome was a group of unconventional units, of which the Long Range Desert Group (LRDG) and the British SAS became the most well known.¹⁰⁴ An additional factor which ensured Churchill's continued interest in Special Forces, and in particular the SAS, was the knowledge his own son Randolph carried out operations with the SAS in the North African desert in 1942.¹⁰⁵

The development of political patronage of Special Forces in the United States was not altogether different. The support from President John Fitzgerald Kennedy was the fundamental contributing factor that allowed American Special Forces to emerge during the post-World War II period. The National Security Act of 1947 created the CIA which assumed many of the same responsibilities of the American SOE equivalent, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). Besides co-ordinating intelligence collection among agencies, the CIA gained sole responsibility for conducting covert operations. When the CIA and

¹⁰³ Gray, *Explorations in Strategy*, p. 149.

¹⁰⁴ For further LRDG publications see Jopling and O'Carroll (eds), *Bearded Brigands*, O'Carroll, *Kiwi Scorpions: The Story of the New Zealanders in the Long Range Desert Group and Barce Raid: The Long Range Desert Group's Greatest Escapade*, Sanders, *Desert Patrols: New Zealanders with the Long Range Desert Group*, and United Kingdom Public Record Office, *Special Forces in the Desert War, 1940-1943*.

¹⁰⁵ Michael Asher writes that Randolph Churchill had made only one of his qualifying jumps before persuading David Stirling to take him on operations. He adds 'Stirling knew Randolph wrote his father daily, and could hardly refuse a chance of gaining the Prime Minister's ear.' Asher *The Regiment*, p.109 and Winston S. Churchill, *His Father's Son: The Life of Randolph Churchill*, p.204.

the newly formed USAF attempted to form unconventional warfare air and ground units, the Army countered by creating the Army Special Forces.

Knowledgeable of the contributions and strategic implications of utilising unconventional warfare and Special Forces in combating hostile regimes, unconventional warfare scholar Abigail Linnington suggested, Kennedy became the first presidential sponsor of American Special Forces:

The arrival of such a powerful patron helped establish special operations capabilities never previously evidenced in the American military.¹⁰⁶

Both Kennedy and Churchill had an extremely close relationship with particular Special Forces units and such favouritism could be partially explained by ties formed during personal periods of military service. Memories of the Boer War might have returned to Churchill in the name 'Commando,' and Eliot Cohen suggested that both leaders possessed some romantic conceptions of war and soldiering and 'admired the bravery of the warrior rather than the competence of the manager.'¹⁰⁷ Similarly, neither had any lengthy first-hand experience or exposure to mass warfare; Churchill had observed Spanish and Cuban guerrilla fighting in 1895, served in the Boer War, and had been a war correspondent before briefly being engaged as a Major in France during World War I, while Kennedy commanded a fast patrol boat in the Pacific during World War II. Cohen suggests therefore, that their earlier experiences of war were rather 'glamorous' and as both were 'elitists - and not just as regards military policy,' they each 'turned to an elite unit as a solution to the problem.'¹⁰⁸

It is doubtful that Sidney Holland's military experiences during the Great War provided any 'glorification of war' in the same context Cohen describes Kennedy's and Churchill's wartime experiences. Holland himself served as a Sergeant, and later a Second-Lieutenant, in the New Zealand Field Artillery but became ill and was invalided home after the battle of Messines. He spent six months in hospital and after several operations lost a lung.¹⁰⁹ The decision to establish the New Zealand SAS in 1955 was not completely the result of Holland's deep military and geopolitical analysis. It is quite clear

¹⁰⁶ Linnington, *Unconventional Warfare as a Strategic Foreign Policy Tool: The Clinton Administration in Iraq and Afghanistan*, pp.7-10.

¹⁰⁷ Cohen, *Commandos and Politicians*, pp. 43-44.

¹⁰⁸ Cohen, *Commandos and Politicians*, pp. 43-44.

¹⁰⁹ Gustafson, *The First Fifty Years*, p.39.

the formation of the New Zealand SAS existed, in the main, on Holland's realisation that committing a 121-strong Squadron would be cheaper than sending a 1,000-strong infantry battalion.¹¹⁰

Keith Holyoake was never going to be the champion of Special Forces as were Churchill, Kennedy, or even Holland for that matter. Neither were senior Army officials likely to have encouraged such patronage. As has been illustrated, many had significant artillery experience and this was one avenue in which they could conceivably provide the Prime Minister with a minimum credible force to show ANZUS support in South Vietnam. Even had there been a key New Zealand SAS advocate at the highest levels of Army command, Holyoake's mistrust of the Army (after a series of embarrassing 'gaffs' involving the deployment of 161 Battery) would ensure the Prime Minister remained sceptical of his military advice. Just how the Army might have explained its inability to replace the initial Squadron deployment in 1967 or early 1968 would have been of interest. There was never going to be a full, or even half Squadron SAS deployment to Vietnam.

Thomson's decision to later recommend a 'token' New Zealand SAS force was made as a result of Army concern that any additional infantry commitment would necessitate the inclusion of experienced New Zealand SAS officers and NCOs from 1 Ranger Squadron. The decision to deploy the New Zealand SAS in September 1968 was a very belated response to a long-standing request from New Zealand's military authorities and made only because it would not involve any increase in cost or alteration to the total number of personnel. Not only had this delay seen a 'strategic opportunity window' missed but it also impacted, and would continue to impact, upon the operational efficiency, morale and recruiting capacity of the New Zealand SAS.

It appeared at one stage the closest the New Zealand SAS would get to conduct Vietnam-related operations would be the provision of a 'security guard' detail for the Seven Nation Conference on Vietnam, hosted by New Zealand in Wellington in early April 1968.¹¹¹ Remembering the guard detail, Ogilvy recounted:

¹¹⁰ Rennie, *Regular Soldier*, p. 132.

¹¹¹ The documents noted that the Officer in Charge of Guard was 'Major D.L. Ogilvy, NZSAS (Room 228, telephone extension 486).' New Zealand Army, "Security Arrangements for Seven Nation Meeting

See that [was] another example of how we were often misemployed. Okay, we were the best operational troops and even though the fellows don't like to say it, they can drill and dress and turn out well. And they were great down on that exercise, and General Thornton, I remember him towering over me and looking over and saying 'well boys, you've done well.'¹¹²

Other members of the Conference security guard were a little more optimistic:

My post was right in the chamber of Parliament where they had the conference. And, it had to be guarded night and day even if there was conference in there or not. Anyway, I am sure it was Henry Kissinger came down and I was standing at the door. And I came to salute – and he asked 'how are you?' And I said 'good – and when do you think we will be going up Sir?' 'Oh, would you like to?' he said. I said – 'oh yeah.' But I thought we would really go – we just had to wait, in my mind.¹¹³

Indeed on 30 September, after seven formal Cabinet proposals in less than 18 months, Holyoake finally agreed to deploy a New Zealand SAS detachment for service in South Vietnam.¹¹⁴ The deployment was made public one month later while Holyoake was overseas.¹¹⁵ The DEA press statement read:

The small detachment of Special Air Service troops which will join the New Zealand Task Force in South Vietnam will be one of several corps supplying replacements for V-Force, the Minister of Defence, Mr Thomson, said this morning. He was commenting on a statement made in Hong Kong by the Prime Minister Mr Holyoake. 'Because recruiting has been disappointing over the last year, we intend to maintain our ceiling in Vietnam by the inclusion, among others, of SAS personnel', Mr Thomson said. The Minister said that no special restriction will be placed upon their employment with the Australian Task Force. 'I don't propose to try running the battle from Wellington', said Mr Thomson. The Minister said that the deployment will be made without any increase in the numbers authorised already to serve in Vietnam.

It was a solution unlikely to have been happily received by Army and Defence officials. There would be a reduction in the number of troops available for the two infantry companies, although the Australians were comfortable replacing elements of support and logistics-based troops within the ANZAC battalion. Nevertheless, its premier soldiers were now provided with an opportunity to once again demonstrate and enhance their

Wellington, 4 April 1968," in PM478/2/23 Part 1 South Vietnam: Political Affairs: Vietnam Troop Contributor's Meetings, ANZ, Wellington.

¹¹² David Ogilvy, interview conducted on 27 February 2008.

¹¹³ Bill Lilliecrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

¹¹⁴ Cabinet Secretary Ray Perry, "1 RNZIR Relief: SAS Inclusion, 30 September 1968," in PM478/4/6 Part 11.

¹¹⁵ PM478/4/6 Part 11 dated 31 October 1968.

skills in South East Asia. The New Zealand SAS Troop was expected to be in South Vietnam by the beginning of December 1968. There was little time to make the appropriate preparations before departure.

Part III: 4 Troop: 1968-1969

Chapter 6

The Arrival of 4 Troop: October 1968 – January 1969

Because they'd been there for two or three years at that stage, two years, two deployments, and we were going to join them as the fourth troop of their squadron. So we had to pretend we were Aussies for a little bit.¹

As soon as Holyoake's Cabinet made the decision to deploy the New Zealand SAS to Vietnam, CGS Major-General Robert Dawson cabled his Australian counterpart, Lieutenant-General Sir Thomas Daly, to confirm if the Troop was still acceptable to the Australian Squadron. Agreement was received three days later.² Until then, the usual New Zealand Troop size had been only 12 strong but, as earlier visits had indicated, the first 4 Troop would need to be organised and equipped on a similar establishment to that of an Australian Troop, including an administrative element.³ Each SAS Troop in Vietnam needed to provide five five-man, or sometimes three six-man, patrols.⁴ Dawson was also aware that the Troop's arrival needed to coincide with the handover of the current Australian Squadron scheduled for February 1969. It was essential that the New Zealand SAS be there by December 1968 to provide a 'good continuity of overlap.'⁵

On 29 October, Dawson advised his Secretary of Defence William Hutchings the Troop would first travel to Terendak Camp, Malaysia, on 19 November to carry out 'approximately one month's training and acclimatisation,' before deployment. News that the New Zealand SAS was to be sent to Vietnam was publicly announced on 30 October by Holyoake during a visit to Hong Kong. Timing of the announcement ensured the New Zealand Prime Minister endured little domestic scrutiny of the decision; any subsequent comment was left to Defence Minister David Thomson who attempted to disguise the addition of the New Zealand SAS Troop as nothing more than 'making up numbers:'

"...Because recruiting has been disappointing over the last year, we intend to maintain our ceiling in Vietnam by the inclusion, among others, of SAS personnel", Mr Thomson said. The Minister said that no special restriction will be placed upon their employment with the Australian Task Force. "I don't propose to

¹ Terry Culley, interview conducted on 21 July 2008.

² New Zealand Army HQ Signal, "NZSAS Troop for Service in Vietnam, 8 October 1968," in New Zealand Army S.15/28/2 Volume 1 NZSAS Force in Vietnam, May 1968-August 1971, NZDF Archive, Wellington.

³ Lieutenant-Colonel R.H. Smith, "Deployment of New Zealand SAS Troop to L ATF, 6 June 1968," in New Zealand Army S.15/28/2 Volume 1, p.2.

⁴ Smith, "Deployment of New Zealand SAS Troop to L ATF, 6 June 1968," p. 2.

⁵ NZV Force Signal, For AG from CGS, 3 October 1968," in New Zealand Army S.15/28/2 Volume 1, p. 1.

try running the battle from Wellington”, said Mr Thomson. The Minister said that the deployment will be made without any increase in the numbers authorised already to serve in Vietnam.⁶

The New Zealand SAS Unit History records Major David Ogilvy’s 1 Ranger Squadron received notification to form the Troop on 21 October 1968, some three weeks after Cabinet authorised the deployment.⁷



Photograph 2: 4 Troop, New Zealand SAS, circa October/November 1968⁸

It appears the decision had been filtered down to Ogilvy much earlier. To comply with Dawson’s instructions to get the Troop to Malaysia by 19 November, Ogilvy had less than one month to select the first group and carry out appropriate training before reaching South Vietnam. In terms of selecting the first group, Ogilvy recounted:

...it would have been the best available fitness-wise, that could be expected to go and perhaps there might have been a bias to the fourth [Borneo] detachment people who hadn’t finished their term or the fifth detachment [who might have] had the expectation of a trip... I would have tried to make a balance, I think,

⁶ DEA, “Press Statement dated 30 October 1968,” in DEA PM 478/4/6, Part 11: South Vietnam: Political: Military Assistance from Australia and New Zealand, 1st December 1967 – 1st December 1968, ANZ, Wellington.

⁷ 1 Ranger Squadron, NZSAS, “Unit History, 21 October 1968,” in NZSAS Archive, Wellington.

⁸ NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington.

Borneo experience and new blood, so there would have been some new blood in there.⁹

It is probable that the initial notification was made to the Squadron on or about 9 October 1968. In late September 1968 Sergeant Winiwini 'Windy' McGee had commenced, along with a number of other Squadron personnel, a 26-day Field Engineering course at the School of Mechanical Engineering (SME), at Linton Military Camp near Palmerston North. McGee's personal file indicates he was 'withdrawn from the course' and returned to Papakura on 9 October 1968.¹⁰ The following day, Exercise DAMSON GIN, a joint Ranger Squadron, Parachute Training and Support Unit (PTSU) and 40 Squadron, RNZAF parachute exercise carried out in the central North Island was similarly cancelled.¹¹

And I remember it vividly because a group of us were parachuting in Taupo at the time, and I was about to go out the door of this aircraft and I was fighting to get out the door and the parachute instructor was pulling me back inside and trying to shut the door. And we were saying, 'hello, we don't do this sort of thing, what's going on?' So we were all worried and concerned and we actually landed at Ardmore airport right next to [Papakura] camp, which again is a warning sign – 'hello, hello what's going on?' And we were taken back and no-one would say anything until, it was David Ogilvy was the OC at the time, and he got us altogether, and he says here's what's happening.¹²

Ogilvy had earmarked Lieutenant Terry Culley to command the first Troop from 'an early time.'¹³ All members were recalled from exercises or activities around the country and when all assembled Ogilvy relayed Dawson's orders and then 'read out the 26 names.'¹⁴ For many the announcement came as a surprise as a large number of the Squadron believed that there was 'no role for New Zealand SAS in Vietnam...it was an artillery and infantry offensive [and] supported by the engineers for the anti-mining campaign.'¹⁵ Tasks carried out during the three week period before departure included receiving all appropriate inoculations, organising equipment, patrol exercising and using up departure leave:

⁹ David Ogilvy, interview conducted on 27 February 2008.

¹⁰ NZDF, "M329877: McGee, Winiwini Ahitaapi," NZDF Archives, Trentham, Wellington, p.7 and Fred Barclay interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

¹¹ RNZAF Paratroop Training Unit, "Unit History, October 1968," in PTSU Unit History 1965-1973, ANZ, Wellington.

¹² Terry Culley, interview conducted on 21 July 2008.

¹³ David Ogilvy, interview conducted on 27 February 2008.

¹⁴ Terry Culley, interview conducted on 21 July 2008.

¹⁵ Terry Culley, interview conducted on 21 July 2008.

...so you went and had dental checks – and we went and had audiogram tests, and then myself and a whole lot of guys signed a bit of paper saying that we promised to protect our ears from loud noises because we couldn't pass the bloody audiogram thing! Riki Keno had all his teeth pulled out by the dentist.¹⁶

In 1972, Culley commented insufficient information 'about the role and employment of the Australian SAS squadron' in Vietnam restricted the initial training to the 'revision of drills and skills adopted from the Borneo campaign' and since the New Zealand SAS had not 'previously worked with its Australian counterpart in the Vietnamese theatre, it had to adapt to new procedure in theatre.'¹⁷ Only eight of the entire Troop had not been involved in New Zealand SAS operations in Borneo or Malaya, and only three, Culley, Corporal Michael 'Paddy' Cunningham, and Lance-Corporal Kevin Herewini, had not seen active service with the New Zealand Army. Cunningham arrived in New Zealand to take up a position in the New Zealand Army in August 1966, as part of a recruitment drive the Army had carried out to bolster its particularly thin NCO ranks. Previously, he had served with the British Parachute Regiment for eight years. No doubt his parachute qualifications, as well as the rest of his military experience, would have impressed the New Zealand officer interviewing Cunningham in London. The officer happened to be Colonel Frank Rennie, the first CO of the New Zealand SAS. Sergeant 'Windy' McGee was the only original New Zealand SAS Squadron member amongst the Troop.¹⁸

In 1987, William Darrell Baker wrote that the 'general lack of current information about both the role and employment of the Australian SAS...could have been reduced considerably if joint exercises and training could have been conducted a year earlier.'¹⁹ At face value, this assessment is largely correct. However, access to Australian information was far from limited had the New Zealanders been prepared to request such detail. At an operational level, it appears that a lack of genuine enthusiasm on the part of the Australians to receive a New Zealand SAS contingent at any time in 1968, coupled with a New Zealand 'contempt' of the Australians which had been demonstrated in Borneo, ensured no real effort would be made to seek information from the Australians that might assist in the deployment. Exchanges with the Australian and New Zealand

¹⁶ Whi Wanoa, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

¹⁷ McGibbon, *The New Zealand Army in Vietnam 1964-1972*, p. 79.

¹⁸ See NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington, Rennie, *Regular Soldier*, pp. 237-257, and Michael Cunningham, interview conducted on 10 June 2008.

¹⁹ Baker, *Dare to Win*, pp. 87-88.

SAS during the 1960s were almost non-existent save for occasional joint exercises.²⁰ Of that limited contact, the impressions left behind of some of the Australians were somewhat mixed:

...prior to us going to Vietnam, we did an exercise in the Ureweras a whole lot of commandos and SAS guys came...and it started to snow and sleet and bloody carry-on. And it really was getting bad and the sleet was coming along horizontally and we needed to cross the ridge and get out on the leaside of this main leading ridge...this was getting silly, you know, it was only an exercise. And we walked through a mob of deer who just stood and looked at us! And when we got to the top of the ridge, the [Australian] guys sat down and wouldn't move. So I did my famous thing – I said 'well that's alright – I'm taking my three guys and we're fucking off.' You know, 'you've all got maps and you're all big plumb soldiers – we'll see you.' Well they soon got up and in behind – and then the next time I saw many of them was in this Wade [2] Squadron [in Vietnam].²¹

When informed of the possibility of a New Zealand Troop being attached to 2 Squadron in May 1968, its OC Major Brian Wade had not been altogether enthusiastic at the prospect of commanding a full SAS Squadron compliment. At that time, there were insufficient radios for an extra troop, United States patrol boots and camouflaged uniforms could not be supplied, the best sites on SAS Hill had already been occupied and extensions to the Other Ranks (ORs) mess and enlarging the unit cinema would have to take place before the arrival of the New Zealanders. In addition, Wade indicated a far greater problem lay in the limited helicopter support currently plaguing the Squadron. Problems with the winches used by the 9 Squadron UH-1B Iroquois helicopters, not expected to be solved until November 1968, limited the number of available aircraft to the Task Force. As far as Wade was concerned, increasing the number of SAS patrols with the inclusion of a further New Zealand Troop 'would have the effect of slowing down the operational tempo to an unacceptable level and morale would certainly suffer.'²² The message seemed clear. While the limitation to helicopter support was likely to have been an entirely genuine reason for Wade's comments in May 1968, the seeming non-existent relationship between 1 Ranger Squadron and the Australian Special

²⁰ For example, Exercise TASMAN V, a joint Australian SAS and New Zealand SAS exercise which was to have included a joint parachute descent, was scheduled in late October 1966. RNZAF Paratroop Training Unit, "Unit History, October 1966," in PTSU Unit History 1965-1973, p.1.

²¹ Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

²² Major Brian Wade, "Problem Areas r.e. Attachment of NZSAS Troop to 2 SAS Squadron, 8 May 1968," in Army Non File Material ANFM A234: S.C59.6, Deployment: NZSAS, 4 November 1968 – 20 November 1969, NZDF Archive, Wellington.

Air Service Regiment remained the prime factor likely to have prevented an adequately detailed and planned build-up.

Despite any real support from the Australian Regiment, the importance of preparation was not lost on the New Zealanders as Culley attested:

As soon as the word came out it got really serious I can tell you. And there was a whole different approach to some of the training activities we took on because we knew that what we were doing was going to keep us alive or otherwise. In the end it paid off.²³

Initial Troop training took place in the Minginui area of the Ureweras during the period 16-25 October 1968.²⁴ According to Troop members, the Squadron Training Officer, Captain Brian Martin, as well as Ogilvy, conducted their own interpretation of 'battle inoculation training' which included taking 'a few risks, knowing the guys weren't going to be bloody stupid and stand up or whatever when somebody was firing over the top of your head.'²⁵ It was important and valuable training. From Ogilvy and Martin's perspective, the 'battle inoculation' training rehearsed and re-emphasised long-standing ambush and Immediate Action (IA) drills which had been established in Malaya and developed and refined in Borneo.²⁶

The Troop left New Zealand from Whenuapai on 19 November aboard RNZAF flight NSL47.²⁷ New Zealand SAS Association Archives contain a two-page memorandum outlining the general points that incoming SAS units needed to be aware of before arriving in Vietnam.²⁸ The memo indicated Phuoc Tuy province was divided into a number of patrol zones, each three kilometres square, which possessed at least one insertion and/or extraction point. It was normal for patrols to be given a combined task of

²³ Terry Culley, interview conducted on 21 July 2008.

²⁴ Handwritten memo from Captain Brian Martin dated 14 October 1968, in New Zealand Army S.15/28/2 Volume 1 NZSAS Force in Vietnam, May 1968-August 1971, NZDF Archive, Wellington, p.1.

²⁵ Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

²⁶ Copy of Sergeant Brian Martin interview by Christopher Pugsley, 1 October 1991, for the NZDF Malayan Oral History Project, held in the NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington.

²⁷ NZDF, "M35339: Ball, Eric," "M329877: McGee, Winiwini Ahitaapi" and "M303668: Johnston, Joseph," all in NZDF Archives, Trentham, Wellington.

²⁸ It is likely that the author of the document was Lieutenant Graye Shattky. The junior Platoon Commander with V2 Rifle Company would shortly return to New Zealand and complete SAS selection. Before leaving South Vietnam, Shattky is understood to have visited some Australian SAS colleagues – from Duntroon days - and written the notes up subsequent to his May 1968 visit. 2 SAS Squadron, "NZ/Aust SAS Ops in Vietnam – General Points, 13 May 1968," in NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington and Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008.

reconnaissance and ambush. The memo also reported the current Australian SAS Squadron were conducting five-man patrol operations even though it still believed the ideal size of a reconnaissance patrol was four soldiers, as had been the case for both Australian and New Zealand SAS patrol operations in Borneo.²⁹

While the memorandum was far from detailed, the New Zealand Troop took up most of the points noted. Training in Malaysia allowed the New Zealanders to acclimatise, conduct jungle navigation and patrolling exercises, practice helicopter drills and fire new and relatively unfamiliar weapons such as the M-79 grenade launcher and M-60 machine gun. According to Baker, the New Zealand Patrol Commanders were also briefed by an ‘ex-Australian SAS officer...on skills required in Vietnam.’³⁰ This briefing did little to genuinely enlighten the New Zealanders on what they were likely to find when they finally began operations:

We had this Aussie Major who gave us a talk...And he’d been to Vietnam with an Australian Squadron and he told us all these stories, which we took notes on...He didn’t really enlighten – once we got there we found that he hadn’t really enlightened us all that much because it was a bit different.³¹

Before the entire Troop had time to familiarise themselves with the techniques passed on by the unnamed ex-Australian SAS officer, the ‘Recce Group’ comprising the Troop Commander Lieutenant Terry Culley and his 2IC and Administrative Warrant Officer Class Two (WO2) Eric Ball, and the ‘Advance Group’ of Patrol Commanders – Sergeants Joseph ‘Johnno’ Johnston, William ‘Bill’ Lillicrapp, and Winiwini ‘Windy’ McGee – had already departed for Vietnam.³² This left Troop Sergeant Fred Barclay with the remainder of the Troop and no Patrol Commanders to work with their patrols.³³ Drills for insertion and extraction by helicopter had been earlier developed with 9 Squadron RAAF and Wade’s note in particular commented that it would be imperative that these skills be learned before arriving in country. The 13 May document also recommended subsequent

²⁹ 2 SAS Squadron, “NZ/Aust SAS Ops in Vietnam – General Points, 13 May 1968.”

³⁰ Baker, *Dare to Win*, p. 79.

³¹ Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

³² Lieutenant Terry Culley, 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, “Activity Report – December 1968, 18 January 1969,” in AWM103 R723/1/79: Reports – General - New Zealand SAS Activity Reports, 1969-1970, AWM, Canberra, and email from Terry Culley to author, dated 16 November 2008.

³³ During its time at Terendak, the Troop was under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel John Brooke, the CO of 1 RNZIR, who would be responsible for the provision of weapons and equipment, allocation of ranges and training areas. Major P.J. Fry (ed), *The First Battalion Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment Journal: 25th Anniversary Commemorative Edition*, (Singapore: Singapore National Printers (Pte) Ltd, 1982), p.97 and Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

training should also place an increased emphasis on navigation ‘as opposed to map reading,’ assault pioneer techniques, advanced demolitions and photography.³⁴ Even had the Patrol Commanders remained in Malaysia, the value of the Australian instruction would have probably been marginal. Barclay noted the Australian advisor had:

...arranged for a helicopter and some rope. And we went out in the football field and he’s going to put guys through climbing down the rope insertion – he had the chopper up about 300 feet. I stopped it. The Battalion 2IC was there, he came down – who I knew – I’d been with the Battalion and done two or three tours with them before SAS – and I said to him ‘shit if he falls off there, we haven’t got a guy.’ If he falls off in Vietnam – well he falls off but not on the rugby field in Malaysia surely? And so he got it sort of stopped – they came up with a thing about hours with the helicopter and took it away.³⁵

As early as June 1968, Dawson had been provided with a paper outlining the likely use of New Zealand SAS troops in Vietnam and their required equipment.³⁶ The report indicated that the Australian SAS Squadron was equipped on a scale of ‘approximately 2½ weapons per man’ so that each patrol could be tailored to whatever task in which they needed to be engaged.³⁷ The weapon and radio equipment for a five man patrol included an XM-148 combination assault rifle and grenade launcher, carried by the Patrol Commander and a combination of two or three M-16s or three or two SLRs, one M-79 grenade launcher and a silent weapon that was usually carried as a second weapon by one patrol member, as well as at least two AN/URC10 (the equivalent of the SARBE radios used in Borneo) and one AN/PRC64 radio sets.³⁸ The M-60 machine gun was also carried by larger-sized SAS patrols. Dawson was told neither 1 Ranger Squadron nor the Australian SAS Squadron in Vietnam currently had any silenced weapons available; Sterling silenced machine guns would have to be ordered via British sources. The report also recommended an order for at least five XM-148 weapons be made before the Troop arrived in Vietnam.³⁹ Orders for the silenced Sterling weapons were sent to the New

³⁴ 2 SAS Squadron, “NZ/Aust SAS Ops in Vietnam – General Points, 13 May 1968.”

³⁵ Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

³⁶ Lieutenant-Colonel R.H. Smith, “Deployment of New Zealand SAS Troop to L ATF, 6 June 1968,” in New Zealand Army S.15/28/2 Volume 1 NZSAS Force in Vietnam, May 1968-August 1971, NZDF Archive, Wellington, p.2.

³⁷ Smith, “Deployment of New Zealand SAS Troop to L ATF, 6 June 1968,” p. 2.

³⁸ Smith, “Deployment of New Zealand SAS Troop to L ATF, 6 June 1968,” p. 3.

³⁹ Smith, “Deployment of New Zealand SAS Troop to L ATF, 6 June 1968,” p. 3.

Zealand Defence Liaison Staff in London on 11 November 1968.⁴⁰ The weapons were not received until February 1969.⁴¹



Photograph 3: XM-148 Rifle⁴²

On 17 October 1968, New Zealand Vietnam (NZV) Force sent a signal to Wellington recommending that the Troop be provided with the XM-148 weapon. Not only was the weapon being carried by Australian SAS patrols and providing ‘more effective firepower’ than two separate weapons, more importantly, the Australian Squadron had ‘no additional weapons to give to the New Zealanders.’⁴³ This would place the Troop at a considerable disadvantage. It appears that resistance to arming the New Zealand Troop with the XM-148 was simply based upon the fact nobody within the New Zealand Army had any real knowledge of the weapon. Army Headquarters in Wellington had earlier advised NZV Force that its ‘information and experience [was] that this weapon is not satisfactory and that the M-16 with M-79 carried as a second weapon [was] a better combination.’ The signal also stated:

Unless AFV [Australian Forces Vietnam] strongly recommend [we] do not intend providing...Would provide 5 additional M-79s in lieu if required.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ The five weapons would cost NZD\$600.00. See Quartermaster-General letter to New Zealand Defence Liaison Staff, London, “Silenced Sterling Submachine Guns, 11 November 1968,” in New Zealand Army S.15/28/2 Volume 1.

⁴¹ Lieutenant Terry Culley, 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, “Activity Report – February 1969, 12 March 1969,” in AWM103 R723/1/79.

⁴² NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington.

⁴³ New Zealand V Force signal dated 17 October 1968, in Army Non File Material ANFM A234.

⁴⁴ New Zealand Army HQ Signal, “NZSAS Troop for Service in South Vietnam, 11 October 1968,” in New Zealand Army S.15/28/2 Volume 1.

The majority of the Troop's equipment and stores moved with the soldiers on 19 November. As was the case for the New Zealand infantry forces already with the Task Force, all maintenance was to come from Australian sources except for specific items of New Zealand uniform.⁴⁵ On 5 November 1968, NEWZARM received instructions from Wellington that they were to purchase 'penlight torches,' folding cots and steel cabin locker trunks in Singapore in advance of the Troop's arrival. They were further instructed to purchase from American sources the M-60 machine gun, 15 radios (5 AN/PRC25, and five of each of the AN/URC10 (241 mc/s) and AN/URC10 (243 mc/s)), five strobe-lights and 26 signalling mirrors. The signal also included authority to purchase tropical leather and nylon 'jungle' boots (26 pairs) and camouflage clothing (56 trousers and 26 smocks) but recommended that NEWZARM wait until the Troop's arrival so that accurate sizes could be issued.⁴⁶ In late November, AFV provided authority to lend seven of the 10 AN/URC 10 sets (only 2 of the 241 mc/s sets could be spared for the Troop) to the New Zealand Government at no cost. Sets ordered by the New Zealanders from the United States would be given to the Australians as replacements when they arrived.⁴⁷

Embarrassingly, Culley reported to New Zealand in early January 1969 that the full entitlement of Troop equipment was still 'not yet at hand.'⁴⁸ In particular, the five Sterling weapons had yet to be issued and the radio equipment was also outstanding.⁴⁹ Other outstanding items included the signalling mirrors, tropical smocks, stretchers, slings and lockers. The mirrors were an urgent requirement because 'each patrol member needed to have one mirror' and as they were about to embark on offensive patrolling operations, the requirement was 'extremely pressing.'⁵⁰ The Australian SAS SOPs determined each patrol member always carried a signalling mirror. The mirror was concave with a central round sight approximately 30mm in diameter and enabled its user to pick up the sun from one direction and then, by keeping the sun in sight, manoeuvre the reflection on to helicopter arriving from another direction. Barclay explained:

⁴⁵ Chief of General Staff, "Mounting Instructions Deployment of 4 Troop NZSAS to Vietnam, 12 November 1968," in New Zealand Army S.15/28/2 Volume 1.

⁴⁶ Army Headquarters signal dated 5 November 1968, in Army Non File Material ANFM A234.

⁴⁷ The radios had still not been sent to the Australians by the end of September 1969. Major-General A.L. McDonald, "Equipment for NZV Force, 29 November 1968" in Army Non File Material ANFM A234.

⁴⁸ 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, "Activity Report – December 1968, 18 January 1969" in AWM103 R723/1/79.

⁴⁹ They were awaiting three URC-10 radios.

⁵⁰ 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, "Activity Report – December 1968, 18 January 1969."

...and you could put it right on the windscreen of this helicopter and of course what he would see was this bright light. And he would just come back and say 'I see mirror' and you would say 'yeah, you can see me.' Or we would have two of them and [the pilot] would say 'yeah, I can see two mirrors.'⁵¹

Toward the end of October 1968, Ogilvy had received a signal from Wade recommending the Troop arrive at Nui Dat in three phases; a reconnaissance group comprising Culley and 'one person on A/Q side' about one week before an advance party of Patrol Commanders, followed by the remainder of the Troop.⁵² This process followed the normal Australian practice for unit relief. The Patrol Commanders arrived early so they could 'proceed on operations with Australian patrols before [the] arrival of [the] main body.' Wade added his Squadron could only accommodate a 'recce and advance parties not in excess of ten.'⁵³ After that, it was up to the New Zealanders to arrive with sufficient tentage for the entire Troop.

Culley subsequently wrote in 1972 that as soon as the advance party arrived in Vietnam on 2 December, he and Ball received 'thorough briefings' from both the Commander NZV Force, Lieutenant-Colonel Kevin Fenton, and Wade.⁵⁴ Culley added that the 'ten days advance movement proved most valuable,' although it could have been even more beneficial had the advance party been able to get to Nui Dat 'at a much earlier stage' allowing a more thorough preparation.⁵⁵ The three Patrol Commanders, Johnston, Lillicrapp and McGee, arrived in South Vietnam, via an RNZAF Bristol Freighter flight, on 3 December and Barclay and the remainder of the Troop nine days later aboard an RNZAF Hercules.⁵⁶

As Culley understood, his Troop was under the operational control of the Australian Task Force (ATF) Commander who delegated that control to Wade. The Australian Squadron Commander was therefore responsible for allotting patrol tasks to the New Zealand Troop

⁵¹ The mirrors were never supplied as requested and the New Zealanders managed to avail themselves of spare mirrors that were in the possession of the Australian Squadron until they were able to collect new ones via the United States military supply network. Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008 and 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, "Activity Report – December 1968, 18 January 1969."

⁵² NZV Force Signal, "Phasing in of NZSAS Troop to 2 (AS) SAS Squadron, 22 October 1968," in New Zealand Army S.15/28/2 Volume 1.

⁵³ NZV Force, "Phasing in of NZSAS Troop to 2 (AS) SAS Squadron, 22 October 1968."

⁵⁴ McGibbon, *The New Zealand Army in Vietnam 1964-1972*, p.79.

⁵⁵ McGibbon, *The New Zealand Army in Vietnam 1964-1972*, p.79.

⁵⁶ Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008 and 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, "Activity Report – December 1968, 18 January 1969."

on a similar basis to those allocated to the three Australian Troops.⁵⁷ Before this happened, the New Zealanders had to familiarise themselves with the Australian approach to SAS operations in Vietnam as well as the type of physical environment they were to encounter and the enemy they were likely to face. On 18 January 1969 Culley wrote back to NZV Force advising of the previous month's activities and events. Most of December had been spent 'erecting their accommodation and constructing defence works,' but by the beginning of 1969 he was able to report that most of the New Zealanders had carried out either short-term TAOR patrols about the immediate vicinity of the Task Force base, or lengthier full-scale SAS reconnaissance and recce/ambush patrols further into the province. Most of these began during the period 28-30 December 1968.⁵⁸

The TAOR patrols were essentially clearing patrols for the Task Force designed to prevent or deter any approaches by Vietcong reconnaissance or sapper squads, and were carried out by all Task Force units based at Nui Dat. For the New Zealand SAS Troop the patrols, usually of no more than two days' duration, served as 'orientation to local conditions' and became, in the words of one Troop member, a way to 'break you in gently.'⁵⁹

Wade's signal to Ogilvy in October 1968 also indicated it was normal practice for the incoming Squadron advance party to have spent three weeks 'in-country' before the main party arrived.⁶⁰ That Culley and Ball had arrived ten days before the whole Troop got to Nui Dat only exacerbated their problems of preparing adequate lodgings and simultaneously beginning their patrol familiarisation activity. The main challenge for the New Zealanders was the sheer amount of work which had to be undertaken before they could commence operations:

...and here's this bush and that's all that was there – they [Australian SAS] said 'there, that's where you're going to live for the next 12 months...' And all we had to clear this area was our goloks [machete] – 'it's gonna take us twelve months just to cut this down, let alone bloody...we won't have time to do operations.' Anyhow we went from there and we got it, and of course we got our Victor and Whiskey Companies in there already and we have the 'old boy net' and see your

⁵⁷ McGibbon, *The New Zealand Army in Vietnam 1964-1972*, p.80.

⁵⁸ 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, "Activity Report – December 1968, 18 January 1969."

⁵⁹ Copy of Joe T. Johnston interview by Christopher Pugsley, 2 November 1992, for the NZDF Malayan Oral History Project, held in the NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington.

⁶⁰ NZ V Force Signal, "Phasing in of NZSAS Troop to 2 (AS) SAS Squadron, 22 October 1968."

old buddies and that - you get a hand, you get a bit of timber here, whatever, and no it wasn't a problem.⁶¹

With no permanent accommodation available, one of the more immediate and pressing problems for the New Zealanders was the state of their allocated tentage. By early January, the Troop's holding was 11 vintage '180lbs' tents, 'made from white cotton material stamped '1943,'⁶² and one 'Marquee on loan from the New Zealand component of 4RAR.'⁶³ All would be initially used to accommodate stores or the troops themselves. However, the New Zealanders soon found that none, as articulated by Barclay, were particularly waterproof:

...the barrage balloon [used to raise the SAS Squadron's communications aerial] and they used to have to winch it in. And old Windy [McGee] and I were both in camp. I think they were called IPP tents – 'Indian Pattern' tent. They were Second World War things and it had an inner and an outer – at night-time you could actually see the stars through the two layers of the tent! And we were talking about when the wet-season came it wasn't going to be too good. And this storm appeared, and the old balloon went down about from here to that concrete house away [10 metres] from our tent – and old Windy said to me 'grab your knife quick!' And we shot out – we cut this dirty big hole right out of the balloon – and hid it. And then when it all cooled down, we took the outer off our tent and put this big bit of rubberised stuff – put the outer on and it was still there when I left.⁶⁴

In the space of ten days, the Troop converted what was known as the 'fourth quadrant' of SAS Hill, and up until that time had been used as a rubbish dump, into what would become the '4 Troop Lines.' ATF engineers provided access to a bulldozer which removed trees, long grass and other undergrowth and 'put a few flat areas in the bush' and the Troop members then 'sort of picked a place where you could put up your tent and that was it basically.'⁶⁵ Timber was procured and put down as tent flooring, and in the finest traditions of the New Zealand Army, when not out on introduction patrols, the Troop went about their new Nui Dat surroundings, meeting the other Kiwi units, and trying to 'beg, borrow, and steal what we could to help ourselves get organised.'⁶⁶

The threat to the Task Force base from incoming mortar and rocket fire was not the only danger with which the New Zealanders had to contend. Unlike Borneo, South Vietnam

⁶¹ Copy of Joe T. Johnston interview by Christopher Pugsley, 2 November 1992.

⁶² William John Barnes, *Voices from Vietnam: The Story of New Zealanders Who Served their Country in Vietnam*, (Christchurch: Wilson Scott Publishing Limited, 2008), p.245.

⁶³ 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, "Activity Report – January 1969, 13 February 1969." in AWM103 R723/1/79.

⁶⁴ Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

⁶⁵ Jim Bache, interview conducted on 10 June 2008.

⁶⁶ Terry Culley, interview conducted on 21 July 2008.

presented the Troop with an environment that required a level of security awareness to be demonstrated not only when out on patrol and with sentry and guard-duty taking up a portion of their time in camp, but at any time in the immediate surroundings outside the Nui Dat lines these were potentially just as dangerous.⁶⁷ The ATF refused to employ local Vietnamese within the confines of the Nui Dat base, and for good reason:

We went down to get some sandbags and at the time that we went down – there was nobody there, no kids, nobody – and Fred [Barclay] said ‘Shit, there’s something funny here.’ So he called up the engineers and they...went in [and] the bloody place was mined – booby-trapped. We would have all gone in there, start[ed] digging sand – and got dealt to.⁶⁸

By the end of December 1968 the New Zealand Troop had put together ‘a good looking set-up.’⁶⁹ The value of the entire Troop building their own Lines, including a permanent combined Orderly Room and ‘Q’ Store and basketball/volleyball court-come-parade ground, was significant for a group that saw themselves as an ‘independent’ unit.⁷⁰ A large shipping container became the Troop’s armoury and defensive bunkers and firing pits were also constructed.⁷¹ According to David Horner, Wade’s replacement in February 1969, Major Reginald ‘Reg’ Beesley recounted that ‘he was “astonished” to find that since their arrival in December [the New Zealanders]...appeared to have “developed a little camp of their own.”’⁷² Although it was true there was a geographic distance between the New Zealand Troop lines and the rest of the Australian Squadron, this was simply the result of the limited space available on SAS Hill which also included a helicopter pad.

After arriving in Malaysia in late November 1968, Culley received formal instructions outlining command and administrative procedures for the Troop while in Malaysia and then Vietnam, from Lieutenant-Colonel Peter Hamilton, Commanding Officer of New

⁶⁷ Like other New Zealand soldiers in Nui Dat, Troop members would carry out overnight guard duty at the New Zealand Embassy in Saigon on a rotational basis. Lieutenant-General Thornton, “Security of Diplomatic Mission in Saigon, 25 June 1968,” in New Zealand Army 15/28 Volume II and Jim Bache, interview conducted on 10 June 2008.

⁶⁸ Sonny Taniora, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

⁶⁹ Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

⁷⁰ The room and store was completed in May 1969. 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, “Activity Report – May 1969, 15 June 1969,” in R723/1/79.

⁷¹ 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, “Activity Report – January 1969.”

⁷² Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 315.

Zealand Far East Land Forces (FARELF).⁷³ Hamilton's directive stipulated Culley was permitted to communicate directly with Ogilvy and 1 Ranger Squadron in Papakura only on 'technical or specialist corps matters.' Similarly, any communication with Wade and 2 Squadron at Nui Dat was required to be done through 1 Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment (RNZIR) and NZV Force.⁷⁴

Even after his arrival in Vietnam, Culley was not allowed to communicate directly with Ogilvy until 'authorised to do so by Commander NZV Force.'⁷⁵ Once the whole Troop arrived in Vietnam, it came under the administrative command of Fenton and operational command of the Commander 1ATF. The directive also stipulated Culley's soldiers would be 'under the command of the Squadron Commander Australian SAS for purposes of discipline.' However, and somewhat to the confusion of Culley, the directive also stated the New Zealand second in command ANZAC Battalion 1ATF would 'exercise the powers of a commanding officer over all troop personnel.'⁷⁶

On the face of it, the directive handed to Culley by Hamilton did not appear dissimilar from that which was received by Meldrum/Worsnop in mid-March 1965.⁷⁷ On matters of national policy and administration the New Zealand detachment commanders in Borneo were under the command of the New Zealand FARELF commander but they were also independently responsible for the safety and well-being of the detachment, for matters of domestic administration, 'for liaison with British military authorities on matters concerning the Detachment, and for ensuring the standard of conduct of the personnel of the Detachment is such as to reflect credit on the New Zealand Army...'⁷⁸

The fundamental difference between the Borneo and Vietnam directives lay in the question of discipline. The 1965 directive stated New Zealand detachment commanders would be appointed 'Commanding Officer for the purposes of the New Zealand Army

⁷³ HQ FARELF, "Directive Four Troop, New Zealand Special Air Service, 22 November 1968," in AWM103 R310/1/64: Establishment and Strengths – General – New Zealand SAS Troop, 1968, AWM, Canberra.

⁷⁴ HQ FARELF, "Directive Four Troop, New Zealand Special Air Service, 22 November 1968."

⁷⁵ HQ FARELF, "Directive Four Troop, New Zealand Special Air Service, 22 November 1968."

⁷⁶ HQ FARELF, "Directive Four Troop, New Zealand Special Air Service, 22 November 1968."

⁷⁷ New Zealand Army Headquarters, "Directive to Commander, Detachment 1 New Zealand Ranger Squadron, Far East, 15 March 1965," in 5/6/7 Volume 1, AMZAM Commonwealth Strategic Reserve – New Zealand National Directives, September 1964 – April 1969, NZDF Archive, Wellington.

⁷⁸ New Zealand Army Headquarters, "Directive to Commander, Detachment 1 New Zealand Ranger Squadron, Far East, 15 March 1965."

Act.’ Fenton wrote at the end of November 1968 that the Australian SAS Squadron Commander could ‘exercise the powers of a subordinate commander in accordance with NZ Army Act Section 81.’⁷⁹ Subsequent legal advice indicated there was ‘no authority to appoint the Australian Squadron Commander’ for such matters and it was confirmed the New Zealand 2IC of the ANZAC Battalion had full disciplinary powers of a CO over members of the Troop in the same way that he was OC to all other New Zealand soldiers based at Nui Dat.⁸⁰

Two key points within the Hamilton directive were to create the most difficulty for Culley during his stay; one from the perspective of his Troop of soldiers, and the second from an Australian/New Zealand command and control perspective. Section Six of the directive stated that the New Zealand Troop was ‘not to operate outside of the area of employment authorised for 1ATF.’⁸¹ Culley recalled the ‘cross-border thing was the one thing that the guys were tetchy about’ and he spent considerable time explaining why the Troop was not permitted to carry out Borneo-type operations.⁸² The issue continued to cause discussion throughout the tour, especially during the second half of 1969 when several Troop members were exposed to United States Special Forces operations and became aware that the Americans were clandestinely carrying out ‘deep penetration’ operations in Laos and Cambodia:

And I said ‘yeah except not here – there, read what it says’ – and I would bring out this piece of paper. The Government says this is what we had to do – we’re here to support the Australians in Phuoc Tuy province and that’s where the mandate is. And, I think that sat heavily on a lot of their minds – when those interactions happened with the Americans in the second six months, you know.⁸³

The second, and most significant, issue was that of operational command and control of the New Zealand Troop. Section Four of the Hamilton directive stated that 4 Troop would be ‘under the operational control of the Commander 1 Australian Task Force’ and would ‘carry out its task as a Troop of an Australian SAS Squadron’ even though Section

⁷⁹ Lieutenant-Colonel K. Fenton, “Deployment of 4 Tp NZSAS, 30 November 1968,” in New Zealand Army Non-File Material ANFM A225: S.58.12 Directives Issued by Army HQ and NZ Army Force FE 21 May 1968 – September 1972, NZDF Archive, Wellington.

⁸⁰ HQ AFV to 1ATF, “Deployment of 4 Troop NZSAS, 18 December 1968,” AWM103 R310/1/64.

⁸¹ Hamilton, “Directive to the Officer Commanding Troop 1 Ranger Squadron NZSAS, 5 December 1968.”

⁸² Terry Culley, interview conducted on 21 July 2008.

⁸³ Terry Culley, interview conducted on 21 July 2008. For further detail on US links, see Appendix One.

Three stated the Troop would be under the ‘command of [the] Commander NZV Force.’⁸⁴ Culley’s initial appreciation coupled with the Australian understanding of the command and control arrangements indicated, however, that Wade was more than comfortable, for when he presented his credentials and the directive to Wade, the Australian Squadron Commander replied ‘I know all about that, I helped write it.’⁸⁵ Culley felt Wade respected the New Zealand Troop as being an independent unit, as did the Task Force Commander Brigadier Sandy Pearson, who was introduced to Culley shortly after his arrival. Culley felt Wade was ready to provide the New Zealanders with whatever they needed ‘to ensure that we could fit in and do what had to be done.’⁸⁶ Operationally, the Australian Squadron OC had similar responsibility to that which many of the New Zealanders had experienced during the Borneo campaign:

...Brian Wade to me was a very, very conservative but very safe – safety first – SAS officer, and I think he was the epitome of a – it was almost as if he was a Brit, he had that kind of ‘stiff upper lip’ moustache...We were almost entirely on intelligence-gathering patrols in that first three months – and he would lay it down, chapter and verse, the SOPs – ‘you don’t detour from your role and your task.’ You know, you defend yourselves and you fight your way out of trouble, because you have got no one else anyway, and if we can we will put everything, all the other assets in the air at your disposal, if you are really in the shit. But he said ‘your job is to get in and get out without being seen or heard.’⁸⁷

There also appears to have been some initial misunderstanding on the part of senior New Zealand Army officers, in that the Troop was not going to be as independent as was intended, merely subsumed into the Australian Squadron. In mid December 1968, Fenton advised Wellington that there had been ‘some thought that the Australians may prefer to send out mixed Australian/New Zealand patrols.’⁸⁸ In response to this, The New Zealand Deputy CGS, Colonel Robert Gurr wrote back to Fenton stating he was ‘quite certain this would create more problems than rotating the tasks on a complete patrol basis,’ and instructed Fenton to ‘say, or at least indicate, as tactfully and strongly as you can that this is what we would prefer.’⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Hamilton, “Directive to the Officer Commanding Troop 1 Ranger Squadron NZSAS, 5 December 1968.”

⁸⁵ Terry Culley, interview conducted on 21 July 2008.

⁸⁶ Terry Culley, interview conducted on 21 July 2008.

⁸⁷ Terry Culley, interview conducted on 21 July 2008.

⁸⁸ Colonel Robert M. Gurr letter to Fenton dated 19 December 1968, in ANFM A234.

⁸⁹ Gurr concluded by instructing Fenton to advise his Australian counterparts in Vietnam this was what the New Zealand Army policy for New Zealand SAS patrol operations was to be. Gurr letter to Fenton dated 19 December 1968.

There is no evidence to indicate the Troop itself was unhappy with the initial arrangements that had been made by Wade, nor was there any attempt by the Squadron OC himself to assert unreasonable control over the New Zealanders. Quite simply, mixed patrols had been a method by which the Australians could introduce 4 Troop soldiers to the operational environment of Phuoc Tuy province. The system had been adopted by the rotating Australian Squadrons when a new Squadron arrived in theatre. Nevertheless, some of the New Zealand Patrol Commanders felt that their introduction to operations in Vietnam was of limited use:

The Aussies actually took us out – they put you to the back of the patrol so you could have a look how things were done, or how the Australians did it...What you have to appreciate here, and this has come out right through all our Patrol Commanders and scouts that were introduced to the system, the Aussie patrols, that they only had six weeks to go and it came out very clearly, that they were not going to stick their necks out...But, as I say, this could have been the factor that this bloke wasn't going to go anywhere, he was not going to locate anybody, he was going to keep his nose clean, and of course that was his last patrol and then he was going back to Aussie. I don't say that he was like that the whole tour...but this was the personal feeling I got with the bloke. Nice bloke to have a beer with in the Sergeants Mess but I think if you're a new bloke in that theatre, you're coming into that theatre in Vietnam, this was the last thing you want to see is something like that...And they all come back more or less the same. There was, I think, Fred [Barclay] was the only one where they did have a 'stoush.' But the rest were very mediocre – holding back – that's the feeling we got from that. After that, we were on our own.⁹⁰

Other New Zealand Patrol Commanders felt differently:

Shit mate, they had had a hard tour...Well when we got up there, they had been there ten months; they had been through Tet, they'd done heavy patrolling. Of course they were 'yarping' and they were really you could probably say 'post traumatic stress' because all they could talk about was 'shooting Gooks.' You'd be up in the mess and they'd be talking dead Vietnamese and he blew this one away...So they really were strung out on the whole business – most definitely. I think Major Wade had worked them pretty well.⁹¹

In his book, *Behind Enemy Lines: An Australian SAS Soldier in Vietnam*, 2 Squadron member Terry O'Farrell wrote that while the New Zealanders were 'initially welcome, they soon began to grate and it's fair to say that right from the start we never really got on with the Kiwis as a group.'⁹² O'Farrell limits his criticism of the New Zealand Troop to

⁹⁰ Copy of Joe T. Johnston interview by Christopher Pugsley, 2 November 1992.

⁹¹ Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

⁹² O'Farrell, *Behind Enemy Lines*, p.144.

frictions brought about by the New Zealanders' relentless 'guitar playing and singing whenever they got near a beer' and avoids any analysis or comparison of an operational nature.⁹³ Conversely, the New Zealanders felt certain quarters within 2 Squadron held particular views of the New Zealand SAS:

I thought they didn't mind us although there was some sort of sarcastic remarks about Borneo. They had the wrong impression; they thought that One Detachment had to be retrained, you know, they left Borneo for a little while. They weren't retrained – they'd been there that fucking long that they needed a rest! But the Aussies sort of took it the wrong way, bit of professional jealousy or something going on. Other than that, we seemed to fit in pretty well.⁹⁴

It was not long before Wade understood the value and experience the New Zealand Troop brought to his Squadron. On 18 January, Culley wrote to NZV Force advising of the previous month's activities and events. Culley noted that by the end of December 1968 most Troop members had been absorbed into Australian Squadron patrols and his Troop Sergeant Barclay had 'joined 2 SAS Squadron for a fourteen day operation in AO STERNUM.'⁹⁵ Culley reported the patrol Barclay was with 'contacted a three man Vietcong group and resulted in one enemy KIA (BC).'⁹⁶ The Australian patrol had in fact encountered several more than Culley initially reported.

The First Patrols: 2 Squadron Patrol 271/68

Barclay's first patrol in South Vietnam was as a member of an Australian reconnaissance and intelligence-gathering patrol, led by Sergeant Mick Ruffin, tasked to confirm intelligence reports that the local Vietcong D445 Battalion was receiving equipment and weapons by boat that were being off-loaded on the beaches. The patrol was one of eight Wade had deployed on Operation SILK CORD between 30 December 1968 and 4 January 1969.⁹⁷ Barclay joined the patrol at relatively short notice:

⁹³ O'Farrell had no operational contact with the New Zealand Troop. O'Farrell, *Behind Enemy Lines*, p.144.

⁹⁴ Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

⁹⁵ 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, "Activity Report – December 1968, 18 January 1969."

⁹⁶ KIA was the abbreviated form for Killed In Action. The term BC or Body Count, would be used if the patrol could positively confirm the death by way of assessing the body. 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, "Activity Report – December 1968, 18 January 1969."

⁹⁷ Major Brian Wade, "2 SAS Squadron Ops 272 Enemy Situation – AO "DOOKIE", 4 January 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries, 7/11/11 2 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Log 1-31 January 1969, AWM, Canberra, p. 1.

I don't think that I had been allocated to his patrol at that stage – I think this was something that sort of happened as the patrol was preparing and he [Ruffin] had already given his orders. And he gave me a quick brief – according to, and I haven't read what the mission was in here [patrol report] – but according to that *Phantoms of the Jungle*⁹⁸ they were told that the patrol had the information that the beaches were being used to land stores and things. Now I knew nothing about that.⁹⁹

On the morning of 1 January 1969 the patrol found their first sign of the enemy - a well worn track running north-to-south.¹⁰⁰ In mid-afternoon, while continuing to search 'watering spots' for further signs, the patrol located the perimeter of what they believed to be a 'company sized defence position.'¹⁰¹ The bunkers appeared to be in a state of disrepair but the native shelters looked as though they had been used recently. About ten minutes later, Barclay, who was carrying out the role of scout, discovered a 'well used NE [north-east] track.' Well-used became 'currently in use' very quickly - while Ruffin and Barclay were inspecting the track, patrol members Privates Dennis Mitchell and Brian Kennedy observed two Vietcong walking up the track from the opposite direction.¹⁰²

Having no time to warn Ruffin and Barclay, Mitchell engaged the enemy at a range of 15 metres and was quickly joined by Kennedy. The two Vietcong were killed. While Ruffin and Barclay advanced to carry out a body search of the two dead enemy, a further seven Vietcong were spotted just before they engaged the patrol. The first group of four received M-79 rounds from Ruffin in an attempt to dissuade the enemy from assaulting the patrol, while one member of the second group of three was shot dead by Barclay. A second was seriously wounded by the fifth member of Ruffin's patrol, Lance-Corporal Mick Honinger. Mitchell recounted that as a result of the first contact, the patrol 'swung into a smooth fire and movement routine as we returned fire and withdrew back towards the camp.'¹⁰³ Barclay also attested to the patrol's instantaneous and automatic application of contact drills:

⁹⁸ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, pp. 280-289.

⁹⁹ Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

¹⁰⁰ Sergeant M.J. Ruffin, "2 SAS Squadron Ops 271/68 Operation SILK CORD Patrol Report, 7 January 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries, 7/11/11, p. 1.

¹⁰¹ Ruffin, "2 SAS Squadron Ops 271/68 Operation SILK CORD Patrol Report, 7 January 1969," p. 1.

¹⁰² The lowest rank in the Australian SAS Regiment at the time was Private. In comparison, the equivalent rank in the New Zealand and British SAS was Trooper. Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 282.

¹⁰³ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 282.

...and we didn't do any fancy pepper-potting backwards, you fire two shots and move – I was as fit a guy as there was in the New Zealand Army in those days – and we just took off because you were either going to make it or you weren't.¹⁰⁴

The patrol withdrew several hundred metres, frequently changing direction. It appeared that the whole grid square was one large 'enemy defensive area' consisting of bunkers, some demolished, some brand new and others obviously under construction. Several of the bunkers under construction were also concrete reinforced.¹⁰⁵ Trees had been cut down and the 'scars camouflaged.' Many tracks were seen all about the complex:

And all of a sudden we were floundering around inside pallets of cement with 'US Army' on them, sawn 4X4, 6x6 timber – there were pallets of it everywhere – it was like a Carters timber yard! Now that came as a hell of a shock to me – I thought 'Christ – there are other people here – we are going to have to be very careful, are there Americans here?' But it took a little while to work it out in my head – I knew nothing about black markets.¹⁰⁶

The patrol was unable to manoeuvre themselves away from the enemy positions, but by mid afternoon they had travelled sufficient distance to believe they were no longer being pursued. After moving into some thick primary jungle, Ruffin ordered the patrol to establish a Lying Up Place (LUP) and tasked his patrol signaller Mitchell to send to Squadron Headquarters the patrols pre-designated three letter code-word for a contact.¹⁰⁷ Each patrol provided themselves, and Nui Dat, with three 'three-letter' words that could be used in three basic emergency situations; a contact had been made and the patrol required immediate extraction; an ambush had been sprung by the patrol and an aircraft – fixed or rotary wing – was needed to communicate with the Squadron Headquarters; or the patrol had been sighted by the enemy but no further action was required.¹⁰⁸

The contact message was received at 1553 hrs by the Squadron Headquarters but the patrol had not been able to wait for a response. After hearing further enemy following, Ruffin told Mitchell to pack up his radio equipment without collecting the radio aerial – each patrol carried a spare – and the patrol headed off in a south-westerly direction. Unbeknown to Ruffin, at the same time his patrol was attempting to evade their pursuers, another seven-man Australian patrol which included Sergeant Johnston, Corporal

¹⁰⁴ Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

¹⁰⁵ Ruffin, "2 SAS Squadron Ops 271/68 Operation SILK CORD Patrol Report, 7 January 1969," p.1.

¹⁰⁶ Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

¹⁰⁷ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 283.

¹⁰⁸ Captain T.N. Culley, "Notes from Debrief – Captain D.G. Shattky, 22 November 1970," in NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington.

Cunningham and Lance-Corporal Joe Wharehinga, had radioed that they too were in a contact with nine Vietcong, were ‘pinned down’ and required the immediate assistance of a 9 Squadron helicopter gunship ‘Light Fire Team.’¹⁰⁹ This patrol was extracted at 1730 hrs that afternoon.¹¹⁰

While Horner pointed out that Ruffin’s circumstances illustrated that it was the Patrol Commander who was best placed to determine whether or not a compromised patrol required extraction, the circumstances of two patrols being contacted at the same time on New Year’s Day 1969 also exemplified how the limited helicopter resources within the Task Force compelled the Squadron Commander to make decisions about which patrol had the most urgent need to be extracted and which would have to wait for assistance.¹¹¹ This was also an example of what Wade had articulated to the New Zealanders back in May 1968. In response to their requests to be extracted, Mitchell recounted Ruffin received a ‘NO EXTRACTION TONIGHT – LUP’ message that was misunderstood by the Patrol Commander as ‘EXTRACTION TONIGHT – LUP.’¹¹² The Squadron radio logs make no reference to any message being passed on to the patrol, although it is highly likely, due to the situation confronted by both patrols simultaneously that the response to Ruffin was not recorded in the official logs.¹¹³

Regardless of the confusion, Ruffin’s patrol consulted their maps and headed to where they believed would be the best available LZ. The patrol reached an LZ, covered by long dry grass at approximately 1750 hrs that afternoon. Barclay was the first to pick up movement towards the north-east of the patrol’s location. One enemy soldier raised his head above the grass and was immediately shot by the New Zealand Troop Sergeant. Two other enemy soldiers appeared almost instantaneously, one threw a grenade which fell short of the patrol. The patrol responded by throwing back two M-26 grenades which killed both Vietcong.¹¹⁴ Further enemy were observed attempting to approach the patrol and were engaged. Another Vietcong, who had climbed a nearby tree to get a clearer

¹⁰⁹ Sergeant V.W. Martin, “2 SAS Squadron Ops 268/68 Operation SILK CORD Patrol Report, 6 January 1969,” in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries, 7/11/1, p. 1.

¹¹⁰ 2 SAS Squadron, “OPS INT LOG, 1 January 1969,” in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries, 7/11/11, Annex A1.

¹¹¹ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 289.

¹¹² Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 283.

¹¹³ 2 SAS Squadron, “OPS INT LOG, 1 January 1969,” Annex A1.

¹¹⁴ Ruffin, “2 SAS Squadron Ops 271/68 Operation SILK CORD Report, 7 January 1969,” pp.2-3.

view of the patrol and to assist in providing more accurate fire on the patrol's position, was also killed.¹¹⁵

The patrol then took 'poorly directed mortar fire' and – much more accurate – medium machine gun fire from additional Vietcong who had joined the battle.¹¹⁶ The patrol estimated a further 50 enemy had emerged to the south-east of their position and had formed an assault line, 120 metres away, at the edge of the clearing. The mortar barrage lasted ten minutes and the medium-machine gun fire another five after that. At the same time small arms fire, as well as Rocket Propelled Grenade (RPG) fire, was directed upon Ruffin's group.¹¹⁷ In turn, the patrol continued to respond with M-16 and SLR fire as well as M-79 grenades. By this time, more Vietcong were seen moving to the left and right flanks of the patrol. In *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, Mitchell recounted Ruffin told the patrol the best option continued to remain defending their current small depression position in the clearing - 'we didn't exactly vote on it-Mick Ruffin put it forward as his intention and we all assented without question.'¹¹⁸ While most of the patrol was still expecting a helicopter extraction that evening, Barclay was not convinced:

He [Ruffin] believed this was going to happen and he said to me – there was no need not to talk because we were being fired at, mortared, and bloody people blowing whistles and whatever, and he said to me 'Look, we're going to be extracted soon.' And I – at the [RAAF] patrol briefing had understood that the area that we were going to was 45 minutes flying in a helicopter from the base – the helicopter base. And of course we were 30 minutes away from dark. And when it gets dark in the tropics, it gets dark; when the sun goes down it gets black. And more and more of these bloody Vietnamese were running around. And they were trying to work out how many of us there were and they were obviously worried about air strikes, which is what we should have done but didn't... And in the end he [Ruffin] and I had a fairly terse conversation and we agreed that we could sit here and bloody die, or we could abandon our packs and bugger-off and do a very undignified retreat – not a withdrawal but to get back to the cover of the bush. And that's what we did.¹¹⁹

As the patrol was about to move from their position and head for the jungle, a mortar bomb exploded, wounding Mitchell. Ruffin was also probably concussed by the explosion but all patrol members managed to reach the relative safety of the jungle. According to

¹¹⁵ Ruffin, "2 SAS Squadron Ops 271/68 Operation SILK CORD Report, 7 January 1969," pp.2-3.

¹¹⁶ Ruffin, "2 SAS Squadron Ops 271/68 Operation SILK CORD Report, 7 January 1969," pp.2-3.

¹¹⁷ Ruffin, "2 SAS Squadron Ops 271/68 Operation SILK CORD Report, 7 January 1969," pp.2-3.

¹¹⁸ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 286.

¹¹⁹ Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

Mitchell and the patrol report, before heading to the jungle Ruffin had ordered all patrol members to discard their packs save for Mitchell's, which contained the radio.¹²⁰ Barclay remembered the explosion from the mortar round:

Just as we did a mortar bomb landed right in the middle of us and we all got a little bit of shrapnel but [Ruffin] got blown right off his feet. And he wasn't badly hurt – another guy was badly hurt but we didn't know that – but the Patrol Commander; he was stunned, absolutely stunned. It blew his web gear off and we got it back on and we took off. So, I was a Sergeant, I wasn't supposed to take control but I thought 'Nah, I've been in Vietnam for thirteen days – I ain't dying unless I've got to.' And we got back to the bush. We talked around – those guys had never really practised night navigation and we needed to keep moving and we actually left this bush line and I was further back in the patrol, helping this Patrol Commander who we needed to come right...And all of a sudden we arrived back – see, I wasn't taking too much notice – we arrived back at the bloody bush edge. So we had done a big half-circle. And so we had a quick sort out because these guys were now – the enemy soldiers – were now firing at random. They knew where they were, where not to fire...they were firing in the hope that we would return the fire...you know they were hoping to panic us which I think was a fairly successful tactic against conscripted Americans...But we knew, carrying the ammunition yourself, you become very aware that every time you fire a bullet, that's one less you've got. So we weren't firing back. So it turned out that this guy...had a torch with a magnet on it and he'd been using the torch – he'd shielded the beam and used it to get through this terrible bloody bush but had been holding the compass in his hand and of course the magnet is just driving the magnetised compass round and round...so you're just following the arrow, which is illuminated and you're not aware. So we got all that sorted out, disappeared into the jungle and spent that night without any gear.¹²¹

The darkness had come to the rescue of the patrol. More enemy fire tried to zero in on the SAS soldiers as the Vietcong realised that Barclay and the Australians had escaped through a gap in the enemy line which surrounded the LZ. It was not until shortly after midnight the patrol established what they felt was a relatively secure night LUP. Mitchell stated that once in the LUP the patrol 'redistributed the ammunition remaining' and assessed the condition of those who were wounded. All patrol members had suffered some form of shrapnel wound but none appeared to be 'serious or debilitating.'¹²² Ruffin claimed at the end of that night the patrol was left with 'just seven rounds of 5.56mm M-16 ammunition and one white phosphorous grenade.'¹²³ He was correct to a point. Barclay recalled:

¹²⁰ Ruffin, "2 SAS Squadron Ops 271/68 Operation SILK CORD Report, 7 January 1969," p.3.

¹²¹ Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

¹²² Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 288.

¹²³ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 288.

I think there were two of us who had SLRs, when we got up in the rocks at night – I think the guys with M-16s, and that guy – had seven rounds between them. I mean I still had sixty, not because I was clever, but because I had been trained. I had gone with ten magazines and I think I had three and a half – a part one and three full ones.¹²⁴

Just as important as the ammunition issue, the loss of the packs also created other potential problems for the Australian members of the patrol:

They'd drunk all the water because during the day when we'd stopped – and we'd had a number of shoot-ups during the day – instead of going to their pack and getting the water bottles out of their pack and drinking - they'd been getting the water off their belt. Then we had to throw our packs away because we couldn't outrun these bloody guys...and of course they got rid of all their water. And it was in the dry season and they were all dying of thirst sort of thing.¹²⁵

The patrol was extracted the following morning after Wade, travelling in an RAAF 9 Squadron Bell OH-13 Sioux 'Possum' observation helicopter, dropped ammunition and directed the group to a nearby LZ. The aggressiveness of the Vietcong in both contacts had surprised the patrol. It was subsequently estimated in excess of seventy Vietcong, including support elements, had engaged the patrol during the second contact. The enemy were also 'fast, well controlled and well co-ordinated.'¹²⁶ For Barclay it had been a close call. The end of the patrol left him with a number of questions about the operations in South Vietnam and the actions and reactions of the Australians:

And when we arrived, I'm sure the [ATF Commander] Brigadier was there – and he came up and said 'well done' and all the bloody rest of it. And I was at the dug out tent that I lived in...cleaning up my gear and Terry Culley came over with obviously the guys who were in camp and said 'well how about telling us what happened' because I think we had gone missing for twelve or fifteen hours – because we had no radio with us. And I was about to get into that, and a runner appeared and said 'Major Wade wants to see you.' And I went up and saw this guy and he said to me – he asked me outright 'did you at any time take command of the patrol' because I had been told that I wasn't to. So I said 'no.' Now I said no – I don't think to protect myself – but in the circumstances I don't think that I actually took command but I made some pretty bloody firm recommendations, amongst which I said 'I'm fucking going – I'm not staying here; if I am going to die then I am going to die trying to get away.' So, that was the de-brief for me – I never went to this debrief [for the patrol] – I didn't even know that it had happened and that produced that bit of paper [patrol report] and I have never seen that bit of paper until now...I didn't blame the Patrol Commander, but I did I did

¹²⁴ Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

¹²⁵ Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

¹²⁶ Ruffin, "2 SAS Squadron Ops 271/68 Operation SILK CORD Report, 7 January 1969," p.2.

think that that particular group of guys were over-confident – see they talked about ‘Slopes’ and ‘Yarpies’ and our guys never used to talk like that....we had respect for the enemy but the old Aussies, yeah, they are Australians aren’t they? I think they suffered from being over-confident and of course it was basically their last patrol.¹²⁷

By the time the Troop commenced operations in South Vietnam, Barclay had been in the New Zealand Army nearly ten years. Described as a particularly ‘hard man,’ who was uncompromising on himself as well as the people for whom he was responsible for, Fred Barclay had enlisted in the New Zealand Army for the first time as a rifleman in the 2nd Battalion NZ Regiment in April 1959. During the Battalion’s time in Malaya, Barclay qualified as a dog handler and was involved on operational patrols against remnants of the Malaysian Communist Party. In late 1963, Barclay, then a Lance-Corporal, was posted back to Malaya and was involved in Confrontation operations against Indonesian infiltrators who landed on the Malayan peninsula in 1964. In May 1965, he successfully completed SAS selection and returned to Borneo as a Patrol Commander with Ogilvy’s third New Zealand SAS detachment in early 1966.¹²⁸

Barclay’s comments raise a number of interesting points that show the differences between the Australian and New Zealand SAS at the time. Members of the three New Zealand Troops who operated in Vietnam between 1968 and 1971, point out there was no consistency in the post-patrol debriefing compared with what they carried out themselves within 1 Ranger Squadron or had experienced with the British in Borneo.¹²⁹ Admittedly, the Australian post-patrol procedure had been developed in the two and a half years the Australians had already spent in Vietnam, and variations were attributed to the different Squadron Operations Officers and their particular styles and standards.¹³⁰ But the fact that Barclay was not invited to participate in a patrol debrief, where it appears Ruffin, the Australian Patrol Commander, was for a period of the patrol dazed – if not concussed – from a mortar round, would suggest elements of the patrol were either not

¹²⁷ Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

¹²⁸ Barclay retired from the New Zealand Army on 24 May 1987 after 28 years of service. Chamberlain, *Service Lives Remembered*, p.33 and Wayne Holah, *Biographies, 4 Troop NZSAS*, NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington, pp. 2-3.

¹²⁹ Lieutenant J.S. Hayes, “4 Troop NZSAS – Post Operational Report South Vietnam Dec 1970 – Feb 1971, 16 February 1971,” NZSAS Association Archives, Wellington, p. 4.

¹³⁰ For example, Barclay, Taniora and Wanoa all felt that the Australian 2 Squadron Intelligence Officer Tony Haley was particularly good at debriefing patrols to the standard that had come to be expected of the New Zealanders. Others, to quote Taniora, were ‘pretty quick [and] slap-dash.’ Fred Barclay, Sonny Taniora and Whi Wanoa, interviews conducted on 19 July 2008.

recorded or overlooked. This certainly seems to have been the case, when the accounts of Mitchell and Ruffin in Horner and those from Barclay, are compared with the 7 January patrol report.¹³¹

This might be explained by the fact the patrol had been in serious trouble and Wade was just happy all had survived. Other New Zealand Troop members, attached to other 2 Squadron patrols had different views of the Australian SAS. Some such as Barclay, felt that the Australians were over-confident; others thought some Australian Squadron Patrol Commanders were too cautious:

...my familiarisation patrol [266/68] was with this guy [Warrant Officer Ray] 'Ginger' Scutts and Terry Culley...and I scouted for this guy – he was a WO2, got the MM [Military Medal] on another tour that he had been over with – 1 Squadron, or another Squadron. But anyhow, he was the most cautious guy I have ever been out with. Shit – we'd move - we'd stop, we'd move – we'd prop, we'd move – we'd prop, everything was sit, sit, sit, wait, listen, listen – and when I went through this report, as you can see there is hardly anything on it. Then if you have a look at the map – and see we hardly bloody went anywhere! And one of the Aussies told me before I went out – he said 'watch old 'Ginger' Scutts – he's bloody nervous.' Like he's been in too long – he had it. And I thought 'oh shit...'¹³²

Barclay's 'close call' was probably the first instance of a New Zealand 4 Troop soldier in a contact with the enemy in South Vietnam.¹³³ Patrol 271/68 also illustrated some of the differences and variations the New Zealanders would continue to experience with the Australian SAS Squadrons in 1969. The movement from New Zealand to Nui Dat had been fast and left 4 Troop not only short of certain key weapons and equipment but altogether unclear about the specific command arrangements and the Australian SAS conduct of operations. To add to this, before New Zealand SAS operations commenced in real earnest, the Troop had to also build a camp.

¹³¹ Barclay would not be provided access to the patrol reports until July 2008.

¹³² According to Horner, Scutts had been in Vietnam with 2 Squadron for eleven months and had participated in an astounding 24 patrols before taking Taniora, Culley and Northover out on their first familiarisation patrol. Of those patrols, five had resulted in contacts with the enemy. Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 291, WO2 S.R. Scutts, "2 SAS Sqn Ops 266/68 Patrol Report, 7 January 1969" in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/11/11 and Sonny Taniora, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

¹³³ Sergeant Windy McGee was a member of a six-man Australian 2 Squadron patrol (001/68 of 9-22 December 1968) that contacted three Vietcong while placing 'Seismic Intrusion Devices' along tracks during Operation STELLAR BRIGHT. See 2nd Lieutenant T.J. Nolan, "2 SAS Squadron Ops 1/68 Operation STELLAR BRIGHT Patrol Report, 6 January 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries 7/11/11 and Malone, *SAS: A Pictorial History of the Australian Special Air Service, 1957-1997*, p. 132.

While the Troop members acquainted themselves with the new operational environment, both the enemy and their role in, and relationship with, the Australian Squadron would present a series of significant challenges during the following twelve months. Subsequent 4 Troop patrols, described in the next chapters, demonstrated not only the different enemy forces active within Phuoc Tuy province in 1969 but also the application of New Zealand SOPs in an environment very different from that of Borneo. The evolution of an ANZAC-SAS relationship which, for a variety of reasons, had not been genuinely encouraged to emerge for a decade is also explored.

Chapter 7

The Beginning: 4 Troop Operations, February – May 1969

I have a band of men and all they do is play for me...¹

On 13 February, Culley completed his January 1969 activity report to NZV Force.² The initial joint Australian/New Zealand patrols had been providing reconnaissance and intelligence information for the Task Force. By the end of January 1969, all New Zealand patrols were carrying out similar tasks for the Squadron. On 7 January 1969 Sergeant Bill Lillicrapp led patrol 05/69 in the first all New Zealand SAS patrol in South Vietnam.³ A total of seven Reconnaissance/Ambush (Recce/Ambush) patrols were conducted by the New Zealand Troop during the month, and of those, the only contact with the enemy was a successful ambush conducted during Lillicrapp's second patrol, 015/69 between 17 and 21 January.⁴ Lillicrapp recounted that first ambush:

...and so we pulled back from the track a little bit and so I gave my group orders – we call it 'O Group' – so gave my orders of what we were going to do. And my plan was to have four of us in the 'killer group' – that's with one guy [each] on the flank with a claymore so protecting our flanks, two of us in the middle and then one behind looking to the rear...The orders were that if they [the enemy] came through, if three of them came through, I'd knock off the middle one and then the guys take up the others, or if two came through, I'd hit the second man. So, we're lying there and along a couple came so what I did was I just aimed my rifle and when his chest hit the sights – so I just operated the trigger – and that was that.⁵

At the same time, the next enemy was engaged and shot by the other patrol members in the 'killer group.' As was the practice, Lillicrapp and his scout Lance-Corporal Whi Wanoa cautiously approached the body with fire and movement. The body was dragged off the track by Wanoa and the two New Zealanders discovered a large number of documents, some cash, a wallet and a Chinese-manufactured pistol. The second enemy was no longer on the track:

¹ 'Ten Guitars' written and performed by Gerry Dorsey, aka Englebert Humperdinck, 1966.

² 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, "Activity Report – January 1969, 13 February 1969" in AWM103 R723/1/79: Reports – General - New Zealand SAS Activity Reports, 1969-1970, AWM, Canberra.

³ Sergeant W.J. Lillicrapp, "2 SAS Sqn Ops 05/69 Patrol Report, 15 January 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/11/11, 2 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative, Duty Officer's Log, Annexes [1-31 January 1969], AWM, Canberra, p.1.

⁴ Lillicrapp, "2 SAS Sqn Ops 15/69 Patrol Report, 25 January 1969," p.1 and 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, "Activity Report – January 1969, 13 February 1969."

⁵ Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

...my policy was if I could see the body, I would search it, but I wouldn't cross a track to search a body. So if a Claymore [mine] blew someone across the track – like we claimed a possible on one of the jobs – I wouldn't go across...I wouldn't cross a track, after a contact, to search for a body because you don't know whether a guy is dead or what, you know? You have got five guys – it's not worth it. But, if I could see it, if it was easy to get to - yes I'd pull it back.⁶

Even though both enemy had probably been killed, Lillicrapp subsequently claimed only one Vietcong KIA, he would not even accept the second had, at the very least, been wounded.⁷ One patrol member, Lance-Corporal Joe Murray, was also wounded during the ambush.⁸ It was believed Murray had received a ricochet round through his right hand that severed tendons. As a result of this injury, Murray returned to New Zealand shortly after. He would return to South Vietnam with the second 4 Troop at the end of 1969. The captured pistol suggested to Lillicrapp and his patrol the dead enemy had been an officer. This was subsequently confirmed but became almost the sum-total feedback the patrol received after being extracted on 21 January:

The first lot of documents we got, we were very naive – you know? We had been in country probably about a month wouldn't it? So we got a pistol we shot the shit out of, Whi and I...We got all these documents, put them back - had money in it - not a lot, about twelve dollars in real money; dong was worth bugger all you know. The documents, we handed all the documents in, plus he had a little medal of Ho Chi Minh – we handed that in as well. 'Ah yes, you'll get this back,' you know – we didn't get anything back. We got the pistol back.⁹

Culley noted in his monthly report all New Zealand patrol reports were being forwarded directly to NZV Force Headquarters.¹⁰ Coincidentally, at the same time as Culley lodged his report, the Deputy Chief of General Staff (DCGS) Brigadier Richard Webb asked, at the request of Major-General Dawson, why SAS reporting was not being either passed to Wellington or included in monthly returns from Saigon.¹¹ The Director of Infantry and SAS, Lieutenant-Colonel John Mace was tasked to provide some form of explanation and on 12 February reported to Webb that it was his understanding all patrol reports and 'After Action Reports' were submitted to NZV Force who in turn forwarded them to New

⁶ Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

⁷ Sergeant W.J. Lillicrapp, "2 SAS Sqn Ops 15/69 Patrol Report, 25 January 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/11/11, p. 1 and 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, "Activity Report – January 1969, 13 February 1969."

⁸ Murray was replaced by Lance-Corporal Nat Tito, a Borneo-veteran with Ogilvy's third Detachment, in April 1969.

⁹ Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

¹⁰ 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, "Activity Report – January 1969, 13 February 1969."

¹¹ Lieutenant-Colonel J. Mace, "4 Troop NZSAS Reports, 12 February 1969," New Zealand Army 15/28/10 New Zealand Forces Overseas – Vietnam: Operational Summaries, Reports, NZDF Archive, Wellington.

Zealand.¹² Mace also discovered at the time of writing his report, only one patrol report had been sent to Wellington - nearly three months after 4 Troop had left New Zealand.¹³

In fact by 5 February, 4 Troop had been involved in 19 patrols; either attached to Australian 2 Squadron patrols for familiarisation or all-New Zealand operational patrols. Mace reminded Webb that the Troop was an independent unit 'for accounting purposes and administration' and was not required to submit reports directly but send reports to NZV Force who in turn forwarded them to New Zealand. Army Headquarters in Wellington used these reports and the 1ATF Situation Reports (Sitreps) to compile its Monthly Activity Report.¹⁴

That the task was given to Mace in the first instance indicates there was either some inability or reluctance in forwarding the Troop reports to New Zealand. Mace did not specify what, or possibly 'who' may have been responsible for this but unlike Borneo, where the British forwarded New Zealand SAS patrol reports – albeit in brief cryptogram form – directly to Wellington literally days after the patrol had been completed, there was no similar mechanism in place to send 4 Troop reports from Vietnam in any fashion, much less a timely one. No further action appeared to be carried out as Webb wrote at the end of the Mace minute 'I don't want any further info at this stage.'¹⁵ The message must have been received 'loud and clear' as a signal from NZV Force was sent to Wellington on 25 February detailing the activities of the Troop for December 1968 and January 1969.¹⁶ But even some detail in this report was incorrect:

Some TAOR patrols were carried out near 1ATF base and served as local orientation. One patrol commander on patrol with 2 (Australian) SAS Squadron contacted a three man Vietcong group and one enemy was killed. Most members were absorbed into Australian patrols for the period 28-30 December 1968. Troop commenced operations with 2 SAS Squadron in January 69 in Phuoc Tuy province...¹⁷

¹² Mace, "4 Troop NZSAS Reports, 12 February 1969."

¹³ Attached to the minute was a copy of a sketch of an ambush carried out by a patrol led by Lillicrapp on 21 January 1969 (Patrol 015/69) in which Murray was wounded. Mace, "4 Troop NZSAS Reports, 12 February 1969."

¹⁴ Mace, "4 Troop NZSAS Reports, 12 February 1969."

¹⁵ Mace, "4 Troop NZSAS Reports, 12 February 1969."

¹⁶ HQNZV Force, "Activities of 4 Troop NZSAS in SVN December 68 – Jan 69, 25 February 1969," in New Zealand Army 15/28/10.

¹⁷ HQNZV Force, "Activities of 4 Troop NZSAS in SVN December 68 – Jan 69, 25 February 1969."

The patrol referred to in the above report was either one of two in which Barclay was involved during December 1968 and January 1969. The first patrol, 271/68, as previously recounted, had been involved in at least two serious contacts with what the patrol believed had been close to 'seventy-plus' enemy. Ruffin's subsequent patrol report recorded seven Vietcong confirmed killed.¹⁸ Barclay's second patrol, 012/69 between 14 and 17 January 1969, recorded four Vietcong killed in a single contact on the last day of the patrol.¹⁹

The second of Barclay's patrols was also significant. This operation took place near the Firestone Trail in Bien Hoa province, as part of a series of patrols in the north-west of the Task Force area.²⁰ The Firestone Trail was a large track constructed by United States Army engineers and followed a path across the border area of Phuoc Tuy, Long Khan and Bien Hoa provinces. In *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, David Horner wrote that as the 012/69 Patrol Commander Sergeant J.B. 'Bernie' Considine 'was manoeuvring his five-man group across a creek,' nine Vietcong Main Force enemy 'appeared from the rear' and 'Lance-Corporal Kim Pember and another soldier engaged the enemy and immediately killed three of them.'²¹

The patrol report, written on 20 January 1969, in fact states that an 'enemy section of 11 Vietcong approached the rear of the patrol from the south' and that two Vietcong were initially 'killed at 5 metres by SLR fire.'²² In his contact report, Considine wrote that whilst he and the two other patrol members were in a creek, Barclay and Pember 'with complete disregard for the enemy fire...crossed the creek and suppressed the enemy locations with SLR and M-79 High Explosive (HE) fire enabling the remainder of the patrol to clear the bank.'²³ In subsequent correspondence, Barclay recounted he initially climbed the bank while Pember was 'laying down suppressing fire.' The New Zealand

¹⁸ Ruffin, "2 SAS Squadron Ops 271/68 Operation SILK CORD Patrol Report, 7 January 1969," p.3.

¹⁹ Sergeant J.B. Considine, "2 SAS Sqn Ops 12/69 Patrol Report, 20 January 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/11/11, pp. 2-3.

²⁰ Operation GOODWOOD's main objective was to identify to the Task Force storage complexes that would be used to support 274 Vietcong Regiment attacks during Tet 1969. Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 289.

²¹ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 289.

²² Considine, "2 SAS Sqn Ops 12/69 Patrol Report, 20 January 1969," pp. 2-3.

²³ 2 SAS Squadron Nui Dat, "Contact – After Action Report, 30 January 1969" in AWM103 R617/1/5/7 Part 3: SAS Patrol Reports 1969, AWM, Canberra.

Troop Sergeant commenced firing from the top of the bank and was initially shot at by Considine before the Australian Patrol Commander ‘realised what was happening.’²⁴

Fortunately, the patrol was able to break contact with the larger Vietcong force and by crawling for 250 metres through ‘thick bamboo,’ establish a LUP and radio for an immediate helicopter extraction which took place 45 minutes after the contact.²⁵ The ammunition spent during the 10-minute engagement included 100 5.56mm (M-16/XM-148) rounds, 340 7.62 (SLR) rounds, 25 M-79 HE rounds and 2 M-26 grenades. Considine’s final comments in the patrol contact report were as follows:

A very tight situation. Good application of fire and movement enabled patrol to withdraw safely from the area.²⁶

River, or any form of obstacle, crossing was a tense and potentially dangerous time for SAS patrols. The New Zealanders had developed specific drills in Borneo from which they felt no need to deviate. For example, large rivers were never crossed in the middle of the day; only at night. In a water crossing or a water resupply, the small-sized patrols had to cover each other or those who were crossing or collecting water. With three in the water, patrol 012/69 would be in considerable difficulty. Once again, Barclay was not invited to the patrol debrief but perhaps this was for the best:

That patrol with Bernie Considine...I was the second-to-last man in the patrol and Kim Pember was the last man – and we got out in the open and I thought ‘shit’ and we were on a sandy beach in this creek, in the dry season and there were footprints in the sand. And I thought ‘shit, this is fucking crazy.’ And they, the other three, were in the creek, filling their water bottles. And I lay down and turned around and Kim Pember was standing. And I had a drink with him nine months ago – and he told me, nobody ever mentioned it – he said he had the muzzle of his rifle on his boot. And about here from that glory box away [approximately four metres] was a guy aiming his bloody weapon – and he [Pember] would have been dead if I hadn’t been used to doing some sort of river crossing [drill], because the rest of them – they lost all their water bottles and we had to come home!²⁷

Lance-Corporal Pember received a Mention in Dispatches (MID) for his part in the 17 January 1969 contact and subsequent successful extraction.²⁸

²⁴ Fred Barclay, letter to author dated 12 January 2009.

²⁵ 2 SAS Squadron Nui Dat, “Contact – After Action Report, 30 January 1969.”

²⁶ 2 SAS Squadron Nui Dat, “Contact – After Action Report, 30 January 1969.”

²⁷ Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

²⁸ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 289, p. 468 and p. 480.

The first formal reference to the 4 Troop activity in South Vietnam came from NZV Force in Webb's January 1969 Operational Summary, written for Dawson to present to Lieutenant-General Thornton.²⁹ Webb noted the Troop had commenced operations with 2 Squadron at the beginning of January for 'a familiarization period of approximately one week' but since then patrols had been conducted 'as national elements.'³⁰ The following month, Webb reported the Troop had 'split into solely New Zealand patrols which have operated throughout the Task Force Tactical AO within the 3 SAS Squadron.'³¹ By March, reference to 4 Troop activities in the monthly Operational Summary amounted to just over two lines of text:

The Troop is operating throughout the Task Force Tactical Area of Responsibility on reconnaissance patrols, and remains under command 3 SAS Squadron.³²

This identical paragraph, save for August, appeared in every other Operational Summary that year.³³ Similarly, Colonel Russell Ainge, who had taken over from Colonel Peter Hamilton in early 1969, provided Army Headquarters in Wellington a report on the activities of New Zealand FARELF units for the period 1 April to 30 June 1969.³⁴ Of the 4 Troop activity during that period, Ainge reported the Troop had conducted 'a total of 12 reconnaissance patrols' resulting in 24 sightings (a total of 72 enemy observed) and one single contact which resulted in two enemy KIA and 'one pistol captured.'³⁵

In fact by the end of June, 4 Troop conducted no fewer than 15 reconnaissance or reconnaissance/ambush patrols, in addition to Troop members being part of four other Australian 3 Squadron patrols. Those patrols resulted in nine enemy KIA (BC), one possible KIA, one Wounded in Action (WIA) and at least four oxen killed. Three hundred and sixty-five enemy had been observed over 62 sightings. In addition to a second Chinese K.54 pistol captured during a further Lillicrapp patrol (078/69) on 18

²⁹ Brigadier Richard Webb, "Operational Summary Vietnam: January 1969 1st ATF, 12 February 1969," in New Zealand Army 15/28/10 Volume 2, New Zealand Forces Overseas – Vietnam: Operational Summaries, Reports, NZDF Archive, Wellington, p.3.

³⁰ Webb, "Operational Summary Vietnam: January 1969 1st ATF, 12 February 1969," p.3.

³¹ Webb, "Operational Summary Vietnam: February 1969 1st ATF, 11 March 1969," p.3.

³² Webb, "Operational Summary Vietnam: March 1969 1st ATF, 15 April 1969," p.3.

³³ Webb, "Operational Summary Vietnam: August 1969 1st ATF, 23 September 1969," p.2.

³⁴ Colonel Russell W.K. Ainge, "Report by the Commander New Zealand Army Force Far East for the Period 1 April 69 to 30 June 69, 11 September 1969," in Army 15/28/10 Volume 2.

³⁵ Ainge, "Report by the Commander New Zealand Army Force Far East for the Period 1 April 69 to 30 June 69, 11 September 1969," p.7.

June, Sergeant Windy McGee's 066/69 patrol also captured a SKS rifle and a number of documents during an ambush on 19 May.³⁶ Lillicrapp also commanded patrol 046/69 that had retrieved 'documents' during an ambush which took place on 23 April and had resulted in two enemy killed.

Such a difference in reporting information is extraordinary. The persistent undercurrent of professional rivalry and perceived jealousy consistently demonstrated by others within the New Zealand Army of the SAS – a theme discussed later in more detail – might explain the limited reporting. However, another possible reason why the SAS activities were not included in the wider New Zealand reporting to Wellington was the classification of the material. Major Peter Hotop reported from FARELF on 2 October 1969, that the 4 Troop activity reports were 'marked SECRET, whereas all other reports have not been given any other classification.'³⁷ The SECRET classification appeared 'excessive' in Hotop's opinion but Army Headquarters in Wellington did remind him that the classification of any document was decided by the originating unit 'after assessing the sensitivity of the contents or as a result of directions from a higher HQ.'³⁸

Not only did the classification level of SAS patrol reporting apparently prevent regular and timely dissemination of New Zealand patrol activity to senior New Zealand officers, copies of the New Zealand patrol reports were not even sent to 1 Ranger Squadron. Analysis of the 3 Squadron Commander Diaries shows 1 Ranger Squadron was not added to the formal distribution list for New Zealand patrol reports until the middle of 1969. Neither 4 Troop nor NZV Force appears to have questioned why Ogilvy was not in regular receipt of the New Zealand patrol reports.

Operationally, February 1969 saw the Troop committed to Task Force Operation SWANBOURNE, a plan to provide a 'Counter Attack Force for 1ATF Base during the period of the Tet Offensive.'³⁹ It was also during February Wade's 2 SAS Squadron was

³⁶ The Chinese SKS rifle was given to the New Zealand Squadron upon McGee's return to New Zealand and remains at Rennie Lines, 1NZSAS Group, Papakura. The captured weapon was recorded in the Patrol Report but not in the summary so it may have been overlooked.

³⁷ Major Peter G. Hotop, "Additional Reports from South Vietnam, 2 October 1969," in New Zealand Army 15/28/10 Volume 2.

³⁸ Army Headquarters Wellington, "Security Classification Additional Reports from SVN, 16 October 1969," in Army 15/28/10 Volume 2, p. 7.

³⁹ 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, "Activity Report – February 1969, 12 March 1969," in AWM103 R723/1/79: Reports – General - New Zealand SAS Activity Reports, 1969-1970, AWM, Canberra.

replaced by 3 SAS Squadron. Culley made no further comment about the Australian Squadron changeover other than to advise NZV Force the Troop Land-Rover had ‘now come under the control of 3 SAS Squadron.’⁴⁰ The changeover, and the ensuing relationship between the New Zealand Troop and 3 Squadron OC Major Reg Beesley proved to be a trying one to say the least.

One of three New Zealand SAS reconnaissance patrols to be deployed in late February 1969, Sergeant Fred Barclay’s five-man patrol 03/69 was inserted by helicopter just inside the border of Bien Hoa province, approximately 19 kilometres north-west of Nui Dat.⁴¹ On the morning of the third day of the patrol, Barclay’s group discovered an old enemy defensive position that consisted of ten bunkers connected by tunnels. Barclay estimated that the camp was big enough to support a company-size enemy force but had been irreparably destroyed by artillery or air attack and looked as though it had been abandoned for some time.⁴²

In the three months the New Zealand SAS Troop had been operating from Nui Dat, the soldiers found Phuoc Tuy province – their primary AO – was made up of a combination of jungle, grasslands, swamps and mountains that offered the ‘perfect terrain for guerrilla warfare.’⁴³ The dry season in South Vietnam lasted from October to May and could be incredibly hot.⁴⁴ The terrain was certainly nowhere near the consistent and vast pure virgin jungle Barclay and many of his fellow Troop members had experienced during operations in Borneo. Dry leaves in the bamboo and along the edge of the jungle made movement – even at the excruciatingly laboured pace the New Zealand SAS soldiers deliberately travelled at most of the time - very noisy and close observation of Vietcong or NVA positions was next to impossible.⁴⁵

The province, as well as those border areas that joined it with neighbouring Long Khanh to the north, Bin Tuy to the east, and Bien Hoa province to the west, had long been rest

⁴⁰ 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, “Activity Report – February 1969, 12 March 1969.”

⁴¹ Sergeant F.D. Barclay, “3 SAS Sqn Ops 03/69 Patrol Report, 2 March 1969,” in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/11, 3 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative, Duty Officer’s Log, Annexes [1-31 March 1969], AWM, Canberra, p.1

⁴² Barclay, “3 SAS Sqn Ops 03/69 Patrol Report, 2 March 1969,” p.1.

⁴³ Ham, *Vietnam: The Australian War*, p.180.

⁴⁴ Ernie Stead, interview conducted on 13 June 2008.

⁴⁵ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 253.

and resupply areas for Vietcong guerrilla forces focussed on the ultimate prize of Saigon, the South Vietnamese capital. By early 1969, important supply routes still crossed the province, and NVA troops supplemented both the Vietcong D445 Battalion and 274 Regiment.⁴⁶

Shortly before the lunch period on the third day of the patrol, Barclay's group found a 'track junction.' As the patrol was assessing the intersection, the Patrol Commander noticed movement to the south side of the track and, believing that the patrol had possibly been sighted by the enemy, moved north 100 metres where the ground offered a little more jungle cover and waited for any signs of follow up.⁴⁷ The patrol listened for an hour but did not detect any advance towards their location. Further voices and noises were heard that same afternoon but Barclay was comfortable the patrol had still not been compromised and continued with his task.⁴⁸

The following morning the patrol discovered a foot track between two creeks. Sign indicated light, but recent, use and Barclay decided to establish an Observation Position (OP) just twelve metres south of the path:⁴⁹

...we used to move about three hundred metres, sit down – because you found things by listening and you couldn't really see. And I wanted whoever was the scout, it might have been [Duke] Pewhairangi, to have a spell. So I got him to come back and I got [Eric Ball] to go just in front of me which would have been [four metres] away. And he did what we all did – there was a tree and so he got his pack against the tree and sat on the ground and he was looking at his arc – then he put his rifle on the ground. And I was about to get the radio going when all of a sudden we could hear all this talking - in fact the first thing we heard was some women talking. And we could see through the jungle - legs and they went round, round (pointing) and disappeared...Kevin [Herewini] and I were on this side – the track went around us like a horseshoe and we were right up in the apex. And we could see the legs [and Eric] could see from the waist-up - he could see their faces, the works. And if he had have moved, we would have been dead...What we had all worked out was that most of these guys carried an AK-47 which was slung around their shoulders with a thirty round magazine. And almost without exception they're right handed...So all the time, those muzzles were all pointing

⁴⁶ Paul Edmonds to George Laking, "Phuoc Tuy Province, 21 April 1969," in Army Non-File Material ANFM A194, New Zealand V Force Reports – General, January 1969 – 7 December 1972, NZDF Archive, Wellington, p.2.

⁴⁷ Barclay, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 03/69 Patrol Report, 2 March 1969," p.1.

⁴⁸ Barclay, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 03/69 Patrol Report, 2 March 1969," p.1.

⁴⁹ Barclay, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 03/69 Patrol Report, 2 March 1969," p.1.

right where we were. But at the worst bloody time there was probably a group of about 30 muzzles looking at us.⁵⁰

In addition to the AK-47s, the patrol also saw one Bren-gun, two pistols, three M3 sub-machine guns and a number of M1 carbines and M1 rifles.⁵¹ After the group passed the patrol, Barclay, finally able to breathe again, put together a count of observed enemy:

We averaged it out; Kevin and I got a good count, [Eric] got quite a good count, I mean there may have been a couple of times that he stopped counting because he thought 'Jesus, this is going to turn to crap' – but there were 70 to 72 people.⁵²

Barclay had been appointed 4 Troop Sergeant for a reason. As uncompromising on himself as well as those for whom he was responsible, Barclay's radio operator, Lance-Corporal Kevin Herewini, may have been taking stock of the immediate threat that the Vietcong enemy group presented in front of the New Zealanders, but this was not the only problem for the young signaller:

That's the day that my bloody belt order came undone and I wasn't worried about the bloody enemy – I was trying to – and Fred turned around with this look of horror. I was trying to roll over, cause you know Fred was so – like [Eric] – is so professional they, you know, if something is not right, boy it doesn't matter where the hell you are – you're in trouble! And my belt inadvertently came undone and I was sort of sitting like that – and he saw it – and he wasn't worried about what was in front, he was worried about, you know, doctrine. So yeah, I got it in the neck when I got back – but that was Fred, you know powerful fellow Fred.⁵³

At the time of the sighting, Barclay suggests that he was a little frustrated that a request for some form of air interdiction against the enemy group, who by this time were resting at a creek – and still unaware they were under surveillance – was denied. Barclay did not know that two days earlier, the entire Australian SAS Squadron had been instructed to 'stand-to' along with the rest of the Task Force because of Vietcong attacks on Binh Ba, Phu My, Hoa Long and Baria during the expected Tet Offensive.⁵⁴ Barclay found

⁵⁰ Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

⁵¹ Barclay, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 03/69 Patrol Report, 2 March 1969," p.2.

⁵² Barclay, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 03/69 Patrol Report, 2 March 1969," p.2 and Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

⁵³ Barclay would also recount that it was his experiences during Considine's patrol 012/69 which were the prime reasons for him being 'less than impressed' with Herewini's belt-order being undone during the patrol. Fred Barclay letter to author dated 12 January 2009 and Kevin Herewini, interview conducted on 15 July 2008.

⁵⁴ This expectation was based on the surprise offensive that had taken place at the same time in 1968, most of the available resources were withheld for defence of the Task Force base. Nevertheless, the radio logs for 25 February 1969 make no reference of patrol 03/69s sighting having been forwarded from the

another well-worn foot track the next day but no enemy were seen or heard. The patrol was extracted by helicopter early on the morning of 27 February 1969.

Culley's Troop carried out three reconnaissance patrols in March 1969⁵⁵ and five in April.⁵⁶ Culley also made a brief reference in his monthly report to Lance-Corporal Jim Bache's inclusion in a five-man Australian Squadron patrol 042/69, commanded by Sergeant Edward 'Ned' Kelly, conducted in the Long Green area east of Dat Do between 9 and 15 April.⁵⁷ In the space of six days, the patrol observed at least 125 enemy during eight sightings.⁵⁸ As a direct result of the intelligence collected by Kelly's patrol, the Task Force deployed both 5 RAR and 9 RAR to search for headquarters (HQ) and company elements of the Vietcong D445 Battalion.⁵⁹

Prior to arrival, the New Zealand SAS understanding of the enemy threat in Phuoc Tuy province was based upon the Australian experience as well as that which had been observed by the New Zealand Army elements in country since 161 Battery's arrival in 1965. A year earlier, Australian intelligence estimates determined that the Vietcong strength was close to 34,000 regulars operating from five main base areas and were 'actively supported by 100,000 locally recruited part-time guerrillas.'⁶⁰ Although NVA

Australian SAS 3 Squadron Headquarters to Task Force Headquarters. 3 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 25 February 1969," p.4 and Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p.313.

⁵⁵ These patrols were 023/69 commanded by Sergeant Joe 'Johnno' Johnston, 026/69 commanded by Sergeant Fred Barclay and 028/69 commanded by Sergeant Bill Lillicrapp. 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, "Activity Report – March 1969, 13 April 1969," in AWM103 R723/1/79, AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/10, 3Special Air Service Squadron Narrative, Duty Officer's Log, Annexes [21-28 February 1969] and 7/12/12, 3Special Air Service Squadron Narrative, Duty Officer's Log, Annexes [1-30 April 1969], all at AWM, Canberra.

⁵⁶ These patrols were 035/69 commanded by Corporal Percy Brown, 040/69 commanded by WOII Eric Ball, 046/69 commanded by Sergeant Bill Lillicrapp, 047/69 commanded by Sergeant Joe 'Johnno' Johnston and 048/69 commanded by Sergeant Fred Barclay. See Corporal P. Brown "3 SAS Sqn Ops 035/69 Patrol Report, 9 April," WOII E. Ball "3 SAS Sqn Ops 040/69 Patrol Report, 12 April 1969," Sergeant W.J. Lillicrapp, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 046/69 Patrol Report, 27 April 1969," Sergeant J. Johnston, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 047/69 Patrol Report, 26 April 1969," and Corporal P. Brown for Sergeant F.D. Barclay, "3 SAS Sqn 048/69 Patrol Report, 30 April 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/12, and 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, "Activity Report – April 1969, 14 May 1969," in AWM103 R723/1/79.

⁵⁷ Sergeant E. Kelly, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 042/69 Patrol Report, 17 April 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/12, pp. 1-2.

⁵⁸ AWM98 R723/1/145: Reports – General – 3SAS Patrol Reports, 1969, dated 17 April 1969, AWM, Canberra.

⁵⁹ Horner writes that the Kelly patrol observed '175 enemy' in total. Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 318.

⁶⁰ Australian Joint Intelligence Committee Report 3/1964, 21 October 1964 and Joint Planning Committee Report 110/1964, 11 December 1964, both quoted in Edwards, 'Some Reflections on the Australian Government's Commitment to the Vietnam War,' p. 22.

units had not yet been identified in the south, the Australian intelligence estimates were confident that North Vietnam was providing senior Vietcong officers, key cadre, and military specialists as well as military and communications equipment.

By the time the Australians expanded their military presence in South Vietnam to the Task Force in mid-1966, the enemy forces in and about Phuoc Tuy province were thought to comprise 'a divisional headquarters, two main-force regiments totalling 3,500 men, the D445 Regional Battalion with a strength of 550, local forces up to a company size, infrastructure in the hamlets and some logistic installations.'⁶¹ These forces were able to establish bases and refuges in most areas of the province, in particular the Nui Thi Vai and Nui Dinh hills in the west, the May Taos mountains in the north-east, the Hat Dich area where the Bien Hoa, Long Khanh and Phuoc Tuy provincial boundaries converged, and the Dat Do area towards the south of the province.⁶²

One month after John Mace visited 3 SAS Squadron in October 1966,⁶³ another former New Zealand SAS officer, Major Brian Worsnop, travelled to South Vietnam on a further fact-finding mission.⁶⁴ In his subsequent report to New Zealand Army Headquarters in Wellington, Worsnop wrote the enemy would 'never stand out and fight a major battle unless he is sure of victory or unless he is defending a vital point e.g. a HQ,' would constantly harass forces with mortar fire as well as use booby-traps to slow down forces as they approached 'sensitive areas' (allowing the main force to either withdraw or move underground).⁶⁵ Worsnop had been advised the enemy's use of tunnels was extensive as was the construction of bunkers and camps in the jungle area. While he understood many of the booby-traps were hastily set up and appeared rather obvious, they still achieved 'their purpose of slowing down...forces.'⁶⁶

⁶¹ McNeill and Grey, 'The Australian Army and the Vietnam War,' in Doyle, Grey and Pierce (eds) *Australia's Vietnam War*, p.33.

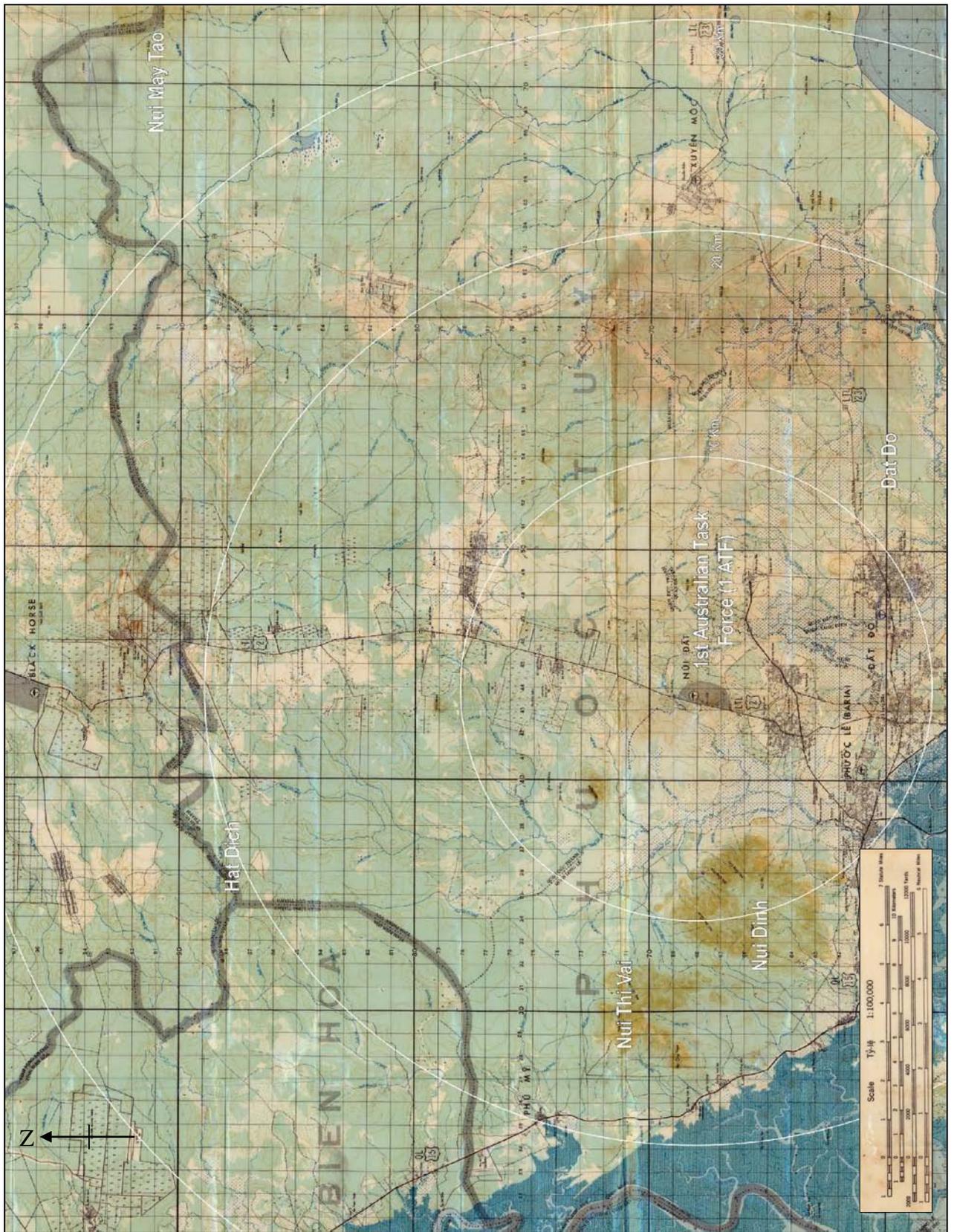
⁶² Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, pp. 176-177.

⁶³ See Major John Mace, "Visit to 3 SAS Sqn, 1ATF, 17 October 1966," in New Zealand Army 15/15, SAS (Ranger Sqn) – FE, October 1965 – December 1972, Volume I, NZDF Archive, Wellington.

⁶⁴ Worsnop would command the V2 rifle company in South Vietnam between December 1967 and May 1968.

⁶⁵ Major Brian Worsnop, "Report on Visit to South Vietnam, 16 December 1966," in MD23/4/1 Volume 1 Defence Aid to South Vietnam: General 29 April 1965 – 10 July 1967, NZDF Archives, Wellington.

⁶⁶ Worsnop, "Report on Visit to South Vietnam, 16 December 1966."



Map 3: Phuoc Tuy province and Nui Dat Base⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Authors' Collection.

Vietcong and NVA Enemy Units in South Vietnam

The NVA/VC is a smart and tough fighter but he is far from unbeatable – even on his own ground.⁶⁸

Vietcong and North Vietnamese military units operating in South Vietnam were divided by the Americans into three generic categories; Combat, Administrative Services and Guerrillas. These were split among NVA, Vietcong Main Force and Vietcong Local Force units.⁶⁹ NVA units were formed and trained in the north and composed primarily of North Vietnamese personnel. Vietcong Main Force regiments and battalions were units directly subordinate to the Central Office South Vietnam (COSV). This organisation had overall responsibility for Vietcong operations in the south and although they were originally formed in South Vietnam, by 1968 many contained large numbers of NVA personnel. LF Vietcong guerrilla units were directly subordinate to the provincial and district party committees and usually operated within the territorial jurisdiction of their respective control headquarters. LF units in Phuoc Tuy province were also organised into company and battalion-size units, however, their strength and composition varied according to availability of manpower, weapons and equipment.⁷⁰

The COSV was broken up into six military regions, each with a political headquarters and a closely integrated military component capable of directing military operations of subordinate Vietcong units. Most Australian Task Force operational areas fell within COSV War Zone D. During 4 Troop's deployment in South Vietnam, four key enemy units were active in Phuoc Tuy province – the Chau Duc District Committee's C41 Rifle Company; D445 Provincial Organic Mobile Battalion (also known as the D445 Local Main Force Battalion); 274 Vietcong Main Force Regiment and the 33rd NVA Regiment.⁷¹

The Chau Duc District Committee was formed to 'provide a link in the communist chain of command; as an interface between political activity and military operations' and manage the activities of communist party chapters at the village level with the small

⁶⁸ MACV, *Handbook for US Forces in Vietnam* (United States MACV, Vietnam, 1968), p.11.

⁶⁹ The combat units included 'manoeuvre' (infantry, sapper, sniper and reconnaissance) and combat support (artillery, engineer, signal, transportation and medical) elements. MACV: *Handbook for US Forces in Vietnam*, p.12.

⁷⁰ MACV, *Handbook for US Forces in Vietnam*, pp. 12-13.

⁷¹ Taylor, *Last Out*, p. 127.

groups of local guerrillas.⁷² The Committee was known to be located within the cave system in the Nui Din Hills, and the C41 Rifle Company, in the Suoi Chau Pha Valley, approximately seven kilometres east of Nui Dat. Neither the Committee nor Rifle Company possessed large numbers. By 1970 the Committee chapters and guerrilla units were known to total approximately 180; the following year that number had reduced to 86.⁷³ The guerrillas were generally poorly armed with older colonial rifles and sub-machine guns.

Despite their limited numbers, in addition to carrying out political and proselytising activities in the province, Committee and C41 guerrillas gathered intelligence, couriered messages, set mines and booby-traps, guided main-force units through the area and extorted money and supplies from the local population.⁷⁴ The Committee and C41 members normally wore 'black pyjamas and Ho Chi Minh sandals.'⁷⁵

The D445 Local Main Force Battalion had its origins in 1957 when two companies of the French-supported Bin Xuyen Party broke away and moved into the mountainous Nui Thi Vai area of the province, to reorganise and form a single company.⁷⁶ After recruiting further supporters, mostly in the form of South Vietnamese 'draft-dodgers,' the name was changed to C40. In 1960, and only 100-strong, it split into two separate units, C40 and C45, although remained capable of reuniting for specific tasks. By the end of the year both companies had merged to form C445.⁷⁷ During the second half of 1964 the unit was split again but heavy casualties after an attack on Bin Gia in November 1964 saw the two re-join to form the nucleus of the D445 Provincial Organic Mobile Battalion.⁷⁸

By early 1965, with further conscription and recruitment, the Battalion was organised into four companies (C1 to C4) and operated principally in the southern area of Phuoc Tuy

⁷² Picken, *Viet Nam Diggers' Language*, p. 44 and Taylor, *Last Out*, p. 128.

⁷³ Taylor, *Last Out*, p. 128.

⁷⁴ Taylor, *Last Out*, p. 129 and Smith, *The Killing Zone*, p. 23.

⁷⁵ Taylor, *Last Out*, p. 129.

⁷⁶ The Nui Thi Vai, or Nui Dinh's were a mountain area approximately 10 kilometres south-west of Nui Dat. Picken, *Viet Nam Diggers' Language*, p. 62

⁷⁷ Major P.F. de Cure, "D445 Local Force Battalion, 18 January 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries, 1/4/136 Headquarters 1 Australian Task Force Narrative Duty Officers Log 1-31 January 1969, AWM, Canberra, p.1.

⁷⁸ de Cure, "D445 Local Force Battalion, 18 January 1969," p.1.

province.⁷⁹ Between the end of 1965 and early 1966, the Battalion ‘with good morale and an offensive spirit’ carried out a number of successful operations but setbacks took place in the second half of 1966, the most significant being the battle at Long Tan on 17/18 August.⁸⁰

Success against South Vietnamese forces during this period nevertheless provided the Battalion with a ‘measure of confidence’ as well as small numbers of captured weapons, but constant harassment in the form of Task Force operations from 1966 onwards, as well as airstrikes and bombardments, forced the Vietcong to move further away from key food-providing areas and populated centres.⁸¹ By early 1969, D445 Battalion still remained partially combat effective despite heavy losses and few successes. Task Force intelligence assessments determined that the Battalion’s ‘aggressiveness’ could be put down to the emphasis placed on ‘political training,’ the presence of NVA cadre and soldiers – first reported in February 1967 – and to its re-equipping in early 1968 of ‘up-to-date [Chinese-Communist manufactured] Chicom weapons.’⁸²

The NVA cadre elements were also responsible for assisting with the establishment of the D440 (Long Khan Province) Battalion. Organisationally, both D445 and D440 were subordinate to the Vietcong Ba Long Province, which was in turn subordinate to the T-7 Military Region.⁸³ It was understood the majority of actions carried out by either Battalion were planned and co-ordinated by Staff Officers from the Province HQ; the actual allocation of sub-units to objectives was generally carried out by the Battalion Commander.⁸⁴ While the Province HQ controlled D445 and could place any additional

⁷⁹ de Cure, “D445 Local Force Battalion, 18 January 1969,” p.1.

⁸⁰ Long Tan was the site of perhaps the most famous Australian battle of the Vietnam War. On 18 August 1966, D Company of 6RAR encountered what was believed to have been the entire 275 Vietcong Regiment as well as elements of the D445 LF Battalion. A variety of sources estimate that the Australians encountered between 700 and 2500 NVA and Vietcong forces. By the time the battle was over, D Company, with the support of other Task Force elements had killed at least 245 enemy (confirmed by body counts, but estimates range up to 700-1000 enemy dead) for the loss of 18 Australian soldiers. Major Harry Smith, “The Battle of Long Tan,” at diggerhistory.info/pages-battles/long_tan.htm, viewed 9 December 2008, Robert Grandin, *The Battle of Long Tan: as Told by the Commanders* (Crows Nest, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, 2004), pp.290-304, and McNeill, *To Long Tan: The Australian Army and the Vietnam War, 1950-1966*.

⁸¹ de Cure, “D445 Local Force Battalion, 18 January 1969,” p.1.

⁸² de Cure, “D445 Local Force Battalion, 18 January 1969,” pp.2-3.

⁸³ In June 1968, the Vietcong command reorganised its area of operations and chain of command. As a result, the provinces of Long Khanh and Phuoc Tuy were merged to become Ba – Long Province. Taylor, *Last Out*, p. 128.

⁸⁴ de Cure, “D445 Local Force Battalion, 18 January 1969,” p.3.

local guerrilla units under the Battalion's command, if circumstances warranted, the Battalion could itself be placed under the direct command of the Chau Duc Committee.⁸⁵

Experience taught the D445 Battalion that the only way to avoid large numbers of casualties from Free World force airstrikes and artillery was the construction of underground fortifications. Such structures were well-built and able to withstand all but direct hits. Temporary camps had only minor attention paid to their defences; these camps closer to the Task Force relied upon camouflage and knowledge that there were other D445 units nearby to support counter-attacks.⁸⁶ Sentries, mines or booby-traps were extensively used to warn of approach. The Battalion had suffered significant casualties over the years and its forces had little option but to attempt to fight on its own terms. If it chose not to fight, then it quickly withdrew. If it decided to continue with a contact D445 Battalion elements would always 'press an attack tenaciously and with skill.'⁸⁷

By 1969, D445's ability to attack in company-sized strength had considerably reduced. The majority of SAS contacts with D445 Battalion elements from this point were essentially during ambushes on known tracks. D445 patrolling around their own camps was known to take two basic forms; routine patrols of two or three guerrillas walking on tracks or trails around a camp or static patrols that were deployed to give early warning. Fixed positions usually contained a similar number of guerrillas, two or three, set in or near a feature some distance from the camp.⁸⁸

While moving in company strength or escorting supplies through the province, enemy sub-units moved with a separation of up to thirty minutes between scouts and the rest of the group. Single file was the formation most often used, with up to several metres between each individual. Scouts, or scouting groups, moved as much as several hundred metres ahead of larger parties. If groups were ambushed on the move, those not in contact withdrew and attempted to counter-attack the ambush by outflanking the attacking force.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ de Cure, "D445 Local Force Battalion, 18 January 1969," p.9.

⁸⁶ de Cure, "D445 Local Force Battalion, 18 January 1969," p.1.

⁸⁷ de Cure, "D445 Local Force Battalion, 18 January 1969," p.3.

⁸⁸ de Cure, "D445 Local Force Battalion, 18 January 1969," p.4.

⁸⁹ de Cure, "D445 Local Force Battalion, 18 January 1969," p.4.

It was assessed by the Task Force that the standard of fire control exercised and practised by the D445 Battalion was high and the guerrillas had developed sound counter-ambush drills. Wade's 2 SAS Squadron consistently reported the D445 Battalion units it contacted had improved their fire discipline, assault tactics and use of fire and movement, throughout 1968.⁹⁰ The Task Force considered these tactical alterations had much to do with the success that the Squadron had in the province, as well as the influence and training being provided by NVA cadre elements. If the Vietcong knew an SAS patrol might be in an area, then tactics described above may have been used to counter any set ambush:

Well, one of the times when we did an ambush...There were four or five guys on the track and they'd been going a couple of days and we thought we'd hit them the next morning – and when they came back through we hit them – but there was another group further up and they started coming through the bush. We could hear them – we could hear these guys coming through the bush – I think they were doing a sweep. So we weren't going to muck about – we decided to take off...On numerous patrols, there were sometimes three or four sent ahead – so you never knew what was further up track – that was the biggest worry if you were going on an ambush.⁹¹

To counter such tactics, SAS patrols would often 'loop the track' which allowed the patrol to determine if follow-up groups were in pursuit.⁹²

D445 also developed a signalling method of early-warning shots which differed from unit to unit. Passwords, hand/arm signals, bugles and whistles were used, as well as coloured cloth attached to clothing or uniform.⁹³ By early 1969, interrogation of Vietcong prisoners established that three shots indicated Task Force elements in the area; four shots, Task Force members leaving the area and; five shots, enemy SAS, US or South Vietnamese long-range reconnaissance patrols (LRRP) close by.⁹⁴

It was also known that the Battalion had in its possession a number of AN/PRC-10 and AN/PRC-25 (or Chicom equivalent) radio sets used to communicate between units and Battalion headquarters, although it was believed use was restricted by lack of batteries.

⁹⁰ de Cure, "D445 Local Force Battalion, 18 January 1969," p.4.

⁹¹ Jim Bache, interview conducted on 10 June 2008.

⁹² Michael Cunningham, interview conducted on 10 June 2008.

⁹³ Taylor, *Last Out*, pp. 136-137.

⁹⁴ de Cure, "D445 Local Force Battalion, 18 January 1969," p.5.

Interrogated prisoners denied that Free World Force radio networks were intercepted by the Vietcong, however, many soldiers within the Task Force understood converted transistor radios could supposedly be used to monitor Task Force, including SAS, radio frequencies.⁹⁵

Clothing and equipment used by D445 was similar to that of the rest of the Vietcong units in the province – mostly black or blue ‘pyjamas’ and an assortment of whatever webbing and packs could be supplied, captured, stolen or made.⁹⁶ Footwear ranged from the Ho Chi Minh sandal to gym-shoes and procured American or Australian-pattern jungle boots. Hats were sometimes worn and varied from a floppy ‘bush hat’ to a locally-produced woven straw hat.⁹⁷ By late 1968/early 1969 the key base camps or principal areas of operation for D445 were in the south-eastern regions of the province.⁹⁸

The 274 Vietcong Regiment was raised in the beginning of 1964, at the same time other main force regiments were being created in the south to provide support for North Vietnamese incursions, and was made up of the Vietcong guerrilla D800 Dong Nai Battalion, the C202 Local Force Company from Song Be and the 265 Battalion (originally formed in Bien Hoa province).⁹⁹ Throughout most of 1965, 274 Regiment undertook operations in Long Khanh and Bien Hoa provinces from bases in the Hat Dich area of north-west Phuoc Tuy province.¹⁰⁰

After the unsuccessful Tet Offensive operations in January 1968, 274 Regiment returned to the Hat Dich region to once again re-group.¹⁰¹ Ambushes along the main highway leading to Saigon were carried out by battalion-size groups of the 274 Regiment between June and August and further substantial losses were inflicted in December 1968 when all three battalions carried out attacks in the Phuoc Tuy/Long Khanh border area. Again, the 274 Regiment returned to Hat Dich to recover. Early in February 1969, during the second

⁹⁵ US Special Forces also assumed that the NVA was able to monitor radio frequencies. Meyer, *Across the Fence*, p.121, de Cure, “D445 Local Force Battalion, 18 January 1969,” p.4 and Taylor, *Last Out*, p. 136.

⁹⁶ Packs were either locally made cloth products or a bag with a piece of rope knotted at one corner and tied around the opening.

⁹⁷ de Cure, “D445 Local Force Battalion, 18 January 1969,” p.5.

⁹⁸ de Cure, “D445 Local Force Battalion, 18 January 1969,” p.6.

⁹⁹ de Cure, “D445 Local Force Battalion, 18 January 1969,” p.6.

¹⁰⁰ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 1 and Taylor, *Last Out*, p. 137.

¹⁰¹ Those attacks, against Bien Hoa and Long Binh, were carried out jointly with 275 Vietcong Regiment, and were repulsed by American and Australian Task Force elements.

Tet Offensive, while again attacking Long Binh, 274's third battalion suffered 194 killed. Significant losses also affected the second battalion who had, on the same night in February, mounted a ground assault against the United States 'Bear Cat' base in Long Khanh province.¹⁰² As a consequence, 274 Regiment could not commit to any significant battles for the remainder of 1969.¹⁰³

NVA forces operating in South Vietnam were organised into battalions, regiments and divisions, with the typical division consisting of three infantry regiments and a number of combat support battalions and companies.¹⁰⁴ Each infantry battalion was made up of three infantry companies, a support company and a headquarters element, averaging approximately 450 men. The 33rd NVA Regiment was raised in February 1965 in North Vietnam's Quang Bin province.¹⁰⁵ At that time it had been designated 101B NVA Regiment and was the replacement for 101 NVA Regiment which had entered South Vietnam in December 1964 as part of the build-up which led to increasing the Vietcong MF.

By late 1965, the 33rd Regiment had lost nearly a third of its complement in a series of battles with the United States 1 Airmobile Cavalry Division. Withdrawing to Cambodia, it returned to Pleiku province in February 1966 but again suffered heavy casualties during a series of battles, the most expensive in October 1966 where they lost over 300 personnel.¹⁰⁶ In the opening days of the 1968 Tet Offensive, the 33rd Regiment is believed to have lost nearly 700 killed in action. A further 400 were killed in battles throughout the remainder of the year.

In January 1969, the Regiment moved into War Zone D and remained in the Black Horse-Xuan Loc area until December 1969. By January 1970, elements were also identified in

¹⁰² Taylor, *Last Out*, p. 139.

¹⁰³ Documents captured in early 1971 indicated that the 274 Regiment could do no more than re-organise itself into 'company-sized sub-units for smaller scale operations' and by May 1971, the Regiment was forced to detach platoon-sized groups to reinforce local guerrilla units. By then, its total strength was estimated to be no more than 610. MACV, *Handbook for US Forces in Vietnam*, p. 73 and Taylor, *Last Out*, p. 139.

¹⁰⁴ MACV, *Handbook for US Forces in Vietnam*, p. 13.

¹⁰⁵ The NVA was the common name given to North Vietnam's People's Army of Viet Nam (PAVN). Picken, *Viet Nam Diggers' Language*, p. 62.

¹⁰⁶ MACV, *Handbook for US Forces in Vietnam*, p. 13.

Bin Tuy province.¹⁰⁷ Both the 33rd Regiment and 274 and 275 Vietcong Main Force Regiments were supported logistically by the 84 Rear Services Group.¹⁰⁸

Because Chau Duc and D445 were recruited and trained in Phuoc Tuy province and the 274 Regiment had extensively operated there since 1966, both were able to navigate accurately.¹⁰⁹ However, the 33rd Regiment were not local and relied upon maps and compasses. Despite significant losses in South Vietnam, by 1971 the 33rd was still regarded by elements within the Task Force as the enemy unit which posed the most significant threat to the ANZAC Battalion.¹¹⁰

For example, in early May 1969, Sergeant Fred Barclay joined an Australian Squadron reconnaissance patrol, commanded by Lieutenant Chris Roberts, that was re-inserted north of Phuoc Tuy province and to the east of the Courtenay Rubber plantation.¹¹¹ On the afternoon of 7 May, the patrol shot and killed two NVA soldiers but was immediately pursued by a much larger group. The NVA enemy swiftly reacted to the contact and despite knowing the patrol's location, did not attempt to attack. Instead, they deliberately drove the patrol east, towards what Roberts believed was an enemy ambush site 'prepared for their reception.'¹¹² This was subsequently confirmed when the patrol was extracted by rope two hours later – the helicopter gunner claimed one further enemy killed as the aircraft withdrew from a group of at least 12 NVA enemy.¹¹³

The NVA were dressed and equipped differently from D445 and 274 Regiments and wore olive-green uniforms with pith helmets and sometimes chest webbing. They also favoured Ho Chi Minh sandals and used available Free World forces weapons and

¹⁰⁷ By the end of September 1971 – as a result of Operation IVANHOE when 4RAR/New Zealand attacked the Headquarters of the Regiment on the 21 September - the entire 33rd NVA Regiment withdrew from Phuoc Tuy province. Picken, *Viet Nam Diggers' Language*, p. xliii and Taylor, *Last Out*, pp. 142-143.

¹⁰⁸ Taylor, *Last Out*, pp. 142-143.

¹⁰⁹ Jim Bache, interview conducted on 10 June 2008.

¹¹⁰ Taylor, *Last Out*, pp. 142-143.

¹¹¹ Barclay had replaced Roberts' 2IC, Lance-Corporal Milutin Kerkez, who was suffering from blisters caused by an 'ill-fitting pack.' Roberts recounts in Horner that because two of his patrol were 'suffering from medical problems' and the imminent possibility of a contact – even though the Patrol Commander had not observed any enemy - he requested the patrol be extracted and reinserted at a nearby location. Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, pp. 319-320.

¹¹² The patrol would claim 'two NVA KIA.' Lieutenant C.A.M Roberts, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 57/69, 13 May 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries, 7/12/13 3 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Log [1-30 May 1969], AWM, Canberra, p. 2.

¹¹³ 3 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 7 May," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/13, p. 15.

equipment. Intelligence reporting indicated the 33rd Regiment was very cautious when on the move and in open areas or when crossing obstacles, sub-units would disperse and move quickly until cover was regained. In close country a system of shots was also used for signalling and communication.¹¹⁴ The NVA also had access to Soviet-Chinese RPGs, mortars and heavy machine-guns.¹¹⁵

Patrol 052/69: Other Enemy Forces in South Vietnam

Ones that look Pakeha, they all look white to me – whether he was American, Russian or Dutch or whatever...¹¹⁶

Since the end of the conflict, allegations have been made that several thousand Soviet and Chinese advisers were stationed in Laos and Vietnam.¹¹⁷ Most were stationed in the North but in subsequent years, additional information in the form of eyewitness accounts and declassified documents and communication intercepts suggest a number of Russian nationals served as advisers to NVA and Vietcong forces fighting in South Vietnam. Some are also believed to have taken an active role in combat operations.

One New Zealand patrol which took place between 28 April and 6 May 1969 had a most unique experience when Terry Culley led a six-man reconnaissance patrol five kilometres east of Xuyen Moc.¹¹⁸ On the second morning, the patrol observed a single ‘Vietcong’ moving along a foot track. The sighting was not significant because the enemy was alone; what amazed the patrol was the person was ‘Caucasian.’¹¹⁹ Culley’s initial thought was the individual, described as well built, with brown hair and a fair complexion, and approximately 5’10” tall, may have been a Dutch mercenary from Indonesia.¹²⁰ The Patrol Commander was not aware an Australian SAS patrol had earlier in January 1969 observed a six-foot tall ‘Caucasian’ NVA adviser leading a group of heavily armed

¹¹⁴ Meyer, *Across the Fence*, p. 162 and Taylor, *Last Out*, pp. 145-146.

¹¹⁵ Taylor, *Last Out*, pp.145-146, United States Department of the Army, *Army Pamphlet 381-10, Weapons and Equipment Recognition Guide – South East Asia*, p. 129, 147 and 167-169..

¹¹⁶ Sonny Taniora, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

¹¹⁷ Meyer, *Across the Fence*, p. 172.

¹¹⁸ Captain T.N. Culley, “3 SAS Sqn Ops 52/69 Patrol Report, 10 May 1969,” in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/13, p. 1.

¹¹⁹ Culley, “3 SAS Sqn Ops 52/69 Patrol Report, 10 May 1969,” p. 1.

¹²⁰ Terry Culley, interview conducted on 21 July 2008.

Vietcong in the north west of Phuoc Tuy province. During this sighting, the ‘Caucasian’ wore a ‘pressed khaki uniform’ and carried either an M1 or M2 carbine.¹²¹

Three days later, Culley’s patrol again observed the same ‘Caucasian.’ This time he was dressed in a grey shirt, khaki shorts, with a bandolier of ammunition around his waist and carried two weapons – an RPD light-machine gun and an M1 carbine. He was travelling with two female Vietcong. Some patrol members, for example Corporal Sonny Taniora, were keen to take on such an opportune target:

...we hit this track and then we propped. And then we heard voices – and it was women again – and it was about here to the door away [approximately five metres] and we were all in line with this track and we heard these women coming down – and what it was, they were heading down to the water hole. And then all of a sudden you saw this six foot-odd fellow, Caucasian, come walking past – and I went like this to Terry [thumb and index finger formed into a circle and held against his eye] ‘round-eye.’ And Terry went [silently by way of facial expression] ‘What?’ What he was doing – was he was escorting these women down to the water hole and they were down there for about half an hour or so. But Terry doesn’t mention in that report...I went like this to Terry [throat-cutting action] – [he] said ‘no, no!’ And I went like this to Sam [Peti, same action] – and he was nodding ‘yeah, yeah!’ and was putting the pack off and getting ready to – because he walked straight past me around the tree – I was on the other side of this tree and he came past and I thought ‘geez.’ Yes, we could have taken him out and brought him back but the Boss said ‘no, we’ll leave it – we’ll stick to the rules of engagement.’¹²²

In the space of nine days, a total of 22 Vietcong were observed in 12 sightings by the patrol, including the two separate sightings of the same ‘Caucasian.’ Of those seen, most were either porters, caretakers or camp followers, providing support to the D445 Battalion that was based around the area, and the activity suggested to Culley that a large camp was under construction. The patrol would lay an ambush on one of the tracks that had been used by a large group but after twenty-four hours, they withdrew and continued south before being extracted by helicopter the following afternoon.

¹²¹ Sergeant A.F. Stewart, “2 SAS Sqn Ops 275/68 Patrol Report, 8 January 1969,” in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries [Vietnam] 7/11/11, 2 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative, Duty Officer’s Log, Annexes [1-31 January 1969], AWM, Canberra, p.1. On 16 October 1968, another Australian 2 Squadron patrol had been involved in a contact with a group of Vietcong that included, ‘a European.’ See Sergeant V. Delgado, “2 SAS Sqn Ops 230/68 Patrol Report, 18 October 1968,” in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries [Vietnam] 7/11/8, 2 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative, Duty Officer’s Log, Annexes [1-31 October 1968], AWM, Canberra, p.1 and Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 290 and p.275.

¹²² Sonny Taniora, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

The subsequent patrol debrief took a significant interest in the sighting of the ‘Caucasian.’¹²³ Taniora also recalled one of the Australian SAS Intelligence Officers (IO) remarked during the debriefing the patrol ‘should have killed’ the ‘Caucasian.’¹²⁴ Further intelligence available during the period suggested there was possibly at least one ‘Russian military advisor’ in the province believed to have been assisting the D445 Battalion with the preparation of the ‘Ho Chi Minh offensive’ which commenced on 19 May.¹²⁵

Only after the regime collapsed in 1991 did former Soviet officials admit more than 3,000 Soviet troops had ‘fought against the Americans in Vietnam,’ confirming the ‘Caucasian’ was almost certainly Soviet.¹²⁶ As early as 1961, the United States was aware of as many as 500 Soviet personnel in Laos, working in air operations, logistical support and as military advisers.¹²⁷ A report of Russian advisers surfaced in 1967 when a Navy Petty Officer attached to a US Navy SEAL Team working in Kien Giang Province, told of encountering a ‘tall, heavy, bearded Caucasian during an ambush along a remote canal.’¹²⁸ Later the same year, a report from an Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) Military Intelligence source, told of two VC regiments in Phuoc Tuy province, accompanied by foreign advisers. Intelligence reports containing evidence of Soviet activity in South Vietnam were of a particularly sensitive nature and were unlikely to have been disseminated widely.¹²⁹

If the patrol had been carrying a silenced weapon, such as the Sterling submachine gun, it is possible they could have either killed or captured the Soviet. Undoubtedly, this would have been one of the more significant coups of the entire war. However, the Sterling weapons were seldom taken on operations by the New Zealanders as Troop members

¹²³ Culley, “3 SAS Sqn Ops 52/69 Patrol Report, 10 May 1969,” pp. 2-3.

¹²⁴ Sonny Taniora, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

¹²⁵ Sonny Taniora, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

¹²⁶ *Russia Today* (Moscow), “USSR ‘Secret’ Vietnam Soldiers Speak Out,” 16 February 2008, viewed on 30 August 2008 at <http://www.russiatoday.ru/news/news/21019>.

¹²⁷ In 1969, William Sullivan, former American Ambassador to Laos, testified to this before the US Senate Subcommittee on US Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad. John Hart Ely, *War and Responsibility: Constitutional Lessons of Vietnam and its Aftermath* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), p.83.

¹²⁸ T.L. Bosiljevac, *SEALS: UDT/SEAL Operations in Vietnam*, (New York: Ivy Books, 1991) in Luis Sliva (date unknown): *Ho Chi Minh’s Foreign Legion*, viewed on 12 September 2008 at <http://www.globusz.com/ebooks/LuisSilva/00000018.htm>.

¹²⁹ Sliva (date unknown): *Ho Chi Minh’s Foreign Legion*.

considered 9mm calibre weapons ineffective in the jungle environment. The Australian Squadron used the silenced-machine guns more than did the New Zealanders.¹³⁰

Concluding Notes

The simple but effective code of the NVA/VC is “When the enemy advances, withdraw; when he defends, harass; when he is tired, attack; when he withdraws, pursue.” Tactics and techniques are simply embellishments on this theme.¹³¹

It is perhaps the last element of the above ‘code’ that most characterised the enemy to the New Zealand SAS. On numerous occasions the enemy displayed caution when searching for SAS patrols, or immediately after ambushes or contacts. Certainly, defensive tactics using rear-guard parties to ‘delay’ pursuing forces were consistently used in Phuoc Tuy province. Often, a Vietcong or NVA group would not know the exact make-up of an ambushing force – such was the extraordinary amount of firepower that a five-man SAS patrol could bring to bear. Any enemy withdrawal or escape could be completed because, for their own continued safety, the SAS patrol would always withdraw in exactly the opposite direction. Nevertheless, New Zealand SAS consistently remained respectful of any enemy encountered, be they Vietcong or NVA.

As with patrol operations in South Vietnam, the Borneo campaign had certain unique features. However, ‘Confrontation’ was essentially a campaign of ‘minimum force’ and these operations provided invaluable experience for all three Commonwealth SAS forces.¹³² The initial requirement of one British SAS Squadron in 1963 developed into a peak requirement of three squadrons by 1965 and was eventually met by calling upon New Zealand and Australian SAS forces. The SAS discovered many of the techniques and tactics developed during the Malayan Emergency had to be altered to meet conditions in Borneo. Between 1956 and 1958, the New Zealand Squadron had been mainly tasked to defeat Malayan insurgents by way of Troop-strength operations from established jungle bases.

¹³⁰ The New Zealanders believed that the 9mm rounds lacked sufficient penetrating power for jungle warfare operations. The weapons were used, however, by the Australian Squadron. Fred Barclay interview conducted on 19 July 2008, and 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, “Activity Report – March 1969, 13 April 1969,” in AWM103 R723/1/79.

¹³¹ MACV, *Handbook for US Forces in Vietnam*, p. 17.

¹³² Major-General George Lea, “The Joint Report on the Borneo Campaign - Preface, 27 January 1967,” in DEFE 5/172, Ministry of Defence Chief of Staffs Committee Serial 16, TNA, London, p.iii.

CLARET operations in Borneo presented a requirement to demonstrate an entirely new 'field of tactics in jungle warfare,'¹³³ and the four-man reconnaissance patrol evolved to become the most 'sensible solution to the problem of secrecy and security in the surveillance role' in Borneo.¹³⁴ The success of the SAS during 'Confrontation' enabled the British to conclude in 1967 that during the time of their deployment in a purely surveillance role there were no major Indonesian incursions which were not located by SAS patrols.¹³⁵

The thoroughness of the New Zealand preparations before Borneo, thanks largely to Major Bill Meldrum, ensured that the four New Zealand SAS detachments achieved a level of success at the very least equal to their British counterparts.¹³⁶ Similarly, the tactics learned and applied by the New Zealanders, as described in Chapter Three, became particularly significant when operations in South Vietnam commenced two years later. The river crossing drills developed in 1965 exemplified this:

A lot of our operations were crossing rivers and we'd never trained for that until we got over there. I remember one thing when we were at Labuan Island, and we were training at the mouth of this river. And we noticed that all these locals came out to see us do this bloody river crossing training...And we'd go across and swim across, dragging our gear behind us – bloody hell, we found out they were all there to watch because there were salt water crocodiles in the area – they were there to watch us get taken out! I'll never bloody forget that. But yeah, most of our areas we had to cross rivers and of course when you get there – you watch the river for a while, you see the boats going up and down the river, then you'd cross over.¹³⁷

River crossing or any form of water resupply was a tense and potentially dangerous time for any SAS patrol and the New Zealanders most certainly used these Borneo drills in South Vietnam. Had Barclay not known 'some sort of river crossing [drill],' the outcome of the Australian patrol 012/69 in January 1969 of which he was a member, would in all likelihood have been considerably different.¹³⁸

The relationship between the British and New Zealanders appeared to be much closer than between the New Zealanders and the Australians in Borneo. This was a view

¹³³ CINCFE. 9/67, "The Joint Report on the Borneo Campaign, 27 January 1967," p. 34.

¹³⁴ CINCFE. 9/67, "The Joint Report on the Borneo Campaign, 27 January 1967," pp. 34-35.

¹³⁵ CINCFE. 9/67, "The Joint Report on the Borneo Campaign, 27 January 1967," p. 35.

¹³⁶ Dickens, *SAS The Jungle Frontier*, p. 324.

¹³⁷ Neville Kidd, interview conducted on 16 July 2008

¹³⁸ Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

supported by many of the New Zealand Borneo veterans. In summing up the second half of SAS operations in 1965, British SAS CO Lieutenant-Colonel Michael Wingate Gray wrote while the 'Comwelisation' of SAS operations had been achieved with the introduction of Australian and New Zealand SAS units, it was the presence of the 1 Ranger Squadron detachments throughout 1965 that saw the 'resultant firm cementing of family relations' between the British and New Zealand groups, and not with the Australians.¹³⁹ It was this Anglo-New Zealand Special Forces attitude that still manifestly remained with the New Zealanders when the first 4 Troop arrived in South Vietnam in December 1968.

The experiences of Fred Barclay's patrol 03/69 on 25 February 1969, as described in this Chapter, provide an illustration of what the New Zealand SAS encountered during nearly two and a half years in South Vietnam; from the intensity associated with observing or contacting the enemy, the uncompromising professional standards that were expected of all members regardless of situation or circumstances, to the influences of experienced Patrol Commanders, and the inherent frustrations and inflexibility which characterised the relationship with their Australian Commanders. Ultimately the relationship with the Australians, the types of patrol operations conducted, and the ultimate value of these, would leave many New Zealand 4 Troop veterans largely dissatisfied with the overall performance of the campaign. It is these areas which will be thoroughly examined in the following chapters.

Many 4 Troop veterans feel the New Zealand SAS deployment to South Vietnam was limited by a number of factors which impacted considerably upon its overall effectiveness. These factors ranged from a lack of political knowledge of how to deploy SAS, to the lack of 'professional skill at arms' demonstrated by their 'Australian [SAS] comrades.'¹⁴⁰ While it was important for the New Zealand SAS to continue to practise and enhance their particular jungle-warfare Special Forces skills developed, tested and proven in Borneo, it would be quite inaccurate to suggest the Australian SAS in Vietnam forced or compelled 4 Troop to 'conform' with any 'Australian limitations.' Any

¹³⁹ Lieutenant-Colonel W.M. Wingate Gray MC, "22 Special Air Service Regiment Summary of Events No 6, 1 Jul 65 – 31 Dec 65, 23 January 1966," in WO 305/2281 22 Special Air Service Regiment, Summary of Events 1965, TNA, London, p.1.

¹⁴⁰ Lieutenant J.S. Hayes, "Project No. 2, An Evaluation of SAS Operations in Vietnam, 15 May 1972," in NZSAS Association Archives, Wellington, pp. 3-4.

differences in SOPs were basically minimal and by the middle of 1969, the New Zealand Troop was well into its patrol activities. They developed an effectiveness that demonstrated both patience and aggression despite command issues and evolutionary changes in operations determined by the enemy Vietcong and NVA forces and changing Task Force expectations.

Chapter 8

Operational Evolution - from 'Recce' to 'Recce/Ambush:' June – July 1969

One [American] fellow said to me 'well what are you going to do if you find a big camp?' 'Easy – know where it is and go and get you. My job is not to go in there and fuck with them – my job is to find it.' He said 'why do you think that?' 'Hey mate, how many have you got and how many have I got – and I am responsible for my crew.' Talking to a fellow, oh a month or so ago, and he said 'when you had a contact, did you go forward and search the bodies?' I said 'what – all four of us?' ...The job, our job there, was reconnaissance – go find, tell them where it is, you know? You know some of those Australian patrols going through a fucking camp – well they got away with it – but are you going to get away with it all the time? I think our fellows are too valuable for that...¹

On arrival in South Vietnam, one of Major Reg Beesley's most pressing problems – quite apart from the relationship with the New Zealand Troop - was to convince the ATF Commander Sandy Pearson that using the SAS Squadron in the province as Pearson had done with Wade at the end of 1968, was not how the SAS had been trained nor was it the best way to conduct SAS operations. Beesley requested that he be allowed to insert individual patrols 'in a fashion designed to cover a target area over an extended period.'² Dubbing this 'saturation reconnaissance,' the strategy called for a number of patrols each to be assigned an AO within a particular target area; at the same time one patrol was extracted a new patrol with the same AO would be inserted to continue the reconnaissance, thereby achieving longer periods in which the SAS could maintain a presence.³ Not only would the number of helicopter hours for SAS be reduced, a single RAAF 9 Squadron helicopter sortie for two patrols at the same time provided a further measure of subterfuge when infiltrating patrols.⁴

The initial six-week period that Pearson gave to Beesley in early 1969 to prove the value of this approach was successful. The Australian Squadron OC was able to deploy as many as sixteen patrols during the period and as a result, the SAS Squadron provided considerable intelligence on possible routes being used by the 84 Vietcong Rear Services Group to move forces and supplies from the May Taos area in the north east, across to

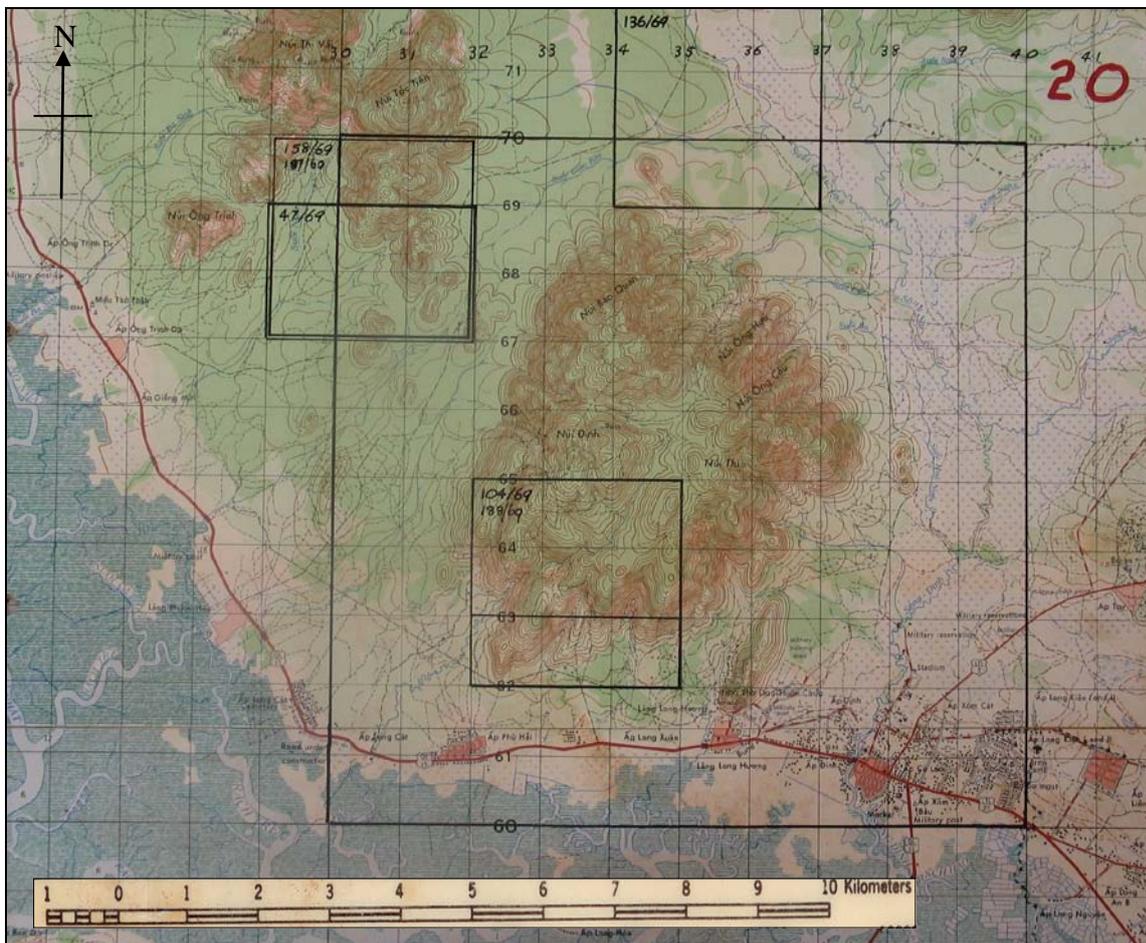
¹ Ernie Stead, interview conducted on 13 June 2008.

² Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, pp. 316-320.

³ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 316.

⁴ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, pp. 316-320.

Hat Dich. This intelligence allowed Pearson to plan offensive battalion operations, and 4 RAR was subsequently deployed into the Hat Dich area shortly thereafter.⁵



Map 4: 3 SAS Squadron AO 20 (including patrol 047/69 AO)⁶

Because of the results obtained during this ‘six week’ period, Pearson not only agreed to allow Beesley to continue deploying 3 Squadron patrols but by early April the Task Force Commander was anxious to send SAS reconnaissance patrols into other areas of the province. While some patrols deployed on the Long Green area east of Dat Do, in Operation ROUND OUT, Pearson directed that Beesley also conduct reconnaissance in the hills of the Nui Thi Vais west of the Task Force base. The two Operation ROUND

⁵ Further information on these operations can be found in 4RAR/NZ(ANZAC) Battalion, Nui Dat, “Combat Operation After Action Report – Operation FEDERAL, 8 April 1969” and Victor 3 Company, “Operation Analysis – Operation OVERLANDER, 18 April 1969” in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries [Vietnam] 7/4/38, 4RAR/NZ(ANZAC) Battalion Narrative, Duty Officer’s Log, Annexes [1-31 April 1969], and AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries [Vietnam] 1/4/145, Headquarters 1st Australian Task Force Narrative, Duty Officer’s Log, Annexes [1-31 April 1969], both in AWM, Canberra, pp.1-16. Interestingly, the V3 report on Operation OVERLANDER was written by Captain Neville Kidd who would replace Major David Ogilvy as OC 1 Ranger Squadron in September 1969.

⁶ 844: Maps of 3 SAS Squadron Op Zones – Patrol Area of Operation (1969-1970), AWM, Canberra.

OUT patrols were deployed on 14 April. Commanded by Australian Squadron members Second-Lieutenant (2LT) Nick Howlett and Sergeant Fred Roberts, these two reconnaissance patrols were tasked to provide information for operations against suspected HQ D445 Regiment installations and activity in the Long Green area south of Xuyen Moc.⁷ Neither patrol was able to observe much in the way of enemy activity (Howlett's patrol saw two enemy and Roberts' patrol saw three) but Howlett was confident a 'fairly large element of enemy had moved east/west a short time' prior to the patrol's deployment – the area in which two New Zealand SAS patrols would soon be inserted.⁸

These two New Zealand reconnaissance patrols, Sergeant Joe 'Johnno' Johnston's 047/69 and Sergeant Bill Lillicrapp's 046/69, were briefed by Beesley on the afternoon of 13 April.⁹ The operation required SAS patrols to be inserted by Armoured Personnel Carrier (APC) to locate Vietcong units, installations and track plans. Somewhat confusingly, the tasking from Pearson also included an instruction that contacts were to be 'avoided at all costs' but could be initiated on the last day of a patrol if the ambush could provide identification of enemy or a Prisoner of War (PW) opportunity.¹⁰

As will be explored in more detail, the confusion for many New Zealand Troop members deployed to Vietnam between 1968 and 1971, particularly those who had reconnaissance patrol experience in Borneo, lay with the supposed importance of remaining undetected during a patrol, only to have their presence in an area confirmed by an ambush towards the end of the operation. Nevertheless, the Pearson/Beesley iteration of this form of patrolling, known as recce/ambush, was accepted relatively quickly by the New Zealand Troop.

⁷ 2nd Lieutenant H.N. Howlett, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 044/69 Patrol Report, 25 April 1969" and Sergeant F.J. Roberts, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 045/69 Patrol Report, 25 April 1969," both in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/12, 3 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative, Duty Officer's Log, Annexes [1-31 April 1969], and 1ATF to 3 SAS Squadron, "Operation Instruction 33/69 (Operation ROUND OUT), 13 April 1969" in AWM98 R569/169/24 Pt1: Operations – General 3SAS Squadron Task-table, Mar-Dec 1969, all in AWM, Canberra.

⁸ Howlett, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 044/69 Patrol Report, 25 April 1969," p. 2.

⁹ 3 SAS Sqn, "Squadron Commander Narrative" in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/12, 3 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative, Duty Officer's Log, Annexes [1-31 April 1969], AWM, Canberra, p.3

¹⁰ 1ATF to 3 SAS Squadron, "Operation Instruction 34/69 (Operation OVERSHOOT), 13 April 1969" in AWM98, R569/169/24 Pt 1.

Two days after their briefing, Johnston's and Lillicrapp's patrols were dropped into their designated AOs by APC. There was no doubt the APC was valuable in terms of offering an alternative method of covert insertion for SAS patrols, especially during a period where helicopter hours were at such a premium but the general consensus among the New Zealand SAS soldiers was APCs were not an ideal method. While 4 Troop members were confident of the 9 Squadron pilots' navigational skills, the same could not be said for some of the APC commanders within the Australian 3rd Cavalry Regiment:

Well you jump in the back of an APC and you stop where the APC commander says you are – and you jump out, you go running into the bush – you've got no hills or anything to say where you are [other than] the compass and a mark on your map that says 'start point.' So you set the old compass and the pedometer and you march on that heading for so many metres, stop and say 'well that's where I am.' Well it turned out that we were exactly a thousand metres away from where we should have been. So the whole thing was out – our patrol route looked nothing like what it should have been, because when we got to the end we were picked up by chopper – and when we said 'we're here,' the chopper pilot said 'no you're not because I'm there and you're not there.' He said 'throw smoke' so we threw smoke and he said 'oh, you're a thousand metres away.' And so what happened after that – we went back and said 'we are going to navigate ourselves into the position.'¹¹

On most occasions when APCs were used, the SAS patrol left the vehicle while it was moving. The APC would then continue on and fire mortar or heavy-calibre machine-gun rounds at a previously designated target.¹² To avoid any further navigational errors, as had been experienced by Culley and others, Patrol Commanders took the responsibility of navigating their patrols to the correct drop-off points. However, any enemy watching the passing vehicle would identify that it contained an SAS patrol every time the Patrol Commander took a navigational fix. The SAS Squadron was the only ATF unit that wore a camouflage uniform. This in turn forced the Patrol Commander to remove camouflage cream, applied to the face and hands, and cover his camouflage smock with a jungle-green shirt.¹³ Once the patrol was ready to debus, the Patrol Commander either had to change in the APC or as soon as the patrol left the vehicle.

¹¹ Terry Culley, interview conducted on 21 July 2008.

¹² Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008 and Anderson, *When the Scorpion Stings*, pp. 107-119.

¹³ Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

Additionally, patrols found the diesel fumes in the confined space of the vehicle often made them quite 'sick.'¹⁴ Some patrol members' hearing also took up to 30 minutes to return after they disembarked the APC.¹⁵ Considering the great reliance SAS patrols placed on their ability to smell and listen, it was little wonder APC insertions were infrequently practised.¹⁶ The first patrol Lillicrapp commanded in South Vietnam, in early January 1969, had been carried out with APC support. Of that patrol insertion, Lillicrapp was sufficiently unimpressed to have written in his concluding report 'The APC dropped patrol in centre of trail which endangered patrol security.'¹⁷ Such was Johnston's experience with the APC insertion he refused to use APCs after patrol 047/69.¹⁸

On the third day of patrol 046/69 Lillicrapp's scout, Lance-Corporal Whi Wanoa, discovered an old enemy squad-sized camp which he and his Patrol Commander estimated had not been used for three years. Also found near the old camp was a small fresh water spring inside a cave. Having observed no sign of recent use either in or around the spring, Lillicrapp tasked Wanoa and his medic Lance-Corporal Duke Pewhairangi to refill the patrol's water bottles. Pewhairangi covered Wanoa while he descended into the cave. He returned to the surface to collect the remaining bottles and whilst doing this, Pewhairangi went into the spring to drink. Unbeknown to Pewhairangi, or the rest of the patrol who were occupied with sending a radio message to Squadron Headquarters, Wanoa heard two enemy approach the watering hole:

I had already filled my water bottles, I had had a good drink of water and I came out of the hole to come back up and get all the rest of the bottles – and Duke went down the hole. And whether he had a drink or not, I still haven't asked him...What happened was when Duke went down the hole, I left him there, right, and I came back up and [the other three] were about twenty metres, twenty-five metres from the patrol – doing sigs. And I heard this 'chop, chop, chop' – you know the bloody footsteps in dry, tinder-dry leaves and what-not. And I went straight to the ones who could see me and I said it was enemy [thumbs down].

¹⁴ Sonny Taniora, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

¹⁵ It is assumed that helicopter noise was similarly debilitating on a patrols' senses.

¹⁶ Not all APC insertions were unpleasant or dangerous experiences. Graye Shattky, Troop Commander of the second 4 Troop, recounts that he had good experiences with an Australian APC Commander both in the 'planning and execution of an APC insertion.' Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008.

¹⁷ Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008, and Sergeant W.J. Lillicrapp, "2 SAS Sqn Ops 005/69 Patrol Report, 15 January 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/11/11, 2 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative, Duty Officer's Log, Annexes [1-31 January 1969], AWM, Canberra, p.2.

¹⁸ Michael Cunningham, interview conducted on 10 June 2008.

And they said ‘Duke?’ ‘No.’ And then of course, I had no option – I was the one who just kept watching and watching and I had my weapon sort of in the general direction – and knowing that he was either going to see me next and open up. So I decided to open [up] and yell at the same time ‘Duke, stay where you are!’ because I knew he was underground.¹⁹

Finally realising Wanoa was indicating the approach of enemy and not Pewhairangi, Lillicrapp and Lance-Corporal Richard ‘Wings’ Williams engaged the first Vietcong at a range of no more than ten metres. The second enemy managed to fire several rounds from his AK-47 before he too was shot dead by the Patrol Commander and Lance-Corporal Kevin Herewini.²⁰ Lillicrapp decided to carry out a quick search of the first Vietcong before ordering the patrol to withdraw to the north-west.²¹ Both enemy had been wearing similar dark blue shirts and trousers and Ho Chi Minh sandals but the first Vietcong was also in possession of a Chicom K-54 pistol, a map and in excess of ‘two pounds’ of documents. According to Lillicrapp:

He must have been a teacher or something – he had drawings or caricatures of aeroplanes and helicopters, and C-130s and that type of thing – obviously [for] recognition but he had made them look comical so people would understand.²²

There was no doubt Beesley was under a certain amount of pressure to provide intelligence to Pearson and the Task Force. Whether or not that was directly articulated to Lillicrapp before patrol 046/69 was deployed is unlikely because if Pearson’s message had been relayed to the Patrol Commander, then perhaps Lillicrapp’s reaction to his Squadron Commander’s subsequent request would have been different.²³ At 1135 hrs, Lillicrapp reported the details of the contact and the capture of the map and documents. Almost immediately, patrol 046/69s report was relayed to Task Force Headquarters.²⁴ An hour later, the Patrol Commander received a radio message indicating Beesley wanted to extract the documents, by way of a helicopter resupply, as soon as possible. Lillicrapp disagreed with the proposed course of action:

¹⁹ Whi Wanoa, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

²⁰ Bill Lillicrapp, letter to Author dated 15 January 2009.

²¹ Sergeant W.J. Lillicrapp, “3 SAS Sqn Ops 046/69 Patrol Report, 27 April 1969,” in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/12, 3 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative, Duty Officer’s Log, Annexes [1-31 April 1969], AWM, Canberra, p.1

²² Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

²³ Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

²⁴ 3 SAS Squadron “Ops Logs, 17-19 April 1969,” in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/12, p. 31.

...Beesley wanted them out – he wanted them out there and then. And by the time that happened, we were just about sitting on top of the camp with people making noise and running around. He wanted us to go to a ridge and a Possum would come in and pick these documents up. Well, in code I said – we had an argument basically. In the end I said ‘documents out – all out’ and he went and saw [Eric Ball] and asked him what the hell did he think I was doing? And [Eric] said, ‘obviously he doesn’t want the chopper to come in because it would compromise the patrol.’ And [Beesley] must have thought ‘fuck what a good idea’ and left it alone at that after that.²⁵

Horner suggested that after approximately six weeks in Phuoc Tuy province, Beesley had determined patrols could stay out much longer - up to ten days in the dry season and up to 12 in the wet season months – which would, as with the saturation reconnaissance strategy, reduce the number of required helicopter sorties.²⁶ At the same time, Beesley had also advocated that patrols could stay out longer by way of helicopter resupply arguing such method would only necessitate one light ‘Possum’ Sioux helicopter, as opposed to the five required for each insertion or extraction. While the process took less than one minute, Horner wrote the method was ‘resisted by some of the ‘old sweats’ in the Squadron’ who felt such flyovers would compromise patrol security.²⁷

As far as 4 Troop was concerned, resupply by helicopter, or any other method, was determined by the ground situation. Lillicrapp believed a helicopter ‘resupply’ would seriously compromise his soldiers – and said so. During the other Operation OVERSHOOT reconnaissance patrol, Johnston had been sufficiently at ease to have received a water resupply from helicopter on the fifth day of the patrol.²⁸ The Squadron radio logs indicate the ‘discussion’ between Lillicrapp and Beesley continued for another twenty-four hours before the Squadron Commander relented and accepted the patrol continue with its reconnaissance mission.²⁹ Based upon the operational briefing given before the patrol set out, the contact at the underground spring had given away the presence of the patrol in the area. Admittedly this could not have been avoided, but perhaps Beesley saw the potential value of the documentary intelligence justified the risk of possibly pin-pointing the precise location of Lillicrapp’s patrol.

²⁵ Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

²⁶ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 318.

²⁷ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 318.

²⁸ Sergeant J. Johnston, “3 SAS Sqn Ops 047/69 Patrol Report, 26 April 1969,” in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/12, p. 1.

²⁹ 3 SAS Squadron “Ops Logs, 17-19 April 1969,” in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/12, pp. 31-35.

There is no evidence to suggest that when advised of the document windfall, Headquarters 1ATF made any specific request to Beesley that they be immediately retrieved.³⁰ Pearson had given the Squadron Commander until 23 April to complete the Operation ROUND OUT task, so unless anything further untoward occurred, Beesley and the Task Force could wait for the patrol to return at the planned time. Lillicrapp's patrol continued for another four days and the activity heard and enemy sighted during the time confirmed an enemy camp was either being constructed or repaired in the north-west of their AO.³¹ At one stage the patrol was so close to enemy 'felling timber' that one falling log almost landed on one member of the patrol.³²

As previously mentioned, an earlier ambush in January 1969 had landed one of Lillicrapp's patrols a haul of enemy documents, some cash, a 'little medal of Ho Chi Minh,' as well as a K-54 pistol.³³ All had been handed over with the clear understanding at least the 'souvenir' medal, cash and pistol would be given back to Lillicrapp, but only the pistol was ever returned.³⁴ Lillicrapp would not again make the same mistake. While examining the second batch of captured documents, Wanoa discovered another amount of money – this time considerably more than had been discovered on the January patrol. It was enough to buy 4 Troop a refrigerator.³⁵

³⁰ "G(OPS), Ops Logs, 18 April 1969," in AWM95, Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 1/4/145 Headquarters, 1 Australian Task Force Narrative, Duty Officer's Log Annexes 1-31 April 1969, Serial 101, AWM, Canberra.

³¹ Lillicrapp, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 046/69 Patrol Report, 27 April 1969," pp. 2-3.

³² Lillicrapp, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 046/69 Patrol Report, 27 April 1969," pp. 2-3.

³³ Sergeant W.J. Lillicrapp, "2 SAS Sqn Ops 05/69 Patrol Report, 15 January 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/11/11, 2 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative, Duty Officer's Log, Annexes [1-31 January 1969], p.1 and Lieutenant T. Culley, "Activity Report – January 1969, 13 February 1969," AWM103 R723/1/79: Reports – General - New Zealand SAS Activity Reports, 1969-1970, both in AWM, Canberra.

³⁴ Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

³⁵ The issue of water appeared to be a recurring theme for the New Zealand patrols during April.

Lillicrapp's patrol had been unaware of the immediate presence of enemy near the spring and patrol 047/69 received a water resupply by helicopter on 19 April. However, unlike Johnston's patrol 047/69, the threat from enemy in the area prevented Ball's 040/69 reconnaissance patrol from receiving a similar aerial resupply and the group were forced to continue a scheduled eight-day patrol with only 'five days of water.' Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008, 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, "Activity Report – April 1969, 14 May 1969," in AWM103 R723/1/79 and WOII E. Ball "3 SAS Sqn Ops 040/69 Patrol Report, 12 April 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/12, p. 1-2.

Concealment, Contacts and Booby-Traps: June – August 1969

We were sitting down once and we were in this area – and I looked where Paddy was sitting – and I went to Paddy [pointing]. And he looked alongside – and there's a grenade...³⁶

Ball signed off 4 Troop's Activity Report for May 1969.³⁷ Five reconnaissance patrols and one Ambush patrol were conducted during the month.³⁸ Compared with the rest of the year, the middle of 1969 was a relatively quiet period for the entire Squadron.³⁹ Three recce/ambush patrols were carried out by the New Zealand Troop in June.⁴⁰ Of those patrols, Sergeant Johnston commanded a five-man recce/ambush patrol in the area just south of Nui May Tao, approximately 30 kilometres north-east of Nui Dat between 11 and 22 June.⁴¹ While Johnston's patrol did not sight any enemy, it did locate two large-scale enemy camps (one that had been constructed as recently as four weeks earlier) and a variety of smaller weapon pits, bunkers and defensive positions of squad-size proportions.⁴²

The first camp complex, discovered on the third day of the patrol, covered an area 200 metres by 150 metres. The patrol spent the day observing the camp area and counted between '60-70 bunkers and weapon pits, 2 cookhouses and 4 native huts.'⁴³ Johnston noted that although the eastern side of the camp had received significant bomb damage,

³⁶ Jim Bache, interview conducted on 10 June 2008.

³⁷ 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, "Activity Report – May 1969, 15 June 1969" in AWM103 R723/1/79.

³⁸ Of these, Sergeant Johnston's 072/69 patrol was tasked with establishing an OP on a hill feature close to Nui Dat that would use a 'Starlight' night scope in order to observe enemy activity at night along the ENGINEER Trail. On the afternoon of 25 May, the patrol was visited by no less than the Commander 1ATF, Pearson, the Commanding Officer of 5 RAR, Lieutenant-Colonel C.N. Kahn and five other Australian staff officers. Not surprisingly perhaps, the patrol saw no enemy for the duration of their operation. Captain T.N. Culley, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 052/69 Patrol Report, 10 May," Sergeant J. Johnston, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 062/69 Patrol Report, 18 May 1969," Sergeant W.J. Lillicrapp, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 064/69 Patrol Report, 16 May 1969," Sergeant W.A. McGee, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 066/69 Patrol Report, 24 May 1969," and Sergeant J. Johnston, "3 SAS Sqn 072/69 Patrol Report, 31 May 1969," all in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/13, 3 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative, Duty Officer's Log, Annexes [1-31 May 1969], 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, "Activity Report – May 1969, 15 June 1969" in AWM103 R723/1/79 and Sergeant F.D. Barclay, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 071/69 Patrol Report, 6 June 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/14, 3 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative, Duty Officer's Log, Annexes [1-30 June 1969], all in AWM, Canberra.

³⁹ Only 11 patrols in total were carried out in June 1969. Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 327.

⁴⁰ Sergeant W.A. McGee, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 077/69 Patrol Report, 20 June 1969," Sergeant W.J. Lillicrapp, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 078/69 Patrol Report, 21 June 1969," and Sergeant J. Johnston, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 082/69 Patrol Report, 26 June 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/14.

⁴¹ Johnston, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 082/69 Patrol Report, 26 June 1969," p.1.

⁴² 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, "Activity Report – June 1969, 11 July 1969," in AWM103 R723/1/79.

⁴³ Johnston, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 082/69 Patrol Report, 26 June 1969," p.1.

the western side of the camp was still intact and could be used immediately.⁴⁴ Even so, the Patrol Commander estimated the camp had not been used for at least eight months. What is of interest is that Johnston did not immediately report the discovery of the camp. The Squadron radio logs for 13-17 June make no reference to having received any reporting about the camp from Johnston's patrol, suggesting that either the camp was already known about, or the Patrol Commander felt there was no need to report his findings until the patrol returned. The absence of any enemy occupying the camp would suggest the latter.⁴⁵

Another two abandoned enemy bunkers were discovered by the patrol five days later. Many Vietcong defensive positions, characterised by extensive underground bunker and tunnel systems or short-term or short-stay camps of varying sizes, often maximised the use of natural features such as rivers, creeks, caves, or ant hills and termite mounds to camouflage and conceal their presence or entrances.⁴⁶ These bunkers, believed not to have been used for at least a year, had been constructed under ant hills.⁴⁷ However, that afternoon the patrol heard sounds of chopping, digging and the dragging of corrugated iron sheets to the south of their location.⁴⁸ The patrol was not the only Task Force element to have observed the construction activity. Shortly after the patrol heard the activity, they saw a fixed-wing 'Possum' light observation aircraft from the Australian 161 Reconnaissance Flight Squadron circling above the enemy location. Johnston was unable to contact the aircraft which had not been cleared by Squadron Headquarters to conduct a reconnaissance in the patrol's AO, let alone, engage any enemy targets.

Fifteen minutes after the aircraft arrived, it attacked the enemy construction party by either dropping what the patrol thought were 'two grenades or firing two M-79 HE rounds.'⁴⁹ Johnston estimated the rounds landed between 50-70 metres away from his patrol.⁵⁰ The Squadron Headquarters had granted the Task Force Headquarters ground clearance to carry out airstrikes 1,500 metres to the north-west of Johnston's patrol earlier

⁴⁴ Johnston, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 082/69 Patrol Report, 26 June 1969," p.1.

⁴⁵ 3 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 13-17 June 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/14, pp. 17-28.

⁴⁶ MACV, *Handbook for US Forces in Vietnam*, pp. 20-26.

⁴⁷ Johnston, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 082/69 Patrol Report, 26 June 1969," p.1

⁴⁸ Johnston, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 082/69 Patrol Report, 26 June 1969," p.1.

⁴⁹ Johnston, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 082/69 Patrol Report, 26 June 1969," p.2.

⁵⁰ Johnston, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 082/69 Patrol Report, 26 June 1969," p.2.

that afternoon.⁵¹ After subsequently receiving Johnston's report (in which the Patrol Commander made no mention the 'POSSUM' aircraft had fired on the construction area) the Squadron queried the Task Force about the unauthorised over-flight. In response, the radio logs indicated the 161 Reconnaissance flight only confirmed it had 'sighted' the enemy camp. There was certainly no reference to having engaged the area with grenades.⁵²

Johnston's patrol remained in the same area for the next thirty-six hours, trying to confirm the 161 Reconnaissance assessment that a 'hospital' was in the area.⁵³ Throughout that period, they heard voices and 'digging and chopping' noises in a number of areas close to their position and although the construction continued until late at night, the patrol was unable to confirm the existence of the hospital.⁵⁴ Early on the tenth day of the patrol, as Johnston's men continued to move west, further weapon pits were found which showed signs of occupation sometime within the last four weeks.⁵⁵ As the patrol rested, they discovered something even more concerning:

It was a 'comms'-halt wasn't it? You [Jim Bache] and Jacky [Curtis] had gone out to put the aerial out – and you were coming back and you came to me. And I sat down...and Jim had picked something up – it had just caught his eye – and at the base of the tree was this grenade. And it wouldn't have been that far away from my foot. And I thought 'Good God' – I was sweating blood...We had walked into it. You [looking at Jim Bache] saved my neck on that one.⁵⁶

As the patrol surveyed their position, they discovered three 'Chicom HE BBT grenades' rigged as a booby-trap with jungle vines attached to the devices as trip-wires.⁵⁷ Each of the trip-wire vines was approximately six feet long and between two and three inches off the ground. The grenades themselves had been tied to the trees with what appeared to be either a white nylon or more plastic-coated wire. The grenades had been concealed with vegetation but at least one had been exposed by weather.⁵⁸ The patrol left the booby-traps intact and continued patrolling in a westerly direction before being extracted by

⁵¹ 3 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 18 June 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/14, p. 28.

⁵² 3 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 18 June 1969," p.28.

⁵³ 3 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 19 June 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/14, p. 29.

⁵⁴ 3 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 18 June 1969," p.28.

⁵⁵ 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, "Activity Report – June 1969, 11 July 1969."

⁵⁶ Joint Michael Cunningham and Jim Bache interviews conducted on 10 June 2008.

⁵⁷ Johnston, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 082/69 Patrol Report, 26 June 1969," p.2.

⁵⁸ Johnston, "Annex Q to 3 SAS Sqn Ops 082/69 Patrol Report, 26 June 1969," p.2.

helicopter two days later. Bache recounted when the patrol returned to Nui Dat, they were advised booby-traps may have been placed there by Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) forces during a recent operation, as opposed to the Vietcong.⁵⁹



Photograph 5: One of the booby-trap grenades found by Johnston's 082/69 patrol on 20 June 1969. The photograph was taken by Lance-Corporal Jim Bache.⁶⁰

Booby-traps, in the form of grenades, panji-pits, poisoned arrows and a number of other devices, were successfully used by the Vietcong, in particular, to 'harass, slow down, confuse and kill friendly troops.'⁶¹ Though there were some close calls, the SAS patrols were spared injury from these devices quite simply because of the painstakingly slow speed at which they moved as well as the policy of not moving along tracks. Patrols avoided casualties from anti-personnel mines for the same reasons. Between the end of July 1965 and mid-September 1971, there were 222 officially recorded casualties of New Zealand military personnel in Vietnam. Of the 35 New Zealanders killed in action, 11

⁵⁹ Johnston himself left booby-traps behind to deter enemy pursuit after a subsequent ambush operation three months later. Johnston, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 137/69 Patrol Report, 30 September 1969," and Jim Eache, interview conducted on 10 June 2008.

⁶⁰ Johnston, "Annex Q to 3 SAS Sqn Ops 082/69 Patrol Report, 26 June 1969," p.2.

⁶¹ MACV, *Handbook for US Forces in Vietnam*, p. 33.

were killed by mines (including land) and three by booby-traps.⁶² The major source of explosive for Vietcong-improvised explosive devices (IED), booby-traps or mines came from Free World Forces and included United States M-26 grenades, claymore mines and stolen, unexploded or left-behind mortar and artillery shells.⁶³

Patrols 093/69 and 094/69: Patrol Commanders

During June 1969, 3 Squadron conducted eleven patrols in which 157 enemy were sighted.⁶⁴ There were also five contacts with at least eight enemy confirmed killed. During the following month, 308 enemy were seen and five killed.⁶⁵ Of those sightings in July, two New Zealand patrols were responsible for observing 211 of the Vietcong. Between 8 and 16 July 1969, Sergeant Windy McGee and Corporal Percy Brown led five-man and four-man reconnaissance patrols around the border area of Bien Hoa and Long Khanh provinces.⁶⁶ Brown opted for the western area of the AO, in Bien Hoa, and McGee took his patrol east into Long Khanh.

The timing of patrol insertions was determined by the Patrol Commander and McGee's patrol was inserted by helicopter late in the afternoon of 8 July. Some Patrol Commanders preferred a morning insertion to allow sufficient daylight hours to make some distance from the LZ, whereas those who opted for an afternoon insertion believed the close proximity of darkness would afford better patrol security. On the third day of McGee's patrol, the group discovered an old bunker system and several weapon pits. Both constructions had received a certain amount of bomb damage and McGee assessed they had not been used for at least twelve months.⁶⁷

The Patrol Commander's interest intensified, however, with the discovery of a well-used foot track showing signs a large group had walked along that very morning. McGee

⁶² The remainder were 13 from gunshot wounds (including RPG), four as a result of unspecified shrapnel, three as a result of contacts (unspecified cause of death but likely to be gunshot wounds) and one to an 'enemy bomb.' Headquarters NZDF G744/1 *Australian and New Zealand Battle Casualties 1965-1971*, ANZ, Wellington.

⁶³ MACV, *Handbook for US Forces in Vietnam*, p. 73.

⁶⁴ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 327.

⁶⁵ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 327.

⁶⁶ Sergeant W.A. McGee, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 94/69 Patrol Report, 18 July 1969," and Corporal P. Brown, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 93/69 Patrol Report, 22 July 1969," both in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/15, 3 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative, Duty Officer's Log, Annexes [1-31 July 1969], AWM, Canberra, p.1.

⁶⁷ McGee, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 94/69 Patrol Report, 18 July 1969," p.1.

immediately set up an OP 25 metres from the track but no enemy were seen and he withdrew the patrol. The following morning, two of the patrol returned to the OP and shortly after 0900 hrs they observed two groups of two Vietcong moving in a south-easterly direction along the track. Two were armed (one with an AK-47 and one with a M1 Carbine) and three wore packs.⁶⁸ While the OP was maintained for the rest of the day, no further enemy movement was observed and McGee decided to move the patrol further east.

At mid-morning the following day, the patrol 'observed signs' which indicated probably less than three days earlier as many as 25 hammocks had been set up for an overnight camp.⁶⁹ Several small fire sites in the same area supported the assessment. Being mindful of the possibility the group of enemy could return McGee, slowly and very carefully, spent the rest of the day reconnoitring the area. Having served as a Trooper with the original New Zealand SAS Squadron in Malaya between 1956 and 1958, McGee was a uniquely experienced and knowledgeable jungle warfare soldier:

He'd explain - if you had come up to an area - and if he was trying to tell you something about the area [and] enemy activity, he would say 'x number of people are here,' one slept there and he'd show you the marks of a hammock on the tree. And they used to take some of the bark off a tree to cover their weapons and keep them dry - and all that type of stuff he would tell you - and you would learn a lot.⁷⁰

An overnight position was selected that afternoon and whilst carrying out a 'clearing patrol' of the immediate area, the patrol discovered another well-used track, approximately 20 metres from the LUP site which again showed 'recent use by a large group of enemy.'⁷¹ The day before, the patrol had been advised by Squadron Headquarters that intelligence indicated the entire 2nd Battalion 274th Vietcong Regiment was only 1500 metres to the south-west of their location.⁷² McGee set up another OP on the track the following day but detected no further enemy movement.

⁶⁸ 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, "Activity Report - July 1969, 6 August 1969," in AWM103 R723/1/79 and McGee, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 94/69 Patrol Report, 18 July 1969," p.1.

⁶⁹ 3 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 13 July," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/15, p. 31.

⁷⁰ Michael Cunningham, interview conducted on 10 June 2008.

⁷¹ McGee, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 94/69 Patrol Report, 18 July 1969," p.2.

⁷² 3 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 11 July," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/15, p. 16.

Late on the afternoon of 14 July, the patrol found a two-metre wide track which showed signs of ‘heavy use in both directions up to two hours previously.’⁷³ Because of the wind direction, McGee decided to move the patrol across the track and find a nearby LUP. While Cunningham and Lance-Corporals Roger Maaka and Kevin Herewini remained in the LUP some 30 metres away, McGee and his scout, Lance-Corporal Mike Cocker, returned to the edge of the track and established an OP near a ‘natural opening in the undergrowth’ from which they could observe the track.⁷⁴ Cunningham was unhappy with McGee’s plan:

So we were having a brew and Windy came to me and said ‘I’m going back to the other track.’ I said ‘what for?’ So he said, ‘I’m just going back to have a look.’ This isn’t the first time that he went. So the next thing that happened was that I said to Mike Cocker ‘you go with him.’ So Mike left his pack with me, Windy left his pack with Roger [Maaka], and then went back.⁷⁵

Thirty minutes after establishing the OP, McGee and Cocker observed 12 armed Vietcong, spaced at five-metre intervals, walking along the track. All were armed with either AK-47 or SKS rifles, wore basic webbing and the ‘grey/green’ shirt and trouser uniform common to 274 Vietcong Regiment forces.⁷⁶ For some reason, the two rear Vietcong left the track and moved directly towards McGee and Cocker. One Vietcong was as close as three metres away before he finally spotted the two New Zealand soldiers. McGee fired his M-16 first and then Cocker fired his SLR. The two enemy were both shot and killed. Another Vietcong, still standing on the track when the contact took place, ran after his group and was not seen again. McGee and Cocker broke contact and headed back to the patrol who were by this time firing towards the track:⁷⁷

All of a sudden, all hell broke loose – they had seen us. What happened was that they went back to the track – and a group of about x number were moving through – and they were pretty heavily armed. And they counted them through – Mike and Windy – counted, I think he said up until the eighth or ninth. The ninth or tenth one came in and looked at the track – then looked our way, into the bush – and stopped, but he didn’t see anything so kept going. And the next one did the same thing. But the third one looked in and then walked into the bush and walked

⁷³ McGee, “3 SAS Sqn Ops 94/69 Patrol Report, 18 July 1969,” p.2.

⁷⁴ 3 SAS Squadron, “Contact/Incident * After Action Report 094/69, 23 July 1969,” in Kippenberger Military Archive Box 136A, New Zealand Army Museum, Waiouru and McGee, “3 SAS Sqn Ops 94/69 Patrol Report, 18 July 1969,” p.2.

⁷⁵ Michael Cunningham, interview conducted on 10 June 2008.

⁷⁶ 3 SAS Squadron, “Contact/Incident * After Action Report 094/69, 23 July 1969” and McGee, “3 SAS Sqn Ops 94/69 Patrol Report, 18 July 1969,” p. 2.

⁷⁷ 3 SAS Squadron, “Contact/Incident * After Action Report 094/69, 23 July 1969” and McGee, “3 SAS Sqn Ops 94/69 Patrol Report, 18 July 1969,” p. 2.

in on Windy and Mike. So they knocked him over, and the contact went in – they came through us, picked up their packs, and in the process a couple of items were left behind. I left my pack behind, which was empty of everything except my light sleeping gear; Kevin left a couple of items behind, Mike something else and I think Roger might have left a ‘hexamine-cooker’ or something. So they came through us, they picked up their packs and then Windy said to me to put down some HE rounds using the M-79. Then we broke through the bush. And we halted about, ah well I would say that we would have gone about a click, or 1000 metres, and the bush was pretty rough – secondary, coarse with bamboo and stuff. So we held up there and there was no follow-up or anything.⁷⁸

Born 19 August 1933, Winiwini (Windy) Anitaapi McGee had volunteered and was selected to join the original New Zealand SAS Squadron in 1955. After two years on active service in Malaya, McGee was posted to Auckland after the Squadron was disbanded in 1958. He returned to Malaya for another two years, with Aitken’s 2nd Battalion, NZ Regiment, in June 1959. In June 1965 he was posted on active service in Borneo with Robert Gurr’s Battalion as a Reconnaissance Platoon Sergeant; his exceptional talent for jungle tracking was rewarded with a Mention in Dispatches (MID).⁷⁹ McGee returned to New Zealand in January 1967 and was posted to 3 RNZIR in Whangarei as Cadre NCO until January 1968 when he was posted back to 1 Ranger Squadron.⁸⁰ McGee was the oldest member of 4 Troop.

A fearless and enigmatic figure who some would describe as exasperatingly so, McGee was both a soldier of outstanding ability and a ‘thorn in the side’ to many of his peers and commanders. In his 1968 performance review, McGee’s Commanding Officer, Major David Ogilvy, described his Staff Sergeant as a ‘practical soldier who performs best in the field where his performance is outstanding.’⁸¹ At the end of his deployment in South Vietnam, Culley described the Patrol Commander as ‘an NCO with a flare for the unorthodox.’⁸² Never was this more so demonstrated than by McGee’s attitude to splitting patrols and operating unilaterally:

So we were there, and then just about – I think it must have been nearly about midnight, something like that – he came round, Windy, and said to me ‘I’m going

⁷⁸ Michael Cunningham, interview conducted on 10 June 2008.

⁷⁹ On 26 August 1965, McGee and a Bren Gunner killed or wounded six out of seven Indonesian soldiers, as they approached the New Zealand platoon. Pugsley, *From Emergency to Confrontation*, p. 322 and 365.

⁸⁰ Holah, *Biographies, 4 Troop NZSAS*, NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington, pp.11-12 and *The Free Glance: The Official Journal of the New Zealand Special Air Service Association Incorporated*, March (2005), p.18.

⁸¹ Major David Ogilvy, “4 November 1968,” in M329877: McGee, W.A., NZDF Archives, Trentham, p.2.

⁸² Captain Terry Culley, “11 December 1969,” in M329877, McGee W.A., NZDF Archives, Trentham, p. 2.

back to the track' – back to the area. So off he went. I tried to tell him not to go – because you're breaking one of the golden rules but he decided to go back. And the sun came up in the morning and he still hadn't returned. So, I happened to be – I was the 2IC, so we made a message out and it said – if nine o'clock comes around send that on schedule – 'patrol member is missing' or something and 'immediately send in heavy fire team' of a couple of choppers. But just as the choppers arrived, he turns up – the 'Magoo' – dragging the pack, a cup and a hexi-burner. But that's your 'Magoo' and he could, he was an excellent soldier, but he was a 'one-man band' – you couldn't work him out.⁸³

The patrol report recorded at 2235 hrs that night, McGee had decided to 'back track' towards the contact area to try and recover the discarded equipment. The patrol had not communicated with Squadron Headquarters between the time of the contact and Cunningham's signal to Nui Dat the following morning. Radio logs indicated that at 1025 hrs the following morning, the patrol advised action the previous night and how McGee had gone back to retrieve some equipment but was still to return – 'No.1 missing.'⁸⁴ On receipt of Cunningham's signal, Squadron Headquarters initially feared the worst; two SAS standby patrols – numbers 15 and 35 – were alerted and Beesley flew to the AO in an attempt to locate the missing Patrol Commander.⁸⁵

Twenty minutes after Beesley left, Squadron Headquarters received confirmation from Herewini that McGee had returned. McGee had left the patrol around 2235 hrs the previous evening but it appears that even he had to finally accept that travelling on his own and at night was near suicidal. As a general rule, night movement was discouraged by SAS patrols for fear of walking into the enemy, inadvertently travelling along tracks or stumbling on to booby-traps.⁸⁶ McGee stopped several hundred metres short of the contact area and remained there until 0500 hrs the next day. By 0730 hrs he reached the abandoned LUP site, recovered the pack and magazine and rejoined patrol 094/69 a little over two hours later.⁸⁷

No one could fault McGee's consummate tracking skills that enabled him to return to the LUP and recover Cunningham's pack and Maaka's SLR magazine but at what potential cost? The pack had contained little if any equipment and Cunningham was sure nothing

⁸³ Michael Cunningham, interview conducted on 10 June 2008.

⁸⁴ 3 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 15 July," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/15, p. 27.

⁸⁵ 3 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 15 July," p.27.

⁸⁶ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 246

⁸⁷ McGee, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 94/69 Patrol Report, 18 July 1969," p.2.

of a sensitive nature had been left behind. McGee had split the patrol – creating two smaller and much more vulnerable groups – at a time when intelligence indicated, and sightings had confirmed large numbers of enemy were in the immediate vicinity of the AO. It was frustrating for those in the patrol and equally perplexing for other members of the New Zealand Troop:

I know Roger was unhappy about a couple of things. Not so much Kevin – Kevin was a bit like me in that he hadn't had much experience in patrolling...But Roger and Mike Cocker, Mike had been there before and they were quite experienced, so they had a say. I heard later that Windy actually had gone and seen Major Beesley and wanted to go out on his own – he asked could he go out and do a patrol on his own. And that was 'Magoo.' But at the same time you can't take it away from the man – he was a bloody good soldier...a good tracker.⁸⁸

Corporal Percy Brown's 093/69 reconnaissance patrol returned a day after patrol 094/69. It had not travelled as far as McGee's patrol but it had been just as nerve-wracking for those involved.⁸⁹ Just before 1400 hrs on the fourth day, a group of 23 Vietcong were seen moving approximately 15 metres ahead of Brown's location. The enemy moved in groups of two to three at five second intervals and travelled quickly.⁹⁰ Brown decided to establish an OP to discover further enemy movement. They had crossed two 'disused oxcart tracks' already that day. It was possible, because of this recent movement, Brown may have discovered a new supply route being used by the Vietcong south of the Long Thanh rubber plantation in Bien Hoa province.⁹¹ He was not wrong. Over the next five days the patrol, at the same location, observed a further 155 Vietcong during the day and 18 torch-lights at night.⁹² The patrol made the assumption that one torch-light equated to one enemy. It is entirely possible, such were the limits of Vietcong equipment, there was more than one enemy for each torch.⁹³

⁸⁸ Michael Cunningham, interview conducted on 10 June 2008.

⁸⁹ Brown, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 93/69 Patrol Report, 22 July 1969," p.1.

⁹⁰ Brown, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 93/69 Patrol Report, 22 July 1969," p.1.

⁹¹ Brown, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 93/69 Patrol Report, 22 July 1969," p.1.

⁹² When received by the Squadron Headquarters on the morning of 12 July, Brown's initial reporting caused something of a stir. The previous evenings sightings of torches (three separate sightings of two, six and four in the space of 70 minutes) had been received as '42' at 2130 hrs, '46' at 2215 hrs and a staggering '296' at 2240 hrs. Not surprisingly, the Patrol Commander was asked to repeat the message back the following day and the correct totals were confirmed. 3 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 12 July," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/15, p. 18 and Brown, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 93/69 Patrol Report, 22 July 1969," pp. 1-2.

⁹³ Brown, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 93/69 Patrol Report, 22 July 1969," pp. 1-2.

About lunchtime the following day the patrol was extracted by rope. They had to endure a most uncomfortable three kilometre trip beneath the helicopter before it found a suitable landing location which allowed the patrol to get into the aircraft for the remainder of the flight. Not only were they to observe, at close distance, nearly two hundred armed enemy, but for every night save one, they endured unknown 105mm and 155mm artillery shelling near their night LUP positions. The most frightening would have been the 12-15 rounds on the first night of the patrol. Brown reported these rounds landed between 50 and 100 metres from the patrol.⁹⁴ Culley's subsequent 4 Troop notes for July recorded that Beesley had commended Brown's patrol on a 'Very professional job on OP,' noting the 'large numbers seen without being sprung, indicated good position.'⁹⁵ The comments were something of an understatement, but were also a relatively accurate reflection of the Patrol Commander himself.

Peihopa (Percy) Matekoraha Brown's career in the New Zealand Army spanned three decades, with almost as much time overseas on active service as he did in New Zealand. Initially serving with the New Zealand Regiment in Malaya, Brown joined 1 Ranger Squadron and deployed to Thailand in 1962, served with Bill Meldrum's first detachment in Borneo in 1965, and again with David Ogilvy's third group the following year.⁹⁶ He became a Patrol Commander during the first 4 Troop deployment to South Vietnam in 1968/69 and assumed the role of Troop Sergeant during the third – albeit shortened – 4 Troop tour in 1970/71. Despite Brown's low profile and unassuming and supremely modest nature, he was thoroughly well respected by his fellow Troop members:

Percy used to hide – he was such a modest character. If you said one word of praise to Percy when he was standing there, he would take off – quite shy character.⁹⁷

New Zealand SAS and Camouflage

Brown's patrol exemplified the New Zealand SAS' ability to remain undetected for an indefinite period as long as water, food and ammunition were available. This ability had

⁹⁴ Subsequent requests to investigate the source/s of the artillery rounds that landed in the Patrol's AO were apparently inconclusive. 3 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 9-13 July," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/15, pp. 18-27 and Brown, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 93/69 Patrol Report, 22 July 1969," p. 2.

⁹⁵ 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, "Activity Report – July 1969, 6 August 1969."

⁹⁶ Holah, *Biographies, 4Troop NZSAS*, pp. 3-4.

⁹⁷ Michael Cunningham, interview conducted on 10 June 2008.

much to do with tactics used by the patrols, in the terms of speed of movement and their expert use of camouflage and concealment. As was the case in Malaya and Borneo, the Australian and New Zealand infantry soldiers fought in Vietnam wearing jungle-green cotton clothing commonly referred to simply as ‘greens’ or ‘JGs.’⁹⁸ This uniform was also used by the Australian SAS Squadron - and the New Zealand Troop - when not on patrol or conducting TAOR patrols.⁹⁹ The standard headwear which accompanied the ‘JG’ uniform was a matching green jungle or bush hat. Although initially of British manufacture, from 1968 Australian firms provided ATF with an almost identical version, save for smaller ventilator mesh air holes.¹⁰⁰

By the time 4 Troop arrived in South Vietnam the Australians had been using camouflage uniforms for nearly a year. Initial patrolling in 1966 had been carried out with the ‘JG’ uniform but by early 1968 some locally-manufactured ‘tiger stripe’ uniforms were being used on Squadron patrols. Wade was a keen supporter of the use of camouflage and strongly advocated its use in Phuoc Tuy province because the ‘sense of security that good camouflage gives a patrol has a marked effect on the morale of the patrol members.’¹⁰¹

In 1968, Wade’s 2 Squadron submitted an evaluation of both the ‘tiger stripe’ and the recently arrived American ERDL tropical-patterned camouflage uniform. The camouflage pattern used in the latter uniform was developed by the United States Army Engineer Research & Development Laboratories (ERDL) in 1948, but was not issued to US Special Forces units in Vietnam until early 1967.¹⁰² In South Vietnam, the uniform was referred to by the Australian SAS as the ‘SEAL SUIT,’ because it was commonly used by United States Navy SEAL (SEa, Air and Land) Special Forces teams. Although both the ‘tiger stripe’ and ERDL uniform had been worn by patrol members, Wade reported there was ‘almost universal preference’ for the ERDL camouflage.¹⁰³

⁹⁸ Kevin Lyle, *Vietnam ANZACs: Australian and New Zealand Troops in Vietnam 1962-72*, (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2004), p.27.

⁹⁹ Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

¹⁰⁰ Lyle, *Vietnam ANZACs*, p. 27.

¹⁰¹ 2 SAS Squadron Nui Dat, “Clothing For SAS, 2 May 1968” in AWM103 R8415/1/3: Clothing – Special Purpose – General, Tiger Suits for SAS 1968-1970, AWM, Canberra.

¹⁰² Newman Blechman and Alex Hardy, *DPM: Disruptive Pattern Material*, (Washington D.C: Department of Publications, Maharishi, 2004) and Stanton, *US Army Uniforms of the Vietnam War*, p.134.

¹⁰³ The colour blend and lack of sharply contrasting camouflage pattern made the ERDL uniform suitable for use in all types of vegetation experienced in Vietnam, whereas the ‘tiger stripe’ camouflage was only suitable for primary jungle and burnt-out areas and was too dark for more open terrain and ‘particularly bad in bamboo due to the dark and abrupt pattern.’ 2 SAS Squadron Nui Dat, “Clothing For SAS, 2 May 1968.”

The ERDL uniform was ‘cut loose’ which allowed ventilation to all parts of the body and the pockets were much larger. The ‘tiger stripe’ pockets were so small that once filled they restricted body movement.¹⁰⁴ Although the ERDL material was light, cool and took far less time to dry out, it was not as durable as the ‘tiger stripe’ uniform and was believed by some to be only good for a maximum of three patrols before becoming ‘unserviceable.’¹⁰⁵ Two hundred sets were ordered by the Australians in mid-1968 but by the end of 1969 the uniforms were in such short supply a direct purchase of additional sets from the United States had to be made.¹⁰⁶ Some New Zealand Troop members made do with their allotment of one set of the uniform by re-stitching missing pieces or using adhesive tape.¹⁰⁷

Although jungle hats were available in a variety of patterns and materials, some soldiers preferred locally-made ‘tiger stripe’ berets and a common Australian SAS practice was to camouflage-paint a plain green ‘JG’ hat. Because there was no matching camouflage ERDL jungle hat, the New Zealanders commissioned a number of locally-made hats, with shortened brims, ‘foliage loops’ with a similar camouflage pattern to the ERDL uniform. In early 1969 these were purchased with Troop funds.¹⁰⁸ Along with sweat rag ‘neck scarves,’ some Troop members also wore headbands to stop sweat running into their eyes.¹⁰⁹

The ERDL uniform was worn by the majority of the Australian Squadron members, and all of the New Zealand SAS soldiers, even though some of the Australians continued to favour the ‘tiger stripe’ pattern. As with weapons, the individual modification of webbing and packs was not discouraged and each SAS soldier put together a set of equipment which met his personal combat needs and specific responsibilities within the patrol – as signaller, medic, demolitions specialist or scout. However, when patrolling the New Zealand Troop prohibited any deviation from the standard ERDL uniform.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁴ 2 SAS Squadron Nui Dat, “Clothing For SAS, 2 May 1968.”

¹⁰⁵ Lyle, *Vietnam ANZACs*, p. 47.

¹⁰⁶ Lyle, *Vietnam ANZACs*, p. 47.

¹⁰⁷ Joint Whi Wanoa and Fred Barclay interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

¹⁰⁸ Lyle, *Vietnam ANZACs*, p. 61 and Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

¹⁰⁹ 2nd Lieutenant J.S. Hayes, “4 Troop NZSAS – Post Operational Report South Vietnam Dec 1970 – Feb 1971, 16 February 1971,” NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington, p. 4.

¹¹⁰ Whi Wanoa, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

The Australian experiences provided the most obvious practical justification for such a policy:

...the 'tiger stripe'...and they got into that. You'll see in those photographs in that book *Phantoms of the Jungle* and that [Terry] O'Farrell book – and that's crazy to have one guy who is dressed differently. Because if you really got into a situation where you'd lost control and you were going to have to run for your bloody life...that's the guy that they would zero in on because they would all know who to chase. I mean if all five of you are dressed the same and I yell out 'catch one' then you try and catch five. But if I say 'the guy in the tiger-suit, go for him' – to me it was crazy, it just put you...you were different from everybody else.¹¹¹

The value of camouflage cream was also universally accepted.¹¹² Initially, the first Troop had access to American-sourced supplies but by early 1970 the cream had become scarce. Resourceful members of Captain Graye Shattky's second New Zealand Troop manufactured their own camouflage cream using 'anti-septic ointments mixed with nugget or dye.'¹¹³ Some also purchased black 'stage make-up pencils.'¹¹⁴ The cream was liberally applied to face at least once per day and on places such as the hands at least twice per day. Because of the climate, patrol members found it necessary to regularly reapply the creams:

...you could put that camouflage paint on your face, walk five metres and it's all run off you. I mean the sweat, it's pouring off you...¹¹⁵

To solve this problem, some Troop members wore either 'loose-fitting mittens' made from old and discarded ERDL uniforms, or 'Nomex' flying gloves with rubberised palms and index fingers.¹¹⁶ Gloves, as opposed to camouflage cream, also provided protection against thorns, mosquitoes and hot weapon barrels.¹¹⁷ Subsequent American creams had two basic colours – the green/black combination was ideal for use during the wet season, while the green/sand colour was more appropriate for the dry seasons.¹¹⁸

¹¹¹ Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

¹¹² Lyle, *Vietnam ANZACs*, p. 47.

¹¹³ Captain D.G. Shattky, "4 Troop NZSAS Post – Operational Report SVN 1969/70, 26 October 1970," in NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington, p.2.

¹¹⁴ Hayes, "4 Troop NZSAS – Post Operational Report South Vietnam Dec 1970 – Feb 1971, 16 February 1971," p. 4.

¹¹⁵ Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

¹¹⁶ Lyle, *Vietnam ANZACs*, p. 59 and Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 244.

¹¹⁷ Shattky, "4 Troop NZSAS Post – Operational Report SVN 1969/70, 26 October 1970," p. 2.

¹¹⁸ Hayes, "4 Troop NZSAS – Post Operational Report South Vietnam Dec 1970 – Feb 1971, 16 February 1971," p. 5.

Weapons were also liberally covered with either paint or material to reduce shine and break up their distinctive outlines; even individual magazines were painted. Belt kit and packs were also camouflaged.¹¹⁹ The majority of Troop members preferred to wear United States-issue nylon jungle boots and while the boots were not camouflaged per se, some patrol members wore 'old socks' around the ankle which could be drawn over the sole of the boot to conceal footprints in sandy or muddy ground.¹²⁰

Concluding Notes

...because of Borneo we were much better in Vietnam...and I still believe that there wasn't a lot of refining to do in Vietnam from Borneo, as far as operations, movement and SOPs.¹²¹

The patrolling drills carried out by New Zealand SAS in South Vietnam remained very similar to those which had proved effective during more than ten years of New Zealand Army jungle warfare operations in South East Asia. That most New Zealand SAS members were from New Zealand infantry regiments allowed for a largely seamless transition in the application of tactics originally designed for platoon-size formations to the smaller four or five-man SAS patrol groups.

By mid-1969 there was no question that the performance and effectiveness of the New Zealand Troop in South Vietnam was the equal to any previous New Zealand Special Forces deployments to South East Asia. A number of 1 Ranger Squadron members subsequently expressed a certain amount of disappointment that Patrol Commanders – such as Lillicrapp, Johnston and Brown - received no more recognition for their patrolling effort than a couple of sentences from their Australian Squadron Commander. The absence of gallantry awards for the New Zealand SAS operations in South Vietnam continued to be a recurring theme not only for the rest of the first 4 Troop campaign but for the next forty years.

It could be argued the lack of medallic recognition for 4 Troop members also supports the argument posited by some veterans themselves that the campaign was not as successful as it could have been. While there is no suggestion awards should provide a sole

¹¹⁹ Lyle, *Vietnam ANZACs*, p. 25.

¹²⁰ Shattky, "4 Troop NZSAS Post – Operational Report SVN 1969/70, 26 October 1970," p. 2.

¹²¹ Jack Powley, interview conducted on 6 August 2008.

determinant or even a supporting measure of the value, success or otherwise, of a military campaign, the question why no member of the New Zealand SAS received any award for gallantry during operations between December 1968 and February 1971, presents itself as an anomaly that must be examined.

The Australian Department of Veterans' Affairs 'Vietnam Roll' lists 41,749 Australian Army personnel having served in Vietnam between 1962 and 1975 out of a total of approximately 61,000 Australians who served in all three services during the period.¹²² Statistics provided in Ian McNeill's *To Long Tan: The Australian Army and the Vietnam War, 1950-1966* record that 728 'British' gallantry awards were made to members of the Australian Army.¹²³ In addition, Australian soldiers received 364 United States awards and 529 decorations from the Government of South Vietnam.¹²⁴ Taking the Australian Department of Veterans' Affairs and McNeill figures, the ratio of gallantry awards for the Australian Army in Vietnam is approximately one award for every 47 soldiers. A total of 3368 New Zealand soldiers served in South Vietnam between 1964 and 1972.¹²⁵ A total of 54 awards were presented to the New Zealand Army, including American and South Vietnamese decorations.¹²⁶ Based upon this data, the ratio for awards per New Zealand soldier is approximately 1 to 62.

When it came to the incidence of gallantry awards, it appears the New Zealand Army was acutely aware of the disparity between those for the two countries. In early 1969 Major-General Dawson had asked Colonel Kevin Fenton to examine the issue and ensure as many New Zealand troops as possible received decorations. Fenton responded in mid-June by advising his CGS there were 'real limitations to how many we can get through

¹²² Australian Department of Veteran's Affairs 'Vietnam Roll,' at <http://www.vietnamroll.gov.au/veteransearch.aspx>, viewed on 12 February 2009.

¹²³ The most highly decorated Australian unit was the AATTV. The awards presented to the unit included four VCs, two DSOs, six MCs, 20 DCMs, 16 MMs and 49 MIDs, as well as numerous United States and South Vietnamese gallantry awards. McNeill, *To Long Tan*, p.472 and Ham, *Vietnam: The Australian War*, pp 645-646.

¹²⁴ McNeill, *To Long Tan*, p.472.

¹²⁵ New Zealand Army, *Brief History of the New Zealand Army in South Vietnam*, p. 6.

¹²⁶ The awards included 34 to members of the Whiskey and Victor Companies (consisting of one MBE, eight MCs, four DCMs, four MMs and 19 MIDs, and 20 to 161 Battery members (eight MBEs, one MC, four BEMs, one Queens Commendation for Bravery and six MIDs). Three battery members also received United States Presidential Unit Citation Awards and the Battery, as a whole, also received the South Vietnamese Presidential Unit Citation. New Zealand Army, *Brief History of the New Zealand Army in South Vietnam*, p. 7.

jointly with the Australians.’¹²⁷ While the Commander NZV Force had ‘endeavoured to promote the principle of selection by merit rather than quota’ in his discussions with Australian commanders, Fenton advised Dawson that even the Australian rifle companies were limited in their opportunities for awards because they came ‘after the higher HQ and other arms and services in 1ATF’ were considered.¹²⁸ Fenton also conceded that NZV Force itself was guilty of concentrating ‘on our infantry to the exclusion of others because that is where the force is operationally active’ when it came to New Zealand gallantry awards and did ‘tend to overlook other deserving groups.’¹²⁹

The twenty-six Australian SAS gallantry decorations awarded during their time in South Vietnam included four Military Crosses (MC), two Distinguished Conduct Medals (DCM), four Military Medals (MM) and 16 MIDs.¹³⁰ Approximately 540 Australian SAS served in South Vietnam.¹³¹ This equates to one decoration for every 20.7 Australian SAS soldiers. Between December 1968 and February 1971, 75 New Zealand SAS soldiers served in South Vietnam with the three 4 Troop deployments. Not one member received an award for gallantry in Vietnam. In comparison, the original New Zealand SAS Squadron, which totalled approximately 120 personnel, received seven awards (two MCs, one BEM and four MIDs) during its two years in Malaya; a ratio of approximately 1 to 17. Even in Borneo, supposedly the most sensitive of operational deployments taking into account the CLARET operations, the four half-squadron detachments between them – some 160 soldiers – received at least five awards (one MC, two BEMs and two MIDs).¹³²

¹²⁷ Lieutenant-Colonel K. C. Fenton to Major-General Dawson, “12 June 1969,” in New Zealand Army S.95/14/1 Volume 2, Honours and Awards – Vietnam, January 1969 – March 1971, NZDF Archive, Wellington.

¹²⁸ Fenton to Dawson, “12 June 1969.”

¹²⁹ Fenton to Dawson, “12 June 1969.”

¹³⁰ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, pp. 480-481.

¹³¹ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, pp. 487-509.

¹³² For Malaya, Major Frank Rennie was awarded a MID on 21 March 1958 and then received an MC on 23 May 1958, Lieutenant Ian Burrows received an MC on 28 May 1957 and the Malaysian Negri Sembilan Conspicuous Gallantry Medal (CGM) on 19 November 1957, Captain Graham Boswell and Lieutenant John Mace both received MIDs on 23 May 1958 and Trooper Steve Watene was awarded a BEM for gallantry on 7 January 1958. During the Borneo ‘Confrontation,’ Lieutenant Eru Manuera received a MC on 14 December 1965, Sergeant Eric Ball was awarded a BEM on 23 June 1966, Lance Corporal Niwa Kawha received a MID on 14 December 1965 and a BEM on 13 January 1966, and Sergeant Ken Schimanski a MID on 14 December 1966. Major Neville Kidd, “Honours and Awards: NZSAS Personnel, 13 September 1971” and New Zealand Defence Wellington signal to Field Force Command, “Honours and Awards NZSAS Personnel, 20 September 1971,” both in New Zealand Army 93/5/17 Volume One, Honours and Awards – Presentation of 1958-July 1972, ANZ, Auckland, and Pugsley *From Emergency to Confrontation*, p. 121, 362 and 364-365.

Almost all wars, emergencies, police actions, ‘confrontations’ and peace-keeping missions record instances of bravery or conduct where the military awards system in place at the time fails to recognise all so deserving, however, the campaign in South Vietnam remains the only operational deployment, either before or since, in which the New Zealand SAS failed to receive any form of medallic recognition. Is there a single explanation or might there be a set of circumstances which contributed to what appears to be a very clear anomaly in the operational history of the New Zealand Special Air Service? The likely answer to this will be examined in more detail in Chapter Eleven.

Chapter 9

Patrolling and Contacts: August – November 1969

New Zealand SAS patrol field-craft was firmly established in Malaya between 1956 and 1958 and steadily evolved throughout the following decade.¹ Undoubtedly, the reputation that the New Zealand infantry battalions – as well as New Zealand SAS - achieved through its experiences in South East Asia was a direct result of an adherence to the well-proven and highly-developed small unit skills of patrolling and ambushing. For the infantry elements of the ATF in Vietnam, patrolling was considered ‘an offensive strategy’ designed to dominate the countryside and force most, if not all, Vietcong and NVA elements from Phuoc Tuy province.² A basic New Zealand infantry patrol order in Vietnam, principally carried out in a platoon size, was made up of four groups; Scout, Command, Gun and Rifle Group.³

The Scout Group normally comprised two soldiers who assumed the role of ‘scout’ or ‘point’ and worked in tandem, alternately patrolling a short distance ahead of the next part of the patrol. From a New Zealand unit perspective, patrol members who were scouts often preferred it to be a full-time role. The Command group of the patrol comprised the Patrol Commander and the patrol signaller and was near the centre of the patrol, between Scout Group and Rifle Group because the position afforded the most protection.⁴ The Gun Group contained a two-man M-60 machine gun team and the patrol 2IC, and would be followed by the Rifle Group which may contain five M-16/SLR-armed infantrymen and an additional grenadier armed with an M-79 grenade launcher.⁵

A platoon-strength patrol was made up of three sections each led by a junior Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO), and the platoon commanded by either a Lieutenant or Sergeant.⁶ Infantry patrols were seldom sent out on fighting patrol operations at less than ‘half-platoon strength,’ although section-size patrols were used for perimeter-clearing or

¹ Army Department 209/3/222 Volume One: Organisation and Formation – 1 Ranger Squadron Special Air Service, July 1959 – June 1972, ANZ, Wellington.

² Smith, *The Killing Zone*, p. 30 and Lyle, *Vietnam ANZACs*, p. 20.

³ Smith, *The Killing Zone*, p. 30, Lyle, *Vietnam ANZACs*, p. 20 and Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008.

⁴ Second Battalion, RNZIR, “The Patrol Commanders Guide, 7 November 1960,” in New Zealand Army 251/7/61 Handbook – SAS Soldiers, September 1966 – May 1968, ANZ, Wellington.

⁵ Smith, *The Killing Zone*, p. 30 and Lyle, *Vietnam ANZACs*, pp. 20-22.

⁶ Lyle, *Vietnam ANZACs*, pp. 20-21.

defence listening post roles.⁷ Platoon-strength infantry patrols were dispersed into sections to reduce casualties in contacts and avoid ambushes but moved in a variety of formations which best suited the covered terrain.⁸ For New Zealand infantry soldiers such as Captain Graye Shattky, who subsequently commanded the second 4 Troop, this practical knowledge had considerable application for SAS patrol operations:

During [infantry] operations in Borneo's dense jungle, we found the traditional infantry technique of 'harbouring' for the night in a defensive circle, to be particularly difficult when it came to establishing arcs of responsibility and coordinating fire support between the sections. Instead we developed a triangular harbour which enabled the three sections to easily link at each apex, with Platoon HQ sited centrally. We found that with practice the technique was much quicker and more efficient as well as providing obvious advantages by way of enfilade fire support across each section's frontage. In Vietnam as Victor Company, we continued to use and refine the techniques and procedures developed in Borneo. For example, we considered the traditional 'linear ambush' to be clumsy and particularly vulnerable to any aggressive response by a large enemy force. Instead, having identified a suitable ambush site (normally a bend in a well-used track) the platoon would deploy as for a night harbour, with one point of the defensive triangle sited close to the bend, from where the ambush commander could observe enemy movement from either direction along the track. The triangular position allowed Claymore mines to be positioned pointing in each direction along the track, enabled good observation of movement from either direction and provided all-round and interlinking fire support should the enemy attempt a counter attack. The technique, particularly when the claymores were well-sited and initiated simultaneously, proved highly effective and was successfully adapted for use by New Zealand SAS patrols in Vietnam.⁹

New Zealand SAS patrols followed a similar, albeit smaller, make-up to that of infantry platoons. A specialist full-time scout led the patrol, followed closely by the Patrol Commander, the signaller and two riflemen – one of which was a dedicated medic. The last member of the patrol was affectionately known as 'Tail-end Charlie.' The patrol's size was both its strength and weakness. If an unavoidable contact was made, the five-man SAS patrol was able to deliver an astonishing amount of firepower and SAS contact drills called for immediate and decisive offensive action singularly designed to enable the patrol to 'break contact' as quickly as possible or to confuse the enemy to believe they had engaged a much larger force than just five.

⁷ Smith, *The Killing Zone*, pp. 30-31.

⁸ Smith provides a sufficiently thorough description of these formations – either 'Single-file,' 'One-up,' 'Two-up' or 'Diamond' – in diagrammatical form in *The Killing Zone*, pp. 31-32.

⁹ Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008 and email dated 22 February 2009.

To achieve the above, some SAS weapons were modified. SLR rifles were altered to only fire 'automatic' bursts, rather than single-shot, or had their flash suppressors removed to 'exaggerate muzzle signature.'¹⁰ This, combined with the amplified noise of the modified weapon, also increased the 'morale' of the Troop members and provided them with 'the fire support they needed for small patrol operations.'¹¹ Others were not convinced of the necessity to drastically alter weapons:

I mean I had a guy who asked me could he take the flash-hider off his SLR. And I said 'well, it's not really a good idea.' If you get tangled up - [and] I used to carry an SLR - if you get tangled up at night time without the flash on, well things were a bit different. But he obviously went to the Armourer and got it loosened and he took it off. And of course we got sprung one evening [possibly patrol 104/69], and he's firing...and there's a twelve-foot bloody flame coming out of his rifle! And he's yelling out to me 'they're all shooting at me!' Well, of course they were, you know? But he learnt – and everybody else learnt – sort of.¹²

Some SAS SLRs were converted to 'carbine' format by halving the length of the barrel and hand-guard.¹³ Other SLR modifications included the addition of 30-round magazines, removal of bayonet lugs, sling swivel and carrying handle, extended magazine release catch, a forward pistol-grip attached to the barrel hand-guard, and the setting of a 'pace-counter' – the New Zealand equivalent to a 'sheep-counter' - into the pistol-grip or stock.¹⁴ This latter modification presented some unexpected consequences for the New Zealanders:

Sheep-counters – I never used a sheep-counter. I gave it to someone else – I mean, I had enough to think about. Well Johnno [Johnston] said he would have his on his pistol grip and he would use his thumb. He took it off in the end because his finger was getting twitchy!¹⁵

Patrols 109/69 and 120/69: New Zealand SAS Contact Drills in Vietnam

4 Troop's Activity Report for August 1969 contained details of five recce/ambush patrols and one reconnaissance patrol,¹⁶ although members of the Troop were actually involved

¹⁰ This was achieved by inserting a pin which would hold the working parts to the rear of an empty magazine. Lyle, *Vietnam ANZACs*, p. 49.

¹¹ Terry Culley, interview conducted on 21 July 2008.

¹² Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

¹³ Lyle, *Vietnam ANZACs*, p. 48.

¹⁴ Lyle, *Vietnam ANZACs*, pp. 47-48.

¹⁵ Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

¹⁶ One member of the Troop was also returned to New Zealand ill. After being extracted on the second day of patrol 112/69, Trooper Dennis 'Bro' Terry was diagnosed with renal colic and sent home on 19 August.

in eight recce/ambush patrols that month.¹⁷ In early August 1969 Corporal Percy Brown commanded a six-man recce/ambush patrol around the southern reaches of Nui May Tao hills, some 30 kilometres north-east of Nui Dat.¹⁸ Almost immediately the patrol was forced to cross a number of ‘recently-used’ tracks. As the patrol observed the third foot track found that afternoon, three Vietcong moved steadily and quietly, past their location.¹⁹ Due to the density of the jungle, the patrol could not determine whether or not the enemy were armed.²⁰ All about them, numerous foot tracks were seen and parts of the jungle cleared, which indicated the construction of some type of camp or enemy position.²¹ Early the following morning, as they continued east, the patrol crossed a ‘three foot wide’ track which showed use during the previous 48 hours. Fifteen minutes later Brown established an OP approximately 20 metres from the track where the patrol remained for the rest of the morning.²²

At 1315 hrs the patrol observed three Vietcong – two male and one female – moving north. The first was armed with an SKS rifle and wore a green uniform.²³ Shortly after, while Brown and Lance-Corporal Kevin Herewini were setting up the patrol radio, two

In addition, Trooper Sam Peti was wounded during patrol 109/69, and though remaining on duty for the remainder of that patrol, he was unable to participate in any further operations for the rest of the tour. Both Terry and Peti returned to Vietnam with the third 4 Troop in December 1970. 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, “Activity Report – August 1969, 12 September 1969” in AWM103 R723/1/79: Reports – General - New Zealand SAS Activity Reports, 1969-1970, AWM, Canberra.

¹⁷ Sergeant F.D. Barclay, “3 SAS Squadron Ops 104/69 Patrol Report, 7 August 1969,” Corporal P. Brown, “3 SAS Squadron Ops 109/69 Patrol Report, 17 August 1969,” Captain T. Culley, “3 SAS Squadron Ops 112/69 Patrol Report, 19 August 1969,” WO2 E. Ball, “3 SAS Squadron Ops 113/69 Patrol Report, 20 August 1969,” and Sergeant F.D. Barclay, “3 SAS Squadron Ops 120/69 Patrol Report, 28 August 1969,” all in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries [Vietnam], 7/12/16 3 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Log, Annexes [1-31 August 1969], Australian War Memorial, Canberra. New Zealanders were also involved in two 3 Squadron patrols; Major Beesley’s 104/69 and Lieutenant Chris Roberts’ 124/69. See Barclay, “3 SAS Squadron Ops 104/69 Patrol Report, 7 August 1969,” and Lieutenant C.A.M. Roberts, “3 SAS Sqn Ops 124/69 Patrol Report, 20 June 1969,” in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries [Vietnam], 7/12/14, 3 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative, Duty Officer’s Log, Annexes [1-30 June 1969], all in AWM, Canberra. The one New Zealand reconnaissance patrol of the month, 108/69, was commanded by Sergeant Bill Lillicrapp. Sergeant W.J. Lillicrapp, “3 SAS Sqn Ops 078/69 Patrol Report, 21 June 1969,” in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/14.

¹⁸ Brown, “3 SAS Squadron Ops 109/69, 17 August 1969,” p. 1 and Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 488.

¹⁹ Brown, “3 SAS Squadron Ops 109/69, 17 August 1969,” p. 1.

²⁰ In the case of sightings, the basis of any SAS IA or contact drill relied upon the use of hand-signals and field-craft to ‘prevent the sighting becoming a contact unintentionally.’ 2 SAS Squadron, “2 SAS Sqn Standing Operating Procedures, 16 September 1968,” in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries, 7/11/7 2 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Log 1-30 September 1968, AWM, Canberra, p.3.

²¹ Brown, “3 SAS Squadron Ops 109/69, 17 August 1969,” p. 1.

²² Brown, “3 SAS Squadron Ops 109/69, 17 August 1969,” p. 1.

²³ Brown, “3 SAS Squadron Ops 109/69, 17 August 1969,” p. 1.

more armed Vietcong were seen. Both enemy stopped in front of the OP position and looked towards the direction of the patrol. Then the first Vietcong, armed with an AK-47, slowly moved off the track towards the patrol, closely followed by the second carrying a RPG launcher.²⁴

The first Vietcong came to within seven metres of the patrol before Trooper Sam Peti fired his SLR and both were killed by 'single aimed shots' to their chests, while the other patrol members suppressed the immediate area. Almost at once, the patrol received three short bursts of LMG fire by an unconfirmed number further along the track. A grenade was also thrown.²⁵ The patrol 2IC, Lance-Corporal Jack Curtis, immediately engaged the area from where the LMG fire originated and all fire ceased. The thrown grenade exploded close to Peti and the patrol scout Lance-Corporal Whi Wanoa. Peti suffered shrapnel wounds to his right knee and Wanoa was wounded in his right thigh and left ear.²⁶

Brown withdrew the patrol in an easterly direction after ascertaining both injured members were fit to continue. While only Peti had seen and engaged the enemy, the patrol nevertheless expended '40 5.56mm [M-16] rounds and 80 7.62mm [SLR] rounds in putting down suppressing fire.'²⁷ The LMG firing after the initial contact suggested Peti had probably shot the leading scout of a much larger group.²⁸ The patrol continued on an easterly bearing for the rest of the day. They crossed two more tracks - one a well defined foot track showing foot-traffic activity within the last few hours and the second, an overgrown oxcart track which displayed no recent sign of use - before the patrol found a small hut early that evening. Inside the hut, Brown's examination revealed a cache containing between 70 and 100 pounds of what was later determined to be ballistic cartridges for rifle grenades,²⁹ 20 pounds of welding rods, a large number of candles,

²⁴ Brown, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 109/69, 17 August 1969," p.1 and 3 SAS Squadron Nui Dat, "Contact - After Action Report, 17 August 1969," in AWM103 R617/1/5/7 Part 3: SAS Patrol Reports 1969, AWM, Canberra, p. 1.

²⁵ 3 SAS Squadron Nui Dat, "Contact - After Action Report, 17 August 1969," p.1.

²⁶ Peti and Wanoa were the 115th and 116th New Zealanders to be officially wounded in Vietnam. HQ NZDF G744/1 Australian and New Zealand Battle Casualties 1965-1971, ANZ, Wellington, p. 7.

²⁷ In its haste to withdraw, the patrol had also left behind a radio 'aerial and a morse key.' 3 SAS Squadron Nui Dat, "Contact - After Action Report, 17 August 1969," p.2.

²⁸ In the subsequent report Beesley wrote "The patrol's action on contact is commendable.' 3 SAS Squadron Nui Dat, "Contact - After Action Report, 17 August 1969," p.2.

²⁹ This assessment was made by the patrol's Australian Squadron debriefing officer, 2nd Lieutenant Nick Howlett. Brown, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 109/69, 17 August 1969," p. 3.

several 'four foot long' rolls of thin tin, and two coils of fencing wire.³⁰ That evening the patrol established a night LUP a short distance from the hut.³¹

Brown headed north after leaving the enemy camp and the patrol spent the next two days patrolling without observing any further enemy. Towards the end of the sixth day, the patrol discovered why timber had been removed from the cleared sections of jungle when they encountered two 'ten foot by ten foot' wooden bunkers. Once again, the patrol reconnoitred the surrounding area, crossed another well defined track, and set up a night LUP.³² The following morning, they were forced to cross as many as seven foot tracks – all well used and showing signs of recent activity.³³ However, as the patrol - now travelling west – continued, no enemy presence was detected until the next day.

Noises heard earlier the next morning from women, children, babies and animals suggested to Brown that the patrol was not far from a small village or camp site. Several huts, as well as a small garden, were also spotted as the group continued patrolling.³⁴ At 1245 hrs, just as the patrol was about to reach the Suoi Bao Nop creek,³⁵ Wanoa saw three Vietcong no more than seven metres to his right. The scout slowly and deliberately brought up his weapon and aimed at the three who he could see were 'moving tactically' with weapons at the ready and peering through undergrowth in the direction of the patrol.³⁶

At the same time, Brown sighted more movement behind the third Vietcong which suggested more enemy than just the three in view. Even though Wanoa was the first to see the enemy, Brown – positioned directly behind the scout - was the first to fire as he spotted a fourth Vietcong aiming his weapon at Wanoa. He immediately opened fire with

³⁰ Brown, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 109/69, 17 August 1969," pp. 1-2.

³¹ The next morning, Brown contacted Nui Dat for further instruction. He was advised to destroy the ammunition if possible, which he did by 'scattering and burying' the rounds. The welding rods and the candles were disposed of the same way and the remainder of the materiel was left untouched. Brown, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 109/69, 17 August 1969," p.2 and 3 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 7 August," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/16, p.8.

³² Brown, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 109/69, 17 August 1969," p. 2.

³³ Brown, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 109/69, 17 August 1969," p. 2.

³⁴ Brown, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 109/69, 17 August 1969," p. 2.

³⁵ Because of the large number of tracks, camps, construction and activity encountered, the patrol had not been able to replenish their water supply – they had not had any water for nearly two days. 3 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 7 August," p.16.

³⁶ 3 SAS Squadron Nui Dat, "Contact - After Action Report, 17 August 1969," p.2.

‘10 single aimed shots’ and killed the ‘fourth enemy.’³⁷ Wanoa then fired two aimed bursts, killing the third Vietcong from the initial enemy group, and then fired upon the first and second enemy but could not confirm they had been hit.³⁸ The rest of the enemy took cover and did not return fire.³⁹

Only Brown and Wanoa saw the engaged enemy and as per their contact drills, the patrol collectively suppressed the immediate area, regrouped and moved west. The remaining enemy, estimated by Brown to have been at least eight, pursued the patrol for another 200 metres, and got as close as 40 metres, before abandoning the chase. Although believed to be well-armed, at no time did the Vietcong fire upon Brown’s patrol, either during the initial contact or whilst following.⁴⁰ As the patrol continued, they had to travel past the cache they had found five days earlier. The patrol covered approximately 1200 metres in three and a half hours before they established a night LUP. They were extracted the following morning.

That Brown was able to extricate his patrol from contacts on two separate occasions once again demonstrated the SAS contact drills which emphasised laying down large amounts of suppressing fire in an astonishingly short space of time, would save patrols from becoming embroiled in a lengthy battle unlikely to be won with so few numbers. In his concluding notes of the second contact, Major Beesley made reference to the way in which the enemy had reacted and then followed up. He was equally impressed with Brown and his patrol:

The patrol’s action to break contact is commendable, and again emphasises the requirement for well rehearsed drills.⁴¹

Contact rehearsals and drills were an integral and vital part of the New Zealand Troop’s pre-patrol preparation. It was normal practice for all patrols to not only fire their weapons

³⁷ 3 SAS Squadron Nui Dat, “Contact - After Action Report, 17 August 1969,” p.2.

³⁸ Brown, “3 SAS Squadron Ops 109/69, 17 August 1969,” p.1 and 3 SAS Squadron Nui Dat, “Contact - After Action Report, 17 August 1969,” p.2.

³⁹ The Patrol Commander would subsequently claim ‘two VC KIA (BC)’ and two ‘VC WIA’ during the second contact. 3 SAS Squadron Nui Dat, “Contact - After Action Report, 17 August 1969,” p.2.

⁴⁰ The patrol had expended 40 rounds of M-16/XM-148 and 100 rounds of SLR ammunition during the contact, and Wanoa was forced to leave his pack behind. Brown, “3 SAS Squadron Ops 109/69, 17 August 1969,” p.3 and “Contact - After Action Report, 17 August 1969,” p.2.

⁴¹ 3 SAS Squadron Nui Dat, “Contact - After Action Report, 17 August 1969,” p.2.

on the range but also rehearse 'live-firing immediate action (IA) drills.'⁴² Experience, particularly in Borneo, had demonstrated traditional infantry-style flanking movements within a jungle environment were completely impractical and extremely difficult to control. The SAS contact drills – a system of fire and movement individually or in pairs - which had been firmly established within 1 Ranger Squadron by Meldrum as early as 1964, did not require any real revision or alteration by the Troop for operations in South Vietnam.⁴³ Nevertheless, the Troop still spent considerable time, some would most emphatically argue much more than the Australian Squadron, rehearsing their contact drills:

...probably the one thing that I remember most about operations is that we rehearsed more. You see if you rehearse in New Zealand for training; it's training aye? When you're over there, you are rehearsing for the real thing [and] it has a more sharper impact and the guys used to spend more time – they would stay there on the range...The feature of the rehearsals, I think the live-firing rehearsals where the guys really had to put their heart and soul into it because quite often you would go for bloody days [inaudible] and not get to do what you had rehearsed because of the unavailability of the enemy or the enemy appearing at a time when you weren't going to expose yourself to that sort of extra activity.⁴⁴

Even when enemy were sighted during a patrol, because most SAS patrols were reconnaissance in nature, contacts in South Vietnam remained the exception rather than the rule.⁴⁵ The SAS drills tended to focus on five basic contingency situations; head-on contact, ambush, contact on LZ, sightings and contact in LUP. Basic contact drills were designed to produce 'the maximum fire in the area of the enemy' either from the patrol's front, rear or to one flank.⁴⁶ These three axis points formed the basis from which all responses to contacts were conducted.⁴⁷

⁴² Captain D.G. Shattky, "4 Troop NZSAS Post – Operational Report SVN 1969/70, 26 October 1970," NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington, p. 2.

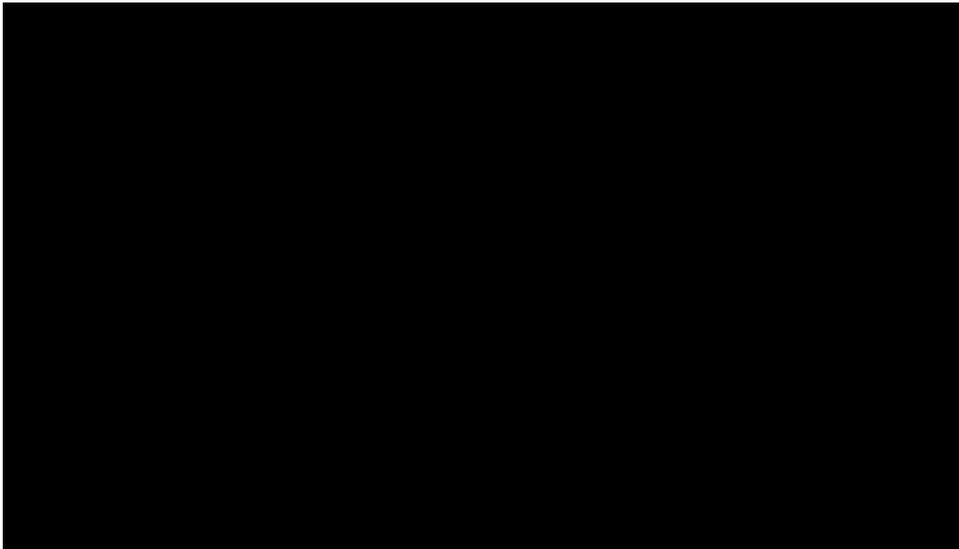
⁴³ Shattky, "4 Troop NZSAS Post – Operational Report SVN 1969/70, 26 October 1970," p. 9.

⁴⁴ Terry Culley, interview conducted on 21 July 2008.

⁴⁵ Captain Terry Culley, "Post Operational Report - 4 Tp NZSAS, April 1970," NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington, p. 6.

⁴⁶ Major R.P. Beesley, "3 SAS Sqn Standing Operating Procedures, 6 February 1969," in AWM98 R569/169/25 Pt2: Operations/General - 3SAS and 1SAS Squadron, 1969-1970, AWM, Canberra.

⁴⁷ Culley, "Post Operational Report - 4 Tp NZSAS, April 1970," p. 6.



(4) Contact to Rear. This drill is used if the en
is obs/contacted to the rear of the pti.

(a) The rear man or the pers seeing or being
fired on by the en dives for cover, fires at en
and shouts "rear".

(b) All other pti members shout "rear" then take
cover as fols :-

En

Rfn to left
Med to right
Sig to left
Comd to right
Scout on axis

Rfn o o Med

Sig o o Comd

o Scout

Document 1: Contact Drill diagrams from Culley's Post Operational Report ⁴⁸

For example, if enemy was observed at the front of a five-man patrol, the patrol member seeing or being fired upon was required to initiate return fire, dive for cover and shout 'Front.'⁴⁹ All other patrol members would then shout 'Front' to confirm that all were aware of the direction of the enemy and which drill to use. Automatically, the patrol then took their designated positions and engaged the enemy, or immediate area, with rapid and continual fire. Most Patrol Commanders would simplify the contact instructions down further:

...if we had a contact and I decided that we were going left that's what I would scream out. I mean if you had a whole lot of Vietnamese who could speak

⁴⁸ Culley, "Post Operational Report - 4 Tp NZSAS, April 1970," pp. 6-7.
⁴⁹ Culley, "Post Operational Report - 4 Tp NZSAS, April 1970," p. 6.

English then you were in trouble. But I would scream ‘Left.’ That told us who was going to move first, that guy would change from firing single aimed shots – he would fire a quick burst to say he was moving. And he would move as soon as he had fired the burst. And the next guy closest to the enemy would do the same – and you would keep doing that until you broke free. But you’d never talk again.⁵⁰

When the Patrol Commander considered the suppressing fire was sufficient to counter any incoming enemy fire he shouted ‘bug out’ and he and the scout would turn and run parallel to the patrol axis - through two lanes created by the three other patrol members, until they reached positions level with the signaller and the medic. The Patrol Commander and scout then turned and recommenced firing. As soon as this occurred, the drill called for the rifleman at the rear of the patrol to ‘take charge’ and yell the ‘bug out’ order again. The rifleman, signaller and medic then turned and ran, again parallel to the patrol axis, a distance of between 10-15 metres before turning and firing at the enemy.

This fire and movement action continued until the Patrol Commander was satisfied the patrol was clear of any enemy fire and he would then shout ‘break,’ with the rest of the patrol repeating the command, not just to ensure that all had understood the order, but also to confirm that all patrol members were still alive – before the whole group fired a burst of automatic fire and grenades and ran off in the same direction as the Patrol Commander.⁵¹ The drills, so practised and rehearsed, became an automatic reaction. Noise from the intensity of fire sometimes, as Barclay mentioned, drowned out voices so it was vital pre-planned reaction occurred to avoid losing control:

...what I found was that as the second guy [Patrol Commander], I sometimes saw a lot of things the lead scout didn’t see because he’s concentrating on where he’s going and what’s immediately there. I have got a more relaxed – a better overview, you know, and so you would pick up things...It also told me that when I saw Sonny [Taniora] go past, I’d fire a little automatic burst of about three rounds and I would take off – that meant Nat Tito [Barclay’s signaller] knew I was moving. When I heard him firing, I knew he was okay and he was moving – because you do lose a little bit of control for a minute or two.⁵²

For contacts from the rear or to the left or right flanks of the patrol, the same procedure followed save for the initial directional command shouted by the patrol member who first saw the enemy.⁵³ Patrol Commanders sometimes varied drills for particular

⁵⁰ Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

⁵¹ Culley, “Post Operational Report - 4 Tp NZSAS, April 1970,” p. 6.

⁵² Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

⁵³ Culley, “Post Operational Report - 4 Tp NZSAS, April 1970,” pp. 6-8.

circumstances, but the variations were minimal and for most Patrol Commanders while on patrol, the contact drills formed the basis for all other tasks. SAS Patrols halted frequently to listen, communicate, rest, eat or sleep. In each case, the halt procedure remained the same:

...what I made my group do is – as we were moving along, the scout would always sit down and face the front, regardless of which way you were looking, his left and his right would govern where the enemy were, right? And that solved this problem of is it left or is it right or is it back to front – simple things that you don't think of, you know, until – 'shit, what are we going to do?'⁵⁴

While the immediate action drills themselves required no alteration, by the time of the second 4 Troop deployment, range orders changed by 1ATF limited a patrol's ability to conduct what had been previously considered acceptable and necessary 'realistic training' in advance of deployment.⁵⁵ Contact drills required one man firing live rounds past another who, although to a flank, was still in the general line of fire. These contact drills continually proved their worth in South Vietnam.

Enemy Weapons

Both the Vietcong and NVA were equipped with Soviet or Chicom AK-47 and semi-automatic rifles, light-machine guns (RPD) and rocket-propelled anti-tank grenade launchers (RPG).⁵⁶ Weighing approximately 10.5 pounds when loaded, the 7.62mm AK-47, or Chicom Assault Rifle Type 56, was by 1969 the basic weapon for most communist world armies. Two major types were manufactured; one with a conventional wooden butt-stock and other with a folding metal stock.⁵⁷ It was accepted most Vietcong moved through the jungle with a round in the chamber of the AK-47 and the safety-catch applied; the major drawback of the AK-47 was it was almost impossible to release the safety-catch without an audible 'click.' On one of Corporal Michael 'Paddy'

⁵⁴ Ernie Stead, interview conducted on 13 June 2008.

⁵⁵ Every three months, all 1ATF personnel were required to participate in Exercise LIFESAVER, an instruction drill which emphasised weapons safety precautions and correct 'rules of engagement.' For 4 Troop members, the exercise was conducted internally within the Australian Squadron. Shattky, "4 Troop NZSAS Post – Operational Report SVN 1969/70, 26 October 1970," p.2 and 2nd Lieutenant J.S. Hayes, "4 Troop NZSAS – Post Operational Report South Vietnam Dec 1970 – Feb 1971, 16 February 1971," NZSAS Association Archives, Wellington, p. 3.

⁵⁶ MACV, *Handbook for US Forces in Vietnam*, p. 73.

⁵⁷ A modified version of the AK-47, the AKM, was also used in the Vietnam conflict. The AKM was also over 3.5 pounds lighter. United States Department of the Army, *Army Pamphlet 381-10, Weapons and Equipment Recognition Guide – South East Asia* (Washington D.C.: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 1969), pp. 38-41.

Cunningham's patrols, the SAS soldier was so close to the enemy, he could clearly see the position of the catch:

I was in a situation where we were putting out an ambush and two walked along the track – and they would be as close as to that plant there [five metres]. And I had just put the Claymores out on the ground, and I put my rifle down on my right – and I looked up and there was two standing there. And they were so close I could tell that the safety-catch was on – on the AKs...If it is up – it's on, if it was down and there was a gap – then it was off.⁵⁸

Between 6 and 17 August 1969, Cunningham had been 2IC of a five-man patrol on a recce/ambush operation approximately 19 kilometres north-east of Nui Dat.⁵⁹ It was one of a series of 3 Squadron patrols across the approaches to the May Taos Mountain area in the north-east of the province. On 12 August, the patrol identified a well-defined foot-track, showing signs of recent use, and decided to put an OP on the track the following day. At 0845 hrs the patrol observed five enemy, including one female, moving quietly in a south-westerly direction. Two of the Vietcong were carrying what appeared to be very heavy packs. Nearly two hours later, the patrol saw another group of 12 moving in the same direction. This group comprised nine females, all carrying heavy packs, and three armed males who were also carrying an 81mm mortar barrel and base-plate.⁶⁰

The following morning the Patrol Commander, WO2 Eric Ball, laid an ambush on the track. It was while Cunningham was placing his claymores that the two Vietcong enemy had been seen approaching the ambush site. The patrol waited until the middle of the afternoon before a suitable opportunity presented itself. Ball sprung the ambush on another two Vietcong by engaging with small arms fire at approximately 1530 hrs:

I was on the left flank and Ben [Ngapo] was on the right, [Eric] was there and Joe [Wharehinga] – he was the sig – and they came up the track. We opened up and this guy – he had an army great-coat on like the old British Army great-coats. And he took his AK off his shoulder...and he was trying to cock his weapon but obviously he had a stoppage. We found after that one of the [SAS] rounds had hit his magazine and caused his weapon to malfunction - lucky for us I think.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Michael Cunningham, interview conducted on 10 June 2008.

⁵⁹ WOII E. Ball, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 113/69 Patrol Report, 20 August 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries, 7/12/16 3 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Log 1-31 August 1969, AWM, Canberra, p. 1.

⁶⁰ Ball, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 113/69 Patrol Report, 20 August 1969," p. 2.

⁶¹ Michael Cunningham, interview conducted on 10 June 2008.

The patrol carried out a quick body search of the dead Vietcong, recovered his 'malfunctioned' AK-47 and headed west for approximately 500 metres before establishing a LUP for the evening.⁶² The second Vietcong had managed to fire two bursts from his AK-47, and even though he had been seen to have been hit several times, could not be located during the subsequent search.⁶³ The patrol remained in the area for a further two days before being extracted by helicopter on the morning of 17 August.

As with the AK-47, the Soviet 7.62mm SKS (Chicom Carbine Type 56) carbine rifle was also widely distributed throughout Vietnam. The SKS could be recognised by a permanently-attached folding bayonet, a protruding 10-round magazine, a high front sight and a top-mounted gas cylinder.⁶⁴ The 7.62mm Light Machine-Gun (Chicom Type 56 RPD) was the standard squad weapon for all Vietcong and NVA units. It was recognised by a long exposed barrel and gas cylinder and a 100-round belt drum-type magazine.⁶⁵ While the speed at which the enemy responded to SAS contacts and ambushes was particularly fast, their weapon handling and patrolling was in general of a mixed standard, and marksmanship, in the main, was relatively poor. Patrols involved in contacts found the shorter-statured Vietcong's return fire was often too high.

Patrol 120/69: The 'shortest patrol in the history of the SAS'⁶⁶

Oh that's right, that was a standing joke – you'd say 'ah, yeah, Fred's going out – won't be long.' They'd go out, sure enough [makes helicopter sounds mimicking the return of the patrol] – 'hey, how many Fred?' 'Oh, there were thousands of the bastards!' But anyway, that was always the standing joke – Fred's going out; won't be long.⁶⁷

On the afternoon of 22 August 1969, Sergeant Fred Barclay's six-man recce/ambush patrol 120/69 was inserted by helicopter just south of the Nui May Taos, approximately

⁶² 3 SAS Squadron, "Operations Log, 14 August 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries, 7/12/16, p. 19.

⁶³ The completed patrol report states '2 VC KIA (BC).' Ball, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 113/69 Patrol Report, 20 August 1969," p. 3, and Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, pp. 330-331.

⁶⁴ United States Army, *Army Pamphlet 381-10*, pp. 36-41.

⁶⁵ The Soviet RP-46 (Chicom Type 58) LMG was also used, but usually as a supporting weapon for company-sized units. See de Cure, "D445 Local Force Battalion, 18 January 1969," Annex B, p.1.

⁶⁶ Sonny Taniora, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

⁶⁷ Kevin Herewini, interview conducted on 15 July 2008.

14 kilometres north of Xuyen Moc.⁶⁸ The patrol was one of several Beesley had tasked to survey the southern approaches to the May Taos that month.⁶⁹ Barclay had earlier selected a relatively large LZ area covered in tall grass, but upon arrival the 9 Squadron helicopter pilot discovered the grass had hidden numerous tree stumps which prevented the Iroquois from landing. Not only was the patrol forced to jump from the aircraft, hovering approximately 'six feet' above the ground, the tree stumps forced the patrol to deplane some 30 metres from the 'safety' of the tree line.⁷⁰ After the helicopter departed the six moved towards the edge of the clearing and crossed a track camouflaged by the grass so that it took the form of a low tunnel. Alarming, the track showed signs of being in current use. Two minutes after landing, Barclay and his scout, Corporal Sonny Taniora, crossed another foot track and almost instantly Taniora saw movement no more than two metres away:

I just got in off the fringe of the bush and [this] dude was behind an ant-hill. So I had to dispatch him to his 'tupuna.'⁷¹

Taniora killed the Vietcong with an aimed burst to the head and the patrol carried out their immediate contact drills. They fired and withdrew, moving towards the centre of the LZ which afforded some cover and, at the same time, radioed for helicopter extraction. As soon as the first shots had been fired by Taniora, the patrol came under RPD fire from another Vietcong no further than three metres away. The light machine-gunner was killed by Barclay with 'six single aimed shots' to the chest and body.⁷²

As the patrol broke that contact, it came under heavy and accurate fire from another RPD and approximately 10-12 other small arms 30 metres west of their position. A small explosion knocked Barclay over causing minor shrapnel wounds to his chin and right leg, but not enough to incapacitate the Sergeant who used his URC10 and PRC25 radios to call for assistance from the 9 Squadron helicopter 'Light Fire Team' gunships which had

⁶⁸ Sergeant F.D. Barclay, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 120/69, 28 August 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries, 7/12/16 3 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Log 1-31 August 1969, AWM, Canberra, p. 1.

⁶⁹ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 331.

⁷⁰ 3 SAS Squadron, "Contact/Incident * After Action Report 120/69, 28 August 1969," Kippenberger Military Archive Box 136A, New Zealand Army Museum, Waiouru.

⁷¹ Sonny Taniora, interview conducted on 19 July 2008. 'Tupuna' is Maori for ancestors. H.W. Oarsman (Ed), *The Dictionary of New Zealand English: A Dictionary of New Zealandisms on Historical Principles* (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1997), p.865.

⁷² 3 SAS Squadron, "Contact/Incident * After Action Report 120/69, 28 August 1969."

accompanied the patrol's insertion.⁷³ Some 20 seconds later, as the patrol continued to withdraw to the centre of the LZ, another Vietcong came into view five metres in front of Lance-Corporal Jim Bache, the patrol medic. The Vietcong was engaged with short bursts by Barclay and fell screaming to the ground:

And somebody in the patrol said to me 'can I finish him off?' And I thought he was doing a good job for us because, you know, it was all that elephant grass and he's screaming his head off – hopefully that would work, not make the others angry, but make them a bit more cautious.⁷⁴

As the patrol manoeuvred back to the centre of the LZ, both Taniora and Bache saw more movement immediately behind the withdrawing group and opened fire but were unable to determine any result. Taniora and Lance-Corporal Richard 'Wings' Williams then engaged more movement in the grass, this time from five metres north-west of the patrol.⁷⁵ Again, they were unable to confirm any enemy hit. Twenty-five seconds after Barclay contacted the 'Albatross Lead' helicopter, the two supporting LFT 'Bushranger' gunships approached from the north along the tree line.⁷⁶

Wearing his URC10 radio around neck, Barclay reported to the helicopters that the patrol was being engaged by an estimated 15 Vietcong.⁷⁷ Barclay had initially attached a marker panel to Sergeant Bill Lillicrapp's pack in order to assist the helicopters identify the precise location of the patrol. Barclay was confident the panel could be seen from the air but not from the ground – Lillicrapp suggested later he was less than convinced!⁷⁸ Barclay also instructed Taniora to throw smoke to further confirm the patrol's location to the helicopters:

As soon as we came out after the fire-fight, we'd been there doing the business, and they called up you see 'pop the smoke.' So Fred says to me 'pop the smoke mate' – and I pull one out, threw it into the middle. [But] because it was bloody swamp there, the thing went out – just choked and died. He said to me 'pop another one, for fucks sake!' So I grabbed it, and held it in my bloody hand – and

⁷³ Barclay, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 120/69, 28 August 1969," p. 1.

⁷⁴ Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

⁷⁵ Barclay, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 120/69, 28 August 1969," pp. 1-2.

⁷⁶ 9 Squadron was first established within the RAAF in July 1925 as 101 Flight operating 'Seagull' fixed-wing aircraft from the decks of *HMAS Albatross* – the source of term 'Albatross' or 'Albie-Lead.' It was disbanded in December 1944 to be reformed in June 1962 as a dedicated helicopter search and rescue squadron. Mutch, *Who Dares Grins*, p.246.

⁷⁷ 3 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 22 August," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/16, p. 36.

⁷⁸ Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

my hand's burning, my hat's burning – and he said 'hold on – keep it there until they recognise us.' Then they said 'Yeah, we read you red, we read you red' – now I could throw the bastard down...⁷⁹

The Patrol Commander tasked the gunships to direct their fire into the western edge of the tree line – the direction from which the patrol was still receiving incoming fire. The 'Bushranger' helicopter gunships of 9 Squadron were armed with a combination of two M21 7.62mm multi-barrelled electrically-fired mini-guns, two XM158 launcher pods each loaded with seven 2.75 inch rockets, as well as a pair of twin-mounted M-60 machine guns operated by door gunners.⁸⁰ The helicopters were effective and after making their initial pass, all enemy fire ceased.⁸¹ The gunships continued to suppress the area of original contact while the patrol was extracted, exactly 24 minutes after they were first inserted:⁸²

...when we got in the helicopter and we were taking off, the co-pilot was sitting there and old Sonny gave him a whack across the head – they were good, they used to bring cold drinks and coffee and things – but Sonny gave this guy a whack on his helmet 'Good on you, you bloody beaut' type of thing. And he was the commander of the Australian Air Force – he was there on a visit...we went and had a drink with him that night – he thought that it was a hell of a joke.⁸³

For the New Zealand patrol, once again it had been a near run thing. Taking an opportunity to comment, Beesley wrote of the contact that while Barclay's 'command, control and leadership...when slightly wounded' were commendable, the Patrol Commander should not have attempted to control the fire fight, call for assistance and direct air support simultaneously.⁸⁴ That Barclay was able to combine all roles undoubtedly demonstrated his quite outstanding Patrol Commander capabilities but was it necessary for Beesley to castigate the New Zealand Troop Sergeant quite so emphatically with these comments and were they legitimate? As shall be explored further, the

⁷⁹ Sonny Taniora, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

⁸⁰ The twin mounted M-60 machine guns were noticeable by their absence of hand-guards, added empty case defectors and large storage bins that held the belts of 7.62mm ammunition. Lyle, *Vietnam ANZACs*, p. 11.

⁸¹ Barclay, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 120/69, 28 August 1969," pp. 1-2.

⁸² The patrol would claim two Vietcong enemy KIA and one WIA. Barclay, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 120/69, 28 August 1969," p. 1.

⁸³ The RAAF officer turned out to have been Deputy Chief of Air Staff (DCAS) Air Vice-Marshal William Edwin Townsend, CBE, Officer Commanding RAAF HQ Operational Command on a visit to South Vietnam. Joint Fred Barclay and Sonny Taniora interview conducted on 19 July 2008 and Australian Army Commanders' Diaries, AWM95 1/4/161: Headquarters, 1 Australian Task Force Narrative, Duty Officer's Log, 1-31 August 1969, AWM, Canberra, p.7.

⁸⁴ It was suggested another member of the patrol should have been delegated this task, as part of the 'contact proceedings on LZ' pre-deployment briefing. 3 SAS Squadron, "Contact/Incident * After Action Report 120/69, 28 August 1969."

relationship between the two was never an easy one. This was also Barclay's last patrol for the tour.⁸⁵

At the beginning of September 1969, Sandy Pearson was replaced as the ATF Commander by Brigadier Stuart 'Black Jack' Weir. Horner wrote that unlike Pearson, Weir was keen to 'take the fight to the Vietcong main force units deep in the jungle.'⁸⁶ As for the SAS Squadron, Weir still believed its primary function was to gain information but he also expected them to 'inflict casualties on the enemy when opportunities arose.'⁸⁷

One of the most successful New Zealand SAS patrols of the entire Vietnam deployment was one of five recce/ambush patrols conducted in September 1969.⁸⁸ Patrol 137/69 commanded by Sergeant 'Johnno' Johnston was inserted by helicopter 11 kilometres north of Nui Dat and five kilometres west of Route Two.⁸⁹ Johnston's patrol was one of two, the other an all-Australian patrol, deployed into the same area to collect intelligence on Vietcong activity in the western reaches of the Task Force area.

Only an hour after insertion, the patrol found their first track and estimated it had been used only that morning by a small group of enemy. Johnston decided to LUP near the track that evening and established an OP the following day. Two groups of enemy were observed on 18 September – one group of four in the morning and a second group of ten early in the afternoon. The second group all carried large and heavy packs. The patrol withdrew from the OP during the afternoon and returned to the same LUP occupied the

⁸⁵ The following month, Barclay travelled to Malaya and got married. After a short 'honeymoon,' he returned to Vietnam and was immediately attached to the US Special Forces, with Sergeant Windy McGee, for a period of familiarisation. Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

⁸⁶ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 333.

⁸⁷ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 333.

⁸⁸ Sergeant W.J. Lillicrapp, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 125/69 Patrol Report, 11 September 1969," Captain T. Culley, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 126/69 Patrol Report, 11 September 1969," Sergeant W.A. McGee, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 130/69 Patrol Report, 20 September 1969," Sergeant J. Johnston, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 137/69 Patrol Report, 30 September 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam], 7/12/17 3 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Log, Annexes [1-30 September 1969] and Sergeant W.J. Lillicrapp, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 141/69 Patrol Report, 4 October 1969," AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam], 7/12/18 3 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Log, Annexes [1-31 October 1969], both in AWM, Canberra. Corporal Percy Brown also took a five-man New Zealand Troop patrol out between 17 and 23 September to assist Sergeant Peter Bye's 3 Squadron patrol 133/69 which had required two patrol members to be extracted due to bad coughing that was feared would compromise the security of his patrol. Sergeant P.F. Bye, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 133/69, 25 September, 1969" and 3 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 16 September, 1969" in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/16, 3 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative, Duty Officer's Log, Annexes [1-31 August 1969], AWM, Canberra, p.18.

⁸⁹ Johnston, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 137/69 Patrol Report, 30 September 1969," pp. 1-2.

previous night. Johnston believed the location was sufficiently secure to allow the patrol to remain in the area.⁹⁰

Just before 1100 hrs the next day, the patrol observed a group of ten armed Vietcong moving 'steadily, up close and quietly' along the track carrying weapons which included six AK-47 assault rifles and two SKS semi-automatic rifles.⁹¹ Another four Vietcong, including one female, were seen at 1230 hrs. None of the group was carrying any equipment but the patrol believed that at least one member had a RPD light machine gun. Once again the patrol noted the female of the party was 'talking as usual.' Early on 20 September, the following day, the patrol set a linear ambush on the track, 'with 3 Claymore mines covering the killing ground.'⁹² Johnston allowed two groups of three well-armed Vietcong to move through the ambush before midday.

A third group of three were not so fortunate. As soon as the group entered the 'killing ground,' Johnston initiated the ambush by detonating the Claymores. When the mines exploded, the rest of the patrol killing group fired their SLR and M-16 weapons. Johnston was able to find only one body when he moved forward to conduct a search, however, as the patrol withdrew in a north-westerly direction they heard a groan from the ambush area from at least one of the other two Vietcong.⁹³

Born in October 1936, Joseph Tumu (Johnno) Johnston had been on active service on four separate occasions before arriving in South Vietnam in December 1968 and had been a member of 1 Ranger Squadron since January 1962.⁹⁴ In 1965, his first Borneo detachment commander Bill Meldrum described the 'quiet but efficient' patrol 2IC as a 'good all round SAS soldier.'⁹⁵ By 1969, Johnston had become an exceptional Patrol Commander. His reputation came not only from his complete professionalism but also his ability to be a calming influence, as Corporal Michael 'Paddy' Cunningham experienced at the beginning of the Troop's tour:

⁹⁰ Johnston, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 137/69 Patrol Report, 30 September 1969," pp. 1-2.

⁹¹ Johnston, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 137/69 Patrol Report, 30 September 1969," pp. 1-2.

⁹² Johnston, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 137/69 Patrol Report, 30 September 1969," p.2.

⁹³ Johnston, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 137/69 Patrol Report, 30 September 1969," p.2.

⁹⁴ Johnston had served with 2NZ Regiment in Malaya between November 1959 and November 1961 and then with 1 Ranger Squadron in Thailand (May – September 1962) and Borneo (1 and 3 Detachments). NZDF, "M303668: Johnston, J.T." in NZDF Personnel Archive, Trentham, Wellington.

⁹⁵ NZDF, "M303668: Johnston, J.T."

And we went out on my first patrol and that one turned out to be a bit hairy but quite good...I was on that one with Johnno [patrol 268/68] and we did have a contact. Somebody was about to go to the loo and received rounds by a sniper and then all hell broke loose...And Johnno just came up to me and he asked me whether I was okay – gave me a drink of water and as cool as a cucumber, just gave me a drink of water and said ‘don’t worry about it – piece of cake.’⁹⁶

Later that same afternoon, after patrol 137/69’s successful claymore ambush, Johnston and his men discovered nine shallow graves which appeared to have been between two and three months old. The Patrol Commander, as with many other experienced New Zealand soldiers, was also a master of the art of black humour:

And we moved through this area – where we found...shallow graves – you could see it, as you came up the jungle opened out a bit and you could see these indents on the ground. And there had been a contact there because there was about half-a-dozen at least - you could see the bones sticking out. And of course, being Maori, Johnno said to Rik [Keno] – again that sense of humour you get – everything is dead serious – ‘Rik,’ he said ‘get some bones – we’ll have some soup later on.’ Rik wouldn’t drink the water for days – we crossed a stream to fill up [on 20 September] and Rik wouldn’t fill up! But that’s the sort of thing that went on.⁹⁷

For the next two days, the patrol headed north and early on the morning of 24 September they discovered another foot track. With the patrol assessing a large group of enemy had used the track as recently as the previous day Johnston decided to establish an OP.⁹⁸ Forty-five minutes later they observed a group of seven Vietcong moving towards the OP. This group was split in two travelling 15 metres apart, heavily armed (at least two RPG-7 launchers and three M-1 carbines) and again ‘talking.’ Another 31 enemy were observed moving along the track that day – two sightings of 11 and one group each of three and six. These later groups were all armed with AK-47s, pistols and light machine-guns.⁹⁹

The following morning, twenty Vietcong, carrying an assortment of AK-47s, M-1 carbines and shotguns were seen heading north along the track, all moving steadily and were quiet and well-spaced.¹⁰⁰ The patrol reported they observed 61 enemy in just over

⁹⁶ Michael Cunningham, interview conducted on 10 June 2008.

⁹⁷ Michael Cunningham, interview conducted on 10 June 2008.

⁹⁸ Johnston, “3 SAS Sqn Ops 137/69 Patrol Report, 30 September 1969,” pp. 1-2.

⁹⁹ Johnston, “3 SAS Sqn Ops 137/69 Patrol Report, 30 September 1969,” pp. 1-2.

¹⁰⁰ An hour later, Johnston had to withdraw his OP because of a faulty AN/PRC64 radio set - it would be replaced later that afternoon from a ‘Possum’ observation helicopter, along with six further Claymore mines. Johnston, “3 SAS Sqn Ops 137/69 Patrol Report, 30 September 1969,” p.2.

24 hours.¹⁰¹ This encouraged Beesley to allow Johnston to carry out a further ambush ‘as soon as possible.’¹⁰² By the following night, the patrol had returned to an LUP not far from the track that had been observed on 24 September. That night the patrol prepared another linear ambush along the track using an additional six Claymore mines supplied the previous day:

...we put the claymores out at moon-light – about 11 o’clock at night. I remember a bit of a giggle between Rik and Johnno – they were putting the claymores out, and there was a bank of about six or seven claymores, and Rik said to Johnno ‘what’ll I do if they come along?’ And Johnno said ‘put your hand up and tell them to wait’ ...99% of the time all ambushes were carried out with claymores...¹⁰³



Photograph 5: M18A1 Claymore anti-personnel mine¹⁰⁴

The M18A1 Claymore anti-personnel mine was used widely in Vietnam, not only in its originally-designed role as a defensive weapon, but also for offensive ambush tasks. The initial New Zealand Troop to Vietnam was largely inexperienced in the use of the mine

¹⁰¹ Horner states that all of these sightings took place on 24 September. Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 334.

¹⁰² Radio logs from 24 September also record that the patrol’s enemy observations had also been forwarded to ATF Headquarters. 3 SAS Squadron “Ops Logs, 24-27 September 1969,” in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/17, pp. 36-39.

¹⁰³ Michael Cunningham, interview conducted on 10 June 2008.

¹⁰⁴ NZSAS Archive, Wellington.

and had not used them with any great frequency in Borneo.¹⁰⁵ However, by the time the New Zealanders arrived in South Vietnam and had observed the success of Australian operations using the mine, it soon became a valuable component of a patrol's basic weapons and equipment:¹⁰⁶

My patrol always carried claymores – and with the det[onator] cord rolled up with the det[onator]s already on them and the creosote on the det[onator] cord. So that was the sort of SOP...¹⁰⁷

Sometimes ambushed enemy would confuse the Claymore's explosion with that of an artillery shell. Some SAS Patrol Commanders initiated ambushes solely by detonating mines and avoided using small arms fire until the strength of remaining enemy forces became known.¹⁰⁸ The Claymore was relatively light and two could be carried by each patrol member, giving a potential ambush killing area of some 50-60 metres for a five-man patrol. This would be a far larger area than would be possible using small arms on a narrow jungle track and also enabled patrols, such as Johnston's, to attack larger groups of enemy.¹⁰⁹

By 0640 hrs on 27 September, the patrol was set within their ambush position. Nearly three hours later they observed a group of 14 Vietcong moving into the ambush area. At the optimum moment, Johnston initiated the ambush in which five were instantly killed and another wounded.¹¹⁰ The eight remaining Vietcong not in the Claymore killing ground moved at once into the bush to the patrol's right flank in order to regroup. Johnston, conscious of the possibility of a counter-attack, instructed the rest of his patrol to withdraw in an easterly direction. Not satisfied the patrol would not be pursued, the Patrol Commander booby-trapped their tracks 100 metres from the ambush site. His hunch was correct as soon afterwards the patrol heard one of his booby-traps detonate.¹¹¹ By mid-afternoon, the patrol had travelled a sufficient distance to be comfortable with

¹⁰⁵ Horner comments that the Australian SAS Squadron in Vietnam did not begin to extensively use the Claymore mine in ambushes until mid-1969. Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 215.

¹⁰⁶ Office of the Defence Attaché, British Embassy Saigon, "Detailed Report No 36: The Special Air Service Regiment in Viet-Nam, 6 March 1968" in AWM98 R723/1/68: Reports/General – SAS LO Quarterly Reports, 1967-1968, AWM, Canberra, p.4.

¹⁰⁷ Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

¹⁰⁸ Shattky, "4 Troop NZSAS Post – Operational Report SVN 1969/70, 26 October 1970," p. 8.

¹⁰⁹ Office of the Defence Attaché, British Embassy Saigon to MOD, "Detailed Report No 36: The Special Air Service Regiment in Viet-Nam, 6 March 1968."

¹¹⁰ Johnston, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 137/69 Patrol Report, 30 September 1969," p.2.

¹¹¹ Johnston, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 137/69 Patrol Report, 30 September 1969," pp. 1-2 and Michael Cunningham, interview conducted on 10 June 2008.

establishing communications to request extraction. Johnston was still not entirely convinced his pursuers had given up the chase:

Anyway, it was after one of the ambushes, we had set some booby-traps – or Johnno had – and one of them had been set off. So he was obviously thinking along the lines that somebody was behind us. So he changed his mind to a rope extraction – and he told us to put our ropes on – it was the early hours of the morning. We put our ropes on and we got pulled out by the rope.¹¹²

Almost as soon as the patrol had radioed results of their ambush and subsequent predicament, Squadron Headquarters received a report that an Australian SAS patrol had lost a soldier, Private David Fisher, who fell from a rope while being extracted. Although Johnston was concerned his patrol needed to be taken out as soon as possible, the patrol had not been engaged by the enemy so were in no immediate danger – all efforts focused on locating Fisher:

I can see Rik Keno, he was a character – and we had that job in which you were talking about Dave Fisher, the guy who had fallen off the rope and got killed – well we happened to be getting pulled out on that day. And we had made our way to the LZ and were sitting there, and Johnno sent a message. And he got a message that came back saying, ‘No, repeat no extraction’ and then they gave us a time for the next day. And so Johnno came around, and he checked us all out...and he went and [checked] how much ‘ammo’ we had and food and water – as you do. He came to Rik, and I was watching Rik – Rik had his back against a tree, and Johnno was talking to him – I couldn’t hear what he was saying but I knew what he was saying – he was saying ‘how is the food Rik?’ And Rik [expecting to be extracted out] had nothing – he had eaten the lot! He’d eaten everything – he had nothing more.¹¹³

Fortunately for Keno, Johnston’s patrol was extracted by helicopter that afternoon.

Although the focus on the search for Fisher took precedence over other activities, many felt such was the conduct of patrol 137/69, its Patrol Commander at the very least deserved to be recognised for such a skilful and professional effort.¹¹⁴ In the space of

¹¹² Michael Cunningham, interview conducted on 10 June 2008.

¹¹³ Michael Cunningham, interview conducted on 10 June 2008.

¹¹⁴ Beesley commanded patrol 148/69 – a nine-man patrol that included four members of the New Zealand Troop – inserted on the afternoon of 28 September into the area where Fisher was believed to have fallen. The patrol included Corporals Percy Brown and Jack Curtis (medic) as well as Lance-Corporals Roger Maaka (signaller) and Whi Wanoa (scout). It was the only patrol in which members of any New Zealand Troop to Vietnam rappelled into Phuoc Tuy province. Lance-Corporal Ben Ngapo was also aboard the aircraft, as part of the patrol – but the karabiner connecting him to his rope became jammed and he was not able to leave the helicopter. Major R.P. Beesley, “3 SAS Squadron Ops 148/69 Patrol Report, 29 September

nine days, Johnston's patrol had sighted 107 enemy on two different tracks, had been potentially compromised with a helicopter resupply and had successfully carried off two textbook ambushes. In addition, Johnston brought all his soldiers back and comparing the patrol with other similar encounters during the deployment which resulted in similar body counts, one could question why Johnston's efforts were not rewarded. It is interesting to note that Australian Sergeant Michael 'Joe' Van Droffelaar, Patrol Commander of 136/69 received a Military Medal (MM) as a result of a contact in the Nui May Taos - on the same day as Johnston's ambush - which resulted in four confirmed Vietcong shot dead and two others possibly killed. It was during the helicopter extraction of Van Droffelaar's patrol that Fisher had fallen from his rope.¹¹⁵

New Zealand SAS and Rope Extraction

In an emergency situation where a patrol requested to be extracted and was unable to reach a designated LZ – as in the situation Johnston and Van Droffelaar's patrols found themselves – patrols could be winched up to a helicopter (two soldiers at a time) or as many as six could be lifted out at once.¹¹⁶ In order to facilitate the all-patrol rope extraction, usually referred to as hot-extraction, each patrol member before deployment would construct a 'swiss-seat',¹¹⁷ a harness made from rope and karabiner before being attached to ropes dropped from the rescue helicopter:

And it had sufficient space on them to lift a total of six in an emergency – but more so for five – and three on one side and two on the other, and your Patrol Commander and the sig normally took one side because the sigs pack at least would be the heavy one. And the idea was if the patrol got into a bit of strife and they were being followed up, and they weren't able to get to a landing site where a helicopter could land and pick them up, the gunships would go in, suppress the area, and a slick would come in and hover over a bomb crater that had been cleared, pre-identified by smoke and panel and mirror, or whatever, sequences.

1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam], 7/12/17, p.1 and Whi Wanoa, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

¹¹⁵ The remains of Fisher were finally recovered in September 2008 and he was buried in Sydney on 14 October 2008. Corporal M.J. Van Droffelaar, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 136/69 Patrol Report, 29 September 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/17, p.2, Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, pp. 334-337 and p. 480, Mutch, *Who Dares Grins*, pp. 319-320 and "Private David Fisher Repatriation to Australia, 10 October 2008" viewed on 17 October 2008 at www.defence.gov.au/media/download/2008/Oct/20081010/index/htm,

¹¹⁶ Shattky, "4 Troop NZSAS Post – Operational Report SVN 1969/70, 26 October 1970," p. 9.

¹¹⁷ Malone, *SAS: A Pictorial History of the Australian Special Air Service*, p. 122 and 2 SAS Squadron, "2 SAS Sqn Standing Operating Procedures, 16 September 1968," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries, 7/11/7 2 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Log 1-30 September 1968, AWM, Canberra, Annex E.

And then the ropes were kicked out by the dispatcher...and you just hooked on to the proper place and turned inwards, or faced outwards, and then you linked arms and they would haul you up through the gap, and then flown to a area where they could land – you went away from the helicopters, then coiled your ropes up and climbed back in and then headed back to base.¹¹⁸

4 Troop's October Activity Report made reference to four New Zealand patrols.¹¹⁹ One of these, patrol 153/69 commanded by Sergeant Windy McGee, was part of a series of Squadron patrols operating in the Nui May Taos.¹²⁰ The patrol found a number of tracks during the first two days but the first sightings only took place during the third morning when the patrol observed three Vietcong (including two females) south of their position. Half an hour later the patrol discovered what was believed to be an enemy camp but McGee was unable to carry out a close target reconnaissance (CTR) of the area because of the 'wood-cutting' activity taking place about him.¹²¹

Two additional tracks were subsequently located that afternoon and McGee suspected that one showed signs of having been used by an estimated 20-30 enemy no more than seven hours earlier while the second, just north of the Long Khanh and Phuoc Tuy border, showed recent signs of being used by over 100 enemy. In the following days, these estimates were confirmed. The patrol set up an OP close to the track and that afternoon saw 54 Vietcong.¹²² On the morning of 14 October, the patrol observed another 111 enemy. Almost all wore heavy packs and McGee estimated half were armed with an assortment of AK-47s assault rifles, SKS, M-1 and M-16 rifles, RPDs and RPGs.¹²³ During a mid-afternoon water resupply, McGee noticed further signs that indicated at least three enemy had been close to the patrol's LUP which suggested the patrol had been compromised. However, rather than moving the patrol away from the immediate area, the enigmatic Patrol Commander decided to set an ambush on the track. No target

¹¹⁸ Whi Wanoa, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

¹¹⁹ 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, "Activity Report – October 1969, 11 November 1969," in AWM103 R723/1/79: Reports – General - New Zealand SAS Activity Reports, 1969-1970, AWM, Canberra.

¹²⁰ Sergeant W.A. McGee, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 153/69 Patrol Report, 18 October 1969," Captain T. Culley, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 152/69 Patrol Report, 13 October 1969," and Sergeant J. Johnston, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 156/69 Patrol Report, 24 October 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam], 7/12/18.

¹²¹ McGee, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 153/69 Patrol Report, 18 October 1969," pp. 1-2.

¹²² McGee, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 153/69 Patrol Report, 18 October 1969," pp. 1-2.

¹²³ McGee, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 153/69 Patrol Report, 18 October 1969," pp. 1-2.

presented itself and the patrol withdrew to establish a night position at approximately 2000 hrs.¹²⁴

Early the following morning during a stop to send a radio message, McGee's 2IC, Lance-Corporal Jack Curtis heard noises which indicated an enemy group was no more than 20 metres away from the patrol. Shortly thereafter, they observed at least five enemy moving in an 'extended line' towards their location.¹²⁵ Those seen were wearing green uniforms, soft green hats and basic webbing, which suggested that the group was part of the 33rd NVA Regiment. As the enemy emerged into a small clearing on an old logging track, McGee engaged and killed the leading two NVA at a range of approximately ten metres.¹²⁶ The enemy immediately responded by returning fire with AK-47 and RPD rounds. The patrol suppressed the area and withdrew east, abandoned their AN/PRC-25 radio set and three packs in the process. An estimated 15 enemy pursued the patrol which forced the other two patrol members to also discard their packs. McGee unsuccessfully tried to contact friendly aircraft operating within the immediate area using the emergency frequencies loaded into his URC10 radio set.¹²⁷

Thirty minutes later, SAS Headquarters received an 'in-clear' message from McGee reporting his situation and requesting extraction. Beesley forwarded the request to Task Force Headquarters and almost immediately received a positive reply. The large numbers of enemy McGee had reported during the previous two days, no doubt supported any assessment the patrol was in trouble.¹²⁸ The patrol was extracted by rope at 1030 hrs but as the helicopter was ascending after having 'hooked-up' the soldiers, a hydraulic failure resulted in a loss of power which caused the pilot to momentarily lose control.¹²⁹ This imbalance of the aircraft could not be corrected and the swinging patrol beneath the aircraft created a 'pendulum effect' making the helicopter exponentially unstable. As the

¹²⁴ McGee, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 153/69 Patrol Report, 18 October 1969," pp. 1-2.

¹²⁵ McGee, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 153/69 Patrol Report, 18 October 1969," pp. 1-2.

¹²⁶ McGee, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 153/69 Patrol Report, 18 October 1969," pp. 1-2.

¹²⁷ McGee, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 153/69 Patrol Report, 18 October 1969," pp. 1-2.

¹²⁸ 3 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 12-15 October," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/18, pp. 16-22.

¹²⁹ G (OPS) – HQ 1ATF, "Ops Log, 15 October 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 1/4/168, Headquarters, 1 Australian Task Force Narrative, Duty Officer's Log, 1-31 October 1969, AWM, Canberra, p.95.

helicopter descended, the patrol was dragged a distance of at least 60 metres along the LZ before the co-pilot released the ropes and the aircraft crashed:¹³⁰

I was on another job when I came back and heard about it...And we were all having a beer up in the Mess and it was Windy's team in there you see. So anyway, they were talking about Jack Curtis – because all the guys, the four guys were up here and old Jack was on the long rope see – he was underneath. Because when the chopper started going down, you know it had lost power and it was going in, old Jack was yelling out to the guys up the top 'Tell those bastards to get higher – the ground is getting closer!' Well, he didn't know that they had lost power and were going in aye? And they were all cracking up about it laughing away...¹³¹

McGee's patrol rendered first aid to the helicopter crew before the entire party was extracted by another 9 Squadron helicopter some 30 minutes later. At 1 Field Hospital Vung Tau, the patrol and helicopter crew were examined, and although none of the SAS patrol sustained any major injuries, Lance-Corporal Denny Makara was nevertheless admitted. Makara had replaced Trooper Dennis 'Bro' Terry who had returned to New Zealand because of illness at the end of August; patrol 153/69 was Makara's first SAS patrol in Vietnam.¹³²

By the time Beesley had set off to visit the patrol at Vung Tau, the RAAF had determined the crashed helicopter was beyond repair and needed to be destroyed. Squadron stand-by patrol numbers 13 and 42 were requested to carry out the task. At all times, the SAS Squadron maintained two stand-by patrols of five men, at fifteen minutes notice, in the event one or more patrols required support, or to assist in the 'destruction of a downed aircraft anywhere in the Task Force AO.'¹³³ As part of its Squadron responsibilities, the New Zealand Troop was required to provide one of these stand-by patrols every other day. The stand-by patrols were equipped with basic patrol order, an M-60 machine-gun and each included a demolitions expert. For the New Zealand Troop, those members with assault-pioneer and demolitions ratings were sufficiently qualified.¹³⁴ In an operation which required them to be on the ground for no more than 15 minutes, the stand-by patrols – one Australian and one New Zealand – removed the two M-60 door guns and

¹³⁰ Terry Pinkerton interview in Gary McKay, *On Patrol with the SAS: Sleeping with your Ears Open*, (New South Wales: Allen and Unwin, 1999), pp.208-209.

¹³¹ Sonny Taniora, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

¹³² He was discharged from hospital on 17 October. 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, "Activity Report – October 1969, 11 November 1969."

¹³³ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 243.

¹³⁴ Shattky, "4 Troop NZSAS Post – Operational Report SVN 1969/70, 26 October 1970," p. 6.

radio equipment, placed an 'E-pack' (a Bergen pack already made up full of explosives) inside the helicopter, closed the doors and detonated the charge.¹³⁵ The helicopter was completely destroyed.¹³⁶



Photograph 6: The crashed helicopter involved in the patrol 153/69 extraction, 15 October 1969.¹³⁷

The investigation into the crash subsequently determined that while being flown out, the swinging of the roped-up soldiers created an imbalance which irrecoverably altered the aircraft's own centre of gravity. As a result of this accident, the RAAF, never entirely comfortable with the method,¹³⁸ determined that rope extractions were far too dangerous and they were banned.¹³⁹ This left the SAS with one alternative extraction method if a

¹³⁵ Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008, Michael Cunningham, interview conducted on 10 June 2008 and 3 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 12-15 October," pp. 16-22.

¹³⁶ 3 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 12-15 October," pp. 16-22.

¹³⁷ The photograph taken by Terry Pinkerton appears in McKay, *On Patrol with the SAS: Sleeping with your Ears Open*, pp.150-151.

¹³⁸ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, pp. 266-267.

¹³⁹ Horner wrote it was the Fisher incident that led to the RAAF withdrawing their support for rope extractions. However, the extraction method continued to be used by the SAS in Vietnam after Fisher's death and was only suspended after the crash involving McGee's patrol 153/69. It was not until February 1971 that clearance for 9 Squadron to resume rappelling and rope extractions was granted by the RAAF. Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 338 and p. 352, and Signal to RAAF AFV, "Iroquois Rappelling

helicopter could not land; winching up by hoist. Although the rope extraction method was extremely uncomfortable for the SAS patrol underneath, as the helicopter had to lift the soldiers vertically until they were clear of the jungle and then fly off slowly to avoid creating the pendulum effect, it was still much faster than the alternative winch method. Only two soldiers could be hoisted up to the helicopter at one time, therefore three hoists to extract a five-man patrol had to be made, making the hovering helicopter particularly vulnerable.

and Suspended Extractions, 13 February 1971” in AWM98 R852/20/1: Training/Descents from Helicopter Techniques, AWM, Canberra.

Chapter 10

New Zealand Special Air Service Fighting and Ambush Patrols: 1969

By mid-1969, Major Reg Beesley had been able to convince Brigadier Sandy Pearson SAS patrols should be able to ambush the enemy if a suitable target presented itself. Additionally, Beesley's recce/ambush patrols would fill gaps when Task Force Infantry battalion units were elsewhere committed. That the Squadron was keen to take on such a role, when helicopter support may not be so readily available, demonstrated the confidence it had in its own ability.¹ Or was it more Beesley's aggressiveness?

Further evidence might suggest it was the latter. Beesley went about demonstrating the Squadron's capability to his Task Force Commander by initiating several large-scale SAS 'fighting' patrols. Despite limited exposure to large-group operations – one New Zealand 4 Troop member described them as 'like going out like a battalion patrol sort of thing'² - as well as the inherent problems of trying to move such groups silently and remain concealed,³ the Squadron conducted four of these patrols in May 1969. These patrols included 053/69, a ten-man ambush patrol commanded by Australian 2nd Lieutenant Terry Nolan;⁴ 069/69, a 17-man 'fighting' patrol also commanded by both Nolan and Australian Sergeant Emmanuel 'Tony' Tonna;⁵ 070/69, a 16-man 'fighting' patrol commanded by Australian Lieutenant Chris Roberts,⁶ and 071/69; a 17-man 'fighting' patrol commanded by Sergeant Fred Barclay.⁷

Most impressive, in terms of enemy activity observed, was Nolan's second patrol between 18 and 27 May. Just south of the Long Khanh-Phuoc Tuy province border, the patrol discovered what they believed was the major 'west-to-east' main supply route for 84 Rear Services Group and Vietcong Main Force elements and in the space of eight days

¹ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 323.

² Nat Tito, interview conducted on 25 February 2008.

³ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 323.

⁴ 2nd Lieutenant T.J. Nolan, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 53/69 Patrol Report, 10 May 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/13, p. 1.

⁵ Nolan, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 69/69 Patrol Report, 30 May 1969," p.1.

⁶ Lieutenant C.A.M. Roberts, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 70/69 Patrol Report, 30 May 1969," AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/13, p. 1.

⁷ Barclay, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 71/69 Patrol Report, 6 June 1969," p.1.

observed over 780 enemy moving along the route in both directions.⁸ Nolan's patrol was approximately 15 kilometres east of the Barclay and Roberts' groups.

Comprising seven New Zealanders and ten Australians, Barclay's 17-man patrol was inserted by helicopter 14 kilometres north-west of Nui Dat and six kilometres south of Roberts' insertion point. By the third day Barclay reported that he doubted there had been any enemy in the area for at least three months.⁹ Despite hearing numerous signal shots at night and finding disused and overgrown tracks, the Patrol Commander was so convinced there were 'no enemy in the AO'¹⁰ that the following day he recommended twelve of the patrol return to Nui Dat and the remainder be re-tasked to conduct a more conventional reconnaissance patrol in another area.¹¹ Barclay received a reply to his message later that same afternoon; there would be no alteration to the patrol mission but he was granted an extension of his AO out to the Bien Hoa-Phuoc Tuy provincial border.¹²

The following morning, the patrol discovered a 'well defined' foot track which showed signs of use during the prior twenty-four hours close to where they had established their night LUP. For the rest of the morning Barclay put an OP on the track.¹³ With no results, the patrol moved north. May was the end of the dry season in South Vietnam and the large patrol struggled in the stifling hot conditions:

...the big thing that sort of happened really was everybody going down. And that was because the bigger the group I think, we were going a bit faster but we still had the same weight on and that was sort of forgotten about I think.¹⁴

⁸ Nolan would wrench his knee and be extracted before the patrol completed its task. Having taken over command, Sergeant Emmanuel 'Tony' Tonna sprung an ambush on four Vietcong on the afternoon of 26 May in which three of the enemy were killed and the remainder wounded. Horner wrote that the ambush was initiated on 24 May. Horner also wrote that as a nine-man group of the patrol advanced to carry out a body search, they were fired at by the wounded Vietcong, adding that 'The rest of the patrol suppressed the area but the enemy escaped.' The patrol report also confirms that the enemy 'escaped' - but was able to do so because he was 'in a small depression in the ground' and could not be killed. The patrol report concludes that the 'Patrol abandoned the search, suppressed the area with SA, M-79 HE and M26 grenades, and [then] withdrew.' Nolan, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 69/69 Patrol Report, 31 May 1969," p. 4 and Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 324.

⁹ 3 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 22 May 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/13, p. 35.

¹⁰ 3 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 22 May 1969," p.35.

¹¹ 3 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 23 May 1969," AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/13, p. 36.

¹² 3 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 23 May 1969," p.36.

¹³ Barclay, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 71/69 Patrol Report, 6 June 1969," p.1.

¹⁴ Nat Tito, interview conducted on 25 February 2008

On the afternoon of 26 May, the patrol received an aerial resupply of six jerry-cans of water. The helicopter also winched out two Australian patrol members who were suffering from 'heat exhaustion.'¹⁵ A second helicopter medevac mission took place that same afternoon when another of Barclay's patrol was extracted suffering from similar heat-associated problems. Things would not get much better for the New Zealand Patrol Commander.

At least twice during the patrol, Barclay tasked elements of the group to carry out smaller 'recce' or clearing patrols beyond the location of the main party.¹⁶ Done primarily to search for any sign of the enemy, it was much easier for five men to move quietly than 17. For Barclay, the last time he had commanded large groups was as a section commander in the New Zealand infantry battalions. The larger patrols were difficult to keep silent:

Regardless if you have got five people or twenty people, you should be all still doing the same thing but these Australians...it was like a holiday camp type of thing going on, and Fred said 'I'll sort it out with them' and so he went and had a talk with his Australian counterpart you know and said 'let's buck our ideas up a bit' or something like that.¹⁷

On the morning of 28 May, Barclay's radio operator, Lance-Corporal Nat Tito signalled Squadron Headquarters a third helicopter resupply flight was required as two of the patrol's weapons, an XM-148 and an XM-203, had become unserviceable.¹⁸ Concerned another helicopter flight could identify the patrol's position, the absence of enemy thus far nevertheless gave Barclay sufficient confidence to allow a third flight within two days. Because of the '60 foot' trees in the area, the replacement weapons had to be roped down to the soldiers.¹⁹ The weapons were lowered successfully, however, while hoisting up the unserviceable rifles, they became tangled in the trees and had to be dropped to enable the Sioux helicopter to depart.

¹⁵ Barclay, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 71/69 Patrol Report, 6 June 1969," p.1 and 3 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 3 May 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/13, p.39.

¹⁶ Two 'Recce' patrols were deployed on 25 May and one on 31 May. Barclay, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 71/69 Patrol Report, 6 June 1969," pp. 1-2.

¹⁷ Nat Tito, interview conducted on 25 February 2008.

¹⁸ The safety-catches had jammed on 'safe' preventing the operation of the cocking hammers on both weapons. 3 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 28 May 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/13, p. 43.

¹⁹ 3 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 28 May 1969," p.44.

Barclay was immediately tasked to look for the dropped weapons but shortly after commencing the search, signal shots fired near the group indicated to the Patrol Commander that it was perhaps better to move away from an area that had been clearly compromised because of the helicopter activity. For the next three hours, Barclay and Beesley debated the merits of continuing the search:

81430H	POSSUM 27	SHQ	to return your loc (.)
81430H	SHQ	Ptl 35	Through POSSUM 27 (.) Locate wpns and cont msg (.)
281440H	Ptl 35	SHQ	Through POSSUM 27 (.) Have msg and understand (.) Do not agree (.)
281445H	SHQ	Ptl 35	If I have to search for artivles it would be dangerous (.)
281450H	Ptl 35	SHQ	Through POSSUM 27 (.) Send en sit (.)
281453H	Ptl 35	SHQ	En sit (.) In area in which I have moved negative en (.) To N and
281532H	1 ATF CP	SHQ	E unknown (.)
281550H	Ptl 35	SHQ	Will call again in 1 hr (.)
281600H	SHQ	1 ATF	Req ground clearance for LFT to fire into YS 326824 (.)
281625H	SHQ	Ptl 35	Loc no change (.) Still looking (.) 5 shots heard 300m W 1 shot
281630H	Ptl 35	SHQ	200m E (.)
281640H	SHQ	Ptl 35	SITREP No 97 for period 271600H to 281600H May 69 (.)
281650H	Ptl 35	SHQ	Continue search (.)
281730H	SHQ	Ptl 35	Till when (.)
		Ptl 35	Until wpns recovered (.)
		SHQ	Req OC in POSSUM now (.)
		Ptl 35	From OC (.) Cont search for wpn wef AM 29 May (.) POSSUM your loc
		Ptl 35	290800H (.) Advise any major change en sit (.) No change
		SHQ	extraction date (.)

Document 2: 3 SAS Squadron Headquarters Radio Log, 30 May 1969.²⁰

Not only did Barclay's patrol spend the next two days searching for the missing rifles but Beesley also ordered that the patrol not be extracted until 3 June.²¹ They had now remained in the same area for four days and Barclay felt it was only a matter of time before the enemy began to investigate the area in more detail and with larger numbers.²² On the afternoon of the last day of May 1969, Barclay's concerns were realised.

At approximately 1425 hrs, another smaller 'listening' patrol heard voices no more than 100 metres away. Less than two hours later, Barclay's group discovered a battalion-sized enemy camp. The area of the camp was approximately 200 metres by 100 metres and even though the state of the empty camp indicated it probably had not been used for twelve months, Barclay calculated it would take little more than 48-hours to restore it to

²⁰ 3 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 28 May 1969," p.44.

²¹ One of the weapons - No. 853614 - would be recovered by an SAS patrol operating in the same area in December 1969. 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, "Activity Report - January 1970, 3 February 1970," in AWM103 R723/1/79 and 3 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 30 May 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/13, p. 46.

²² Incredibly, a fourth helicopter resupply took place early on 30 May when clothes (five pairs of trousers and one shirt), hexamine blocks and additional rations were dropped to the patrol. 3 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 30-31 May 1969," pp. 46-48.

some semblance of serviceability.²³ Five minutes later, the patrol observed four well-armed Vietcong moving through the camp. Immediately, the Vietcong began to speak to each other and point towards the location of the patrol. Fortunately, one of the enemy called out in Vietnamese and the group disappeared into the centre of the camp. Not long afterward, the patrol began to smell ‘cooking odours’ emanating from the same direction.²⁴

In the space of ten minutes, the patrol observed a further 26 Vietcong and 15 NVA soldiers in or about the camp. All were armed.²⁵ Barclay was quite certain that the first group of enemy had spotted the patrol²⁶ but waited until the other enemy had gone by before attempting to extricate his group from the camp area. His attempt was unsuccessful as a subsequent radio message sent at 1840 hrs reported that the patrol had been pursued by an estimated ‘45 Vietcong’ after leaving the camp area with the enemy reaching close to ‘40 metres’ from the withdrawing SAS group.²⁷

Enemy ‘noise and movement’ could be heard approximately 80 metres from the patrol’s LUP location which forced Barclay to establish a ‘two-man listening watch’ throughout the night. Fortunately, the enemy did not come any closer.²⁸ It was an intense night and although the Patrol Commander felt relatively safe in his all round laager, he was more concerned about the following day:

311745H	SHQ	--	OC departed by Albatross (.)
311840H	Ptl 35	SHQ	Loc YS 342815 (.) Fol by 45 VC at 40m (.) LUP noise 80m to rear (.)
			en came from RZ loc (.)
311900H	SHQ	Ptl 35	Is assistance required (.)
311910H	Ptl 35	SHQ	Not tonight (.) Tomorrow may have trouble (.)
		SHQ	1 x 50 cal and 2 x M60 and 1 x M16 firing sustained bursts of
			1 x M16 firing sustained bursts of

Document 3: 3 SAS Squadron Headquarters Radio Log, 31 May 1969.²⁹

²³ Sergeant F.D. Barclay, “3 SAS Sqn Ops 71/69 Patrol Report, 6 June 1969,” in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/14, 3 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative, Duty Officer’s Log, Annexes [1-30 June 1969], AWM, Canberra, p.2.

²⁴ Barclay, “3 SAS Sqn Ops 71/69 Patrol Report, 6 June 1969,” p.2.

²⁵ 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, “Activity Report – May 1969, 15 June 1969,” in “Activity Report – January 1969, 13 February 1969,” in AWM103 R723/1/79.

²⁶ The radio log records at 1615hrs, the Squadron Headquarters received the one word message from the patrol ‘Sighted.’ It is likely that this message refers to the first group of enemy that were observed in the camp. 3 SAS Squadron “Ops Logs, 31 May 1969,” p.49.

²⁷ 3 SAS Squadron “Ops Logs, 31 May 1969,” p.49.

²⁸ Barclay, “3 SAS Sqn Ops 71/69 Patrol Report, 6 June 1969,” p.3.

²⁹ 3 SAS Squadron “Ops Logs, 31 May 1969,” p.49.

After moving only 75 metres the following morning, the patrol heard voices coming from the direction of their overnight LUP as well as voices to the north. The enemy was moving in a parallel direction to the patrol and Barclay was pretty certain they now knew the exact size of his patrol and its approximate location. With enemy now on three sides, Barclay requested either the patrol be extracted or receive LFT support.³⁰ Further concern arose when 1ATF advised the Squadron a USAF 'B-52 strike' was scheduled to take place just north of the patrol's location in two hours time.³¹

At the same time that 3 Squadron's 2IC, Captain Ross Bishop, was flying above them in a 'Possum' light observation helicopter, a 9 Squadron 'Bushranger' helicopter gunship suppressed the area 80 metres to the north, east and south of Barclay's location.³² As the 'Bushranger' gunship continued firing, the patrol received small arms fire from approximately 80 metres south-east of their location. While the enemy fire was not particularly accurate, further movement was seen in thick bamboo as close as 12 metres from the patrol.³³ In an attempt to dissuade the enemy from getting any closer, Barclay decided to engage the area with a controlled burst of small arms and M-60 fire:

We had some guys come poking up to where we were in a little harbour – and only two or three of them – but we were going to have to shift because I think they knew, I'm quite sure they knew, we were there. And so I said to these four Australians [there were 10] 'I want you to fire two rounds each – as low as you can.' Well, everybody in the whole thing, except the New Zealanders, fired [their whole magazines] because I didn't know - we didn't have the background, the training – it was a half-platoon type of thing.³⁴

Barclay was almost certain suppressing the area had not been successful. As the patrol continued to move south, more voices could be heard from the same area. For the next 15 minutes the patrol continued to travel south under the protection of the 'Bushranger'

³⁰ The patrol reports records that Barclay 'requested LFT support.' The radio log records that the Patrol Commander requested a helicopter 'extraction as soon as possible.' Barclay, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 71/69 Patrol Report, 6 June 1969," p.3 and 3 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 1 June 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/14, p.1.

³¹ 3 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 1 June 1969," p.1.

³² Barclay was further advised that artillery support from the American Fire Support Base (FSPB) VIRGINIA was also available should the patrol require further assistance. The Patrol Commander declined. Barclay, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 71/69 Patrol Report, 6 June 1969," p. 3 and 3 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 1 June 1969," p. 1.

³³ The rounds passed about 'eight feet' over the patrol. Barclay, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 71/69 Patrol Report, 6 June 1969," p.3.

³⁴ Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

gunship.³⁵ By early afternoon on 1 June, Barclay's patrol stopped and waited for the gunship to return. No further enemy pursuit was detected for the rest of the afternoon, but it was not quite the end of problems for the signaller Tito:

And that's one where I [nearly] lost my codebooks. And [Eric Ball] was walking behind me...must have said 'come on we're going' – picked everything up, because you're not supposed to put them inside your shirt and they must have dropped out...and he picked them up, came round and said 'did you forget something?' I said no, and he gave them to me and I said 'thank you very much.' I would have really been in the cart over that.³⁶

Apart from Tito's near security breach, the intensity of the past 24 hours had taken its toll in other ways. Two more Australian patrol members were struck down with severe heat exhaustion. By 1725 hrs, the pulse-rate of one of the two soldiers had dropped to an alarming 50 beats per minute and Barclay was concerned the soldier would not even survive being carried.³⁷ Still with a distance of 400 metres to get to the designated LZ, Barclay estimated with a sick soldier carried and the possibility of an unknown number of enemy in pursuit, his patrol could not reach the designated LZ before 1900 hrs. He was told that he would not be extracted if he got there any later than 1845hrs.³⁸ The patrol was safely extracted by 9 Squadron helicopters at 1850hrs.³⁹

Patrol 168/69: New Zealand SAS Ambush Patrols in Vietnam

During their time in South Vietnam, the Vietcong and NVA continued to develop tactics that they hoped would counter or defeat SAS ambush SOPs. By the end of October 1969, Beesley reported that in response to SAS contacts or ambushes, the enemy were immediately diving for cover and at the same time returning fire. The initial fire was normally high and inaccurate, but the Main Force units nevertheless continued to react quickly.⁴⁰ Beesley also noted small advance and rear parties were being used in support of heavily-laden supply groups, approximately 10-15 metres either in front or behind the main body.⁴¹ It had also been noted that follow-up or counter-ambush drills were

³⁵ Barclay, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 71/69 Patrol Report, 6 June 1969," p.3.

³⁶ Nat Tito, interview conducted on 25 February 2008.

³⁷ 3 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 1 June 1969," p.2.

³⁸ 3 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 1 June 1969," p.2.

³⁹ 3 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 1 June 1969," p.2.

⁴⁰ AWM98, Headquarters Australian Forces Vietnam HQAFV R723/1/145, "HQAFV: Reports General: 3SAS Patrol Reports, 1969," AWM, Canberra.

⁴¹ Similarly, patrols had noticed small screening groups patrolling either side of a significant track.

dependent upon the amount of ammunition carried by the enemy; in most cases, it was believed to be no more than 40 rounds per enemy – in comparison with between 180 to 220 rounds carried by every SAS soldier.⁴² This, coupled with Pearson's replacement Brigadier Stuart Weir's keenness to see SAS patrols exert more of an 'offensive presence' in areas where the main elements of the Task Force had not operated for some time, saw Beesley continue to recommend larger 'fighting' or 'ambush' patrols for the Squadron when opportunities presented themselves.⁴³

Between December 1968 and March 1971, 4 Troop members participated in only nine 'Ambush' patrols in South Vietnam and of these, only three were all New Zealand affairs.⁴⁴ One of the most documented took place between 29 October and 3 November 1969 when Sergeant Bill Lillicrapp led a twelve-man ambush patrol, which included six Australians, into an area just west of the Nui May Taos and approximately 36 kilometres north-east of Nui Dat. The Australian element was commanded by Sergeant Michael 'Joe' Van Droffelaar, who was notionally Lillicrapp's 2IC, but more accurately, commander of the Australians in the patrol.

Lillicrapp's group, along with another all-Australian ambush patrol commanded by Sergeant Fred Roberts inserted approximately five kilometres further north-east of the New Zealand patrol's position, had been tasked by Beesley to ambush the enemy supply route known to run parallel with the provincial road Route 330. The 274th Vietcong Regiment was usually supplied by the 84 Rear Services Group but also acquired and moved supplies independently as needed. They liaised with local village guerrilla units and enlisted help in order to either procure food and money, or assist with the movement of supplies delivered via the coast.⁴⁵ Having conducted several successful reconnaissance patrols in the same area, Lillicrapp was selected to command one of the two patrols:

...we'd had a bit of good luck on that track you know, and the Task Force in October/November 69 was heavily into killing – the Task Force Commander... Major Beesley said would you like to take out a fighting patrol. I said 'Yeah I

Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 339.

⁴² Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 339.

⁴³ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, pp. 333-339.

⁴⁴ These included ppatrols 269/68 (28-31 December 1968), 71/69 (20 May-1 June 1969), 168/69 (29 October-3 November 1969), 113/70 (30 April-7 May 1970), 122/70 (6-12 May 1970), 212/70 (3-5 August 1970), 016/71 (18-21 January 1971) and 33/71 (5-11 February 1971). NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington.

⁴⁵ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, pp. 279-340 and Taylor, *Last Out*, p. 141.

would.’ So, what happened was, he told me who the patrol would be and there would be six Kiwis and six Aussies. So Joe Van Droffelaar and I were the command element. I quite liked Joe. So Joe and I sat down and had a talk about it; worked out our drills and I think he, yeah was 2IC, but I think what we done administratively though – because that’s his patrol and my patrol really – and what we did was...he carried his normal radios, I carried my normal radios. My 2IC [Sonny Taniora] looked after all the admin and rations for my patrol; his 2IC looked after that for all his patrol, you know, so we didn’t try to step on one another’s toes as it were.⁴⁶

Lillicrapp gave himself and the two patrols that made up the single ambush group plenty of preparation time to rehearse the drills that would be needed on the operation. While the Patrol Commander had no reservations about working with the Australians, he needed to be confident the joint-patrol knew exactly how they would conduct themselves in such a large group, how they would set up the ambush - which included at least twelve Claymore mines - and who would be responsible for each particular role.

Lillicrapp was an extremely thorough Patrol Commander, respected equally by the New Zealand Troop and the Australian Squadron alike. He was extremely well-regarded by Beesley and equally comfortable operating with his Australian counterparts who were ‘all Special Forces’ as far as the New Zealander was concerned.⁴⁷ The thoroughness of the rehearsal drills carried out by the patrol was important. Lillicrapp was not keen to complicate the operation by integrating ‘infantry tactics’ of flanking manoeuvres or using ‘gun groups’ armed with M-60 machine guns. The New Zealanders had carried out some initial training with the M-60 in Malaysia before arriving in South Vietnam but had little experience with the weapon’s use on operations – Lillicrapp opted the patrol maintain drills that were familiar and straightforward, adapting tactics that they ‘all knew so we didn’t get complicated.’⁴⁸

Practice before the patrol was deployed included a full dress rehearsal at the Nui Dat range, just outside the perimeter wire, with the successful detonation of 12 Claymore mines as well as live fire contact and withdrawal drills:

And then the finale was that we put in our twelve-man claymores and blew it down at the range. We had the [Australian SAS] Ops Officer – Second Lieutenant Eddy I think his name was – he came down to observe us and he said ‘There’s no

⁴⁶ Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

⁴⁷ Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

⁴⁸ Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

way you would get away with that in Australia.’ And I said ‘yeah, well we’re not in fucking Australia are we sir.’ Because there are bullets flying - I just set off the contact drill by firing, just past Whi [Wanoa], into the ground. So bullets kick up and it is ‘contact front’ [and] we’re into it.⁴⁹

The day before the patrol left, as was his particular routine, Lillicrapp gave one final briefing outside the Squadron Officers and Sergeants Mess, reminding the patrol of its task, the three-letter contact code words, emergency radio frequencies and any additional intelligence or information which had come to hand. The Australian Squadron had access to a large amount of intelligence relating to most activity within the Task Force AO. Sources included not only other SAS patrol reporting (including LZ and track registers and recordings of all contacts) but also other ATF operation reports, reports from intelligence agents, airborne radar readings, infrared surveillance reporting and seismic detection reports.⁵⁰ On the day of the patrol, both Lillicrapp and Van Droffelaar carried out a Visual Reconnaissance (VR) with the 9 Squadron Helicopter pilot – Albatross Lead – who was to command the patrol insertion later that afternoon. To avoid enemy identification of the intended insertion point, a VR flight was carried out, not directly over the patrol AO, but alongside and at some distance and height from the insertion point.⁵¹

For the first two days of the operation, Lillicrapp’s patrol crossed a number of well-defined foot tracks in the area but none showed signs of any recent use so Lillicrapp kept searching the area for the particular track he wanted; he had been in this patrol AO before and knew exactly what he required his team to find. Early on the morning of 31 October, Lillicrapp discovered what he was looking for – an east-west track just south of the Song Trong, a tributary of the Song Rai. More importantly, the 12-inch wide track showed ‘signs of use within the last 24 hours.’⁵² Shortly after the Patrol Commander placed a

⁴⁹ Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

⁵⁰ Shattky, “4 Troop NZSAS Post – Operational Report SVN 1969/70, 26 October 1970,” p. 2.

⁵¹ A VR flight would take place anything up to four days before the actual patrol insertion and a variety of deception methods were practised by the pilot and Patrol Commander to try and confuse any enemy to the purposes of the flight. Some SAS Patrol Commanders felt that there was no doubt the Vietcong had been able to relate a sequence of air activity to a future SAS patrol insertion. Common deception methods would include flying parallel to the edge of the patrol area and then continuing for ‘some distance before circling low over an area well beyond’ his AO. Shattky, “4 Troop NZSAS Post – Operational Report SVN 1969/70, 26 October 1970,” p. 2 and Hayes, “4 Troop NZSAS – Post Operational Report South Vietnam Dec 1970 – Feb 1971, 16 February 1971,” p. 2.

⁵² Sergeant W.J. Lillicrapp, “3 SAS Sqn Ops 168/69 Patrol Report, 5 November 1969,” AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/19, 3 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative, Duty Officer’s Log, Annexes [1-30 November 1969], AWM, Canberra, p.1.

two-man OP on the track,⁵³ a group of 14 enemy travelled past carrying an assortment of weapons (including two new AK-47s), packs and bags. While the group wore a mixture of black and blue uniforms, the OP noted the leading Vietcong wore a 'white shirt.'⁵⁴ The following morning, Lillicrapp arranged a 'linear Claymore ambush on the south-side of the track' and also placed three Claymores on each flank of the ambush as a defensive measure:

...on the left-hand side Percy Brown commanded that group, and on the right-hand side Sonny Taniora commanded that group. And then we started to – once they were in place there to protect our flanks and our sigs looking to the rear, Whi [Wanoa] and I put in our six claymores on the left-hand side and Joe Van Droffelaar and his scout put the six claymores on the right-hand side... The guys that I believe escorted that big group in there – they came back some time during the day – they walked back through the ambush. I didn't fire it because I wasn't after two – I was after heaps.⁵⁵

With no further enemy movement on the track, Lillicrapp withdrew the ambush before last light and established his night position. Earlier that day, the other ambush patrol commanded by Roberts had initiated a Claymore ambush on a group of four Vietcong. Three enemy, including two females, were killed instantly and a blood trail indicated the fourth Vietcong had been wounded.⁵⁶ There was no set, or defined, policy when it came to engaging female enemy; individual Patrol Commanders determined what constituted legitimate targets. Just as others did, Lillicrapp had certain views:

I let women go through my ambush, unarmed, carrying stuff. Yeah, they probably were Charlie but I just didn't feel like doing that, so I didn't...Johnno [Johnston] wouldn't have done that either – I know that because we discussed it. I mean who wants to be called the 'lady killer?' I mean can you imagine that shit –

'Ah yeah, Lillicrapp got two women mate'

'Oh, were they armed?'

'No, they had a pack on their back.'

'Oh, good one.'⁵⁷

The Roberts contact had alerted the enemy that at least one SAS patrol was in the area. The absence of any helicopter extraction after the contact would also have indicated the

⁵³ One Australian and one New Zealand patrol member. Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

⁵⁴ Lillicrapp, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 168/69 Patrol Report, 5 November 1969," p.1.

⁵⁵ Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

⁵⁶ One pistol was recovered from the dead male Vietcong, as well as the two food packs that the women were carrying. Sergeant F.J. Roberts, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 170/69 Patrol Report, 4 November 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/19, p. 1.

⁵⁷ Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

patrol was either all dead or still near to the supply tracks close to Provincial Route 330. Because of this, it appears that the Vietcong decided to send out clearing patrols through the jungle and parallel to the main supply route. Any enemy in the area would now be extremely alert for further indications of an SAS presence. Roberts' patrol continued to move east, away from the Lillicrapp ambush, and set up a further small arms ambush on another track approximately 500 metres away from his first. At 0750 hrs the following day, four more Vietcong were shot and killed.⁵⁸ Roberts subsequently received an 'immediate' DCM for the two successful ambushes carried out on this patrol.⁵⁹

Forty minutes after Roberts's second ambush, Taniora's flank group heard enemy moving towards Lillicrapp's main ambush group. The ambush had been reset by Lillicrapp almost two hours earlier. Because the Claymore mines had not been pulled back the previous evening, Lillicrapp and Van Droffelaar took their scouts early that morning and together checked the twelve Claymores to make sure they were still camouflaged and had not been turned around by the enemy during the night:

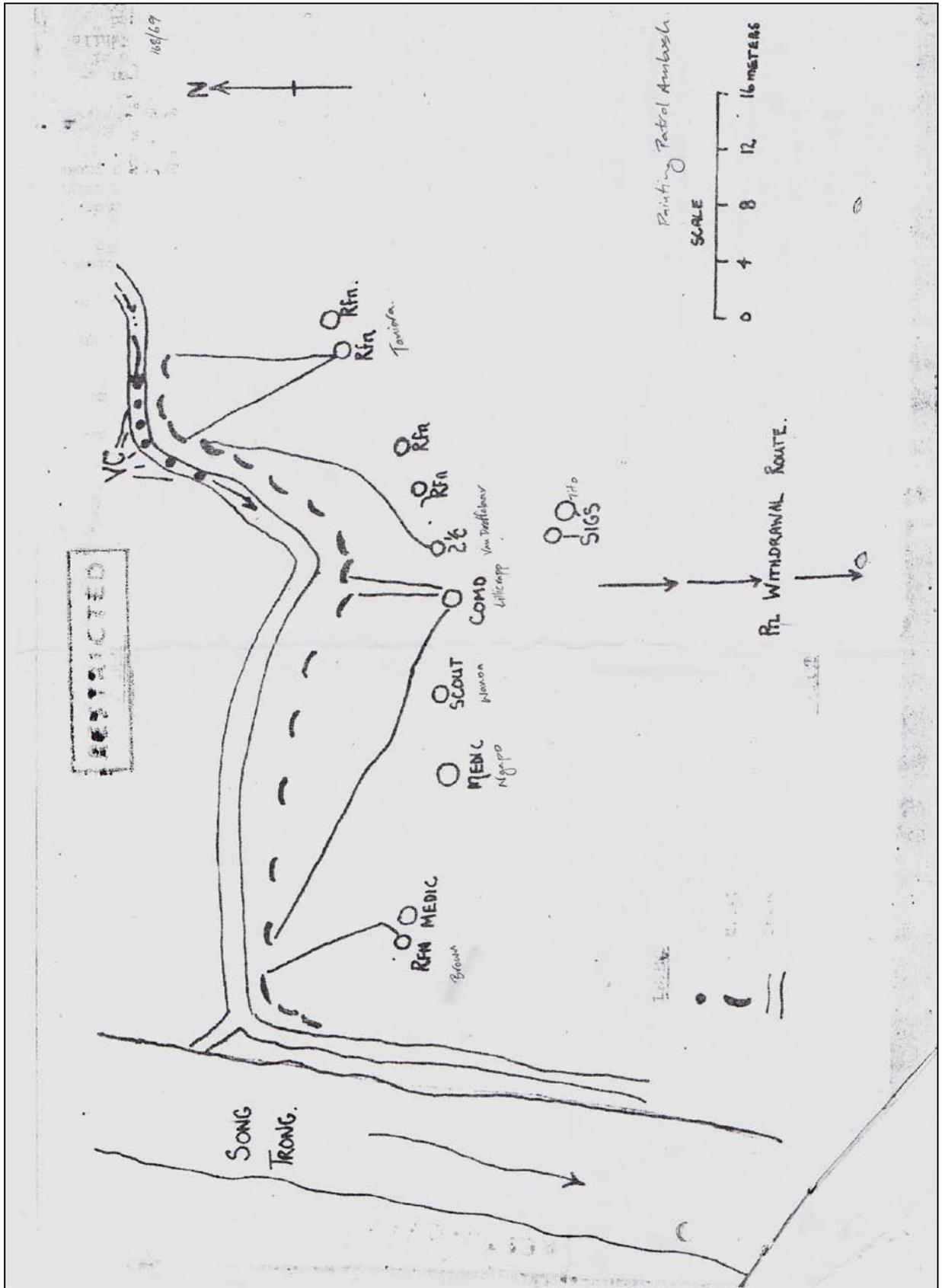
So away he goes, away Whi [Wanoa] and I go and we start on the left and check so we both meet in the middle. And, so then we were just waiting for them to come back along the track. And then slowly, all of a sudden I hear [Vietnamese language and shouting] fucking like this. And then boom, Sonny blows his Claymores, so I just blew my twelve straight away. Sonny said there was five or seven inside the Claymores when he blew them – so yeah, they would have been mince-meat.⁶⁰

The patrol orders had been that if anyone had identified a threat, either Lillicrapp as the Patrol Commander or Brown or Taniora as the two commanders on the flanks, their Claymores could be blown. Both Taniora and Brown were experienced patrol 2ICs and Lillicrapp was confident that the two would know exactly whether or not to initiate a contact. In the seconds before the ambush was activated, Taniora's right flank group had observed five Vietcong approximately 15 metres from the ambush position.

⁵⁸ Roberts, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 170/69 Patrol Report, 4 November 1969," pp. 1-2.

⁵⁹ According to Beesley's Squadron Commanders Diary Narrative for December 1969, Roberts was awarded his DCM on '1 November 1969.' However, the second ambush carried out by the patrol did not take place until 2 November 1969. Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 341, p. 469 and p. 480, Roberts, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 170/69 Patrol Report, 4 November 1969," p.2, and Major R.P. Beesley, "Commanders' Diaries Narrative, December 1969" in 7/12/20, 3 SAS Squadron Narrative, Duty Officer's Log, Annexes [1-31 December 1969], AWM, Canberra, p.1.

⁶⁰ Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.



Document 4: Patrol 168/69 Ambush Sketch ⁶¹

⁶¹ 3 SAS Squadron, "Contact/Incident * After Action Report 168/69, 6 November 1969," in Kippenberger Military Archive Box 136A, New Zealand Army Museum, Waiouru.

The patrol contact report stated that the leading enemy ‘appeared to sight the right Claymores of the killing group’ and immediately moved to the north side of the track.⁶²

It was then that Taniora set off his flank Claymores:

...and I was watching, and then they turned, the guy turned on the track, and he went to run and he slipped over. And I thought ‘shit, they’ve spotted the Claymores.’ Because we had Claymores out with white phosphorous grenades attached to them.⁶³ So the next thing we heard was them coming up on the flank – then they opened up. Well, I just bloody hit the button on the Claymores. And of course those guys must have been starting to come down then, checking all of the bloody track, that’s why I think he must have seen our Claymores. But he got it anyway – took all one hundred ball-bearings with him to the happy hunting ground.⁶⁴

As soon as Lillicrapp detonated his twelve mines, the patrol came under attack by an unknown enemy group carrying out a flanking manoeuvre on the right hand side of the of ambush position. The patrol returned fire, Brown detonated the left flank Claymores, and then withdrew south leaving five packs behind. Lillicrapp recounted the withdrawal:

There was a bit of shooting on the right-hand side so that group there, they must have been pissed off with us or something – so I just kept yelling out to ‘come in, come in’ and Percy finally got the message. I was just yelling at the top of my voice, and then Percy brought his guys in, Sonny brought his guys in and we just bugged out...one bloke tripped as we were going, I thought the fucker was shot, so when he stood up again I was really pleased about that. And then, away we went.⁶⁵

While the patrol withdrew, the enemy was heard moving towards them. Concerned about pursuit, Lillicrapp called for air support and contacted a nearby patrolling OV-1B Bronco ground-attack aircraft, which offered to put in a ‘strafing run’ for the patrol:

So he just flew over the top of us and just ‘brassed’ everything up. And I felt more comfortable – I think that stopped them – so it sort of discouraged them. So we just made it to the LZ, set the contact, and the choppers came in and picked us up we went home.⁶⁶

⁶² 3 SAS Squadron, “Contact/Incident * After Action Report 168/69, 6 November 1969.”

⁶³ The SAS had ascertained that the claymore mine could be even more deadly with phosphorus grenades attached. MACV, *Handbook for US Forces in Vietnam*, p. 93.

⁶⁴ Sonny Taniora, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

⁶⁵ Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

⁶⁶ Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

Horner suggested that the advancing enemy had discovered the waiting ambush because the ‘surface of one of the Claymores set in front of an ant hill flashed in the sunlight.’⁶⁷ That the Vietcong saw one of the Claymore mines, there can be little doubt, however, if there was a reflection from one of the Claymore mines, then the diagram drawn as part of the post-patrol contact report would suggest the sunlight struck either one of the right-flank defensive mines or one of the mines that were checked by the Australian element of the patrol earlier that morning.⁶⁸

After returning to Nui Dat, Lillicrapp and Van Droffelaar briefly spoke with Beesley who asked how many enemy had been killed. Disappointingly, and perhaps to Beesley’s chagrin, Lillicrapp replied ‘none.’⁶⁹ He had not seen any enemy enter the ambush killing ground and the enemy on Taniora’s right flank had been blown off the track. More Vietcong had attempted to out-flank the patrol so Lillicrapp had not been able to search for bodies. According to Lillicrapp, Van Droffelaar told his Squadron Commander that Taniora had reported seeing five enemy before that ambush was initiated. Lillicrapp’s reply was ‘if you want to claim them, claim them, but I didn’t see any dead.’⁷⁰ The patrol report recorded that five Vietcong were killed as a result of the contact.⁷¹ The contact report also admonishingly stated ‘more care should be taken in camouflage of M18A1 [Claymores] and measures should be taken to counteract any possible flanking manoeuvre carried out by the enemy.’⁷²

Despite Lillicrapp’s disappointment that his patrol had been compromised, there is no doubt the patrols carried out by the SAS Squadron in late October/early November 1969 convinced Weir of the need to carry out larger Task Force operations of battalion strength in the May Taos area. Operation MARSDEN, between 1 and 28 December, carried out by 6 RAR/NZ (ANZAC), inflicted serious damage to one of the last remaining secure Vietcong operating and staging areas within Phuoc Tuy province, and its success, according to the Task Force Commander, was a ‘direct result of information from [the earlier] SAS patrols.’⁷³

⁶⁷ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 342.

⁶⁸ 3 SAS Squadron, “Contact/Incident * After Action Report 168/69, 6 November 1969.”

⁶⁹ Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

⁷⁰ Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

⁷¹ Lillicrapp, “3 SAS Sqn Ops 168/69 Patrol Report, 5 November 1969,” p.3.

⁷² 3 SAS Squadron, “Contact/Incident * After Action Report 168/69, 6 November 1969.”

⁷³ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 343.

By late November 1969, Captain Graye Shattky's Advance 'Recce Party' and Patrol Commanders had arrived to begin the Troop handover.⁷⁴ The designated replacement Troop Commander wrote up the Troop's Activity Report for November 1969. It contained information relating to six patrols carried out by the New Zealanders during that month.⁷⁵ Shattky himself, three of his Patrol Commanders, Sergeants Ernie Stead, Graham Campbell and Joe Murray, as well as the new Troop Administrative Warrant Officer, Staff-Sergeant Danny Wilson, were also involved in 3 Squadron patrols deployed at the end of November and completed in early December 1969.⁷⁶ The last two patrols of Culley's Troop were carried out at the same time with Johnston's 196/69 patrol - the Troop's last - returning to Nui Dat on 3 December 1969.⁷⁷

Concluding Notes

On 18 November 1969, David Thomson reported to Prime Minister Keith Holyoake on his CGS's recent visit to South Vietnam. In his report, Major-General Dawson said that he visited the Task Force and had seen both New Zealand infantry companies as well as 161 Battery and 4 Troop. Dawson added that both the Gunners and Culley's men were 'highly spoken of.'⁷⁸ Until approximately six weeks earlier, the role of the SAS had been that of reconnaissance patrols only, but Dawson reported this had now changed to '75%

⁷⁴ The Troop was also visited by Major General Dawson on 6 November. Captain Graye Shattky, "Activity Report - November 1969, 12 December 1969," in New Zealand Army 15/28/10 Volume Two, New Zealand Forces Overseas - Vietnam: Operational Summaries, Reports, NZDF Archive, Wellington.

⁷⁵ The entire Squadron carried out 14 patrols in total for the month of November. Of these, the four New Zealand-commanded patrols that were completed in November were patrol (in order of deployment) 177/69, 178/69, 180/69 and 181/69. Major R.P. Beesley, "Commanders' Diaries Narrative, November 1969," p.1, Sergeant W.J. Lillicrapp, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 177/69 Patrol Report, 12 November 1969," Sergeant J. Johnston, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 178/69 Patrol Report, 15 November 1969," Captain T.N. Culley, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 180/69 Patrol Report, 20 November 1969" and Corporal M.A. Cunningham, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 181/69 Patrol Report, 21 November 1969," all in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam], 7/12/19 3 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Log, Annexes [1-30 November, 1969], AWM, Canberra.

⁷⁶ Sergeant C.J. Dwyer, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 187/69 Patrol Report, 3 December 1969," Sergeant A. Foxley, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 195/69 Patrol Report, 5 December 1969," Sergeant W.J. Lillicrapp/Staff-Sergeant D. Wilson, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 188/69 Patrol Report, 3 December 1969," Sergeant J. Johnston, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 196/69 Patrol Report, 5 November 1969" and Sergeant J.M. Robinson, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 201/69 Patrol report, 13 December 1969," all in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam], 7/12/20 3 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Log, Annexes [1-31 December, 1969], AWM, Canberra.

⁷⁷ Lillicrapp/Wilson, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 188/69 Patrol Report, 3 December 1969" and Johnston, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 196/69 Patrol Report, 5 November 1969."

⁷⁸ Report from Dawson to Thomson, with extracts forwarded to Holyoake, on Dawson's visit to Vietnam dated, 18 November 1969. See PM478/4/6 Part 12 South Vietnam: Military Assistance from Australia and New Zealand 1st January 1969 - 31 July 1970, ANZ, Wellington.

reconnaissance and 25% recce/ambush' operations. Dawson concluded that Brigadier Weir told him that he was now 'getting a good pattern of recce information from SAS operations.'⁷⁹

Between 9 December 1968 and 3 December 1969, members of Culley's Troop were involved in 73 recorded operational patrols with either 2 or 3 Squadron. This does not include the TAOR patrols of which there appears to be no retained record. Of the 73 patrols, 37 were reconnaissance, 32 'recce'/ambush and four were dedicated Ambush patrols. Of these, 51 were commanded by New Zealand Patrol Commanders and were either all New Zealand-manned or a combination of New Zealand Troop and Australian Squadron members. Only Lillicrapp and Johnston commanded all-Australian patrols during 1969.⁸⁰

It is true that many members of 4 Troop were less than enthusiastic when it came to larger fighting or ambush patrol operations. In comparison, there appears to have been little genuine resistance on the part of the New Zealanders to conform to the changing parameters of patrol operations in 1969 – the changing evolution between conducting reconnaissance and recce/ambush activities. Nevertheless, the New Zealand approach did originate from 1 Ranger Squadron's earlier, and successful, operational campaigns in Borneo. Vietnam was different, and regardless of the reasons - perceived or actual - Beesley had for selling the services of the Squadron to the Task Force Commander as an offensive weapon when the battalions were overstretched, without such operations, there would have perhaps been even less activity for the New Zealanders to involve themselves in. As shall be explored in the following chapter, conflict between the two groups only truly manifested itself at the Troop command level and even here it had more to do with 'strong' personalities than any serious questioning of different SAS doctrine or correct Special Forces utility.

The command tensions between the Australian Squadron and 4 Troop during 1969 could not detract from the overall operational success which had been demonstrated by Culley and his soldiers throughout the year. Culley considered that not only were the New

⁷⁹ Dawson's visit to Vietnam dated, 18 November 1969.

⁸⁰ Sergeant W.J. Lillicrapp, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 177/69 Patrol Report, 12 November 1969," and Sergeant J. Johnston, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 178/69 Patrol Report, 15 November 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam], 7/12/20.

Zealand patrols effective, and did ‘everything that was expected of them’ even when mixed with Australian Squadron members, the New Zealand soldiers still maintained a professional sense of purpose, ‘synergy and good-will to allow those to be successful.’⁸¹ Any initial concerns associated with ‘mixing and matching’ patrols were found to be unsubstantiated.⁸² Nevertheless, there remained some, albeit subtle, differences unique to both groups.

New Zealand and Australian Special Air Service Art and the Vietnam War

Both Maurice Conly and Major Alan Oliver were employed at various times as official New Zealand Army War Artists during the Vietnam period.⁸³ Oliver visited 4 Troop on 17 April 1970 and while he viewed equipment used by the patrols and photographs illustrating aspects of operations, there is no record of his having subsequently produced any SAS-related works.⁸⁴

After the Vietnam War ended, both 3 Squadron of the Australian SAS Regiment and New Zealand Special Air Service Group (1NZSAS Group) commissioned artists to produce works recording aspects of the operational campaign in South Vietnam. In the mid-1970s, Western Australian artist Frank Pash produced ‘Who Dares Wins’ in which is depicted one (or both) of Fred Roberts’ ambushes for which Roberts was awarded his DCM. Nearly twenty years later, 1 NZSAS Group commissioned Major Ion Brown, the official New Zealand Army Artist, to produce a painting of the New Zealand SAS in South Vietnam.⁸⁵

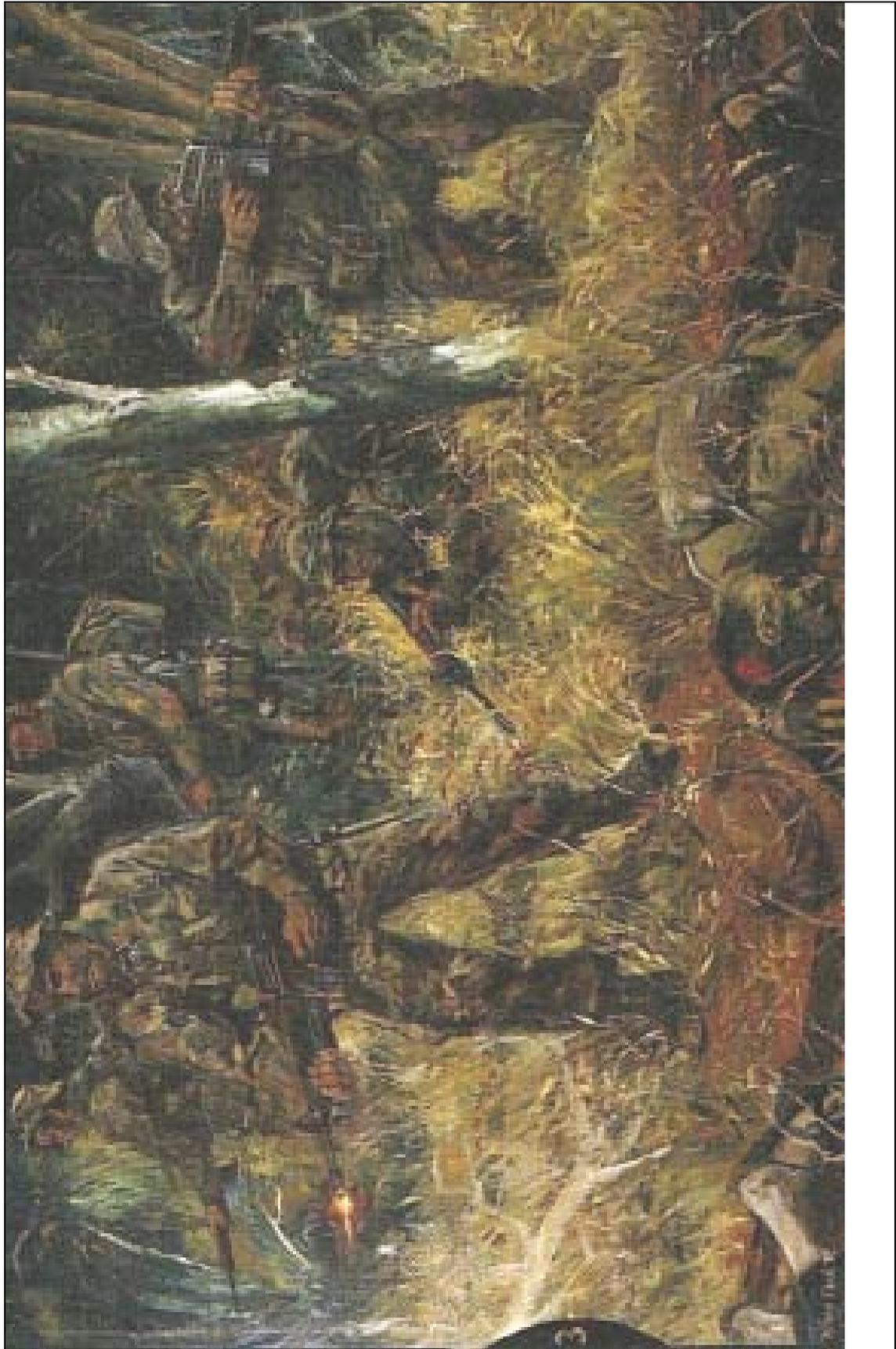
⁸¹ Terry Culley, interview conducted on 21 July 2008.

⁸² Terry Culley, interview conducted on 21 July 2008.

⁸³ Paul Harrison, “*Send for the Artist...*” *Maurice Conly, 54 Years as the Air Force Official Artist*, (Auckland: Random House New Zealand Ltd, 1995), pp. 106-110 and 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, “Activity Report – April 1970, 15 May 1970.”

⁸⁴ Oliver also discussed the possibility of painting a portrait of Sergeant Graham Campbell (see Chapter 12), the only New Zealand SAS casualty of the campaign. Captain D.G. Shattky, “17 April 1970” in Shattky’s personal diary, Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008, and 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, “Activity Report – April 1970, 15 May 1970.”

⁸⁵ Malone, *SAS: A Pictorial History of the Australian Special Air Service*, p. 389. The following image is from the same source.



Painting 1: 'Who Dares Wins'



Painting 2: 'Nui May Taos Ambush'

War Art expert Laura Brandon has argued that war art is ‘as much an expression of culture...as an account of one aspect of art history.’⁸⁶ In a post-World War II environment, Brandon has suggested that much of the official art created during this period reflected the military’s ‘ongoing and often blatant attempt to ensure that commissions reflect its viewpoints.’ While it was accepted that commissioned artists who painted war in an ‘unkindly way would soon need to find another job,’ debate continued to persist throughout the period as to whether war art presented a genuine ‘historic record’ or accurate ‘eyewitness account,’ or whether many of these works simply fictionalised events.⁸⁷

In 1966 the United States Army established the Vietnam Combat Art Program to ‘create a pictorial record of the war. The first nine teams of artists spent 60 days each in Vietnam making sketches, before transferring to Hawaii for another 60 to 75 days to work up sketches into more finished compositions.’⁸⁸ One American artist to have painted during the Vietnam period was Leon Gulb. Of his work, Gulb said in a 1994 interview; ‘I try to get at male aggression, at how men posture and so on. This is not a theatre of the absurd but a theatre of reality. This is the way the world runs, the world as it is.’⁸⁹ Gulb said that of the soldiers he painted ‘one could say I was celebrating them rather than exposing them.’⁹⁰

Like Gulb, is it this that Pash has most likely tried to achieve in his painting of Roberts’ patrol 170/69? Such a celebration is by no means a bad thing. Both works were commissioned in the knowledge they would not be available for public consumption nor scrutiny, and as such any perceived ‘glorification of war’ would not necessarily be deliberate. With experience of the Vietnam theatre in 1969, Conly himself wrote:

It must be remembered that the war artist is not required to express an attitude to war, or what it is about, but to show what war looks like. He paints what he sees with his own style and technique.⁹¹

⁸⁶ Laura Brandon, *Art & War* (London: I.B Taurus & Co Ltd, 2007), p.7.

⁸⁷ Ion Brown, interview conducted on 21 March 2009 and Brandon, *Art & War*, p.76.

⁸⁸ Brandon, *Art & War*, p. 78.

⁸⁹ Leon Gulb and Nancy Spero, *War and Memory* (Cambridge Massachusetts: MIT Visual Arts Center, 1994), p. 29 quoted in Brandon, *Art & War*, p. 89.

⁹⁰ Brandon, *Art & War*, p. 91.

⁹¹ Maurice Conly in Harrison, “*Send for the Artist...*,” p. xi.

Brown's work depicts Lillicrapp's 168/69 patrol ambush that took place on 3 November 1969.⁹² After spending time with the Patrol Commander (who was about to retire from the New Zealand Army) which included a brief period in the Mamaku Ranges, Brown used photographs and his own personal experiences of South East Asia – particularly his 'knowledge of the jungle and light' - to create 'Nui May Taos Ambush.'⁹³ As the official New Zealand Army Artist between 1987 and 1997, it was Brown's task to record the New Zealand Army's history, hoping that his representational work provided 'road-markers in history.'

In all of his post-World War II art, it was Brown's objective to capture the essence of the event, both in the accuracy of the conditions of South East Asia and the precise reproduction of New Zealand military doctrine. Getting a tactical situation wrong with small things like 'sleeves rolled up' or standing up in an ambush would, according to Brown, be immediately spotted by any soldier – current or former – viewing the work.⁹⁴ 'Nui May Taos Ambush' not only illustrates Brown's impressionist style but also successfully shows his enthusiasm for 'painting [jungle] atmosphere.'⁹⁵

It is clear the two works, painted decades apart, have different styles which affect not only the tone and sense of each but impact upon any interpretation. This notwithstanding, the two paintings depict events that took place only several kilometres away from each other and within the same twenty-four hour period. While the author professes only a limited knowledge of art history, it could be stated that with the two paintings, might have Pash and Brown delivered by way of illustration, the subtle but quite clear quintessential differences between the Australian and New Zealand SAS psyche, or at the very least the culture of the two groups – the Australian Squadron and the New Zealand Troop - that was prevalent in 1969? The following chapters will expand this further, however, the irony of Brown's 'Nui May Taos Ambush' work of course is that of the two patrol members depicted in the painting, the head that can be seen to the right of the main figure (Lillicrapp) is that of Australian Corporal 'Joe' Van Droffelaar.

⁹² Careful scrutiny of the work shows at least two enemy Vietcong walking through the ambush. The patrol report states that the only time enemy wearing 'white shirts' were observed, took place on 31 October 1969. Lillicrapp, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 168/69 Patrol Report, 5 November 1969," p.1.

⁹³ Ion Brown, interview conducted 19 February 2009.

⁹⁴ Ion Brown, interview conducted 21 March 2009.

⁹⁵ Ion Brown, interview conducted 19 February 2009.

Chapter 11

Out with the old and in with the new: December 1969

I met a lot of people that I didn't have a lot of time for but I just didn't have anything to do with them – just kept out of their way. I don't think I could even name you four or five people that I disliked that I met in the Army – but I absolutely loathed him – what he did to our Troop and in particular to Terry Culley.¹

David Horner wrote that for the New Zealanders in late 1968-early 1969 'there was little problem with co-operation with 2 Squadron as both parties knew that they had to work together for only a short period, but cooperation with 3 Squadron was to present a bigger challenge.'² In relative terms, Horner was correct. Major Brian Wade had initially cautioned hosting an additional Troop within the Australian Squadron by arguing that increased numbers, combined with the issues associated with limited helicopter support in 1968, would impact upon the operational 'tempo and morale' of the entire Squadron, including on the New Zealanders.³ As demonstrated in previous chapters, evidence on the whole, suggests that this was a justified and legitimate concern. The working relationship established with Wade's Squadron proved to be an effective one, once the New Zealand Troop – perhaps largely thanks to the efforts of soldiers such as Sergeant Fred Barclay – had proven to the Australians their ability and worth.

Even before 4 Troop arrived in South Vietnam, it appeared that the New Zealand Squadron Commander David Ogilvy's own particular bias would ensure the ANZAC-SAS relationship would be a difficult one from the outset:

...The Borneo thing - the fact that [when] we were operating to the Brits we realised that they weren't as good. The fact that we perhaps had no option other than to go with the Australians [in Vietnam] – that wouldn't have been, for me anyway, a happy relationship to start with.⁴

Ogilvy's lack of enthusiasm for his Australian counterparts, much in the same vein as demonstrated by Bill Meldrum in Borneo in early 1965, was clearly a 'professional' pre-conception that dominated his consideration. Unlike with Meldrum, the situation in

¹ Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

² Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 303.

³ Major Brian Wade, "Problem Areas r.e. Attachment of NZSAS Troop to 2 SAS Squadron, 8 May 1968," in Army Non File Material ANFM A234: S.C59.6, Deployment: NZSAS, 4 November 1968 – 20 November 1969, NZDF Archive, Wellington.

⁴ David Ogilvy, interview conducted on 27 February 2008.

Vietnam dictated there was no British SAS component with which the New Zealand Troop could choose to align, and as will be seen, Ogilvy himself would not make any significant effort to establish a relationship between Papakura and Perth. The role of establishing a relationship between the two Commonwealth SAS units would fall, in effect to Culley, Ball and the rest of the New Zealand Troop in an operational theatre.

By the time Wade's Squadron departed Vietnam in February 1969, the New Zealand Troop was fully engaged in operational patrolling within Phuoc Tuy province. Some initial misunderstanding on the part of senior New Zealand Army officials, that the Troop was not going to be as independent as intended had been dispelled by the beginning of 1969.⁵ Mixed patrols had been the method by which 4 Troop members were introduced to the operational environment in South Vietnam.⁶ There is no evidence to suggest the Troop itself was concerned about the initial arrangements made by Wade, nor was there an attempt by the Squadron Commander himself to assert control over the New Zealanders. This issue, however, revisited 'SAS Hill' in early 1969.

The Australian SAS 3 Squadron, commanded by Major Reg Beesley, formally took over from Wade's 2 Squadron on 22 February 1969.⁷ Beesley, known as 'The Beast,' graduated from Duntroon in 1959 and joined the Australian SAS Company at the beginning of 1961. Between then and being posted to the 28th Commonwealth Strategic Reserve in 1964, he held a number of SAS positions, including reconnaissance officer, platoon commander, adjutant and Squadron Commander.⁸ Three Squadron's Second-in-Command (2IC) in South Vietnam, Captain Ross Bishop described Beesley as a 'dedicated professional soldier, conscious of his responsibility and dedicated to excellence. He pushed hard but was highly respected.'⁹ Horner wrote that 'one of Beesley's early problems was to establish a sound working relationship with the New Zealanders' and was initially 'astonished' to find that they appeared to have 'developed a little camp of their own.'¹⁰ In 1997, Beesley said:

⁵ Colonel R.M. Gurr letter to Fenton dated 19 December 1968, in Army Non File Material ANFM A234.

⁶ Gurr letter to Fenton dated 19 December 1968.

⁷ The main body of the Australian Squadron arrived on 21 February 1969. Major R.P. Beesley, "Commanders' Diaries Narrative, February 1969" in 7/12/10, 3 SAS Squadron Narrative, Duty Officer's Log, Annexes [21-28 February 1969], AWM, Canberra, p. 1 and Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 313.

⁸ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 299.

⁹ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 319.

¹⁰ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 315.

I also took over the NZSAS Troop who had been in country for three months...and from what I gathered their treatment by Australian SAS, before I arrived, was pretty poor. They were told to go and put their headquarters and their tents, etc. over there...and [it] wasn't good.¹¹

Although it was true there was a geographic distance between the New Zealand Troop lines and the rest of the Australian Squadron, this was mainly the result of the lack of space available on 'SAS Hill.' The physical limitations prevented 4 Troop from positioning themselves any closer to the Australian Squadron than the location which Wade had allocated.¹² It is interesting to speculate on just what area Beesley would have placed the New Zealanders had the decision been his, or was he intent on splitting up the New Zealand Troop and mixing them within the Australian troops that made up 3 Squadron? It seems more likely that Beesley was troubled by the possibility Culley might exert control over his soldiers and potentially undermine the overall authority of the Australian Squadron Commander and the development of a 'little camp' mentality was the method by which this could have occurred. To firmly establish his authority over the Troop, Beesley began by attempting to integrate 4 Troop into 3 Squadron. It was a plan of which only a few were aware:

There [were] rumours that Reg Beesley was going to integrate us totally so that we'd have Kiwis and Aussies all mixed up in each Troop. Whether that was a rumour or whether Terry knocked it on the head, I don't know.¹³

In 1988, Beesley told Horner that the New Zealand Troop initially 'lacked mature leadership and an understanding of the environment which was very different to that experienced in Borneo.'¹⁴ In late 1969 Lieutenant-Colonel Lawrie Clark took command of the Australian SAS Regiment, a position he held until early 1972 and in recounting the period to Horner, Clark considered 'the weakest link in SAS had always been the inexperience of junior officers.'¹⁵ At the time, it was standard practice to post young Australian officers directly from either Portsea or Duntroon, to the SAS Regiment in Perth. Beesley later expressed surprise at Clark's remarks and noted Clark might have been 'out of contact with the young officers due to the growing independence of

¹¹ Reg Beesley interview with Gary McKay, AWM, Canberra, recorded on 4 September 1997.

¹² Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

¹³ Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

¹⁴ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 315 and pp. 477-478. When interviewed in 1997 Beesley said that Culley 'had no management whatsoever' and 'didn't go out on patrol.' Reg Beesley interview with Gary McKay, AWM, Canberra, recorded on 4 September 1997.

¹⁵ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 306 and p. 393.

Squadron Commanders whose responsibility it was to train young officers as regimental officers and patrol commanders.’¹⁶ Beesley added that as ‘operations later proved, they [the young Troop officers] acquitted themselves well whilst some of the old and bold didn’t fare that well.’¹⁷ Could it be that Culley was the only young officer within Beesley’s Squadron that lacked maturity or experience – or was there something else?

Preparations for Second 4 Troop: 1969

Preparations for the second 4 Troop, scheduled for deployment between December 1969 and December 1970, commenced almost as soon as Culley’s Troop departed for South Vietnam at the end of 1968. The initial feedback from Culley to Ogilvy arrived in a very piecemeal fashion, and soon the Ranger Squadron OC sensed the Troop Commander and his 2IC Ball were ‘pretty unhappy’ about the ‘relationship with the Australians.’¹⁸ In addition, a representative from the New Zealand Squadron had still not made an official visit to either Perth or Nui Dat. Common sense would suggest that a visit was necessary, if only to ensure, at the very least, subsequent training programmes for the next New Zealand Troop matched the realities of SAS operations in Phuoc Tuy province. Even the New Zealand Prime Minister, Keith Holyoake, had visited the Australian SAS Squadron in South Vietnam by November 1968.¹⁹

In early March 1969 Ogilvy wrote to Brigadier Robin Holloway at 1 Infantry Brigade and stated that prior to the commitment of the Troop to Vietnam, he had made requests to visit the Australian SAS Squadron but such a visit had been ‘considered inappropriate.’²⁰ Ogilvy cannot recall the precise reasons why the visit was declined but it would be fair to suggest that any advanced indication the New Zealand Government was preparing to deploy the SAS to South Vietnam before the decision had been made public would not have been encouraged by either senior Army officers or their political masters.²¹

¹⁶ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 306.

¹⁷ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 306.

¹⁸ David Ogilvy, interview conducted on 27 February 2008.

¹⁹ The Prime Minister and Lieutenant-General Leonard Thornton called on Wade and 2 Squadron on 28 October 1968. 2 SAS Squadron, “OPS INT LOG, 28 October 1968,” in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries, 7/11/8, October 1968, AWM, Canberra.

²⁰ Major David Ogilvy to HQ 1 Infantry Brigade Group, “Visit to 4 Troop NZSAS, 11 March 1969,” in Kippenberger Military Archive Box 136A, New Zealand Army Museum, Waiouru.

²¹ David Ogilvy, interview conducted on 27 February 2008.

Ogilvy advised Holloway that after four months in theatre there had still 'been no communications between the Troop and the Squadron except that of an unofficial nature.'²² It seems staggering that the Squadron was not receiving either Patrol or after action reports, but this was the case. Ogilvy was aware of the 'relationship issues' but chose to report that from the personal letters he had received from Culley it appeared there were a number of 'differences in patrolling techniques and SOPs' which required further examination before the next Troop deployed in six months time. Ogilvy concluded his note to Holloway by stating:

Few would argue that the Troop requires considerable and well planned training. At the moment there is a doubt as to whether all that is being taught is correct. All doubts could be removed by a visit from a unit representative...It is requested that approval be given to a unit representative visiting Vietnam in the near future.²³

Ogilvy handed over command of 1 Ranger Squadron to Major Neville Kidd on 25 September 1969 after Kidd had completed a twelve month tour in Vietnam as 2IC to Major John Hall's Victor Three (V3) rifle company.²⁴ Before leaving Vietnam, Kidd, a Troop Commander with the second New Zealand SAS detachment to Borneo, visited the Australian SAS Squadron between 7 and 15 May 1969.²⁵ Even after twelve months in theatre, Kidd would have accompanied at least one 4 Troop patrol, had he not been recovering from an 'undetermined viral infection' which was subsequently identified as acute viral malaria.²⁶ That experience was afforded to Captain Jim Maloney - designated by Ogilvy to command the second 4 Troop detachment - in late June/early July 1969.²⁷

Holloway could see no reason not to allow Ogilvy to send a representative to 'examine' the differences between the Australian and New Zealand SAS units and it appeared realistic that Maloney should go. Ogilvy provided the designated Troop Commander

²² Ogilvy, "Visit to 4 Troop NZSAS, 11 March 1969."

²³ Ogilvy, "Visit to 4 Troop NZSAS, 11 March 1969."

²⁴ Major R.P. Beesley, "13 May 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/13, 3 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative, AWM, Canberra, and Neville Kidd email correspondence 3 November 2008.

²⁵ Beesley, "13 May 1969," in AWM95 7/12/13.

²⁶ Kidd recounted that after operating in the northern area of Phuoc Tuy V3 Coy suffered approximately 70% malaria cases and were removed from operations for a period to recover. Neville Kidd, interview conducted on 16 July 2008, and email correspondence 3 November 2008.

²⁷ 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, "Activity Report - July 1969, 6 August 1969," in AWM103 R723/1/79: Reports - General - New Zealand SAS Activity Reports, 1969-1970, AWM, Canberra.

with an exhaustive list of requirements to investigate.²⁸ Maloney also participated as a rifleman in one of the three reconnaissance patrols undertaken by the New Zealand Troop in July 1969.²⁹

However, the overall experience, in particular the ‘difficult’ command relationships, had a substantial impact upon Maloney for when he returned to New Zealand he indicated to Ogilvy he no longer wanted to command the replacement Troop:

...our guys were better but it never helps to rub that in to someone you are trying to work alongside, which some of our fellows tended to do. I spent a lot of time in the evenings with our guys and the Aussies in the Sergeants Mess – they had a combined Sergeants/Officers dining set-up – and you know, some of the banter that went on there, you would say that it certainly didn’t help relationships. So, there was a bit of tension there and I could see that it wasn’t a terribly happy set-up...So when I came back, I did my report on all the stuff there – I also made it clear that a senior captain wasn’t necessarily the best thing for a New Zealand Troop – what it was doing was promoting separateness. So, I had long discussions with David Ogilvy and he wasn’t too happy about that side of my report that said I think we’ve taken the wrong track here in trying to make our Troop more senior than the other troops; that we really need to back off and have a Lieutenant or a junior Captain commanding so that we don’t promote a difference between the groups. So, eventually I said to Dave [Ogilvy] ‘look, I can’t say that one hand and then go up there myself – so I won’t take the Troop up.’ And he wasn’t very happy about that and neither was John Mace who had sent me up [to 1 Ranger Squadron] to actually take the Troop up.³⁰

Any perceived ‘top-heavy’ command element in the first New Zealand Troop mirrored that upon which the British SAS had commented when Meldrum’s first detachment to Borneo arrived in Brunei in March 1965. Maloney’s visit coincided with Culley’s departure for Rest and Recreation (R and R) leave so the Troop Commander was absent. Consequently, Maloney’s only source of information on the relationships in Nui Dat was

²⁸ The list included information on patrols (for example frequency and duration, strength, tasks – including ROE, distances (travelled in day/night), differences in IA drills, equipment carried, entry and exit drills, emergency drills, medical packs carried, size of AOs and knowledge of friendly forces and artillery/FAC procedures), methods of communication, medical, relations with Australian Squadron (chain of command, joint patrols, use of equipment, employment of ops officer, feasibility of providing vehicle mechanic and medical corporal within present strength of 26), base routine (sentries, base training, PT, recreation, dress) and welfare issues. Major David Ogilvy, “Vietnam Orientation Directive to Captain J Maloney, 30 May 1969,” in Kippenberger Military Archive Box 136A.

²⁹ The patrol was not particularly eventful and in the space of ten days the group discovered four old positions, saw no enemy although Maloney did get ‘a whiff of hair-cream - just a smell of hair-oil.’ WO2 E. Ball, “3 SAS Sqn Ops 090/69 Patrol Report, 18 July 1969,” in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/15, 3 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative, Duty Officer’s Log, Annexes [1-31 July 1969], AWM, Canberra, p.1 and Jim Maloney, interview conducted on 17 June 2008.

³⁰ Jim Maloney, interview conducted on 17 June 2008.

via Beesley, his 2IC Bishop and the acting New Zealand Troop Commander Ball. That Maloney was able to identify problems of friction between the command elements of the two SAS groups there can be little doubt. The value of his visit at a time when Culley was absent is also questionable. Even if he felt that the ‘reservations’ about Beesley’s attitude towards the New Zealanders were accurate or justified, Maloney was quite correct in identifying in ‘these matters of command friction, there’s always personality.’³¹ Therefore, it was likely that the relationship would change when the current personalities completed their respective tours.

In a real sense, the rank of the New Zealand Troop Commander meant little so long as he was willing to acknowledge – as Maloney points out - the New Zealand Troop was in South Vietnam to be ‘bloody good soldiers, not bloody good New Zealanders.’³² Culley admitted that the responsibility of managing the relationship between the New Zealand Troop and the Australian Squadron was perhaps the most important element of the Troop Commander’s responsibility.³³ That Maloney identified this in the space of several weeks in Vietnam, in Culley’s absence, does not adequately explain why after he returned to New Zealand, he told Ogilvy that he no longer wished to command the second Troop. The New Zealand Squadron Commander was particularly disappointed with Maloney’s decision but had little time to dwell on the issue.³⁴ Captain Graye Shattky was appointed to command the second New Zealand Troop scheduled to depart for Vietnam in less than five months.

Operational Command: ‘The command arrangements were complicated.’³⁵

What Maloney experienced in June and July 1969, had its genesis six months earlier when 3 Squadron arrived in South Vietnam. In 1997 Beesley stated that he was frustrated with the New Zealand Troop because they had ‘not arrived with an operational directive.’³⁶ While the rest of 4 Troop, as articulated by Lillicrapp, was unaware of the plans for integration, the senior members of the group – Culley, Ball and Barclay – had

³¹ Jim Maloney, interview conducted on 17 June 2008.

³² Jim Maloney, interview conducted on 17 June 2008.

³³ Terry Culley, interview conducted on 21 July 2008.

³⁴ David Ogilvy, interview conducted on 27 February 2008.

³⁵ McGibbon, *The New Zealand Army in Vietnam 1964-1972*, p. 80.

³⁶ Reg Beesley, interview with Gary McKay, AWM, Canberra, recorded on 4 September 1997.

experienced the Australian Squadron Commander's intentions first-hand in late February, early March:

And then one day [Eric] came and saw me – and he was upset. And he said 'look, you've got to go up and see Major Beesley in his tent – and the boss [Culley] is up there.' And, so I went up there and I arrived and old Beesley said 'sit down' and he...said 'I'm going to take all of the men and I am going to mix it all up, re-accommodate people – there will be Australians and New Zealanders all mixed up in patrols.' And I thought 'fucking hell; either the guy is joking' - which I didn't think he was – and I was waiting for Terry to say something. Now, I had been in the Army long enough to know, because I had been in and out of the Army over a ten year period, and I thought 'shit, this young fellow [Culley] is in a hell of a situation here – this guy has got operational command over us and that's all – is he not saying anything because I am here?' And I said to Beesley 'look, perhaps I should go?' 'Sit down – you're included.' And he said to – sort of prompted Terry a bit. Terry was a bit taken aback I think and he [Beesley] asked me. And I'm fairly basic – and I said to him 'If you're going to carry out this proposal Sir, it's got to be carried out today – not in two weeks time when all the rumours and everything have boiled up and the place is falling apart – it's got to be done right now.' And I guess in a round about way called his bluff...³⁷

To those such as Barclay, the Troop's title 'Fourth Independent SAS Troop' did in fact give Culley 'powers as subordinate commander' but there was no real evidence the New Zealand Troop Commander was intent on exercising his 'powers' in order to undermine the Australian Squadron Commander.³⁸ To Culley, Beesley was:

a brash little bugger who was out for glory – his own glory and gratification – and tried to bloody take over the command of the New Zealand troops. Well I knew damn well that that word didn't exist in my orders. And in there it described the commitments and deployments and what you could do and what you couldn't do – what the relationship was with the Australians, you know.³⁹

Much to Beesley's chagrin, Culley telephoned Saigon and requested the presence of Major John Willson, the NEWZARM Deputy Assistant Adjutant General (DAAG), who was visiting South Vietnam at the time,⁴⁰ to explain to Beesley Hamilton's Directive and why the New Zealand Troop Commander was unable to accede to the wishes of the Australian:

³⁷ Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

³⁸ Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

³⁹ Terry Culley, interview conducted on 21 July 2008.

⁴⁰ In 1969, the DAAG was the equivalent of the today's 'Assistant Chief of Personnel at Army General Staff.' Flinkenberg, *New Zealand Vietnam Roll*, p. 166 and email correspondence from Major-General Piers Reid (Rtd), 11 December 2008.

Fred came up and that's when I got on – went back and got on the phone and rang Saigon. And we had John Willson appear from Saigon and he was senior to Beesley from Duntroon days – and produced the bit of paper again, and said ‘you've seen this before – this is what it means.’ And he [Beesley] said ‘so what?’ He said ‘well, that's what our countries have agreed.’ He said ‘I don't have to listen to that.’ He [Willson] said ‘you actually do – Captain Culley is actually right in what he says.’ I was never disrespectful after that – I knew my place, ‘yes sir, no sir, three-bags-full sir’ – but we never had any favours after that.⁴¹

Culley's perceived obstinacy in indirectly or directly countering Beesley's wishes made for a cordial but tense relationship for the rest of the tour. The experience also had a lasting effect on his 2IC:

And, you've probably heard people talk about [Eric] or whatever - if you take the personalities out of it and you take the establishment, it was very difficult for a Warrant Officer to be with a 26-man Troop because the Australians [had] three 26-man Troops and one Warrant Officer....I don't think anybody else ever knew. I never told anybody in our Troop because to me I hate rumours...they destroy organisations and families and whatever. But [Eric] did come and see me – we were up there and he said ‘look, you know, I'll come and see you tomorrow and just talk to you.’ And he said ‘when I arrived up there, the message was for Terry to come with his second-in-command.’ So they went up. And [Beesley] said to [Eric] ‘you go away and count your socks – you're the Admin Warrant Officer; send the Troop Sergeant.’ Now that was pretty bloody...this is four months into a twelve month tour? That's not the way to handle things.⁴²

Why did the Australian Squadron Commander insult Ball in the presence of Culley and, more importantly, was this discussion the catalyst for the subsequent animosity between the New Zealand Troop and 3 Squadron which remained for the rest of 1969? Beesley had a reputation for being a no-nonsense officer and appeared to be determined to make it patently clear just who was to be in charge. But were his comments, as Barclay understood them to be, a flippant, off-the-cuff, remark based upon his understanding of role of his own Squadron Administrative Warrant Officer, or was it part of a more deliberate attempt to exert his influence and undermine any influence that the much older Ball may have had over his younger Troop Commander Culley? Either way, Ball would have regarded the comments as a personal ‘put-down’ and a very deliberate insult – a strategy possibly designed to extract an immediate and potentially disrespectful response

⁴¹ Terry Culley, interview conducted on 21 July 2008.

⁴² Barclay recalls that Ball only recounted the ‘count your socks’ exchange because the Troop Sergeant needed to be aware of the reasons why he had been included in the discussion between Beesley and Culley. Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008 and subsequent letter to author, 12 January 2009.

able to be used to Beesley's advantage. If this was the case, the Australian Squadron Commander did not get the expected reaction.

Born in Invercargill in 1935, Eric Ball enlisted in the New Zealand RF Cadets in 1952 and served with the Royal New Zealand Armoured Corps (RNZAC). In August 1957 he re-enlisted and saw active service as a mortar platoon section commander in Malaya with 1 NZ Regiment until 1959. In 1960, he returned to RNZAC and was posted to Wellington and Waiouru before joining 1 Ranger Squadron in April 1965 as a Troop Sergeant. Ball served in Borneo as a Patrol Commander with Dearing's second detachment between September 1965 and February 1966. A number of SAS appointments followed, as well as a corps and trade change to Infantry, and in November 1968, he was promoted to Acting WO2 and posted to Vietnam.⁴³

Resented by some, respected by many, Ball had the reputation of being as hard on himself as he was on other soldiers. Made up of equal amounts of determination and stubbornness, the Warrant Officer, as many New Zealand soldiers in the 1960s and 1970s would attest, could be particularly brutal. There was often no 'generosity' or 'forgiveness if you were weak or showed weakness - he would certainly fasten on to that straight away and do something about it.'⁴⁴ Those very traits also made Ball and, although to a much lesser extent, Barclay such integral and influential members of the Troop:

See, all of these guys were my mentors, each one of them. So was [Eric], Fred and that's the way – for me, this is the unique thing about our unit, is that as hard as they were - and I'll tell you now, [Eric] was probably the hardest of anybody – he just had one standard and that was it. If you didn't measure up, there was a consequence and there was no two ways about it. And you knew exactly where you were – you knew exactly where you stood with Eric...⁴⁵

As with Barclay's attitude to rumours and the chain of command, it is unlikely that Ball would have discussed the conversation with Beesley beyond Culley and the Troop Sergeant. Nevertheless, he was immensely proud of his military career and his service in

⁴³ After returning from Vietnam in 1971 Ball was appointed to Squadron Sergeant-Major (SSM) and held this position until mid-1974 when he was commissioned and posted to RNZAF PTSU. He returned to 1 NZSAS Squadron as the Training Officer in May 1976. In August 1977, he commanded the Exercise 'Return Angel' detachment to Malaysia and twelve months later was promoted to Major and Chief Instructor of the NZSAS Centre where he remained until his retirement from the New Zealand Army in early July 1981. Holah, *Biographies, 4Troop NZSAS*, NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington, pp. 1-2.

⁴⁴ Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008.

⁴⁵ Kevin Herewini, interview conducted on 15 July 2008.

the New Zealand SAS Squadron; any perceived slur on either himself or the New Zealand Troop, for that matter, would neither be forgiven nor forgotten. As a senior NCO, Ball would conduct himself with the utmost professionalism and remain outwardly respectful, as the hierarchical elements of military command dictated but Beesley would never be given any chance of earning the Warrant Officer's respect, such was the character of the Troop 2IC. As far as Barclay understands, the exchange in Beesley's tent and the subsequent discussion between himself and Ball was never again mentioned.⁴⁶ In 1997 Beesley said that Culley lacked a genuine capacity to manage the Troop and the New Zealanders had been 'mainly run by the head Warrant Officer...'⁴⁷ Either the Australian Squadron Commander did possess a begrudging regard for Ball and his abilities or he viewed Culley with even less respect than he did of the 4 Troop Warrant Officer.

The Australians understood that the New Zealand Troop was to be part of the Australian SAS Squadron and not in any way as 'Independent' as had been described in the 1968 Unit Directive. True, Beesley was not prepared to have the management of the Squadron undermined by a recalcitrant New Zealand Troop Commander heavily influenced by his far more operationally-experienced and inflexible 2IC and Troop Sergeant, but then again perhaps it was to do with the Australian Squadron Commander's 'bloody mindedness' more than anything else?⁴⁸ It is correct the taking the 4 Troop Land-Rover and placing it under the direct control of the Australian Squadron did bring matters 'to a head,' but if the perspective of the New Zealanders is taken into account, it was nothing more than simple determination on the part of Beesley to exert control:

We had a vehicle – a Troop vehicle – but Major Beesley decided he'd pool it in the Squadron pool. That caused a bit of upset...He took it off us! It's dumb – it's so disappointing that.⁴⁹

Again, Horner suggested that Beesley was determined 'the New Zealanders should not be allowed to task their own patrols' because 'all patrol tasks should be co-ordinated and directed by Squadron Headquarters.'⁵⁰ In fact, all patrol tasks were co-ordinated through the Squadron Headquarters. The New Zealand Troop, exactly as with the three Australian Troops, was given their patrol 'jobs' in advance. Individual patrols were often

⁴⁶ Fred Barclay, letter sent to author on 12 January 2009.

⁴⁷ Reg Beesley, interview with Gary McKay, AWM, Canberra, recorded on 4 September 1997.

⁴⁸ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 315.

⁴⁹ Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

⁵⁰ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 315.

determined by such factors as manpower availability; some Troop members might be sick or on leave and this would determine a slightly different patrol make-up but this was no different from either 2 or 3 Squadron's approach. Was Beesley's determination to integrate the New Zealand Troop and the three Australian Troops a similar effort or was there some other reason for this ambition?

There had been a series of patrols since he'd been there – and all their [3 Squadron] patrols were in and out very quickly and things had gone wrong and we'd had some quite successful patrols and I think there a little bit of – a couple of Aussies told me later on that he was a bit miffed that his guys hadn't done so well. Any other Commander would have said 'well, shit I have only just got here with my troops.'⁵¹

It could be concluded that Beesley regarded Culley as a junior and relatively inexperienced officer and deemed to be far too influenced in his decision-making by his much more experienced senior NCOs. Whether Ogilvy deliberately selected Ball and Barclay specifically for this role is not clear. By belittling Ball in the presence of Culley, the Australian Squadron Commander could have influenced and exerted almost complete control of 4 Troop in all areas. If this was in fact the case, then Culley's call to Saigon and the subsequent visit by Willson proved decisive in negating any such strategy. Culley's immediate call to his New Zealand superior demonstrated quite clearly that the young Troop Commander was hardly as impressionable or 'wet behind the ears' as Beesley may have initially thought.

Beesley told Horner that he 'believed that SAS, whatever country, could operate together and that such a "family" had little room for [paranoiac] megalomania.'⁵² Strong language. With a New Zealand perspective on events, one could be forgiven for believing that Beesley was making inadvertent reference to himself rather than the New Zealand Troop and perhaps he was the 'inflexible' one.

Patrol 104/69

All Australian SAS Squadron Commanders in Vietnam 'recognised that their main role was not to join their men on patrol but to direct and co-ordinate the operations of the

⁵¹ Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

⁵² Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 315.

patrols from Squadron headquarters.’⁵³ Nevertheless, this did not stop them, should an opportunity have presented itself, from joining or leading patrols. Beesley was an extremely enthusiastic advocate of this and believed ‘from a leadership point of view it was essential that on occasions he should lead his own patrol on operations.’⁵⁴ From the Borneo experience, particularly after observing how Michael Wingate-Gray, David Moloney and Ogilvy had commanded operations during ‘Confrontation,’ this approach would have been anathema to almost all members of 4 Troop. As far as the New Zealanders were concerned, Beesley ‘was the Squadron Commander [and] should have been commanding the Squadron.’⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the Troop experienced on at least two occasions first hand Beesley’s adage ‘that if he could not lead his own patrol he should not have been a Squadron Commander.’⁵⁶

Between 23 July and 2 August 1969, Barclay commanded a five-man New Zealand patrol on a recce/ambush task in the middle of the Nui Dinh hills, an area which thanks to an American country and western song popular at the time, was affectionately known to some as ‘Wolverton Mountain.’ Some of the lyrics, with a hint of menace, go:⁵⁷

They say don’t go on Wolverton Mountain
If you’re looking for a wife
Cause Clifton Clowers has a pretty young daughter
He’s mighty handy with a gun and knife

Her tender lips are sweeter than honey
And Wolverton Mountain protects her there
The bears and the birds tell Clifton Clowers
If a stranger should enter there⁵⁸

The terrain was exceedingly steep and covered with numerous large limestone boulders, in some ways similar to areas encountered in Borneo, with medium primary jungle growth allowing visibility in most areas of no more than fifty metres. Three hours after being inserted, the patrol found a small ‘deserted’ camp estimated to have been twelve

⁵³ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 319.

⁵⁴ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 319.

⁵⁵ Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

⁵⁶ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 319.

⁵⁷ Sergeant F.D. Barclay, “3 SAS Squadron Ops 104/69, 7 August 1969,” in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries, 7/12/16 3 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Log 1-31 August 1969, AWM, Canberra, p. 1.

⁵⁸ ‘Wolverton Mountain,’ written by Claude King and Merle Kilgore, 1962.

months old.⁵⁹ Another camp was discovered on the sixth day of the patrol but it, too, did not appear to have been used within the last year. A third platoon-sized camp construction was found by the patrol the next day. This camp had been destroyed by either ‘air action’ or artillery.⁶⁰

After eight days of patrolling, Barclay was convinced ‘there was nobody in the area.’⁶¹ On the morning of the last day of July, the patrol came across a ‘crude latrine and a quantity of sawn saplings laying on the ground.’⁶² Two hours later, some freshly opened tins of fish and two pairs of black trousers were spotted.⁶³ Five minutes later, Barclay saw a large bundle of clothing appear on a rock. In an instant, both Barclay and his scout, Corporal Sonny Taniora, engaged separate Vietcong targets:

I shot the guy on top of the rock, up on the top, big boulder. Coming around and Fred was behind me – and I just saw this guy come up aye. ‘Holy hell, it's a bloody sentry’ – so I bowled him. Next minute there's a big flash of lightning coming over my shoulder and it was Fred having a crack at the guy in front of me – because when we broke contact and we were cutting back, and we were getting our breath as we were going down this hill and reorganising and Fred said ‘didn't you see that guy in front of you?’ I said ‘where?’ He said ‘right in front of you.’ I said ‘I was shooting the one up on top of the boulder mate’ – I hadn't seen this dude down at the bottom and old Fred knocked him off see. Had Fred not seen him – I would have been gone.⁶⁴

The Vietcong shot by Barclay had been armed with an unknown type of bolt-action rifle and had been killed as he tried to re-cock the weapon. While the patrol was withdrawing with fire and movement, a third Vietcong was seen to throw a grenade at the patrol. Fortunately, it did not detonate.⁶⁵ The patrol had no option but to withdraw through the camp area they had discovered earlier that morning. The patrol's well-practised extraction from contact drills enabled them to get out of an extremely dangerous situation and by 1500 hrs they had managed to manoeuvre themselves away from the camp area without being pursued or noticing any further sign of recent enemy activity.⁶⁶ Establishing a night LUP that afternoon, some 30 metres from a small track which led to a water

⁵⁹ Barclay, “3 SAS Squadron Ops 104/69, 7 August 1969,” p. 1.

⁶⁰ Barclay, “3 SAS Squadron Ops 104/69, 7 August 1969,” p. 1.

⁶¹ Barclay, “3 SAS Squadron Ops 104/69, 7 August 1969,” p. 1.

⁶² Barclay, “3 SAS Squadron Ops 104/69, 7 August 1969,” p. 2.

⁶³ Barclay, “3 SAS Squadron Ops 104/69, 7 August 1969,” p. 2.

⁶⁴ Sonny Taniora, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

⁶⁵ Nat Tito, interview conducted on 25 February 2008.

⁶⁶ Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

collection point, Barclay felt safe enough to task Lance-Corporal Nat Tito to send a signal to Nui Dat reporting the contact as well as the discovery of a number of ‘fresh small camps and caches:’⁶⁷

...there were a set of proformas in each theatre that covered sort of each situation – if you had a contact, or if you had a sighting or if you were putting an ambush in...We had had a bit of a shoot-up and I simply wanted him [Beesley] to know where we were and that we were all okay – that’s all he needed to know at that stage. And he insisted on me sending this whole proforma. And para A is your location and para B is the location of the incident. Para C is type of enemy – and I put ‘humans’ – and he couldn’t handle that sort of thing. Jesus, when we got back, it was one of the two rows that I had with him – he yelled and screamed and spat all over me like a fox terrier!⁶⁸

The following morning, with time on his hands and knowledge the patrol was relatively safe in their current location, Barclay despatched a far more detailed message to satisfy his Squadron Commander. Of the three camps the patrol had identified, Barclay estimated the first to have been 100 metres square with sufficient beds, tables, latrines and clothing to accommodate up to 25 enemy.⁶⁹ Barclay also reported that he suspected the Vietcong, contacted the previous day, had been transferring food and clothes from caches in caves to a second camp approximately 100 metres by 40 metres in size. Both camps were easily visible from the air.⁷⁰

According to Horner, a ‘determination that patrols should remain in after a contact’ was the principal reason why Beesley, acting on Barclay’s report, decided to send an eleven-man patrol to meet up with the New Zealand Troop Sergeant’s patrol and mount a combined attack on one of the two camps. There is no evidence to suggest Barclay either requested his patrol be extracted immediately after the 31 July contact or asked for supporting forces to be inserted after the discovered camps had been reported. This, it appears, was all done at the behest of Beesley.⁷¹ The SAS OC took command of the

⁶⁷ 3 SAS Squadron “Ops Logs, 31 July,” in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/15, 3 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative, Duty Officer’s Log, Annexes [1-31 July 1969], AWM, Canberra, p.49.

⁶⁸ Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

⁶⁹ Barclay, “3 SAS Squadron Ops 104/69, 7 August 1969,” p. 2.

⁷⁰ 3 SAS Squadron “Ops Logs, 1 August,” in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/16, p. 2.

⁷¹ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 327.

eleven-man fighting patrol which was made up mainly of 4 Troop soldiers.⁷² Both Barclay and Taniora remembered receiving the message late on 1 August:

...I had sent him a report which we had had tonnes of time to write out – we'd had a couple of little incidents but nothing very significant....And there were two camps to my way of thinking. So I sent him all this – he didn't come back and say 'elaborate on this' you know – all of a sudden Nat [Tito] said to me 'I've got this message here – I have got it partly decoded, have a look.' 'Be at this bloody grid-reference' – he's on the way.⁷³

Fred said to me 'hey, we have got to go to this grid reference and we have got to be there x time.' And I was looking at these mountains going 'geez, how are we going to get there boy?' The 'Beast' is coming in!⁷⁴

The radio message sent to Barclay advised that his patrol was to rendezvous with Beesley's patrol some 600 metres from their present location before proceeding to attack the larger of the two camps. Apparent difficulties with the radio communications meant Barclay received the message at least three hours after Beesley's patrol had landed.⁷⁵ Beesley had initially considered that his reinforcement patrol rappel into the area but this did not happen.⁷⁶ Further radio problems meant that the two patrols were not able to meet until the following day.⁷⁷ By mid afternoon on 2 August it was clear that no enemy were in or near the camp and Beesley decided to abandon the proposed assault.⁷⁸ The New Zealanders in both patrols sensed the Australian Squadron Commander was bitterly disappointed that an attack had not eventuated:

...all I remember about this one is doing a lot of walking because Beesley wanted us to be at a certain spot, and we had to shoot like hell over there, and I don't think he appreciated what being out in the bush was, with carrying packs, you know that's my opinion...And when they aborted it, we had to walk like a whole day's bloody walk - he wouldn't bring a chopper in or anything to take us out - as if he was punishing us because there was nothing there.⁷⁹

The patrol report concluded by stating that Beesley's patrol had 'observed an old M-16 mine lying on the ground.'⁸⁰ It was not destroyed by the patrol but left in situ. Horner

⁷² Barclay, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 104/69, 7 August 1969," p. 1.

⁷³ Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

⁷⁴ Sonny Taniora, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

⁷⁵ Barclay, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 104/69, 7 August 1969," p. 2.

⁷⁶ This more than likely explains why the LZ selected by the patrol was so far away from Barclay.

⁷⁷ The two patrols were vectored together with the assistance of a 9 Squadron Albatross helicopter relaying radio messages between them. Barclay, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 104/69, 7 August 1969," p. 2.

⁷⁸ 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, "Activity Report – August 1969, 12 September 1969" in AWM103 R723/1/79.

⁷⁹ Nat Tito, interview conducted on 25 February 2008.

⁸⁰ Barclay, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 104/69, 7 August 1969," p. 2.

recounted the mine episode but also added that by chance, ‘Beesley stopped one soldier just as he was about to step on’ the mine.⁸¹ Neither the patrol report, nor Horner’s account of the patrol record that Beesley briefly ‘went missing’ after the Squadron Commander fell into a charcoal pit as the two groups walked out:

They had dug a big hole and made an oven and had been making charcoal. And I was trying to tell him ‘look, walk one behind the other’ – and he was darting there and darting here – and he disappeared and these guys couldn’t see. ‘Oh, he’s down a hole’ – ‘Well leave the bugger there’ because I had had a guts-full of him.⁸²

Despite supposedly being ‘most impressed with the Kiwis’ sense of purpose, their dedication and professionalism,’⁸³ Beesley maintained a ‘tense relationship’ with the New Zealanders until Culley’s Troop departed in December. However, by the time the New Zealanders left, the Australian Squadron Commander’s view had softened to one of grudging respect for Culley’s soldiers and their achievements in South Vietnam.⁸⁴ Unfortunately, however real or perceived the change in Beesley’s view of the New Zealanders was, any long-term admiration was forever marred by a single incident that took place on the penultimate night of the Troop’s stay in Vietnam. The incident had a significant impact on the record of Culley’s Troop in Vietnam, but perhaps not an altogether unjustifiable one.

The McGee Incident

It had a lasting effect in as much as all the reports that were sent by Beesley to whoever, reflected all that – he used group punishment; he lumped everyone in on one guy’s [actions]...It was unfortunate that it happened on the last night because like first impressions, last impressions you know.⁸⁵

On the afternoon of 10 December 1969, the Australian Squadron Officers and Senior NCO’s Mess hosted a farewell function for Culley’s Troop. Those attending the function included Lieutenant-Colonel Fenton. As was the rule, Beesley closed the Mess at 2200 hrs and most headed down to the 4 Troop lines to continue the party. According to eye-witness accounts, Sergeant Windy McGee spent some time ‘haggling’ with the Australian 3 Squadron duty barman to provide him with an additional bottle of spirits. The barman

⁸¹ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 327.

⁸² Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

⁸³ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 315.

⁸⁴ Terry Culley, interview conducted on 21 July 2008.

⁸⁵ Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

refused and McGee stormed off in a particularly aggrieved manner. During the early hours the following morning, the 3 Squadron Duty Officer roused Culley and Ball and the rest of those who had attended the party and all returned to the Officers' and Senior NCO's Mess where they were accused by Beesley of assaulting one of the Australian Troop Commanders, Lieutenant Nick Howlett.⁸⁶

Most of the New Zealanders were still slightly 'fuddled' from the function that had finished only a few hours earlier, but sobered up rather quickly when the Squadron Commander told them that Howlett had been beaten so badly that he had a damaged pelvis and broken jaw and was alleged to be only able to utter the word 'Kiwi' as he crawled into Beesley's tent.⁸⁷ As far as Beesley was concerned, without being able to identify the individual responsible, he regarded all of the New Zealanders as suspects, and until he discovered exactly who was responsible, no one was going to be allowed to leave.⁸⁸

McGee's belligerent and aggressive behaviour throughout the night was enough to convince at least Lillicrapp and Johnston that he was most probably responsible, and when he had the opportunity, Lillicrapp advised Barclay of his suspicions. The Troop Sergeant forwarded the information to Ball and Culley, and McGee was confronted with the accusation. It is understood that McGee admitted he had been responsible and the Patrol Commander was escorted back to his tent where he was to wait until an 'Orderly Room' could be arranged for later that morning.⁸⁹ While the rest of the Troop remained mostly unclear about exactly what had transpired,⁹⁰ most of 3 Squadron was certainly well aware that one of their own had been beaten up and by whom:

So in the morning we went up to say goodbye to Colonel Fenton – well fuck, he could hardly look at us mate. And we were ashamed, too – it was really awful – and the Aussie senior NCOs you know like, looking at us like we were shit and you can't blame them, aye. That was really, really bad – really ashamed.⁹¹

⁸⁶ Kevin Herewini, interview conducted on 15 July 2008, Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008 and Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

⁸⁷ Howlett's injuries were so severe, that he returned to Australia early on 17 December 1969. Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 497.

⁸⁸ Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008 and Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

⁸⁹ Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008 and Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

⁹⁰ Nat Tito, interview conducted on 25 February 2008.

⁹¹ Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

The Troop was scheduled to return to New Zealand the following morning when the main body of Captain Graye Shattky's Troop arrived from Singapore aboard an RNZAF Hercules transport.⁹² Not only did Culley have to deal with McGee, he also discovered that Trooper Sam Peti had been caught breaking into the ORs Mess and had taken some 'meat' which he intended to take back with him and cook in the New Zealand Troop Lines. Beesley, who was in no mood to take pity on the New Zealanders, wanted to charge the New Zealand Trooper with 'stealing rations on active service' – a crime that Barclay recalled had in previous conflicts been punishable by death.⁹³

Fortunately for Peti, the Australian Squadron Commander did not have powers of discipline over the New Zealand Troop. This charge was also dealt with by the senior New Zealand Operational Commander in Vietnam who was also responsible for matters of discipline concerning Culley's 4 Troop. In early December 1969, that role was the responsibility of Major Larry Lynch, OC of V4 Coy, at the time attached to the 2RAR/ANZAC Battalion.

Lillicrapp and Johnston escorted McGee to Vung Tau hospital where, because of Howlett's injuries, the Orderly Room was conducted.⁹⁴ The final ignominy for the New Zealand Troop was that Barclay and his soldiers discovered the trucks sent to take the Troop to Vung Tau to catch their flight home had just completed their weekly rubbish disposal duties.⁹⁵ The trucks were changed at the last minute after Captain Ross Bishop, the Australian Squadron 2IC, discovered what had been arranged.⁹⁶ While the Australian Lieutenant gave his evidence as he recalled events, McGee refused to admit responsibility:

...so Larry Lynch really hooked into Windy. Then he said that because we were going home, there would be no summary of evidence, they would finish there.

⁹² The flight NSL 55/56, commanded by Squadron Leader Tremayne, would return to New Zealand on 16 December 1969. Flying Officer D.V. Monti and Wing Commander M.W. Hodge, "Unit History No. 40 Squadron, December 1969," ANZ, Wellington, p. 1.

⁹³ The New Zealanders also had to contend with five of their soldiers who had contracted 'Bacillary Dysentery caused by consuming bad prawns' the day before and were still in hospital. Captain Graye Shattky, "Activity Report – December 1969, 13 January 1970," in New Zealand Army 15/28/10 Volume Two, Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008 and Nat Tito, interview conducted on 25 February 2008.

⁹⁴ Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

⁹⁵ Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

⁹⁶ Fred Barclay, letter to author dated 12 January 2009.

And I think he gave [McGee] a severe reprimand and fine I think....So what do the Aussies think? Here he's got hit over the wrist with a wet bus ticket – I mean there is nothing in it is there? He beat an officer. He should have been court-martialled - I don't care if we had to have stayed behind or not - so the Aussies can see that justice is not done, you know, this is a joke isn't it 'ha Windy McGee beat up Lieutenant Howlett, what a joke, and the Kiwis done nothing about it mate.' Well, I don't blame them for being pissed off. And if the price was that we didn't get any awards as a Troop, well, so be it.⁹⁷

There was no doubt that McGee's military career had been chequered with previous indiscretions and many of a particularly serious nature.⁹⁸ But the quite lenient punishment meted out by Lynch was perhaps the most damaging aspect of the entire sorry affair. Because he had not admitted responsibility for the assault, Lynch could only record the New Zealand Sergeant 'at approximately 2330 hrs on 10 December 1969, was involved in a disturbance in the 3 SAS unit lines.'⁹⁹ McGee received a 'Severe Reprimand' and was 'fined \$NZ30.00.'¹⁰⁰ To illustrate the probable Australian reaction with some perspective, two months earlier Sergeant 'Johnno' Johnston had been charged with drinking 'several cans of beer' in the 4 Troop lines, whilst in the company of soldiers subordinate to him. For these two charges, Johnston had been fined by Major Neville Wallace '\$NZ25.00.'¹⁰¹ The punishment imposed on McGee by Lynch was quite simply unacceptable. Several hours after the Orderly Room, Beesley completed McGee's end of tour report:

Sergeant McGee has showed initiative and drive in the conduct of his patrols. He has a tendency to be morose when under the influence and needs to exercise more control over his alcoholic intake. Has the knowledge and capacity to accept promotion to the next higher rank but requires strong supervision.¹⁰²

Concluding Notes

In early 1967, Brigadier Stuart Graham took command of the Task Force. Horner wrote that while his initial views on the value of Special Forces had been negatively 'coloured' by experiences in World War II, these views altered considerably as a result of the

⁹⁷ Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

⁹⁸ McGee was the subject of at least one previous New Zealand Army Court-Martial proceeding in 1960. "McGee W.A. 329877, 1960," ANZ, Wellington.

⁹⁹ NZDF, "M329877: McGee, W.A." NZDF Personnel Archive, Trentham, Wellington.

¹⁰⁰ NZDF, "M329877: McGee, W.A."

¹⁰¹ NZDF, "M303668: Johnston, J.T." NZDF Personnel Archive, Trentham, Wellington.

¹⁰² Major R.P. Beesley, "Annual Personal Report – Sergeant W.A. McGee, 12 December 1969" in NZDF, "M329877: McGee, W.A."

success of the SAS Squadron in Vietnam.¹⁰³ Like his predecessor Brigadier Oliver Jackson, Graham utilised the Squadron principally in a 'surveillance, reconnaissance and early warning' capacity. Any offensive task, such as ambushing, was supposedly 'subsidiary to their primary tasks.'¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless by the middle of 1967, Graham was quite content to encourage Major Dale Burnett's 1 Squadron to carry out an 'equal number' of surveillance, reconnaissance and ambush tasks. 1967 also saw the deployment of a number of Squadron 'snatch' patrols to capture prisoners of war, and although none were ever successful, they nevertheless illustrated Graham's enthusiasm for using the SAS to obtain 'more useful intelligence.'¹⁰⁵

Brigadier Graham never believed that he was using the Australian Squadron to achieve 'kills for the sake of numbers of kills.'¹⁰⁶ However, his replacement as Task Force Commander in October 1967, Brigadier Ron Hughes, was determined to use Burnett's Squadron in a much more aggressive fashion and regardless of the patrol mission believed they 'should achieve kills if the opportunity arose.'¹⁰⁷ Burnett subsequently commented that such a policy quite easily led to the Task Force's 'interest in a particular area being given away.'¹⁰⁸ It is likely that any suggestion the Task Force was primarily interested in 'body counts' begins during this period.

During 1 Squadron's operational tour, Burnett's soldiers had carried out '246 patrols; had killed 83 Vietcong, and possibly a further 15, and had sighted a total of 405 enemy.'¹⁰⁹ An impressive record when it is considered for every four enemy seen, one was killed – a ratio that could not be equalled by any other unit within the Task Force. Richard Bushby suggested that clarification of roles and tasks created some initial deployment issues when the Task Force first arrived in Phuoc Tuy province in 1966.¹¹⁰ Certainly the evolution of the SAS role, in particular the relationship between changing tactical methods and the Task Force Commander's interpretation or understanding of the Squadron's assigned

¹⁰³ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 213.

¹⁰⁴ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 213.

¹⁰⁵ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 214.

¹⁰⁶ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 214.

¹⁰⁷ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 229.

¹⁰⁸ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 229.

¹⁰⁹ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 232.

¹¹⁰ Richard Bushby, 'Educating an Army': *Australian Army Doctrinal Development and the Operational Experience in South Vietnam, 1965-72* (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, 1988), pp.89-90.

role, was an issue which persisted throughout the duration of Task Force operations in South Vietnam. The evolution of operations which took place in 1967 – from ‘fighting for information to harassing the enemy’ – was one example, from the perspective of Burnett, that concerned the SAS, especially as the application of basic platoon-size infantry tactics could prove to be potentially disastrous for a much smaller five-man patrol.¹¹¹

Whether Task Force Commanders failed to recognise the inherent risks of exposing the SAS patrols to potentially dangerous situations, even when the SAS Squadron Commanders had articulated this concern, is not entirely clear. What is clear is that the use of the SAS in a more strategic sense was either not seen, ignored or valued less than the role Task Force Commanders saw for them. Burnett’s Squadron carried out a number of Troop-strength patrols in March and July 1967.¹¹²

In January 1968, Hughes was instructed by Australian Forces Vietnam (AFM) Major-General Tim Vincent to ‘orient his force more towards SAS-type operations.’¹¹³ To Vincent there was no doubt the SAS operations were the Task Force’s most successful; ‘115 enemy KIA with two friendly wounded and one died of wounds – and we should do more of it.’¹¹⁴ This message was articulated to New Zealand representatives also. During his visit to Nui Dat and Vung Tau on 29 December 1967, it became clear to the New Zealand Charge D’affaires Paul Edmonds that Vincent wanted ‘[New Zealand] SAS...’¹¹⁵ Vincent’s desire for additional SAS forces, as interpreted by Edmonds, is likely to have been spurred by a report prepared by the Australian Army Operational Research Group for the period from May 1966 to October 1968 which analysed Australian Army contacts in South Vietnam. The report noted that the Australian infantry battalions had been involved in 74% of all Australian contacts, compared with 24% by the SAS Squadron and 2% by armoured units. More significantly, when enemy casualties were tabulated, it was found that of the 410 enemy killed, the infantry battalions had accounted for 188, SAS

¹¹¹ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 232.

¹¹² AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries, 7/10/3 and 7/10/7, 1 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Log 1-31 March and 1-31 July 1967, both in AWM, Canberra.

¹¹³ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 235.

¹¹⁴ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 235.

¹¹⁵ Letter from Paul Edmonds (New Zealand Charge D’affaires in Saigon) to George Laking, “New Zealand Troops in South Vietnam, 3 January 1968,” in PM478/4/6 Part 11 South Vietnam: Military Assistance from Australia and New Zealand 6 December 1967 – 23 December 1968, ANZ, Wellington.

173 and armoured 49.¹¹⁶ As was described in Chapter Five, lobbying for New Zealand SAS troops to serve in Vietnam began to gain in intensity from this time.

When they first arrived in December 1968, neither Culley nor the rest of the Troop is likely to have known exactly how the operational relationships between the Australian SAS Squadrons and their Task Force Commanders had evolved during the previous two years. Brigadier Sandy Pearson had replaced Hughes at the end of October 1968. Not only did Pearson believe Wade's Squadron 'should be used solely for gathering information and carrying out reconnaissance to find large enemy forces which could then be engaged by 'normal' infantry and artillery units,' he had also questioned the accuracy of Squadron intelligence at various times in 1968 to the point that he 'remained sceptical to the accuracy of some reporting.'¹¹⁷ To this end, Culley's Troop arrived in Vietnam at a stage where the Squadron was reverting to a role principally of a reconnaissance nature. For those within 4 Troop whose experiences were based upon their reconnaissance and surveillance performances in Borneo, this was not necessarily an unhappy beginning.¹¹⁸

In 1997, Beesley said the following:

Their problem was the first group had come to Vietnam - it was unfortunate - relying on what they had learnt on operations in Malaya...as you well know it's a different kettle of fish; a different ball game. You know, we had, when I was there, we had had three years of experience with...and it was all noted down, so we had some idea and a new book was being written - new SOPs required...They were a bit slow in converting, a bit slow in absorbing, a bit slow in recognising the change.¹¹⁹

These comments, particularly Beesley's references to the Troop being 'a bit slow in converting' appear to have been a direct reference to the perceived command inflexibility demonstrated by the New Zealand Troop. The general consensus amongst those members of the first 4 Troop is the New Zealand patrols were effective and achieved all 'that was expected of them.'¹²⁰ Even patrol 120/69 in late August 1969, which lasted all of twenty-four minutes, confirmed their ability to extricate themselves thanks to proven

¹¹⁶ The infantry themselves had suffered 19 soldiers killed and 73 wounded, armoured units two killed and 22 wounded, and the SAS Squadrons had sustained only 19 wounded. Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 236.

¹¹⁷ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 278.

¹¹⁸ Baker, *Dare to Win*, p. 88.

¹¹⁹ Beesley, interview with Gary McKay, AWM, Canberra, recorded on 4 September 1997.

¹²⁰ Terry Culley, interview conducted on 21 July 2008.

and well-rehearsed contact drills. The New Zealanders also participated in successful operations when either leading or being part of Australian Squadron patrols. Initial concerns that if the Troop ‘mixed and matched too much’ it would lose effectiveness were found to be incorrect. Though the relative age of the New Zealand Troop was seen by some of the Australians as an inhibitor to a more flexible style of operations, it was this very experience, as demonstrated by ‘old salts’ such as Barclay more than once having to exercise strong command and control to take over and influence the outcome of battle, that was perhaps one of the most significant measures of Culley’s Troop in South Vietnam.

Patrols	Sightings	Enemy	Contacts	Enemy KIA	Enemy KIA (Poss)	Enemy WIA	Own KIA	Own WIA		
Australian Squadron Patrols (December 1968 – December 1969)										
Total	242	471	3313	90	140	25	10			
Australian Squadron Patrols involving New Zealand Troop members										
Reconnaissance	36	111	741	13	20		2			
Recce/Ambush	32	59	425	13	24	2	6			
Ambush	3	9	70	2	8		1			
Total	71	179	1236	28	52	2	9	12		
New Zealand Commanded Patrols										
Reconnaissance	25	96	610	4	6		1			
Recce/Ambush	24	59	425	11	22	2	6			
Ambush	2	8	67	1	5					
Total	51	163	1102	16	33	2	7	10		
V and W Coy Operational Activity (December 1968-December 1969)										
Total				46	36	77		35	10	47

Table 2: 4 Troop Patrol Statistics 9 December 1968 – 3 December 1969¹²¹

During their stay, the first 4 Troop soldiers were involved in just under 30% of all of the Australian 2 and 3 Squadron patrol operations. Despite being involved in only 17% of the contacts, those contacts resulted in nearly a quarter of all confirmed Vietcong kills. It makes sense the Troop – a quarter of the total size of the Squadron – was responsible for 25% of the statistics. What is interesting is that the New Zealand quarter of the Squadron also observed a third of all enemy seen during the same period.

¹²¹ Material sourced from AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries [Vietnam], 7/12/8 - 7/12/20 3 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Logs, Annexes [1-31 December 1968 to 1-31 December 1969], in AWM, Canberra, and New Zealand Army 42/17/1 Part One, “Operations New Zealand ‘V’ Force Activity Reports, 23 August 1967 – 24 August 1970, ANZ, Wellington.

Whether or not there was an element of fortune – a question of the New Zealanders being in the right place at the right time – that influenced or explains these statistics, there could be no escaping the fact Culley's 4 Troop was able to, in the three years since Borneo, once again clearly display the New Zealand SAS' obvious and consummate skill in carrying out long-range reconnaissance patrols in South East Asian jungle environments where, regardless of distance or the opportunity to cross sovereign borders, it was still as important to report enemy movement as it was to remain undetected. Of all enemy observed by all SAS patrols between December 1968 and February 1971, including all Australian patrols during that period, Culley's single Troop were responsible for sighting just over 30%.

There seems little doubt that the McGee incident in December 1969 cast a lasting and impressionable shadow on the first New Zealand Troop, but did the assault of Howlett and the subsequent and seemingly inadequate punishment meted out by Lynch, for which many within the Australian Squadron felt each was as unpalatable as the other, go so far as to impact upon 4 Troop and its overall operational performance in Phuoc Tuy province during 1969?

According to Terry Culley, through his discussions with Beesley, the New Zealand Troop Commander was aware that between 'five and seven' gallantry citations had been prepared as a result of activity (patrols, operations, contacts) carried out by the first New Zealand 4 Troop.¹²² Culley was always conscious of the relationship with Beesley the Troop (or at the very least he and Ball) possessed. Personalities aside, Culley was confident that the New Zealanders' operational performance would nevertheless be recognised:

Our final debrief of the tour – and that's when he told me 'I'm really impressed with what your guys have achieved and there's five for sure – maybe seven – citations that I'm putting in for you, your troops.' And consequently I got home and didn't worry about it thinking that it was all going to happen.¹²³

Culley was not sure whether the citations had been filed or destroyed.¹²⁴ This would have made for a quite an astonishing ratio of 1 to 3.7 for the first Troop, perhaps an altogether

¹²² Terry Culley, interview conducted on 21 July 2008.

¹²³ Terry Culley, interview conducted on 21 July 2008.

¹²⁴ Telephone discussion with Terry Culley conducted on 8 January 2008.

unrealistic proposition for any single unit operating in South Vietnam, be it the SAS OC, Australian Task Force or NZV Force officers, let alone those within the respective Army Headquarters in Canberra or Wellington. Culley added that after Vietnam, subsequent approaches by Major Neville Kidd were made to the New Zealand Army to have some of the 4 Troop patrol members considered, but the difficulty of retrospectively granting awards was likely to be far too problematic, and in order to maintain the 'relationship with the Australian Army,' Wellington declined to progress Kidd's recommendations.¹²⁵ It remains a significant and disappointing outcome for many, including Culley, Kidd and others, who strongly believe that at the very least, Johnston, Brown and Lillicrapp, as well as Barclay, should have been recognised for their efforts in 1969.¹²⁶

This notwithstanding, some New Zealand SAS veterans feel that such was the damage done by the McGee incident that if depriving 4 Troop of gallantry awards was the ultimate cost then it would be a price that the New Zealand SAS would have to pay. But even if it could be argued that the 'distasteful activity of that last night' ruled out the first 4 Troop, were the subsequent New Zealand SAS Troops equally less deserving?¹²⁷ Any decrease in the operational tempo of SAS activity in Phuoc Tuy province from late 1969 onwards may have been a contributing factor in the two New Zealand Troops commanded by Shattky and Lieutenant Jack Hayes similarly not receiving any medallic recognition, although the last Troop was there for less than three months which in all probability would account for an absence of awards.¹²⁸

While it could never be said that those subsequent New Zealand patrols carried out after 12 December 1969 were any less dangerous, of the twenty-six decorations awarded to the Australian SAS on active service in South Vietnam, only five (one Military Medal and four Mention in Dispatches) were awarded after January 1970.¹²⁹ In addition, senior members of the second 4 Troop to Vietnam have also opined that such was the variation

¹²⁵ While it is unclear whether or not the citations got beyond the Squadron Commanders tent, Fenton's presence at the Troop farewell function may have also been significant. Neville Kidd, interview conducted on 16 July 2008 and Terry Culley, interview conducted on 21 July 2008.

¹²⁶ Terry Culley, interview conducted on 21 July 2008.

¹²⁷ Terry Culley, interview conducted on 21 July 2008.

¹²⁸ As will be discussed in the following chapter, there is evidence that Bill Taare had been recommended for a gallantry medal – possibly an MID - as a result of his conduct displayed during patrol 014/70 in January 1970 – after Graham Campbell had been shot and killed. A recommendation written by Shattky was forwarded to Beesley but no award was ever made. Terry Culley, interview conducted on 21 July 2008, Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008 and Crosby, *NZSAS*, p. 222.

¹²⁹ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, pp. 480-481.

of operational intensity in terms of enemy observed and contacts that took place, if any gallantry awards were deserved, they would most probably have been earned by members of Culley's first Troop.¹³⁰

The McGee incident would remain a disappointing episode in the following decades that neither of the two groups involved were willing or able to forget. In her 2009 publication *Grey Ghosts: New Zealand Vietnam Vets Talk About Their War*, Deborah Challinor quoted an Australian SAS Regiment Association article titled 'Working relationships that were not too close,' in which an unnamed Australian author wrote:

We...will retain 'fond' memories of the Kiwis though – especially the heroes who beat him to a pulp in a most cowardly fashion. Big victory, ambush a drunken officer at midnight! Nice one! That really hurt us all with that one beating and undid all the diplomatic and conciliatory work that had been done by a lot of people...¹³¹

On 12 December, Culley's replacement Shattky wrote in his personal diary that he believed matters surrounding the assault on Howlett had now been resolved, albeit 'perhaps not satisfactorily' and with the first Troop now gone, Shattky hoped with it had gone 'all those problems that were peculiar to it...'¹³² It was now up to the new 4 Troop Commander and subsequent New Zealand deployments to not only maintain the operational reputation that Culley's soldiers had demonstrated in 1969 but also, and perhaps more importantly for the remainder of the campaign in South Vietnam, restore the reputation of the New Zealand Special Air Service in the eyes of their Australian counterparts.

¹³⁰ Danny Wilson, interview conducted on 18 July 2008.

¹³¹ Challinor, *Grey Ghosts*, pp. 66-67.

¹³² Captain D.G. Shattky, "12 December 1969" in Shattky's personal diary and Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008.

Part IV: 4 Troop: 1969-1971

Chapter 12

The Second New Zealand 4 Troop: December 1969 – August 1970

Once the first group left, the second group were younger – not full of old salts. And they adapted more quickly and easier.¹

The formal changeover between the first and second 4 Troop deployment took place at 0800 hrs on 12 December 1969. There was little in the way of an extended handover other than that which had taken place between Captain Graye Shattky and his Patrol Commanders already in country:²

...you'd get a bit of information off some of the mates that you knew – like Johnno would say, excellent bloke Johnno Johnston – 'you go out there, make sure everything is alright. Never mind this bloody gung-ho – this doesn't work here.'³

While Shattky's advance party was by now aware of the McGee incident, there was little thought that it may have had any lasting effect on the relationship between 3 Squadron and the newly arrived New Zealand Troop.⁴ The most important objective for the new group was to 'see how the Australians operated'⁵ and as with some of the initial impressions of the Australian Squadron gained when Culley's group first arrived in December 1968, Shattky's Troop had similar mixed views of the Australian Squadron:

Some were good and some were just straight arseholes as far as I was concerned. But some were okay you know...I didn't pick up anything from them. As I say, right from the word go, we – I never saw what they were doing, you know - when they did their practice patrol drill before they went out – ah, range test firing. Some of the Aussies were good – you know, they hung around with us but some of them were laid back and, as I said, just stayed in their tents most of the bloody time and did nothing. And I think that was one of the reasons why they didn't get on well with a lot of ours.⁶

The Troop had little time to settle as thirteen were involved in 3 Squadron's operational parachute descent, codenamed Operation STIRLING, which took place over 15 and 16

¹ Reg Beesley interview with Gary McKay, AWM, Canberra, recorded on 4 September 1997.

² Danny Wilson, interview conducted on 18 July 2008, Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008 and 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, "Activity Report – December 1969, 13 January 1970," in AWM103 R723/1/79: Reports – General - New Zealand SAS Activity Reports, 1969-1970, AWM, p.1.

³ Ernie Stead, interview conducted on 13 June 2008.

⁴ Danny Wilson, interview conducted on 18 July 2008.

⁵ Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008.

⁶ Danny Wilson, interview conducted 18 July 2008.

December 1969.⁷ As well as Trooper Bill Moffitt's involvement in the advance Pathfinder group, ten 4 Troop members were also 'used to secure the Drop Zone and recover parachutes while 3 Squadron patrols were deployed on various recce/ambush tasks' the following day.⁸ Staff-Sergeant Danny Wilson and Sergeant Ernie Stead, both of whom were qualified Parachute Jump Instructors (PJI) supervised the 'ground training' and acted as dispatchers respectively.⁹ Major John Murphy who commanded 3 Squadron when the Australians had first arrived in South Vietnam in 1966 had similarly carried out a Squadron parachute descent in January 1967. Of the jump, Murphy described it as 'largely a sporting gimmick.'¹⁰



Photograph 7: 4 Troop New Zealand Special Air Service, November 1969¹¹

Of the twelve patrol groups deployed on Operation STIRLING, only five all-Australian patrols continued on patrol operations after the descent. The five patrols were inserted into their respective patrol AO by APCs of B Squadron, 3 Cavalry Regiment. The rest of the Squadron, including the New Zealanders, remained behind to clear the Drop Zone

⁷ The operation is likely to have been named in honour of the founder of the British SAS, Lieutenant-Colonel David Stirling, although Horner appears not to be aware of this as he refers to the descent and subsequent patrols as Operation 'STERLING.' Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 344.

⁸ 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, "Activity Report – December 1969, 13 January 1970," p.1 and Corporal K. Thompson, "Operational Para Descent, 13 January 1970," in NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington, p.1.

⁹ Ernie Stead, interview conducted on 13 June 2008.

¹⁰ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 201.

¹¹ NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington.

(DZ), provide DZ perimeter security and collect the discarded parachutes.¹² Operation STIRLING was ostensibly designed to practise parachute insertions into an operational area.¹³ While Horner suggested that the operation also served as a deception for the insertion of the five patrols, this would have made more sense had the patrols been left behind after the pathfinder and security elements had departed, and not been inserted into their respective AOs by the APCs.¹⁴

New Zealand SAS SOPs: Contacts and the Extraction of Wounded or Dead

Of the 34 contacts in which New Zealand SAS patrols were involved between December 1968 and March 1971, only one was enemy initiated. Regrettably, that single contact inflicted the only New Zealand SAS casualty of the campaign. The SAS attitude to casualties was if any member of a patrol was wounded it was essential that he not be 'left behind.' It was made clear every effort was to be made to remove the man and his equipment from the immediate contact area. These lessons had been learned in Borneo:

They [British SAS in Borneo] had lost some prior to what they used to call 'shoot and scoot.' But they would 'shoot and scoot' and leave the others behind you see, and that was one of the problems they were having, especially when the two got badly wounded – Lillico and Thompson.¹⁵ They got wounded you see and the

¹² Major R.P. Beesley, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 183 1/69 Op Stirling, 13 December 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries, 7/12/20 3 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Log 1-31 December 1969, AWM, Canberra, p. 2.

¹³ In early 1970, both the New Zealand SAS Squadron and the Australian SAS Regiment had begun to examine the use of free-fall parachuting as a method of inserting patrols into operational areas. Both commenced free-fall courses in their respective countries and by April 1971, the Australians had at least one five-man patrol plus two reserve patrols that were capable of making operational jumps. The method was not used by the Australian SAS in South Vietnam, however, it was known that an American 5th Special Forces Group patrol had completed an undetected free fall insertion into South Vietnam in 1969. According to reports received by the Australians, when the Special Forces patrol assembled on the ground they discovered they had landed next to an NVA base camp. Had the patrol been inserted by helicopter or even static line parachuting, it was likely that they would have been detected. 2 SAS Squadron, "Report on Exercise KINGFISHER, 1 October 1970," 1ATF to AUSTFORCE Vietnam, "Operational Free Fall Insertions, 19 April 1971," and AHQ Canberra to AFV, "Operational Free Fall Parachute Insertions, 10 March 1971," all in AWM98 R579/1/70: Organisations – General –Role of SAS Squadron, 1970-1971, AWM, Canberra.

¹⁴ Interestingly, an unidentified senior New Zealand officer wrote on the New Zealand copy of the operational order for STIRLING 'They then climbed onto APC's and rode into battle!' Captain Graye Shattky, "Activity Report – December 1969, 13 January 1970," in New Zealand Army 15/28/10 Volume Two, New Zealand Forces Overseas – Vietnam: Operational Summaries, Reports, NZDF Archive, Wellington, and Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, pp. 343-344.

¹⁵ On 28 February 1965, two members of an eight-man British SAS patrol were wounded as a result of a contact with Indonesian regular troops on the Indonesian side of the Borneo border. The lead scout, Iain 'Jock' Thompson was hit in the left thigh and knocked off the track they were walking along. Thompson's Patrol Commander, Sgt Eddie 'Geordie' Lillico, had also been shot in the thigh but the round had grazed the sciatic nerve. Unable to use his legs, Lillico dragged himself off the track and into some nearby

others had gone. Whereas for hours and days, we would practise IA [Immediate Action] drills so that we always looked after one another. And we stuck to that – and that has become, even I think you'll find now, still in vogue with the Unit now – don't leave anyone behind...¹⁶

The attitude was designed to provide a consistency of peace of mind more than to determine an 'out-and-out' rule. Soldiers at any level and in any theatre needed to be assured that in the event of being wounded they would not be left by their comrades. It was important this single policy be ingrained way of thinking – to have done any differently would have left soldiers wondering just what criteria might determine their being either extracted or left behind. As always, it was the responsibility of the Patrol Commander to make such judgements based upon circumstances:

...it's alright to say 'whatever happens, we'll get our men out' but do you get them out at the cost of another two or three, and in a small patrol you only need another man to go down and you haven't got the manpower to get them out. So that is at the back of your mind – I suppose it's something that you can't answer until it happens...but if a guy goes out and knows that they are going to do their best to get him out of that, that's a big battle isn't it? Because if he is going out thinking 'God, I am going to be left behind if something happens to me,' he's not switched on...But you do have to go out with that thing – one and all in-type of thing. You have to have that...¹⁷

In 1970, the basic Australian SAS SOP for casualty evacuation in the event of a contact was similar to practised drills standard within 1 Ranger Squadron. The addition of a fifth member to most patrols made dealing with a patrol casualty slightly less daunting. Two patrol members could carry the casualty and leave the remaining two to take on the scout/'tail-end-charlie' roles.¹⁸ The standard drill called for the patrol member who first noticed the casualty to shout 'casualty' followed quickly by the wounded person's

undergrowth for the remainder of the contact. By the time the fire-fight had finished, the rest of Lilloco's patrol had carried out their 'shoot and scoot' procedures; a drill that required the group to immediately open fire once contacted to deter follow-up but also break contact as quickly as possible. Shortly after reaching their emergency RV location, the remaining patrol members decided to head to the nearest infantry position to get assistance. Nearly three days after the contact, Lilloco was picked up by a searching helicopter. The helicopter had twice flown over him the previous day, but due to the close proximity of Indonesian forces – also searching for the British soldiers – he had been unable to fire signal shots or activate his SARBE beacon, for fear of putting the helicopter, its crew, and himself in danger. Thompson was found the following day, having dragged himself over 1500 yards in an attempt to reach the border. In reward for their actions Lilloco would receive the MM and Thompson a MID. Asher, *The Regiment: The Real Story of the SAS*, pp. 387-392, Dickens, *SAS: Secret War in South-East Asia*, p. 33, Geraghty, *Who Dares Wins*, pp. 73-75, Warner, *The Special Air Service*, pp. 230-232 and Peter Scholey, *Who Dares Wins: Special Forces Heroes of the SAS* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2008), pp. 81-95.

¹⁶ Ernie Stead, interview conducted on 13 June 2008.

¹⁷ Jack Powley, interview conducted on 6 August 2008.

¹⁸ Michael Cunningham, interview conducted on 10 June 2008.

name.¹⁹ This was then repeated by the rest of the patrol. The two patrol members closest moved into a position to render assistance while the rest of the patrol adopted positions to provide covering fire.²⁰ The entire patrol then withdrew from the immediate area, using basic fire and movement, and once clear – with all-round defence established - an assessment of the condition of the wounded patrol member would to be made.²¹

Patrol 014/70

Shortly after 1500 hrs on 13 January, Sergeant Graham Campbell and his five-man recce/ambush patrol were inserted into Binh Tuy province to continue monitoring the eastern approaches to the May Taos.²² Born in Taihape in April 1943, Campbell had enlisted in the New Zealand Army in 1964 and was posted to 16 Field Regiment, Royal New Zealand Artillery. He completed New Zealand SAS selection (course number 12) early the following year and served with Dearing's second detachment in Borneo as the Intelligence NCO between August 1965 and February 1966. In 1968, he was one of two New Zealand SAS soldiers selected to learn Vietnamese at Victoria University before joining the second 4 Troop.²³

The next morning, the Patrol Commander and his scout, Trooper Whare Mira 'Bill' Taare, headed towards a track they had discovered the night before. The track was well-defined and showed signs of regular use within the previous 24 hours. The patrol was operating in 'secondary growth' with visibility between 15 and 20 metres. Campbell's plan for the morning was to establish an OP near the track and report back any subsequent enemy movement.²⁴ As the two advanced towards the track, Campbell is understood to have stepped on a stick or twig. The two froze, waiting to hear if the noise may have alerted enemy in the area. The patrol had heard voices north of their overnight LUP earlier that morning, but thus far had not seen any enemy.²⁵

¹⁹ Captain Terry Culley, "Post Operational Report - 4 Tp NZSAS, April 1970," NZSAS Archives, Auckland, pp. 6-8.

²⁰ Culley, "Post Operational Report - 4 Tp NZSAS, April 1970," pp. 6-8.

²¹ Culley, "Post Operational Report - 4 Tp NZSAS, April 1970," pp. 6-8.

²² Lance-Corporal A.S. Puia, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 014/70, 17 January 1970," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries, 7/12/21 3 Special Air Service Squadron, Narrative Duty Officers Log 1-31 January 1970, p.1.

²³ Holah, *Biographies, 4 Troop NZSAS*, NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington, pp. 4-5.

²⁴ Puia, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 014/70, 17 January 1970," p. 1.

²⁵ Puia, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 014/70, 17 January 1970," p. 1.

The two waited for a minute.²⁶ As soon as they began to move again, Campbell and Taare were engaged by a 'heavy' volume of automatic fire from at least five unseen enemy within 10 metres. Campbell fell to the ground. Taare immediately returned fire and as soon as he noticed his Patrol Commander was not firing, he shouted to the rest of the patrol that they should 'close up' toward his location. Trooper Warwick McCallion picked Campbell up, and with their fire and movement contact drills, the patrol withdrew.²⁷ After the patrol medic, Trooper Tama 'Sammy' Maaka wrapped a dressing around Campbell's head, the patrol suppressed the contact area with small arms fire and an 'M-34' white-phosphorus smoke grenade and withdrew in a westerly direction.²⁸

Several minutes later, patrol 2IC Lance-Corporal Sid Puia was able to send a radio message requesting a helicopter 'DUSTOFF.'²⁹ The message was received at Squadron Headquarters at 0905 hrs. Fifteen minutes later, approval for the patrol to be extracted was given to the Squadron Commander, and at 1040 hrs, the body of Campbell and his patrol were extracted to Vung Tau.³⁰ Later that afternoon, Beesley advised Shattky, whose own patrol had been inserted at the same time as 014/70, of Campbell's death. Shattky's patrol had also heard the contact earlier that morning but the Troop Commander did not tell his patrol of the death until they had returned to base several days later.³¹

In 1997, Beesley said the following:

...Sergeant Campbell, who was one of the best patrol commanders I had, a Kiwi, made a mistake and instead of walking back from a track and coming on to the track again, leaving some distance while you were doing it, he walked up the side of a track. The Vietcong did exactly what we were doing to them – and the first AK round

²⁶ Horner states that after Campbell broke a stick, the two waited forty-five minutes before advancing. Puia, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 014/70, 17 January 1970," p. 1 and Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 346.

²⁷ Terry Culley, interview conducted on 21 July 2008.

²⁸ 3 SAS Squadron Nui Dat, "Contact – After Action Report, 17 January 1970" in AWM103 R617/1/5/8 Part 2: SAS Patrol Reports and Programmes 1970, pp.1-2.

²⁹ 'DUSTOFF,' sometimes referred to as 'Dedicated Untiring Service to Our Fighting Forces,' was the term (or call-sign) used to describe a helicopter used for casualty evacuations. Picken, *Viet Nam Diggers' Language*, p. 23.

³⁰ 3 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 14 January 1970," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/21, 3 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative, Duty Officer's Log, Annexes [1-31 January 1970], AWM, Canberra, pp. 27-28.

³¹ Captain D.G. Shattky, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 013/70, 21 January 1970," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries, 7/12/21, p.1 and Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008.

went through his mouth and out the back of his head. He died and took forty-five minutes to get a helicopter to him. But he died en route.³²

Further credence to the claim that Campbell was not killed instantly, was provided by Terry Pinkerton, a member of the RAAF 9 Squadron helicopter crew who extracted the patrol on 14 January. In an interview for *On Patrol with the SAS: Sleeping with your Ears Open*, Pinkerton claimed that he told the rest of the patrol ‘Campbell was still alive.’³³

Almost certainly, Campbell had been killed instantly. As soon as they were able, Puia ordered the patrol stop so that Maaka could conduct a more detailed examination of their Patrol Commander. While Taare was reasonably certain that Campbell had been shot in the head, Maaka could not find an entry wound, observed no bleeding and was unable to feel any exit wound. Neither was there any pulse. As the patrol medic commenced bandaging Campbell’s head, Maaka noticed bleeding from one of the Patrol Commander’s closed eyes. By opening the eye, Maaka discovered the entry wound. The medic and other patrol members subsequently concluded that the round must have ‘hit something on the way, like the rifle or a tree, and turned sideways.’³⁴ There could be no other explanation why such a high velocity round had not made any exit wound.³⁵

In the subsequent patrol contact report, Puia wrote that ‘paralleling or angling on to a known track which shows signs of being well-used could prove very dangerous’ as it allowed anyone moving along the track ‘to detect the patrol.’³⁶ Beesley concurred with the assessment and added that patrolling parallel to a track was quite possibly just as dangerous as walking on one, although it is unclear whether the Patrol Commander knew of the track’s precise location.³⁷ While there is no suggestion the Patrol Commander or his patrol in any way lacked the level of professionalism that had come to mark New Zealand SAS operations in South Vietnam, there is an argument that Campbell may have been a victim of his own success. Patrol 014/70 was Campbell’s third since he had arrived as part of the second Troop’s advance team and his second as a Patrol

³² Reg Beesley interview with Gary McKay, AWM, Canberra, recorded on 4 September 1997. Horner also records that Campbell ‘died in transit.’ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 346.

³³ McKay, *On Patrol with the SAS*, p. 218.

³⁴ Terry Culley, interview conducted on 21 July 2008.

³⁵ Terry Culley, interview conducted on 21 July 2008.

³⁶ 3 SAS Squadron Nui Dat, “Contact – After Action Report, 17 January 1970,” pp. 1-2.

³⁷ 3 SAS Squadron Nui Dat, “Contact – After Action Report, 17 January 1970,” pp. 1-2.

Commander.³⁸ Of these, the most recent, another six-man recce/ambush patrol, had been particularly successful; eight enemy had been sighted and a Claymore ambush on the fourth day of the patrol had killed two Vietcong and resulted in the recovery of an AK-47 rifle:³⁹

...when we had all done our first patrol, the Patrol Commanders all got together with the boss and that, and we all had a general discussion of how we had gone. And one Patrol Commander says 'I don't want that scout – he's too bloody careful.' [I said] 'I'll have him.' They all looked at me – I said 'no, I'll take him.' That Patrol Commander got killed on the next one. So, if you are not aware of what can happen, you're going to get the chop – can't be too careful...And I think you can become terribly overconfident, and there was one killed in the next one and they got two before that – and the next one after that he got killed didn't he? Fuck – too careful? No one is too careful mate.⁴⁰

While the Troop Sergeant Jack Powley and Lance-Corporal John Tuahine travelled to Vung Tau to formally identify Campbell's body, the patrol was debriefed as was the normal Australian Squadron routine.⁴¹ In the absence of Shattky, Wilson took on the role of monitoring the patrol's reaction to the loss of Campbell. He did not question any of the patrol members, believing those who wanted to talk would approach the Troop Warrant Officer when they were ready:

Because if you questioned them, then sooner or later they are going to start thinking that maybe you think that it was their fault that this happened – so it was better to just leave it there.⁴²

Nevertheless, the loss of Campbell was felt by all within the Troop.⁴³ It was not helped when Beesley initially refused to allow a memorial service for the dead Patrol Commander, fearing if further deaths occurred within the Squadron, he would have to conduct numerous services that would ultimately affect the morale of the entire

³⁸ Campbell's first patrol had been the first detachment's last before returning to New Zealand. Sergeant J. Johnston, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 196/69, 6 December 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries, 7/12/20 3 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Log 1-31 December 1969, pp.1-2 and Sergeant G.J. Campbell, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 218/69, 6 January 1970," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries, 7/12/21 3 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Log 1-31 January 1970, p.2.

³⁹ Campbell, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 218/69, 6 January 1970," p. 2.

⁴⁰ Ernie Stead, interview conducted on 13 June 2008.

⁴¹ As well as being Troop Sergeant, Powley shared a tent with Campbell. Campbell's body was returned to New Zealand and he was buried in Wairoa with 1 Ranger Squadron providing a guard of honour and firing party. Holah, *Biographies, 4 Troop NZSAS*, pp. 4-5, and Jack Powley, interview conducted on 6 August 2008.

⁴² Danny Wilson, interview conducted on 18 July 2008.

⁴³ Otto Simmonds, interview (no date) with Patrick Bronte and Carl Bradley, NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington.

Squadron.⁴⁴ It was Beesley's 2IC, Captain Ross Bishop who convinced the Squadron Commander to change his mind.⁴⁵ The New Zealanders had not wanted a formal military 'parade-come-remembrance' service and could not understand Beesley's reluctance to allow them a simple 'get-together' which would enable the Troop to quietly say their own particular farewells.⁴⁶ Besides, if Campbell had been one of the 'best Patrol Commanders' Beesley had, at the very least the Australian Squadron Commander could have afforded his New Zealand comrades a small memorial service.⁴⁷

For many of the Troop, a sombre evening in the Squadron bar that night further assisted with expunging grief for the loss, albeit in the short-term.⁴⁸ The patrol was given two days in Vung Tau before returning to Nui Dat to continue operations. The Troop indeed took Campbell's death badly, but at the same time also accepted that it could have been any one of them, and as professional soldiers, needed to continue with their work. Campbell's death was the first New Zealand SAS casualty on active service since 1956.⁴⁹ It was a salutary lesson taught in the most extreme way:

I mean you never forgot it, and if anything, it probably – in lots of ways a hard way to do it – it brought home a lot of lessons to you. You know, it's not all games out there.⁵⁰

As Troop Sergeant, it was Powley's job to get the patrol back into operations as quickly as possible. After the death of Campbell their first patrol took place between 1 and 8 February 1970.⁵¹ There was some argument that the soldiers should have returned to patrolling sooner than this but there was also, understandably, some hesitancy on the part

⁴⁴ McKay, *On Patrol with the SAS*, p. 218.

⁴⁵ Barnes, *Voices From Vietnam*, p. 214, McKay, *On Patrol with the SAS*, p. 218 and Jack Powley, interview conducted on 6 August 2008.

⁴⁶ Jack Powley, interview conducted on 6 August 2008 and Barnes, *Voices From Vietnam*, pp. 214-215.

⁴⁷ Horner also states that Campbell was held in high regard by Beesley. Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p.346.

⁴⁸ Danny Wilson, interview conducted on 18 July 2008.

⁴⁹ Trooper A.R. 'Charlie' Thomas was killed in Malaya on 2 May 1956. Thomas and Campbell remain the only two New Zealand SAS soldiers to have been killed in action in the 53-year history of the New Zealand unit. NZSAS (Inc), *Jubilee Journal, A 50th Jubilee Newsletter of the NZSAS Association* (Palmerston North: NZSAS Association and ATL 'n' Print, 2005), p.4.

⁵⁰ Shattky wrote a gallantry citation to Beesley on 2 February but no award was ever made to Taare. Shattky retains a copy of the citation. Captain D.G. Shattky "41724 Tpr TAARE WM, 2 February 1970," Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008 and Jack Powley, interview conducted on 6 August 2008.

⁵¹ Sergeant J. Powley, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 030/70, 10 February 1970," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries, 7/12/22 3 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Log 1-17 February 1970, AWM, Canberra, p.2

of the patrol to get back into the operational routine.⁵² Certainly the heightened tension associated with returning to operations was exacerbated when enemy were spotted on the primary LZ just as the insertion helicopter approached to land:

I think we were coming in to touch down [and] I'm not sure who saw the enemy – whether it was us, the pilot or the [door gunners] but I think it was aborted as we were going in – because as you know, we have an 'Albie Lead' up the top; you come in or two of you come in – and I think it was then that we aborted and went to the secondary LZ.⁵³

It was standard practice for the Patrol Commander to select two patrol insertion points in the event that one – the primary LZ – was compromised. Both the Patrol Commander and 9 Squadron pilot commanding the insertion flight viewed both the LZs during the Visual Reconnaissance (VR) flight.⁵⁴ Powley's patrol subsequently discovered their second LZ had been on the perimeter of a large unoccupied enemy training camp.⁵⁵ Any reluctance to resume operations, real or otherwise was immediately put to one side. Interestingly, the group's next patrol, between 14 and 22 March, also began with Taare spotting an enemy Vietcong on the perimeter of the LZ just before the helicopter landed.⁵⁶ On that occasion the enemy was not seen again. It was a measure of the management from Shattky, Wilson and Powley as well as the New Zealanders' training which enabled the patrol to 'switch-on' relatively quickly; most SAS members would have expected nothing less.⁵⁷ Powley himself was withdrawn from the patrol seven days later suffering a 'severe skin allergy,' and this left Taare in command until they were extracted the following afternoon.⁵⁸ There would be no more time for grieving and for some 'closure' did not happen for another thirty-eight years.⁵⁹

⁵² Ernie Stead, interview conducted on 13 June 2008.

⁵³ Jack Powley, interview conducted on 6 August 2008.

⁵⁴ Captain D.G. Shattky, "4 Troop NZSAS Post – Operational Report SVN 1969/70, 26 October 1970," NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington, p.5 and 2 SAS Squadron, "2 SAS Sqn Standing Operating Procedures, 16 September 1968," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries, 7/11/7 2 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Log 1-30 September 1968, AWM, Canberra, Annex A.

⁵⁵ According to *Voices from Vietnam*, the patrol 'landed about 100m inside a Vietcong camp.' Powley states that this is not accurate. Barnes, *Voices from Vietnam*, p. 214 and Jack Powley, interview conducted on 6 August 2008.

⁵⁶ Sergeant J. Powley, "1 SAS Squadron Ops 061/70, 22 March 1970," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries, 7/12/22, p.2

⁵⁷ Jack Powley, interview conducted on 6 August 2008.

⁵⁸ See Sergeant J. Powley, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 030/70, 10 February 1970," p. 2.

⁵⁹ On 12 January 2008 close to 150 people gathered at the New Zealand Army National Marae in Waiouru, to honour the death of Sergeant Campbell in a Kawe Mate (Memorial) Service. Three of the remaining four patrol members, Taare, Puia and McCallion, as well as Peter Bradford – the Australian 9 Squadron pilot who flew Campbell's body and the rest of the patrol to Vung Tau, attended the Service. A photograph of the former Patrol Commander was placed in the Marae as part of the ceremony. Francesca Low (2008):

4 Troop: January – June 1970

By the time Shattky's first all-New Zealand patrols began deploying at the end of December 1969, the tempo of operations in Phuoc Tuy province was decreasing as the success of large-scale Task Force operations began to impact upon the enemy.⁶⁰ As a result, there was a marked reduction in the number of contacts the New Zealanders, and the Australian Squadron for that matter, had during 1970. Nevertheless, the Troop remained particularly active, especially when the Australian Squadron changeover took place. Between 18 February, when Major Ian Teague's 1 Squadron officially took over from Beesley's 3 Squadron, and 1 March - when the new Squadron commenced patrolling - Shattky's New Zealand Troop was responsible for carrying out all SAS reconnaissance patrolling activity for the Task Force.⁶¹

Between early January and the end of May 1970, the New Zealand Troop carried out twenty-five patrols. Of these, 16 were recce/ambush operations, seven reconnaissance patrols, and two dedicated 'ambush' tasks. While the second Troop's tour was marked by 'a distinct lessening of enemy sightings,' a considerable proportion of the patrols nevertheless did sight enemy and enemy sign, either small parties travelling on tracks or destroyed, or only recently vacated, camps.⁶²

The first all-New Zealand patrol for the second 4 Troop, 217/69 commanded by Shattky, took place between 28 December 1969 and 4 January 1970.⁶³ The patrol had been inserted by helicopter approximately eight kilometres south of Nui May Taos. By mid-afternoon on 31 December the patrol discovered an unoccupied 'squad-sized' enemy

'Report from Kawe Mate service in Waiouru: Honouring a Vietnam Veteran' in *The Free Glance – Journal of the New Zealand Special Air Service Association (Inc)*, March 2008, Auckland, pp.12-13.

⁶⁰ Sergeant E.P. Stead, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 219/69 Patrol Report, 5 January 1970," Sergeant J.T. Murray, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 220/69 Patrol Report, 3 January 1970," Sergeant G.J. Campbell, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 218/69 Patrol Report, 6 January 1970" and Captain D.G. Shattky, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 217/69 Patrol Report, 5 January 1970," all in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries, 7/12/21.

⁶¹ Major I.C. Teague, "Training Instruction 1/70 In-Country Training, 12 February 1970" in NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington, p.1.

⁶² Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008.

⁶³ Shattky, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 217/69, 5 January 1970," p. 1.

transit camp. The camp was well camouflaged and Shattky suspected it had been used on several occasions within the previous ten days.⁶⁴

The inherent danger in reconnoitring enemy camps, in particular empty transit camps, was that a patrol could never be precisely sure of the enemy's return. Contacts, when they did occur, were 'sudden, vicious and momentary at ranges normally no more than 30 metres.'⁶⁵ Carrying out close target reconnaissance (CTR) of enemy camps or built up areas was 'stressful' for an SAS patrol that was always concerned it may encounter a considerably larger enemy force. To this end and taking much from their experiences in Borneo, reconnaissance of positions in Phuoc Tuy province was always cautious and very careful:

...you never entered a complex – back off or try and find the entrance tracks to see and try and gauge when it was last occupied and if it is still being occupied.⁶⁶

By recounting his own experiences as a New Zealand Infantry soldier in South Vietnam in 1994, Colin Smith wrote that the enemy within Phuoc Tuy province 'were undoubtedly formidable and merciless...but were handicapped by their lack of command flexibility and lack of mobility compared to the air-mobile ATF.'⁶⁷ From a New Zealand SAS perspective, the enemy's actions sometimes negated respect for standards of field-craft or professional soldiery. More often than not, bad habits were the single reason for giving away their presence in the jungle, particularly talking and their 'appalling habit of expectorating at regular intervals.'⁶⁸

Yes, spitting was a big thing you picked up. Asians really hawking it up – and you could hear them coming down the track...they used to have some women – you could hear them yakking away.⁶⁹

Invariably, patrols identified an enemy position by smell and/or sound before it was seen. For most of Corporal Sonny Taniora's experiences, this was most certainly the case:

Every camp we hit, it was always given away by women – there was two, three patrols I was on – one with Terry Culley – and the first thing I came across, I

⁶⁴ Shattky, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 217/69, 5 January 1970," p. 1.

⁶⁵ Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008.

⁶⁶ Whi Wanoa, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

⁶⁷ Smith, *The Killing Zone*, pp. 24-25.

⁶⁸ Captain A.W. Freemantle (1974): 'Patrol Lessons in Vietnam' in *Australian Army Journal*, February 1974, Canberra, Australia, pp.44-45.

⁶⁹ Michael Cunningham, interview conducted on 10 June 2008.

heard this bloody noise and I wasn't too sure what it was. I thought it was one of those bloody lizards, you know the big ones, and how they walk? And you could hear this 'swishing' – and so we propped and we listened...And then we heard the voices – and what it was, was two women camouflaging the track with these little brooms [used] to sweep - 'swish-swish' – they were sweeping the leaves back on the track. So we knew there was a camp there – so we just started looping around the place- trying to find the perimeter.⁷⁰

All Patrol Commanders and their scouts developed 'well-rehearsed procedures for reconnoitring enemy camps.'⁷¹ Drills involved lengthy periods of quite simply 'listening for indications of occupation.'⁷² If no sound was heard, the Patrol Commander and scout very cautiously traversed the perimeter of the camp until they were able to identify entry and exit points, as well as locate an 'approach' which could then be used for entry by patrol members. After completion of the camp reconnaissance, which could take several hours, the pair returned to the rest of the patrol where the Patrol Commander articulated his plan for who was to enter the camp, how this would be done and an expected time-frame for the exercise. Most importantly, he would ensure the rest of his patrol knew exactly the direction from which the reconnaissance pair would return, and individual action taken should there be a contact and the patrol members become separated, including the location of alternative RV points.⁷³

Shattky's second patrol of his tour, 013/70 between 13 and 20 January 1970, discovered a camp on the morning of the third day of the patrol.⁷⁴ Shortly thereafter, Shattky and his scout, Trooper Keri Tahana, began to reconnoitre the camp and just as they spotted one enemy bunker, they 'heard voices and equipment rattling of estimated 2 enemy in close vicinity.'⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Sonny Taniora, interview conducted on 19 July 2008, and Captain T.N. Culley, "3 SAS Sqn Ops 52/69 Patrol Report, 10 May 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/13, 3 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative, Duty Officer's Log, Annexes [1-30 May 1969], AWM, p.1.

⁷¹ Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008.

⁷² Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008.

⁷³ RVs were split into two; an Immediate RV, which was used as part of the IA contact drill, and the Patrol RV – usually set between '300 and 1000 paces back along the route of march' from the point of contact. The distances from the two RVs would often depend on the vegetation, and would remain 'open' for four hours of daylight after a contact. 2 SAS Squadron, "2 SAS Sqn Standing Operating Procedures, 16 September 1968," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries, 7/11/7 2 Special Air Service Squadron, Narrative Duty Officers Log 1-30 September 1968, AWM, Canberra, pp.3-4.

⁷⁴ The patrol included Lance Corporal Heremaia (medic) and Troopers John Tawhara (2IC), Osborne (signaller) and Tahana (scout). Captain D.G. Shattky, "3 SAS Squadron Ops 013/70, 21 January 1970," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries, 7/12/21 3 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Log 1-31 January 1970, p.1.

⁷⁵ 3 SAS Squadron Nui Dat, "Contact – After Action Report, 23 January 1970," in AWM103 Department of the Army R617/1/5/9 Part 1: Patrols – General - SAS Patrols 1970, AWM, Canberra.

I remember vividly; we had come in through the latrine and were tip-toeing up the track with bamboo thickets ahead and on either side. Keri was, maybe five – six metres in front while I covered, when suddenly there was this ‘yabba-yabba’ of conversation from a dense thicket immediately in front of him. That was it! Instinct and practise took over – Keri let go a long burst in the direction of the voices and immediately bolted back past me while I hurled the white-phosphorus grenade I’d been carrying with the pin out. We covered each other using fire and movement back to the latrine, and rejoined the patrol.⁷⁶

Knowing where their Patrol Commander and scout were likely to emerge, the remainder of the patrol assisted their withdrawal by suppressing the contact area – some thirty metres away – until Shattky and Tahana were able to rejoin the patrol. By 1230 hrs, the patrol was confident they were not being pursued and patrol signaller Trooper John Osborne was able to report the contact to Squadron Headquarters.⁷⁷ It is not clear whether or not the patrol made the initial request, but a little over an hour later, a 9 Squadron ‘Light Fire Team’ contacted the patrol and proceeded to carry out two strafing runs on the enemy camp.⁷⁸ More tracks were discovered by the patrol but no further enemy were seen after the helicopter attack and the patrol was extracted early on the morning of 20 January.⁷⁹

Two other New Zealand reconnaissance patrols at the end of March 1970 demonstrated even though opportunities for contacting the enemy were less frequent, there was nevertheless more than enough activity about Phuoc Tuy province to maintain the Troop members’ levels of concentration whilst on patrol. Between 23 and 29 March, Wilson had led a six-man reconnaissance patrol into an area eight kilometres south-east of Xuyen Moc where the location of two old camps were known.⁸⁰ Early on the fourth day, the patrol discovered a well-defined foot track, approximately ‘18 inches wide,’ worn bare and showing signs of use within the last 12 hours.⁸¹ Wilson decided to establish an OP on the track and in the space of seven hours observed 24 Vietcong travelling along the

⁷⁶ Graye Shattky, interview conducted 25 November 2008.

⁷⁷ The radio-log records that the patrol had been involved in a ‘contact’ with an estimated ‘six’ enemy at the bunker system that morning. 3 SAS Squadron “Ops Logs, 15 January 1970,” in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/21, p. 29.

⁷⁸ Shattky, “3 SAS Squadron Ops 013/70, 21 January 1970,” p. 2.

⁷⁹ Shattky, “3 SAS Squadron Ops 013/70, 21 January 1970,” p. 2.

⁸⁰ Staff-Sergeant D.W. Wilson, “1 SAS Sqn 072/70 Patrol Report, 30 March 1970,” in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries [Vietnam] 7/10/16, 1 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative, Duty Officer’s Log, Annexes [1-31 March 1970], AWM, Canberra, p.1

⁸¹ Wilson, “1 SAS Sqn 072/70 Patrol Report, 30 March 1970,” p. 1.

‘dusty’ path.⁸² The following day, the patrol discovered a partially overgrown ox-cart track 700 metres to the west of the foot track but no further enemy movement was observed. In his patrol debrief, Wilson recommended further reconnaissance take place of the two ‘old camps.’ Interestingly enough, the patrol report itself makes no reference to either of these two camps being located or observed during the patrol.⁸³

Between 26 March and 1 April, Sergeant Ernie Stead led a five-man patrol just south of the Long Khanh-Phuoc Tuy border near the Nui May Taos.⁸⁴ Within the first 24 hours, the group discovered two destroyed enemy camps which showed no sign of re-occupation.⁸⁵ The patrol continued on a south-easterly bearing and on the morning of the fifth day, found another ‘company-sized’ camp that, as with the other two, had been destroyed by an ‘airstrike.’⁸⁶

Later that afternoon, approximately 100 metres further south, Stead’s patrol located a further ‘large enemy base camp’ which, while not showing any sign of recent occupation, was nevertheless still in reasonable condition. The patrol counted 13 bunkers and an assortment of explosive and anti-personnel mines of Chicom manufacture, electric cable, NVA webbing, a collection of tools and cooking utensils as well as ‘four bottles of MITOX insecticide.’ Stead was confident there were no enemy in the immediate area and spent some time wrecking ‘two command bunkers’ and destroying the equipment.⁸⁷ A quantity of documents was also recovered by the patrol. Another two camps – one platoon-sized transit camp and a destroyed camp of company-size – were found the following day. Again, no sign of recent enemy activity was observed and the patrol was extracted by winch on the afternoon of 1 April 1970.⁸⁸

Patrol 143/70: Amphibious Insertions

...overboard, patrol out and disappears into darkness, boats remain on silent beach 50 metres apart, bulky black exposed mass, cry of lone seabird, thoughts of

⁸² Wilson, “1 SAS Sqn 072/70 Patrol Report, 30 March 1970,” p. 1.

⁸³ Wilson, “1 SAS Sqn 072/70 Patrol Report, 30 March 1970,” p. 2.

⁸⁴ Sergeant E.P. Stead, “1 SAS Sqn 075/70 Patrol Report, 2 April 1970,” in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries [Vietnam] 7/10/17, 1 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative, Duty Officer’s Log, Annexes [1-30 April 1970], AWM, Canberra, p.1.

⁸⁵ Stead, “1 SAS Sqn 075/70 Patrol Report, 2 April 1970,” p. 1.

⁸⁶ Stead, “1 SAS Sqn 075/70 Patrol Report, 2 April 1970,” p. 1.

⁸⁷ Stead, “1 SAS Sqn 075/70 Patrol Report, 2 April 1970,” pp. 1-2.

⁸⁸ Stead, “1 SAS Sqn 075/70 Patrol Report, 2 April 1970,” p. 2.

commando on past enemy coastlines, patrol signals they are clear of beach, through surf into raft-up position outside breakers, wait, return to ship, low-black silhouette on the horizon, flare over something or other, cast light over water, back to PBR [American Patrol River Boat], dark shapes reach out for lines, flurry of activity as boat lifted aboard, securing of boats, sleep on the warm plates of the deck.⁸⁹

During late March 1970, and in advance of a visit to the Troop by John Mace who was by now Director of Infantry and SAS, Shattky wrote a briefing paper titled *Current SAS Operations in SVN – The Need for a New Approach* in which he identified the principal SAS patrol insertion and extraction methods had developed a predictable pattern of operation recognised by the enemy.⁹⁰ This ‘conscious stream of thought’ had been manifesting in the Troop Commander’s mind for some time as his diary entry for 27 March 1970 suggested:

Growing concern of stereotype pattern of SAS Ops. Growing number of contacts on insertion/extraction LZs. Need to use all means at disposal, ingenuity etc.⁹¹

An ‘over-dependence’ on helicopter support combined with the increasing frequency of contacts on or near insertion and extraction LZs, demonstrated to Shattky that the Vietcong were indeed developing drills to counter patrol insertions. It was therefore essential to consider other methods of infiltration into operational areas beyond that of the helicopter. Parachute insertion, ‘stay-behind’ patrols after Task Force battalion operations, and water-borne insertions, were but just three examples he used.⁹² Copies of Shattky’s paper were provided to both Mace and Teague. In late April 1970, Teague wrote a Squadron Training memorandum in which he had, to quote Horner, become ‘concerned at the rather stereotyped nature of the SAS patrols and to introduce variety decided to land a number of patrols from small craft along the Phuoc Tuy coast.’⁹³ Just how much influence Shattky’s briefing note had on Teague is not entirely clear, but as the Commander of 1 Ranger Squadron’s Amphibious Troop before deploying to South Vietnam, Shattky must have been at least a particularly enthusiastic supporter of the use

⁸⁹ Captain D.G. Shattky, “29-30 June 1970” in Shattky’s personal diary, and Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008.

⁹⁰ 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, “Activity Report – February 1970, 6 March 1970” in AWM103 R723/1/79, p.1 and Captain Graye Shattky, “Current SAS Operations in SVN – The Need for a New Approach, 28 March 1970,” in Graye Shattky Archive, Otarehua, Central Otago.

⁹¹ Captain D.G. Shattky, “27 March June 1970” in Shattky’s personal diary, and Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008.

⁹² Shattky, “Current SAS Operations in SVN – The Need for a New Approach, 28 March 1970” and Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008.

⁹³ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 353.

of small-boats or canoes to insert patrols, if not the principal driving force responsible for instilling the idea into Teague.⁹⁴

The most usual form of SAS patrol insertion in Vietnam was helicopter. In his Troop activity report for May, Shattky made mention of eight patrols carried out by the Troop in June and also those Troop members who had assisted with the ‘amphibious insertion of four patrols’ on the last two nights of the month.⁹⁵ This was the first instance New Zealand SAS members were involved with amphibious operations in South Vietnam and the first for the Australians since early November 1966.⁹⁶ With the assistance of US Coastguard patrol boats, Sergeant Teaparapa ‘Tepa’ Dickson’s patrol 143/70 was one of four reconnaissance patrols inserted along the coast on the night of 30 May.⁹⁷ Born in May 1940, Dickson joined the New Zealand Army in 1959 and passed SAS selection three years later. A particularly experienced Patrol Commander, Dickson served in two tours of Borneo (with One and Four detachments) before arriving in Vietnam in 1969. While Horner wrote that all four patrols were landed safely,⁹⁸ for Powley and Wilson, who commanded two of the inflatable insertion boats, it was not quite all ‘plain sailing:’

Yeah, me and Danny had two rubber boat insertions. I think Danny and I were the only ones qualified on the outboard and they were a very small outboard on the rubber boat...one of the patrols we were going in – we hit a sand bar and I thought that it was the beach. So I went to cut the motor and lift it up – and I missed the thing, lifted the motor up and it roared like bloody hell! And I jumped over the side and went straight to the bottom you see. Anyway, we got back up – it was only a sand bar a few yards out from the beach.⁹⁹

During the afternoon of 31 May, one of the amphibious-inserted Australian patrols, 142/70 commanded by Sergeant Donald Fisher, was fired upon by at least three enemy. With no readily visible targets to engage, Fisher’s patrol suppressed the area from where the enemy fire was coming and withdrew. Forty-five minutes later, the patrol discovered

⁹⁴ Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008.

⁹⁵ Captain Graye Shattky, “Activity Report – June 1970,” in New Zealand Army 15/28/10 Volume Two.

⁹⁶ 3 Squadron had assisted a 5RAR operation to clear Vietcong off Long Son Island by patrolling in small ‘assault-craft’ the swamps and waterways around the island. By the end of that operation, Murphy’s Squadron had apprehended nearly 250 Vietnamese on the waterways and had ‘effectively sealed the island from the mainland.’ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, pp. 198-199.

⁹⁷ Sergeant A.V. Smith, “1 SAS Sqn Ops 140/70 Patrol Report, 6 June 1970,” Sergeant J.M. Duncan, “1 SAS Sqn Ops 141/70 Patrol Report, 6 June 1970,” Sergeant D.M. Fisher, “1 SAS Sqn Ops 142/70 Patrol report, 6 June 1970,” and Sergeant T. Dickson, 1 SAS Sqn Ops 143/70 Patrol Report, 6 June 1970,” all in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries, 7/10/19 1 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Log 1-30 June 1970, AWM, Canberra.

⁹⁸ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 353.

⁹⁹ Jack Powley, interview conducted on 6 August 2008.

a 'section-sized' position which contained two four-man bunkers. As he moved closer to investigate the bunkers, Fisher saw another two Vietcong moving towards the patrol. As soon as Fisher shot at the pair, the patrol poured fire in the direction of the enemy until no further movement was detected.¹⁰⁰

Dickson's patrol was only two and a half kilometres to the south-west of Fisher's location and heard both contacts.¹⁰¹ The New Zealand patrol continued on, well aware they were now likely to encounter enemy in their allocated AO. Most patrols followed the SOP that because the enemy was known to take a 'siesta' period during the hottest part of the day, they would similarly observe a 'park time' between 1100 and 1400 hrs.¹⁰² Just before what would be considered the beginning of 'park time' the following morning, the patrol discovered a Vietcong 'overnight camp' which contained bunkers, a well, cooking fires and sleeping spaces for six, and 'sign' indicating the camp had been used within the last 24 hours.¹⁰³ Three days later, Dickson's patrol moved into the area where Fisher's patrol had been contacted and found a 'squad-sized' enemy camp with some newly constructed bunkers, a variety of cooking implements, animal traps and fish nets, rice and a rice 'polishing/grinding' machine, a small quantity of medical supplies and some US military sandbags.¹⁰⁴ All the equipment and food was destroyed before the patrol left.

The next day, the New Zealand patrol found two recently constructed bunker systems within the same area. The first was made up of eight 'T-shaped' bunkers, four water wells and sleeping spaces for 21. The second set contained only four of the bunkers but enough discarded equipment and food to indicate the camp had hurriedly been vacated.¹⁰⁵ On the afternoon of 4 June, Dickson and Fishers' patrols met. Thirty minutes later, they were joined by the two other Australian patrols and all four groups were extracted by helicopter the following morning.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰ Fisher, "1 SAS Sqn Ops 142/70 Patrol report, 6 June 1970," p.1

¹⁰¹ Dickson, "1 SAS Sqn Ops 143/70 Patrol Report, 6 June 1970," p. 1.

¹⁰² 3 SAS Squadron Nui Dat 3 SAS Squadron *Standing Operating Procedures* dated 6 February 1969 in AWM103 Department of the Army, 444: 2 and 3 Squadrons SAS SOP's [Standing Operating Procedures], of same date, AWM, Canberra.

¹⁰³ Dickson, "1 SAS Sqn Ops 143/70 Patrol Report, 6 June 1970," p. 1.

¹⁰⁴ Dickson, "1 SAS Sqn Ops 143/70 Patrol Report, 6 June 1970," p. 1.

¹⁰⁵ Another 30 pound cache of rice, buried in an earthenware jar in the ground was also found close by. Dickson, "1 SAS Sqn Ops 143/70 Patrol Report, 6 June 1970," pp.1-2.

¹⁰⁶ Dickson, "1 SAS Sqn Ops 143/70 Patrol Report, 6 June 1970," pp.1-2.

4 Troop Operations 1970: ‘a distinct lack of enemy’

There is little material available to indicate that there was anything more than a token operational relationship between the SAS Squadron in Vietnam and infantry battalions also attached to the Australian Task Force. While this had much to do with the sheer physical separation between the forces, there were nevertheless on a number of occasions informal exchanges of information:

It seemed that the intelligence we provided, rarely found its way down to individual company commanders who, understandably, questioned the value and effectiveness of SAS operations. I was, on occasion, able to assist my Kiwi counterparts in Victor and Whisky Companies by informally updating them with details regarding areas they were about to enter on operations.¹⁰⁷

Three days after Dickson’s amphibious-inserted patrol had returned to Nui Dat in early June 1970, the patrol again carried out a reconnaissance of another suspected enemy camp within the same area.¹⁰⁸ On 9 June, patrol 153/70 established an OP on the opposite side of Route 328 which allowed observation of the entrance to an enemy camp. In the first two days of the OP, the patrol observed 69 enemy in 22 sightings; most were porters carrying food and a variety of unidentified weapons.¹⁰⁹

Late on the afternoon of 10 June, the patrol noted a series of ‘signal’ shots emanating from north-west of their location.¹¹⁰ No further enemy were observed at the enemy camp site for the rest of the patrol and Dickson’s group was extracted by helicopter on the afternoon of 15 June.¹¹¹ The sudden departure of the Vietcong from the camp on 10 June appeared unusual. Before being extracted, Dickson took his patrol back to the enemy camp which had contained the two sets of newly constructed bunkers discovered during the amphibious-inserted patrol on 4 June. It too was deserted and did not appear to have been used since the New Zealand SAS patrol’s previous visit at the beginning of the month.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ Crosby, *NZSAS*, p. 232 and Graye Shattky, emails to author 31 January and 22 February 2009.

¹⁰⁸ Sergeant T. Dickson, “1 SAS Sqn Ops 155/70 Patrol Report, circa 16/17 June 1970,” in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries, 7/10/19, pp. 1-2.

¹⁰⁹ Dickson, “1 SAS Sqn Ops 155/70 Patrol Report, circa 16/17 June 1970,” pp. 1-2.

¹¹⁰ Dickson, “1 SAS Sqn Ops 155/70 Patrol Report, circa 16/17 June 1970,” p. 2.

¹¹¹ Dickson, “1 SAS Sqn Ops 155/70 Patrol Report, circa 16/17 June 1970,” p. 2.

¹¹² Dickson, “1 SAS Sqn Ops 155/70 Patrol Report, circa 16/17 June 1970,” p. 2.

Shattky wrote that for five days between 8 and 12 June, Dickson's 2IC and scout Taare 'was employed as a guide by Bravo Company 8RAR' and led the Australian company to the camp Dickson's patrol had watched on 9 June.¹¹³ To confuse the issue, on 12 June, Dickson's patrol was instructed by Squadron Headquarters to 'prepare a brief for CO 7RAR.' The radio instruction also advised that the patrol was required to 'provide guides' to assist the infantry soldiers in linking with the SAS patrol and the enemy camp.¹¹⁴ Horner added that as a result of the intelligence collected by Dickson's OP and the four reconnaissance patrols in which Wilson and Powley had assisted after having been inserted via boat at the end of May, '7RAR mounted a four-day operation through the area,' on 19 June.¹¹⁵

According to official 8RAR reports, Operation CUNG CHUNG ('We Together') I, lasting from 12 June to 28 June, was an extension of Operation NUDGE and designed to block enemy access to the Long Dine, Hoe Long, Ape Sufi Nigh and Bin Be areas of Phuoc Tuy province.¹¹⁶ Nowhere within the records does it make any reference to SAS patrols, or patrol members, providing guidance or operational intelligence in support of infantry operations.¹¹⁷ However, in 7RAR's After-Action Report for Operation ELANORA, mention is made of the SAS having observed the camp Dickson's patrol had watched, although it records only '40-50 enemy were seen' by the patrol.¹¹⁸ It appears that the larger Task Force element had discouraged further camp activity and caused the Vietcong to withdraw.

¹¹³ Shattky, "Activity Report – June 1970."

¹¹⁴ 1 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 12 June 1970," in, in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries, 7/10/19, p.135.

¹¹⁵ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 354

¹¹⁶ Lieutenant-Colonel K.J. O'Neill, "8 RAR Combat Operations After Action Report Operations CUNG CHUNG I and PETRIE, 10 August 1970," in New Zealand Army Non-File Material ANFM A A804A, NZDF Archive, Wellington, p.4.

¹¹⁷ O'Neill, "8 RAR Combat Operations After Action Report Operations CUNG CHUNG I and PETRIE, 10 August 1970," p.4.

¹¹⁸ The only contact made during Operation ELANORA took place in the early hours of 20 June, close to the camp that Dickson's patrol had been observing. One Vietcong was killed was 30 pounds of rice were discovered. Lieutenant-Colonel R.A. Grey, "7RAR After Action Report – Operation ELANORA, 26 June 1970," in 7RAR After Action Reports, NZDF Archive, Wellington, p.2 and Annex A.

Concluding Notes

Of the twenty-nine SAS patrols carried out during August 1970, the New Zealand Troop conducted seven.¹¹⁹ None of the New Zealand patrols, including one ‘Fighting’ patrol and one ‘Ambush’ patrol, saw any enemy.¹²⁰ On the 22 Australian patrols, 32 enemy were observed in 11 sightings, and five contacts resulted in four Vietcong KIA (BC), as well as one possible KIA and one confirmed and one possible WIA.¹²¹ Six New Zealand reconnaissance patrols were conducted in September from a total of 25 Squadron patrols.¹²² In contrast during the same two-month period in 1969, 3 Squadron had conducted 38 patrols, observed 238 enemy during 58 sightings and had 23 contacts which resulted in at least 41 KIA.¹²³

During ‘Confrontation,’ several New Zealand SAS patrols had the opportunity to attack Indonesian camps but on most occasions the attacking force was made up of a troop-strength (16-20) compliment of British, New Zealand and sometimes Australian Squadron soldiers. The patrols which attempted to take on the Indonesians with only four or eight soldiers (one or two patrols), carried out the attacks at considerable risk to themselves:

...we actually hit that camp one morning – we ambushed the camp when they were coming down for breakfast...We put one bloke down by what we assumed was the

¹¹⁹ Sergeant E.P. Stead, “1 SAS Sqn Ops 205/70 Patrol Report, 3 August 1970,” Sergeant T. Dickson, “1 SAS Sqn Ops 209/70 Patrol Report, 11 August 1970, Captain D.G. Shattky, “1 SAS Sqn Ops 212/70 Patrol Report, 6 August 1970,” Lance Corporal J Tawhara, “1 SAS Sqn Ops 215/70 Patrol Report, 19 August 1970, Sergeant E.P. Stead, “1 SAS Sqn Ops 227/70 Patrol Report, 29 August 1970” and Sergeant T. Dickson, “1 SAS Sqn Ops 231/70 Patrol Report, 31 August 1970,” in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries, 7/10/21 1 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Log 1-31 August 1970, and Sergeant J Powley, “1 SAS Sqn Ops 234/70 Patrol Report, 4 September 1970,” in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries, 7/10/22 1 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Log 1-30 September 1970, AWM, Canberra.

¹²⁰ Major I.C. Teague, “Summary for Month of Aug 70,” in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries, 7/10/21, p.1 and Sergeant Jack Powley, “Activity Report – August 1970, 9 September 1970,” New Zealand Army 15/28/10 Volume Two, p.1.

¹²¹ Teague, “Summary for Month of Aug 70,” p.1

¹²² Sergeant J.T. Murray, “1 SAS Sqn Ops 237/70 Patrol Report, 7 September 1970,” Sergeant E.P. Stead, “1 SAS Sqn Ops 246/70 Patrol Report, 9 September 1970, Sergeant T. Dickson, “1 SAS Sqn Ops 254/70 Patrol Report, 22 September 1970,” Sergeant J.T. Murray, “1 SAS Sqn Ops 256/70 Patrol Report, 24 September 1970,” and Sergeant J Powley, “1 SAS Sqn Ops 257/70 Patrol Report, 27 September 1970,” in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries, 7/10/22, and Lance-Corporal J. A. Tuahine, “1 SAS Sqn Ops 262/70 Patrol Report, 1 October 1970,” in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries, 7/10/23 1 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Log 1-31 October 1970, AWM, Canberra.

¹²² Teague, “Summary for Month of Aug 70,” p.1 and Powley, “Activity Report – August 1970, 9 September 1970,” p.1

¹²³ Teague, “Summary for Month of Sep 70.”

Officers quarters, which we shouldn't have done, but we did. It was the only thing we could do – and three of us – there were four of us in the patrol. Ah, when they all came into the tented area under like a big balcony - at this stage they had had breakfast obviously [and] we 'opened up.' And as we were shooting there, the officers came running out of their 'basha' and a bloke shot them – and he run up to us, which was only about seventy yards up a bit of a track, which when you think about it now was bloody...a bloody track; lucky it wasn't booby-trapped. But there was civilians living in the camp too. And we headed home.¹²⁴

Stead recounted that it took the Borneo patrol five days to reach the camp and thirty-six hours to get back.¹²⁵ Despite Stead's experiences during OPS/90/88 in August 1965, on most occasions it was the role of the SAS to confirm the presence of Indonesian forces at these camps or staging areas and then guide much larger Company-strength Commonwealth forces, including Dick Noone's Border Scout raiding parties, to the targets.¹²⁶

Like New Zealand SAS operations in Borneo, one of the principal roles for 4 Troop in South Vietnam was the identification and reconnaissance of enemy camps and staging areas within the Task Force AO. Close target reconnaissance required well-practised drills and clear communication between the recce team and the rest of the patrol that may stay behind to provide covering support. Experienced soldiers such as Danny Wilson recalled how they sometimes spent over two days observing camps in Borneo, but again the presence of Indonesian enemy in the camps determined the time a patrol spent at one particular camp location.¹²⁷ Perhaps the only real difference between New Zealand SAS camp reconnaissance SOPs during the two campaigns was the absence of cameras in Phuoc Tuy province as opposed to them being frequently used in Borneo.

By 1970, while the number of enemy camps sighted remained high, the opportunity to engage the enemy had dramatically reduced. Nevertheless, the intense levels of concentration still needed to be maintained. Even when opportunities did present themselves, the Task Force determined that the SAS patrol should only 'provide guides' to facilitate the movement of infantry elements to target enemy camps. It was therefore Shattky's responsibility to ensure the momentum of Troop activities continued at a pace that afforded as many operational opportunities as possible, and he did this by exposing

¹²⁴ Ernie Stead, interview conducted on 13 June 2008 and Crosby, *NZSAS*, p. 152.

¹²⁵ Ernie Stead, interview conducted on 13 June 2008.

¹²⁶ For further details of patrol OPS/90/88 see Chapter Three and Crosby, *NZSAS*, p. 152.

¹²⁷ Danny Wilson, interview conducted 18 July 2008.

his soldiers to other Special Forces units in Vietnam.¹²⁸ Still, as will be explored in the following Chapter, such exposure was unable to redress all of 4 Troop's issues.

¹²⁸ See Annex One for details of many of these experiences.

Chapter 13

Command and Control...Again: 1970

Upon arrival in November 1969, Captain Graye Shattky had walked into what he described as ‘a very tense situation which had arisen from a difference of views between Terry Culley and Reg Beesley, as to the status and independence of 4 Troop.’¹ The McGee incident had done nothing to alleviate the situation, however, once the first 4 Troop departed, Shattky and Beesley were able to resolve the situation but not without ‘considerable effort’ from both.²

The second New Zealand Troop Commander established a ‘very good relationship’ with Beesley who ‘relaxed his attitude towards the Kiwis sufficiently to discuss appropriate missions with me and allow me to determine which of the New Zealand patrols should be deployed on particular tasks.’³ In the short time that Shattky’s Troop had been under operational command of 3 Squadron, the New Zealanders had developed a far better relationship with Beesley. Considering the circumstances in which Culley’s Troop had left Nui Dat in December 1969, this was hardly difficult, but nearly a third of Shattky’s Troop had previously served with one of the two New Zealand rifle companies in Vietnam which no doubt contributed to a much speedier appreciation of the environment.⁴ This, as well as Shattky’s altogether different – and less blunt - approach, saw a much more conciliatory relationship between him and his Squadron Commander:

While the details are now vague, I made it clear that I was there to do what he required operationally. No doubt I would have referred to my understanding that while 4 Troop was under his operational control, I was also [OC of an] independent New Zealand unit answerable to a New Zealand chain of command. I recall feeling that we both felt we could work together by maintaining a sensible and reasonable dialogue. The only issue I recall having to sort out was the matter of how New Zealand patrols would be tasked; after explaining the command relationship I was used to, Reg relaxed his attitude towards the Kiwis sufficiently

¹ Crosby, *NZSAS*, p. 218.

² Crosby, *NZSAS*, p. 218.

³ Crosby, *NZSAS*, p. 218.

⁴ Former members of V2 (December 1967-May 1968) included Shattky himself, Lance-Corporals Lew Peni and John Tawhara, Corporal Sid Puia and Privates Bill Taare and Keri Tahana. Corporal Les Burberry had been a member of V3 (May 1968-May 1969) and Lance-Corporal Buster Nathan V4 (May 1969-May 1970). Flinkenberg, *New Zealand Vietnam Roll* with assistance from Wayne Holah, Historian NZSAS Association, Wellington.

to discuss appropriate missions with me and allow me to determine which New Zealand patrols should be deployed on particular tasks.⁵

Beesley's replacement, Major Ian 'Trader' Teague was a different type of Squadron Commander, being far more 'laid-back' than the 'gung-ho' Beesley.⁶ However, the relatively independent command relationship that Shattky had fostered with Beesley did not survive the change-over from 3 Squadron to 1 Squadron.⁷ After postings to the Sydney Commando Company between 1961 and 1964, Teague had spent time in Vietnam with the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam (AATTV) and then instructed at the Australian Officer Cadet School (OCS) in Portsea before taking command of 1 Squadron in June 1968.⁸ Shattky subsequently sympathised with the recently-arrived Australian Squadron Commander who was probably frustrated by 'the unusual command relationship' which prevented exercising the 'firm control he maintained on his own Troop Commanders.'⁹ Regardless, the two were never to have anything more than a 'cordial relationship' for the remainder of their time in Vietnam.¹⁰

Tension between the two, very much akin to that between Culley and Beesley, was exacerbated when Teague began to task the New Zealand patrols directly without reference to Shattky. While the New Zealand Troop Commander continued to carry out his own patrols, increasingly he also found himself acting as the Squadron Operations Officer; planning patrol operations, co-ordinating those operations with higher echelon and supporting agencies such as artillery and air support, as well as de-briefing Squadron patrols on their return.¹¹ While this may have frustrated Shattky, the presence of Wilson and Powley ensured the Troop remained well managed. Furthermore, as Operations Officer, a role also undertaken by Culley for a period in 1969, Shattky was able to gain a greater appreciation of the activity the entire SAS Squadron carried out in early 1970. It also gave him time to assess the operational environment, consider further solutions to changing enemy tactics, and visit other military units.¹²

⁵ Graye Shattky, email correspondence with author on 21 November 2008 and 21 February 2009.

⁶ Danny Wilson, interview conducted on 18 July 2008.

⁷ Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008.

⁸ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 303.

⁹ Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008.

¹⁰ Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008.

¹¹ Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008.

¹² See Appendix One for a more detailed account of 4 Troop's exposure to other Special Forces' units in Vietnam between December 1968 and February 1971.

Operationally, Teague's frustrations at being able to apply only a very limited element of the Squadron's full capability, coupled with a reduction of enemy activity within Phuoc Tuy province during the second half of 1970 were demonstrably endorsed by Shattky when the New Zealand Troop Commander wrote 4 Troop's Post-Operational report in late October 1970.¹³ Shattky left Vietnam on 29 October to prepare for a three-year instructors position at Portsea. While the commander of the third 4 Troop, 2nd Lieutenant Jack Hayes, arrived early to replace Shattky, Danny Wilson, who by now had been promoted to WO2 became 'in effect the OC of 4 Troop' and retained command until the rest of the second Troop departed in early December 1970.¹⁴ Shattky's last patrol had been in early August and since then he had spent time visiting a number of American Special Forces units throughout South Vietnam. Hayes' early arrival also enabled Shattky to consider the last eight months of 4 Troop operations. In his report, Shattky identified three key factors which had effected the change in operational environment for 4 Troop in 1970; the relief of 3 SAS Squadron by 1 SAS Squadron in February, decreasing levels of enemy activity, and 'increased restrictions on the operational employment of helicopters imposed by the RAAF.'¹⁵

When the Troop arrived the previous December, it was initially employed in the recce/ambush role where patrols reconnoitred main supply routes (MSRs) and base areas, reported this information and then selected suitable targets to ambush.¹⁶ However, since June 1970, the Squadron had been employed primarily in a reconnaissance capacity where patrols were 'expected to avoid contact with the enemy.'¹⁷ Shattky commented that the reduction of the enemy's presence meant that when the enemy were observed within the Task Force AO, they were seldom in groups larger than ten.¹⁸ All the more reason, argued Shattky, why engagement by SAS patrols should have been permitted.

¹³ Captain D.G. Shattky, "4 Troop NZSAS Post-Operational Report SVN 1969/70, 26 October 1970" in NZSAS Archive, Wellington, and Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, pp. 365-366.

¹⁴ Hayes arrived in South Vietnam on 12 October 1970. WO2 Danny Wilson, "Activity Report – October 1970, 12 November 1970," in New Zealand Army 15/28/10 Volume Two, New Zealand Forces Overseas – Vietnam: Operational Summaries, Reports, NZDF Archive, Wellington and 2nd Lieutenant Jack Hayes, "Newsletter No 1, 2 November 1970," in Kippenberger Military Archive Box 136A, New Zealand Army Museum, Waiouru, p.1.

¹⁵ Shattky, "4 Troop NZSAS Post-Operational Report SVN 1969/70, 26 October 1970," p. 1.

¹⁶ Shattky, "4 Troop NZSAS Post-Operational Report SVN 1969/70, 26 October 1970," p. 1.

¹⁷ Shattky, "4 Troop NZSAS Post-Operational Report SVN 1969/70, 26 October 1970," p. 8.

¹⁸ Shattky, "4 Troop NZSAS Post-Operational Report SVN 1969/70, 26 October 1970," p. 8.

With these smaller groups, SAS patrols could have well afforded to react ‘more aggressively’ confident that they were not likely to encounter large groups.¹⁹

The New Zealand Troop Commander also commented that the current Task Force Commander, Brigadier William ‘Bill’ Henderson, had made frequent use of the SAS Squadron’s ability to mount patrols at short notice; deploying fighting and ambush patrols to react to specific information. In Shattky’s view, such deployments were at the expense of detailed preparation and briefing which most, if not all New Zealand SAS, believed was ‘essential for the successful completion of a mission.’²⁰ This comment is more than likely to have been borne from by an unsuccessful two-day ambush patrol Shattky had commanded in early August 1970.²¹ The patrol had been quickly requested to ‘react to suspected enemy movement,’ and while the patrol had set up ambushes on two tracks that showed sign of recent enemy activity, no enemy presented themselves in the two days Shattky’s group was out.²² Besides, as the New Zealand SAS understood long-range operations, it was their role to identify targets subsequently dealt with by larger infantry elements. In concluding his report, Shattky stated:

...that this report details an operational procedure that is followed without variation, only emphasises the fact that 4 Troop NZSAS is misemployed in its current role. The recce and ambush missions given to 4 Troop are well within the capabilities of the recce platoon, 1RNZIR and could be successfully accomplished by a well-trained infantry section.²³

He added that to continue employing the New Zealand Troop in this manner would only ‘cause the unit to lose sight of its Unconventional and Special Warfare role.’²⁴ He was correct. The ‘high degree of individual’ SAS training was not being ‘fully utilized,’ nor was the Task Force making good use of the specialised skills the Squadron possessed.²⁵ Teague, and the Australian SAS for that matter, would not have disagreed with the final comments made by Shattky. In fact, the comments almost mirrored their own Regimental doctrine:

¹⁹ Shattky, “4 Troop NZSAS Post-Operational Report SVN 1969/70, 26 October 1970,” pp. 8-9.

²⁰ Shattky, “4 Troop NZSAS Post-Operational Report SVN 1969/70, 26 October 1970,” p. 1.

²¹ Captain D.G. Shattky, “1 SAS Sqn Ops 212/70 Patrol Report, 6 August 1970,” in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries, 7/10/21 1 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Log 1-31 August 1970, AWM, Canberra, p. 1.

²² Shattky, “1 SAS Sqn Ops 212/70 Patrol Report, 6 August 1970,” pp.1-2.

²³ Shattky, “4 Troop NZSAS Post-Operational Report SVN 1969/70, 26 October 1970,” p. 11.

²⁴ Shattky, “4 Troop NZSAS Post-Operational Report SVN 1969/70, 26 October 1970,” p. 11.

²⁵ Shattky, “4 Troop NZSAS Post-Operational Report SVN 1969/70, 26 October 1970,” p. 11.

It must be stressed that the employment of SAS troops on reconnaissance tasks in the forward edge of the battle area which can be undertaken by the infantry battalions or the reconnaissance facilities organic to the division, is a misuse of the capabilities of this unit.²⁶

Both Beesley and Teague had been frustrated by the Task Force's changing application of SAS resources during their time in Phuoc Tuy province. However, were Shattky's comments those of a young and enthusiastic Troop Commander who was frustrated by the limitations placed upon the Squadron, without necessarily understanding the reasons why such limitations had been imposed? Shattky's desire to become a Special Forces soldier appears to have manifested itself long before he joined the New Zealand Squadron in March 1968. With a knowledge of David Stirling and the exploits of the LRDG during World War II gained from childhood reading, a combination of having Brian Worsnop as an OC for three years, as well as a number of experiences he as an infantryman had not particularly enjoyed, convinced Shattky of the value of unconventional Special Forces operations.²⁷

More than anything else, in writing his post-operational review to 1 Ranger Squadron, Shattky was 'regretting lost opportunities' and the fact that the New Zealanders could have been 'more profitably used and...more productive given the skills that we had.'²⁸ Never would he have advocated that the New Zealand SAS not go to Vietnam as he was able to see the operational experience collected 'added to the dimension that Borneo had already provided.'²⁹ Nevertheless, the limited opportunities afforded to the Troop were still disappointing.

In April 1970 Teague described in his unit diary how the SAS Squadron was being utilised in Phuoc Tuy province:

SAS patrols are deployed generally on reconnaissance tasks related to the Task Force Commander's aims and priorities for gathering intelligence. Many of these patrols combine an ambush task which is designed to maintain the offensive presence of 1 ATF in areas where infantry battalions are not currently operating.

²⁶ Australian Army Headquarters, *The Special Air Service Pamphlet 1967*, (Canberra: Army Headquarters, 1967), p.39.

²⁷ Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008.

²⁸ Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008.

²⁹ Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008.

A few patrols have been employed on purely ambush tasks and on straight surveillance.³⁰

At the end of May 1970, Brigadier Stuart Weir was replaced as Commander 1ATF by Henderson. When he arrived in theatre, the new Task Force Commander expressed a certain amount of dissatisfaction with the 'manner in which [the SAS] were being deployed' believing the 'harassing role' which emphasised 'body count,' took helicopter resources and was 'not productive.'³¹ Henderson recounted that after discussing the subject with Teague, the Squadron Commander was not 'terribly happy' and requested the Task Force Commander articulate his thoughts to the entire Squadron. There is no record of the visit in the Squadron Commander's Diary for June 1970 but there is in Shattky's personal diary:

Visit to Squadron by Brigadier Henderson, new commander 1ATF. New policy - in a word back to reconnaissance. Does not believe in risking SAS patrols in ambush - Task Force requires prompt and accurate intelligence.³²

In his 28 March 1970 paper written for Mace, Shattky had recognised that the SAS Squadron in Vietnam had 'established a pattern of operations which he thought was totally the wrong thing to do - it was against my understanding of Special Forces.'³³ Nor did he believe the Australian Task Force Commanders had any real or genuine 'concept' of Special Forces operations in a truly strategic sense. To the Troop Commander, many Australian company commanders, as well as 'the odd battalion commander,' were 'always dismissive and pretty sceptical about operations, simply because they didn't know what we did and they didn't get the end results.'³⁴ By the end of the month, Teague wrote:

SAS patrols are now being employed on correct SAS tasks and are achieving better results.³⁵

It seems curious that Teague, who was so unsupportive of Henderson's requirement for the Squadron to carry out more patrolling of a reconnaissance nature, should have entered

³⁰ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 353.

³¹ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 354.

³² Captain D.G. Shattky, "6 June 1970" in Shattky's personal diary, and Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008.

³³ Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008.

³⁴ Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008.

³⁵ Major I.C. Teague in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries, 7/10/19 1 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Log 1-30 June 1970, AWM, Canberra, p. 2.

the above statement into the Squadron Commander's Narrative for June 1970? Was Teague a particularly sarcastic fellow or was he simply mercurial? By the end of July, Teague wrote that because of 'current restrictions on 1ATF TAOR there is a distinct lack of SAS tasks.'³⁶ The following month he again made reference to what he described as a 'continuing lack of proper SAS tasks.'³⁷

If Sergeant Tapa Dickson's two reconnaissance patrols in June 1970 – mentioned in the previous chapter - are any measure, Henderson's instructions, as articulated to Teague, called for a reduction in the number of contacts if patrols could possibly avoid them rather than a change in the style of SAS operations. Henderson's demand for the removal of the 'harassing' hit-and-run aspect of patrols was questioned by senior Squadron officers but others, including some of the New Zealanders like Wilson, agreed with the new Task Force Commander's orders:

So to me, a successful patrol would be to go out, do the task that you were given, and get your whole patrol back in – without being seen. I always felt that was the task of the SAS – see and not be seen yourself.³⁸

Horner also suggested that coupled with Henderson's change in use of SAS in Phuoc Tuy province, at the same time there was clearly 'less enemy activity.'³⁹ For some such as Sergeant Jack Powley, their Borneo experiences helped reconcile issues associated with the fewer enemy observed in Vietnam. Both Powley, and Wilson for that matter, appreciated many of their soldiers 'would have liked to have had a shoot-up.'⁴⁰ It was therefore up to the experienced NCOs within the Troop to manage any morale issues associated with a perceived reduction in opportunities to engage the enemy:⁴¹

When we were in Borneo and I came back off one particular patrol, and again there wasn't a lot of activity by the time our Det[achment] got there[1966]. At one stage I was debriefed by a Brigadier and at the end of the patrol he said 'how do you feel?' And I said 'well, you know you go out and you don't find anything so you sometimes think what the heck's going on?' And he said to me 'Corporal, by you finding nothing, you were doing just as a good a job as by the ones that

³⁶ Major I.C. Teague in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries, 7/10/20 1 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Log 1-31 July 1970, AWM, Canberra, p. 1.

³⁷ Major I.C. Teague in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries, 7/10/21 1 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Log 1-31 August 1970, AWM, Canberra, p. 1.

³⁸ Danny Wilson, interview conducted on 18 July 2008.

³⁹ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 355.

⁴⁰ Danny Wilson, interview conducted on 18 July 2008.

⁴¹ Danny Wilson, interview conducted on 18 July 2008.

have incidents or find things – because you are proving they are not, or haven't been, in that area. And we can then concentrate on another area.' And that helped me a lot from then on. Before those, it was 'ah, a waste of time going out, finding unoccupied camps or routes – nothing for ages – what's the use of it?' But that point came home to me and that's what kind of stuck with me [in Vietnam].⁴²

Teague was no Beesley. Certainly there is no doubt the strength and will of previous Squadron Commanders had determined what influence they may have had upon a Task Force Commander with any particular or preconceived views of Special Forces, including what they could possibly achieve in comparison with the conventional infantry forces at his disposal. However, unlike the operational environment confronted by 3 Squadron in 1969, Teague's 1 Squadron was forced to compete for work with Task Force infantry commanders in a province which presented fewer opportunities. More than anything else, this was likely to have been the principal source of Shattky's frustration. Horner assessed that Shattky's report did not take into account the pragmatic realities that the Squadron had to be flexible enough to carry out whatever role was determined by either the Task Force or theatre Commander, even if that particular role meant a certain amount of 'misemployment.'⁴³ A review of the available archival and published material would suggest that all Australian SAS Squadron Commanders, at numerous times, suffered frustrations associated with particular expectations by the different Task Force Commanders. For Teague, and Shattky, this appeared to be no different.

What Horner failed to identify is that Shattky's frustration had more to do with the inability of his Squadron Commander, for whatever reason, to adapt to the changing environment, and with that, never genuinely attempt to convince other Task Force elements to consider different approaches or methodologies. For example, even with the success of new, sophisticated and safer 'quick suspended extraction' rigs demonstrated during American Special Forces operations, the RAAF in 1970 still refused to even consider evaluating and re-introducing updated 'hot-extraction' methods that had been stopped after McGee's patrol 153/69 accident in October 1969.⁴⁴ Similarly, Shattky believed that the amphibious insertions carried out in late May 1970 had proved to be a 'successful means' of positioning patrols in an area without alerting the enemy of activity, in the same way that helicopter and APC insertions might. Unfortunately, Shattky

⁴² Jack Powley, interview conducted on 6 August 2008.

⁴³ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 366.

⁴⁴ Shattky, "4 Troop NZSAS Post-Operational Report SVN 1969/70, 26 October 1970," p. 9.

understood that because of the ‘Vietnamization of the Coastguard Programme’ future insertion opportunities were unlikely.⁴⁵ It appears more than anything else, Teague remained less of a strategic-Special Forces visionary than his predecessor Beesley and his inflexibility and less than cordial relationship with the New Zealand Troop Commander certainly manifested itself for the remainder of the Troop’s time in Vietnam:

I seem to recall that Teague was concerned about the apparent independence of the New Zealand Troop Commander who seemed to have a slightly different relationship – well I did have a different relationship with Beesley. We had, I think, quite a reasonable relationship; a mature one. Teague came in with a different view; he had young Troop Commanders in the main and he wanted to keep the New Zealand Troop under his control.⁴⁶

Teague’s apparent need to maintain ‘control’ of all elements of his Squadron – including the independent 4 Troop – was also apparent to Hayes after he replaced Shattky at the end of October.⁴⁷

New Zealand SAS in Vietnam: Operational Intensity

In October 1970, 4 Troop completed eight reconnaissance patrols.⁴⁸ Sergeant Dickson’s patrol 269/70 between 2 and 9 October located an enemy camp which consisted of 11 bunkers, including one that was ‘still in the process of construction.’ While Dickson’s patrol reported that the camp and all major tracks nearby showed signs of use within the previous 24 hours, no other New Zealand patrol saw any real sign that month.⁴⁹ The Squadron carried out 27 reconnaissance patrols in total during October 1970. Twenty-five enemy had been seen during three sightings and three contacts had resulted in one Vietcong KIA (BC), one possibly dead and one wounded. Teague was still frustrated by

⁴⁵ Shattky, “4 Troop NZSAS Post-Operational Report SVN 1969/70, 26 October 1970,” p. 6.

⁴⁶ Graye Shattky, email correspondence with author on 21 November 2008 and 21 February 2009, and interview conducted on 25 November 2008.

⁴⁷ Jack Hayes, interview conducted on 16 December 2008.

⁴⁸ Lance-Corporal J.A. Tuahine, “1 SAS Squadron Ops 262/70, 1 October 1970,” WO2 D.W. Wilson, “1 SAS Squadron Ops 268/70 Patrol Report, 5 October 1970,” Sergeant T. Dickson, “1 SAS Sqn Ops 269/70 Patrol Report, 10 October 1970,” Sergeant J. Murray, “1 SAS Squadron Ops 271/70 Patrol Report, 11 October 1970,” Lance-Corporal J.A. Tuahine, “1 SAS Squadron Ops 273/70 Patrol Report, 13 October 1970,” Sergeant E.P. Stead, “1 SAS Squadron Ops 279/70 Patrol Report, 19 October 1970,” and Sergeant J. Powley, “1 SAS Squadron Ops 284/70, 27 October 1970,” all in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries, 7/12/21. See also 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, “Activity Report – October 1970, 12 November 1970,” in AWM103 R723/1/79: Reports – General - New Zealand SAS Activity Reports, 1969-1970, AWM.

⁴⁹ WO2 Danny Wilson, “Activity Report – October 1970, 12 November 1970,” in New Zealand Army 15/28/10 Volume Two.

the lack of ‘proper tasks’ for his Squadron, due to ‘both the restricted TAOR and the conspicuous absence of enemy forces.’⁵⁰

During interviews, several members of the three New Zealand SAS Troops commented on the state of the Australian Squadron when they first arrived in South Vietnam and made references to the physical and mental strains apparent within a Squadron which had been on operations for over ten months. Such was the intensity of operations, the extreme heat combined with the ‘stress of listening and trying to watch,’⁵¹ that many believed the 12-month tour was too long for Special Forces long-range patrolling operations. Most agreed that a six-month tour, as had been the case in Borneo between 1965 and 1966, would have been ‘about the right length of time:’

I remember, vividly now, that about six months after we arrived, things like morale started to go down – people were saying they were getting letters from home where their kids were playing up, guys were getting run down and getting all sorts of illnesses and any excuses – and they were queuing up to get all their ‘R and R...’ When you were there, you were continually on your nerves because you were getting rockets every night, you were being strafed, or by mortars that would come in – so you never had a quiet restful night, even in the base...And this is when we stepped up the training bits – we stepped up PT, we stepped up the rehearsals – putting more time into rehearsals – and the guys got that edge back and lasted until Christmas, or until they came home.⁵²

As early as 1967, the Australian 1 Squadron OC Major Dale Burnett and his Task Force Commander, Brigadier Stuart Graham – supported by his Australian SAS Regimental CO Lieutenant-Colonel Len Eyles - lobbied Australian Army Headquarters that SAS tours to South Vietnam be no more than nine months’ duration. It was argued that due to the nature of activity, after approximately ‘seven months of sustained operations’ many of the Patrol Commanders had ‘become run down both mentally and physically.’⁵³ Australian Army Headquarters were reluctant to subscribe to this theory, suggesting that a single casualty for the entire duration of Murphy’s Squadron tour in 1966 and the short duration of patrols being carried out in 1967 ‘relatively close to the Task Force Base,’ did not appear to indicate the Squadron was as fatigued as Burnett, Graham and Eyles implied.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Major I.C. Teague in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries, 7/10/23, p. 2.

⁵¹ Ernie Stead, interview conducted on 13 June 2008.

⁵² Terry Culley, interview conducted on 21 July 2008.

⁵³ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 227.

⁵⁴ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 228.

Consequently Eyles was advised on 23 August 1967 that there was ‘no operational reason why the [SAS Squadron] tour of duty should be reduced below 12/13 months.’⁵⁵

In a similar vein, in May 1969, Major David Ogilvy wrote to Colonel Ron Hassett and suggested that because of the pre-deployment training in Malaysia, Culley’s Troop would be on ‘active service’ for thirteen months, and might Army General Staff consider reducing this by one month to allow the Troop to return to New Zealand in November 1969. There is no indication Ogilvy sensed in communications with his Troop Commander the intensity of operations was beginning to have an affect on Culley’s men.⁵⁶

By the time Hassett replied in August 1969, Ogilvy had been replaced by Major Neville Kidd as OC 1 Ranger Squadron.⁵⁷ Hassett’s delayed response was apparently because Wellington was at the time considering a proposal that Shattky’s second 4 Troop conduct pre-deployment training with Teague’s Australian Squadron in Papua New Guinea (PNG) before being deployed to South Vietnam. It had been agreed as early as March 1969 that the existing main training area used by Culley’s 4 Troop, Minginui, should be given up and an area with similar terrain to Phuoc Tuy province be used instead.⁵⁸ The pre-deployment exercise scheduled to start in early September 1969 was to last just under two months. Had Wellington agreed, the second Troop may have been out of New Zealand one month longer than the current Troop. Army General Staff could hardly commit to Ogilvy’s request and then send Shattky’s Troop away for fourteen months.

Ultimately, Wellington declined the opportunity to carry out a joint pre-deployment exercise in PNG, but Hassett did confirm that subsequent SAS detachments would have a twelve month tour, inclusive of acclimatisation training, in contrast to the practice in

⁵⁵ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 228.

⁵⁶ Neither had Ogilvy been made aware of Australian SAS requests two years earlier to have the length of their deployments reduced. Major David Ogilvy, “Length of Tour Overseas: 4 Troop NZSAS, 22 May 1969,” in Kippenberger Military Archive Box 136A.

⁵⁷ Colonel R.D.P. Hassett, “Length of Tour Overseas: NZSAS, 8 August 1969,” in Kippenberger Military Archive Box 136A.

⁵⁸ It is not entirely clear whether New Zealand or Australia had instigated the proposal of pre-deployment training with the next Australian Squadron in PNG. Captain Harry Russell, “Replacement 4 Troop NZSAS – Training and Admin Requirements, 2 March 1969,” in Kippenberger Military Archive Box 136A, and Lieutenant-Colonel A.J.A. Cooper, “Training of New Zealand Army Personnel for Service with Australian Units in South Vietnam, 8 July 1969” in New Zealand Army 15/28 Volume II, New Zealand Forces Overseas: New Zealand Forces in Vietnam, NZDF Archive, Wellington.

Borneo.⁵⁹ The view was also supported by Mace (Director of Infantry and SAS)⁶⁰ and by the fact that Dawson in late 1968 had ‘personally told Four Troop that they were to do a 12 month tour in Vietnam.’⁶¹

Patrol 312/70: Friendly Fire

The figure fell to the ground and yelled ‘I’m hit’ and either Trooper Sexton or Trooper McCallion yelled ‘It’s Boof, it’s Boof!’⁶²

That the New Zealanders experienced similar stresses during their deployments cannot be disputed and it is likely such a build-up of tension towards the end of the tour – such as the incident in which Australian 2 Squadron member Corporal Ron Harris was shot and killed on patrol in January 1969 - may have equally contributed to the accidental shootings of Lance-Corporal Bill Taare and Trooper Bill Moffitt in November 1970:

And that happened with ours, at the end of our tour, we all started to get really stressed out. And, I went out with a patrol, I was out there, and I thought ‘fucks sake – carrying on like there is something going to happen.’ So I went back – and I said to Danny Wilson ‘something is going to happen in that patrol.’ He said, ‘what do you mean?’ I said ‘Just the way that they carry on – I know something is going to happen’ And Moffitt got shot!...becoming a bit lackadaisical – things like that. I mean you say you are on 95%; well you should be on 100% all the time. And at the end of the, towards the end of the tour, you knew that the fellows were getting run-down.⁶³

Hayes wrote that six patrols were conducted by the New Zealand Troop in November 1970.⁶⁴ On the afternoon of 21 November Lance-Corporal Bill Taare’s reconnaissance

⁵⁹ Major-General George Lea, “The Joint Report on the Borneo Campaign - Preface, 27 January 1967,” in DEFE 5/172, Ministry of Defence Chief of Staffs Committee Serial 16, TNA, London, p.4.

⁶⁰ Mace also felt that the month spent in South Vietnam perfecting operational readiness more than substituted for training in Malaysia and also permitted necessary acclimatisation. He also felt that there were obvious reasons why there should be a uniform policy of 12 month tours for all Corps. Lieutenant-Colonel Mace, “Length of Tour Overseas NZSAS, 10 July 1969,” in New Zealand Army S.15/28/2 Volume One, NZSAS Force in Vietnam, May 1968–August 1971, NZDF Archive, Wellington.

⁶¹ Brigadier Webb in handwritten note to Lieutenant-Colonel Mace, “10 July 1969,” New Zealand Army S.15/28/2 Volume One.

⁶² 2nd Lieutenant J.S. Hayes, “Statement by 41724 Lance Corporal Taare W.M” and “Statement by 39784 Trooper Moffitt T.W.J.” as part of Investigation into the Accidental Wounding of Two 4 Independent Troop NZSAS Soldiers on 23 November 1970, in AWM103 R478/1/283 Headquarters [HQ] 1st Australian Task Force [1ATF]: Investigations – General, Accidental Wounding NZSAS [Special Air Service], 23 November 1970, AWM, Canberra, p.3.

⁶³ Ernie Stead, interview conducted on 13 June 2008.

⁶⁴ Hayes was also a late addition to Sergeant Jack Gerhardt’s 1 Squadron reconnaissance patrol 302/70 which was contacted by an enemy force of at least four on insertion. That patrol lasted approximately twenty-five minutes before the contact area was strafed by ‘Bushranger’ gunships and the patrol extracted. Hayes recounted on return to Nui Dat, Gebhardt discovered a round through his pack; no one could be sure

patrol 312/70, the penultimate of the second 4 Troop tour, was inserted by helicopter into a LZ approximately thirty kilometres north-east of Nui Dat.⁶⁵ This was Taare's first patrol command, having become Sergeant Tapa Dickson's 2IC for the rest of the tour after the death of Sergeant Graham Campbell.⁶⁶

In the absence of a formal SAS Patrol Commanders course – this would not be rectified until the mid-1980s – it was up to the existing Patrol Commanders to determine when their 2ICs had sufficiently demonstrated the skill-sets necessary to be able to command a patrol of their own.⁶⁷ It was important for junior NCOs to be given an opportunity to develop those skills and there was no better occasion than an operational environment. It was certainly a policy Shattky and Wilson tried to emphasise whenever the chance arose:

Part way through our tour, once we had things under our belt and the Troop was operating confidently and efficiently, Danny and I agreed that we should seize opportunities to provide selected junior NCOs with experience as Patrol Commanders, against the future requirements of 1 Ranger Squadron. So it was that some of the younger NCOs had the chance to actually plan and prepare their patrols as well be responsible in the field.⁶⁸

There was an argument that an 'active service' war zone was exactly the wrong place to be testing whether or not a junior NCO was ready to become a fully-fledged Patrol Commander.⁶⁹ While this view does not appear to have been subscribed to by the New Zealanders, during the nearly two and a half years they operated in South Vietnam, only

if the round had been 'friendly or enemy.' Jack Hayes, interview conducted 16 December 2008 and Corporal D. Te Paa, "1 SAS Sqn Ops 297/70 Patrol Report, 10 November 1970," Corporal L. Peni, "1 SAS Sqn Ops 301/70 Patrol Report, 14 November 1970," Sergeant J. Powley, "1 SAS Sqn Ops 303/70 Patrol Report, 17 November 1970," Sergeant J.T. Murray, "1 SAS Sqn Ops 310/70 Patrol Report, 25 November 1970," Sergeant T. Dickson, "1 SAS Sqn Ops 312/70 Patrol Report, 24 November 1970," Sergeant E.P. Stead, "1 SAS Sqn Ops 314/70 Patrol Report, 30 November 1970," and Sergeant J. Gebhardt, "1 SAS Sqn Ops 302/70 Patrol Report, 10 November 1970," all in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries, 7/10/24 1 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Log 1-30 November 1970, and 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, "Activity Report – November 1970, 5 December 1970" in AWM103, R723/1/79, all in AWM, Canberra.

⁶⁵ Dickson, "1 SAS Sqn Ops 312/70, Patrol Report, 24 November 1970."

⁶⁶ Dickson, "1 SAS Sqn Ops 312/70, Patrol Report, 24 November 1970," p. 1.

⁶⁷ While still part of the New Zealand Infantry, all New Zealand SAS NCOs were expected to complete a minimum number of standard infantry courses, of which the Section Commanders and Minor Tactics courses, for example, provided Patrol Commanders who had not been in Malaya and Borneo with the experience of 'giving for giving orders and leading patrols and leading groups of people around.' Many of the SAS Patrol Commanders in Vietnam had been section commanders in New Zealand infantry regiments before being posted to 1 Ranger Squadron. Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

⁶⁸ Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008.

⁶⁹ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 360.

five operational patrols were led by 2ICs considered able to take command of a patrol.⁷⁰ Part of the role of a patrol 2IC was to take over command in the event the Patrol Commander was killed or wounded and most 2ICs aspired to become Patrol Commanders in their own right. The leap from one role to the second should not have been a particularly daunting one, nor should it have been uncomfortable for Patrol Commanders. Nevertheless, in three of the five patrols, the incumbent Patrol Commander accompanied the patrol in order to ensure that ‘if any of them got into strife, things started to get a bit out of hand, you could take over.’⁷¹

Five minutes after leaving the helicopter, Taare’s patrol crossed a track that showed signs it had been used regularly within the previous ‘thirty-six hours.’ That afternoon, they crossed several more tracks all indicating signs of heavy and recent use.⁷² The following morning, the patrol sighted an old Vietcong male moving along a track carrying a stretcher.⁷³ Later that afternoon, another Vietcong, wearing a green uniform and carrying a ‘pack full of wild vegetables and a machete’ was spotted moving straight towards the patrol.⁷⁴ At a range of fifteen metres, he was shot by Taare.

With no pursuit by any other enemy, the patrol carried out a body search and found a small amount of money, fishing hooks and fishing line. They then continued west before stopping for the night.⁷⁵ The previous evening, the patrol had heard machine-gun fire from both heavy and light calibre weapons. Further heavy machine-gun fire was heard that evening though firing was estimated to be much further away. The sound of the gun fire, with the contact that afternoon as well as the numerous, recently used tracks they had crossed, no doubt increased the level of tension for not just the patrol but also the new Patrol Commander.

⁷⁰ The other four patrols were 181/69 commanded by Corporal Michael ‘Paddy’ Cunningham between 11-19 November 1969, 215/70 commanded by Corporal John Tawhara between 12-18 August 1970, 297/70 commanded by Corporal Dave Te Paa between 1-9 November and 301/70 commanded by Corporal Lew Peni between 7-14 November 1970. It is also possible that the TOAR patrols were also used as an initial patrol introduction for newly promoted Patrol Commanders but there is no record of these patrols in existence. NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington. Powley allowed Taare to take over the command of patrol 030/70 for the last two days of the operation between 7 and 8 January 1970. Sergeant J. Powley, “3 SAS Squadron Ops 030/70, 10 February 1970,” in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries, 7/12/22 3 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Log 1-17 February 1970, AWM, p. 1.

⁷¹ Ernie Stead, interview conducted on 13 June 2008.

⁷² Dickson, “1 SAS Sqn Ops 312/70, Patrol Report, 24 November 1970,” p. 1.

⁷³ Dickson, “1 SAS Sqn Ops 312/70, Patrol Report, 24 November 1970,” p. 1.

⁷⁴ 2nd Lieutenant J.S. Hayes, “Activity Report – November 1970, 5 December 1970” in AWM103, R723/1/79, p. 2.

⁷⁵ Hayes, “Activity Report – November 1970, 5 December 1970,” p. 2.

The following morning the patrol moved a short distance to the south-west of their LUP location before Taare stopped for a 'comms halt' at approximately 0845 hrs so that details of the contact that had taken place the day before could be reported. Sensing this was the reason for the halt, Trooper 'Bill' Moffitt (patrol signaller) moved from his all-round defensive position and handed Taare the One Time Letter Pad (OTLP) code book for his Patrol Commander to begin writing and encoding the message Moffitt would send to Squadron Headquarters.⁷⁶ Taare recalled that because the message was particularly complicated, and he had made two errors in a message sent the previous day, he was concentrating on his task and did not hear Moffitt tell him he was going to 'take the aerial out.'⁷⁷ Moffitt did not wait for a reply.⁷⁸

Before Moffitt departed, he advised Trooper David Sexton (patrol medic) not only would he be walking the radio wire out but would also take time to perform his 'morning constitutional.' Sexton told Moffitt he would 'cover' the signaller whilst he was otherwise engaged. Of the rest of the patrol, Trooper Warwick McCallion had heard Moffitt tell Sexton of his plans and Dickson, while not privy to the conversation between the patrol signaller and medic had noted Moffitt's absence and assumed he was putting out the aerial. Taare, the Patrol Commander, was the only patrol member not aware Moffitt had left the safety of the patrol harbour.

Moffitt moved approximately 25 metres away from the patrol, tied the radio aerial to a tree, and after completing his 'ablutions,' headed back towards the rest of the group. Taare had almost finished his message when he heard 'a strange noise.'⁷⁹ Turning, he looked up to see an armed figure in dark clothing moving directly towards the patrol. As the unidentified figure moved closer to their location, Taare caught the attention of Sexton and McCallion by giving them the hand-signal for 'enemy' (thumb pointed down)

⁷⁶ Hayes, "Statement by 41724 Lance Corporal Taare W.M" and "Statement by 39784 Trooper Moffitt T.W.J.," in AWM103 R478/1/283, pp. 3-5.

⁷⁷ As a Patrol Commander, Taare's preference was for the signaller to have been escorted out with another patrol member as he was extending the radio aerial, rather than the signaller move out by himself with one patrol member watching from the halt position. Hayes, "Statement by 41724 Lance Corporal Taare W.M.," p. 3.

⁷⁸ Hayes, "Statement by 41724 Lance Corporal Taare W.M" and "Statement by 39784 Trooper Moffitt T.W.J.," pp. 3-5.

⁷⁹ Hayes, "Statement by 41724 Lance Corporal Taare W.M" and "Statement by 39784 Trooper Moffitt T.W.J.," pp. 3-5.

and pointed in the direction of the threat. Neither soldier could quite understand Taare's agitation for they both knew where Moffitt was. McCallion responded by giving Taare the 'negative sign' (opposite hand signal) and as Sexton turned towards the Patrol Commander, the small sapling he was leaning against began to shake. In whispered tones, Taare instructed Sexton to sit still, and then repeated the enemy warning signal.⁸⁰ Believing his Patrol Commander had identified a genuine threat to the patrol, McCallion turned to locate the advancing enemy.⁸¹

In the instant McCallion turned, Taare noticed the advancing figure had stopped approximately 15 metres away and, believing the enemy had either seen the sapling move or heard the Patrol Commander's whispers to Sexton, stood up and fired three shots at the figure from his SLR rifle – a 'double-tap' and a single round.⁸² Both Sexton and McCallion knew immediately that Moffitt had been shot, shouted this and ran straight to where he had fallen – Sexton immediately assessed the extent of the wounds, and McCallion ran a little beyond the signaller to provide cover.

That Taare had shot Moffitt took several seconds to register with the Patrol Commander. Devastated by the realisation of what had just happened, Taare placed his rifle down beside a tree and wept. As he was being consoled by Dickson, Sexton began his examination. All three rounds had hit Moffitt and his left arm was at an unnatural angle with blood steadily seeping through his shirt sleeve. Sexton carefully removed the signaller's belt-order and then saw two entry holes on the left side of Moffitt's abdomen. Neither wound was bleeding or bubbling, and after failing to find any exit wound, he dressed and immobilised Moffitt's arm and administered pain relief.⁸³

For the next thirty minutes, Taare and Dickson unsuccessfully tried to radio Squadron Headquarters to request a medical helicopter 'DUSTOFF.' Fortunately, Moffitt remained

⁸⁰ Hayes, "Statement by 41724 Lance Corporal Taare W.M" and "Statement by 39784 Trooper Moffitt T.W.J.," pp. 3-5.

⁸¹ 2nd Lieutenant J.S. Hayes, "Statement by 42703 Trooper McCallion W.L." as part of Investigation into the Accidental Wounding of Two 4 Independent Troop NZSAS Soldiers on 23 November 1970, p.9.

⁸² Hayes, "Statement by 41724 Lance Corporal Taare W.M.," p. 3.

⁸³ Subsequent examinations in Vung Tau would find that at least one round had perforated Moffitt's bowel and the other had fractured a rib. 2nd Lieutenant J.S. Hayes, "Statement by 3797836 Captain Dziukas L." as part of Investigation into the Accidental Wounding of Two 4 Independent Troop NZSAS Soldiers on 23 November 1970, p. 10 and "Statement by 41471 Trooper Sexton D.P." as part of Investigation into the Accidental Wounding of Two 4 Independent Troop NZSAS Soldiers on 23 November 1970, p. 8.

conscious throughout and, when asked by Dickson, was able to send the patrols designated codeword for contact 'INN' as well as the request for DUSTOFF to Nui Dat. The Australian Squadron Headquarters received the distress signal at 0955 hrs and immediately advised the wounded signaller that helicopter assistance was on its way.⁸⁴ The 'Medevac' helicopter arrived shortly after 1000 hrs and lowered a stretcher for Moffitt. Because of the dense foliage, the patrol strapped Moffitt into the stretcher and moved him to a clearing approximately 10-15 metres from where he had been shot. Moffitt was winched up to the helicopter and flown directly to the Australian Field Hospital at Vung Tau.⁸⁵

Further helicopters arrived to extract the rest of the patrol. By now Dickson had resumed command of the patrol, so Taare and McCallion were first to be winched up along with Moffitt's pack and XM-148 rifle. As they were winched through the jungle canopy together, they struggled to break free from vines and branches tangled around their weapons and packs. Before clambering into the helicopter McCallion handed his weapon to Corporal Bircham, the 9 Squadron crew man on board the RAAF Iroquois. Bircham reached down, took the XM-148 by the butt and placed it on the floor inside the helicopter with the muzzle pointing out towards the two SAS soldiers. Bircham was trying to help both McCallion and Taare untangle themselves from the jungle vines to get on board when there was the sound of a 'pop' and Taare was knocked off the Iroquois skid. McCallion felt something hit his elbow and then bounce into the helicopter. To his horror, he saw that the 'pop' had been a 40mm HE round fired from his XM-148.⁸⁶

Both Dickson and Sexton were a little confused when they saw the helicopter they thought was about to winch them up suddenly fly away. Neither was aware that Taare had been wounded as a result of the XM-148 discharge. Only after the remaining two patrol members had been picked up by a third helicopter was it explained that another

⁸⁴ 1 SAS Sqn Ops Log, 23 November 1970, in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries, 7/10/24 1 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Log 1-30 November 1970, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, p.242 and 2nd Lieutenant J.S. Hayes, "Statement by 38544 Sergeant Dickson T." as part of Investigation into the Accidental Wounding of Two 4 Independent Troop NZSAS Soldiers on 23 November 1970, pp.6-7.

⁸⁵ Hayes, "Statement by 41724 Lance Corporal Taare W.M.," p. 3.

⁸⁶ Moffitt's weapon had not been 'cleared' by any member of the patrol. Jack Hayes, interview conducted on 16 December 2008.

patrol member had been wounded 'in the leg' and the pilot had decided to fly to Vung Tau as quickly as possible.⁸⁷

When it hit, the force of the round had opened a wound in Taare's groin area.⁸⁸ Fortunately for Taare, the round had not travelled a sufficient distance to have armed itself. Nevertheless, both SAS patrol members were slightly alarmed when Bircham picked up the round and showed it to them.⁸⁹ The 9 Squadron crew man was unable to immediately dispose of the grenade as the helicopter was flying over the built-up area of Baria. Following the instructions from his pilot, Bircham had no option but to hold on to the grenade until they passed the provincial capital before the helicopter could descend to a lower altitude and Bircham dropped the grenade into a swamp-area. The bomb exploded when it hit the water.⁹⁰

Between 23 and 27 November, Hayes investigated the events that led to both shootings. When interviewed Dickson stated that because it was the last patrol of his tour, Taare was 'pretty edgy.'⁹¹ It is interesting that Dickson made no mention this was Taare's first patrol as Patrol Commander. Dickson told Hayes there had been a lot of 'fresh sign in the area,' and the combination of the contact the previous day and being Patrol Commander, had no doubt put Taare under significant strain.⁹² Hayes added in his conclusions that Taare had had a particularly intense tour – this was the second time he had been wounded (the first had also been from a grenade on operations with Victor Two Company 2RAR/NZ (ANZAC) Battalion in late July) and the fourth patrol in which he had been involved with an enemy contact.⁹³ Hayes did not mention that Taare had also been Campbell's patrol scout when the Sergeant had been killed in mid-January.⁹⁴ While Moffitt had not been involved in any contacts until 22 November, he had nevertheless been part of 16 patrols since his first operation – the 3 Squadron parachute descent in

⁸⁷ Hayes, "Statement by 38544 Sergeant Dickson T.," pp. 6-7.

⁸⁸ Hayes, "Statement by 41724 Lance Corporal Taare W.M.," p. 3.

⁸⁹ 2nd Lieutenant J.S. Hayes, "Statement by 41724 Lance Corporal Taare W.M" and "Statement by 42703 Trooper McCallion W.L." p. 4 and p. 9 respectively.

⁹⁰ 2nd Lieutenant J.S. Hayes, "Statement by A44066 Corporal Bircham B." as part of Investigation into the Accidental Wounding of Two 4 Independent Troop NZSAS Soldiers on 23 November 1970, p.13.

⁹¹ Hayes, "Statement by 38544 Sergeant Dickson T.," pp. 6-7.

⁹² Hayes, "Statement by 38544 Sergeant Dickson T.," pp. 6-7.

⁹³ On 26 July, Taare – attached to a V2 patrol - had received a 'RPG shrapnel wound' to the right knee. See G744/1, Australian and New Zealand Battle Casualties - South Vietnam 1965-1971, ANZ, Wellington.

⁹⁴ Taare had been nominated for a gallantry award as a result of taking command of Campbell's patrol after the Patrol Commander had been shot and killed. His 'exemplary leadership' had certainly contributed to the successful extraction of the patrol on that occasion, however, the award was never supported/processed.

December 1969 - and had accumulated over 100 days on SAS operations during his tour.⁹⁵

Hayes concluded that both Taare and Moffitt had proved themselves as 'good professional SAS soldiers' and had done well on tour. It was unfortunate the two had made separate mistakes; Moffitt's failure to ensure all members of the patrol were aware of his plans, contrary to all normal SAS patrolling procedures, and Taare by not having complete control of his patrol.⁹⁶ This ultimately led to Taare 'taking Moffitt as an enemy and engaging him with his weapon.'⁹⁷ Hayes added that while Moffitt had done 'something' without Taare's knowledge, this did not mitigate his 'responsibility for the actions of all members of his patrol.'⁹⁸ In Hayes' view, Taare had correctly adhered to the 'rules of engagement' as applicable to SAS operational patrols. He had seen a 'figure in dark clothing, with an un-identified weapon' that appeared to pose a direct threat to the security and safety of the patrol.⁹⁹

After he read the investigation report, Major R.T.V. Taylor, the New Zealand 2IC of the ANZAC Battalion, and by default CO of the all elements of the New Zealand component in 1ATF, concurred with the findings and subsequent recommendations. Taylor believed that 'no worthwhile objective would be achieved in disciplining' either Taare or Moffitt for neglect.¹⁰⁰ While Taylor suggested the incident reemphasised 'the need for all ranks to be aware that opening fire is not the only immediate action on sighting the enemy,' Hayes noted in SAS operations, it was not always possible, or safe, to 'identify the enemy to the extent required by other infantry elements.'¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ 2nd Lieutenant J.S. Hayes, "Investigating Officer's Report," no date, in AWM103 R478/1/283, pp.18-20.

⁹⁶ Hayes, "Investigating Officer's Report," no date, pp.18-20.

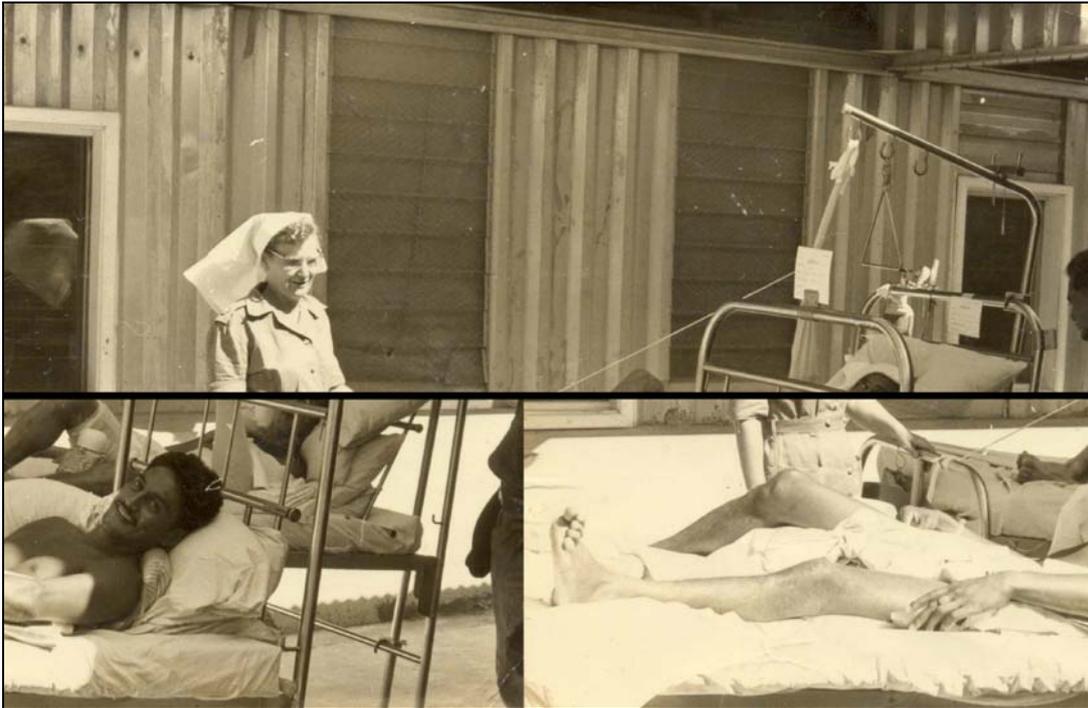
⁹⁷ Hayes, "Investigating Officer's Report," no date, pp.18-20.

⁹⁸ Hayes, "Investigating Officer's Report," no date, pp.18-20.

⁹⁹ Hayes, "Investigating Officer's Report," no date, pp.18-20.

¹⁰⁰ New Zealand Component 1ATF Nui Dat, "Commanding Officer's Comments Investigation: - Accidental Woundings 4 Troop NZSAS, 26 November 1970," in AWM103 Department of the Army R478/1/283, pp.2-3.

¹⁰¹ Hayes, "Investigating Officer's Report," no date, pp.18-20.



Photograph 8: Taare (foreground) and Moffitt at Vung Tau Hospital, November 1970¹⁰²

Indeed Teague himself had written in early August 1970 that while on operations, Task Force Rules of Engagement ‘generally were not applicable.’¹⁰³ ‘Challenging’ threats before they manifested themselves as Vietcong or NVA enemy was not a theory subscribed to by the SAS in Vietnam, particularly in a situation where a five-man SAS patrol had no real idea of the number of enemy that may be approaching their position. As previously mentioned, SAS patrols would not normally fire upon the enemy unless it was absolutely necessary. SAS contact drills – or ‘fire discipline’ – had, on a number of occasions in South Vietnam, saved patrols from being discovered by much larger forces that, had they been ‘engaged,’ would most likely not have survived.

Hayes found no neglect in any form on the part of Taare, McCallion or Bircham for the XM-148 discharge on board the helicopter.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, Teague determined that it

¹⁰² Taare was deliberately placed next to Moffitt. Jack Hayes, interview conducted on 16 December 2008 and NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington.

¹⁰³ ATF ROE stated that a platoon or patrol member could not fire unless ‘the enemy opened fire first, were seen to carry arms and obvious hostile, breaking curfew and not recognised as civilians or failed to stop when challenged and were obviously hostile.’ If the patrol was sighted and engaged by the enemy, then obviously SOP was to return fire, however SAS patrols were also authorised to allow enemy to pass and subsequently ‘engage if in ambush or opportunity target at patrol commander’s discretion.’ Major Ian Teague, “Exercise Life Saver, 10 August 1970,” in Kippenberger Military Archive Box 136A.

¹⁰⁴ The report concluded it was more than likely that pulling on the vines tangled around McCallion’s XM-148 had been enough to release the safety catch and fire the weapon. One of the problems associated with the weapon was when the XM-148 was ‘cocked’ it did not require much pressure to release the safety catch.

was necessary to amend the Squadron's SOPs in relation to the 'condition of weapons for winch extraction operations' as per Hayes' recommendation.¹⁰⁵ The accidental shooting also produced further lessons for those New Zealand soldiers who later joined the New Zealand SAS Squadron. With Moffitt initially incapacitated by the shooting, Dickson had spent over thirty minutes attempting to signal Squadron Headquarters without success. By not having another specialist signaller backing up Moffitt, the patrol was unable to transmit their situation. Had Moffitt been unconscious or more seriously wounded, it is possible the 'DUSTOFF' helicopter may have been too late to reach the wounded patrol member. From that experience, the New Zealand Squadron subsequently ensured that all patrol members maintained the ability to transmit basic morse-code messages:

When Boof [Moffitt] got wounded – because Boof was the signaller - all confusion reigned [and] when we did the [NZSAS Centre] cycle, with the new fellows were learning all that – even if it was only three to five words a minute, they could do it, you see?¹⁰⁶

The end of the tour for Wilson's Troop had been particularly intense. Along with the wounding of Moffitt and Taare, Corporal Sid Puia had to be extracted from Sergeant Ernie Stead's patrol 314/70 on 26 November suffering suspected acute malaria.¹⁰⁷ This was the last patrol for the Troop in South Vietnam.¹⁰⁸ Hayes' Patrol Commanders had arrived in Vietnam on 17 November and the rest of the group followed the next month.¹⁰⁹ On 13 December 1970, after the briefest of exchanges which included the transfer of

McCallion's XM-148 also had a modified extended trigger which was designed to be 'flicked out' at right angles to the body of the weapon to facilitate firing (see Photograph 3, page 161). Normally the extended trigger lay flat against the magazine housing of the M-16 rifle, but according to the SAS Squadron Armourer, Sergeant Lyons, the trigger was 'very easy to move.' As a result of these findings, Hayes recommended that the SAS Squadron SOPs be amended so the 40mm launcher on the XM-148 be unloaded, or the round be expended, before getting into winch slings. 2nd Lieutenant J.S. Hayes, "Statement by 52982 Sergeant Lyons P" as part of Investigation into the Accidental Wounding of Two 4 Independent Troop NZSAS Soldiers on 23 November 1970, p.14.

¹⁰⁵ 1 SAS Squadron Nui Dat, "Comments by OC 1 SAS Squadron 35803 Maj I.C. Teague, 28 November 1970," in AWM103, R478/1/283.

¹⁰⁶ Ernie Stead, interview conducted on 13 June 2008.

¹⁰⁷ The patrol report also notes that at lunchtime on the second day, the patrol discovered a track that showed sign that it had been used by 'an elephant' as recently as two days earlier. Sergeant E.P. Stead, "1 SAS Sqn Ops 314/70 Patrol Report, 30 November 1970," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries, 7/10/24, p. 1.

¹⁰⁸ On 6 December, the group hosted a farewell hangi in which both Brigadier Henderson and Lieutenant-Colonel Brown (CO NZV Force) were principal guests of honour. 4 Troop NZSAS, "Activity Report – December 1970," New Zealand Army 15/28/2 Volume One.

¹⁰⁹ 4 Troop NZSAS, "Activity Report – November 1970, 5 December 1970," New Zealand Army 15/28/2 Volume One.

weapons, the formal handover between the two Troops took place on the tarmac of Tan Son Nhut airbase.¹¹⁰

Concluding Notes: 4 Troop New Zealand SAS 1969-1970

...in the Troop in Vietnam, we didn't see a lot by the time we got there.¹¹¹

SAS operations in Vietnam, both Australian and New Zealand, have always been viewed by commentators, writers and the veterans themselves, with a mixed measure of frustration and satisfaction.¹¹² Horner wrote that despite the frustration of patrols mainly being 'employed on reconnaissance tasks relatively close to the Task Force base when they considered their true role was long-range reconnaissance deep in enemy territory,' the Australian SAS accepted 'political conditions' limited the ability to carry out Borneo-style reconnaissance operations.¹¹³

With little knowledge of the operational environment they would be entering, it took longer for Terry Culley's first 4 Troop to grasp the wider context of the new operational environment in South Vietnam. Their adherence to tried-and-true methods of operation, the relative success in Borneo and absence of a relationship that could have provided them with detailed information on Australian SAS operations, also contributed to this appreciation. For the second Troop, changing roles occurred almost as often as Task Force Commanders changed. Analysis shows that by the end of May 1970, at the same time as Brigadier Henderson arrived, the entire Squadron largely ceased offensive or recce/ambush patrolling. In fact, after May there were only another nine fighting or ambush patrols carried out during the remainder of the year.¹¹⁴

Despite fewer enemy contacts, the second New Zealand Troop's deployment to South Vietnam was no less intensive and no less operationally valuable. The group carried out 79 operational patrols in total, excluding TAOR patrols, of which 71 were all New

¹¹⁰ Wayne Holah, the Troop Administrative Clerk as well as being a fully-qualified patrol SAS member, recalled that Wilson's Troop 'handed over their weapons and they got on the plane and left. We then go onto the back of an open truck and drove to Nui Dat which was quite a few hours away. I felt very vulnerable with just an SLR and one magazine.' Wayne Holah, email to author 20 December 2008.

¹¹¹ Jack Powley, interview conducted on 6 August 2008.

¹¹² Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 348, McGibbon, *The New Zealand Army in Vietnam 1964-1972*, pp. 68-82 and Baker, *Dare to Win*, pp. 92-98 are but three examples.

¹¹³ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 348.

¹¹⁴ Material sourced from AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam], 7/10/19 – 7/10/24 1 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Logs, [1-31 May to 1-30 November 1970] in AWM.

Zealand-manned patrols or at least led by New Zealand Patrol Commanders. As with Culley's Troop, the second group were responsible for sighting nearly 30% of all enemy seen by SAS patrols between December 1969 and the end of November 1970 and despite the volume of enemy seen being only 10% of that which had been observed the previous year, the ratio remained consistent.

Patrols	Sightings	Enemy	Contacts	Enemy KIA	Enemy KIA (Poss)	Enemy WIA	Own KIA	Own WIA
Australian Squadron Patrols (December 1969 – November 1970)								
Total	298	119	397	62	40	9		
Australian Squadron Patrols involving New Zealand Troop members								
Reconnaissance	50	30	99	1	0			
Recce/Ambush	23	7	22	5	4			
Ambush/Fighting	4	0	0	0	0			
Total	77	37	121	6	4			
New Zealand Commanded Patrols								
Reconnaissance	47	29	97	1	0			
Recce/Ambush	20	6	19	4	3			
Ambush/Fighting	4	0	0	0	0			
Total	71	35	116	5	3		1	3
V and W Coy Operational Activity (December 1969–November 1970)								
Total			27	28	46	6	7	25

Table 3: 4 Troop Patrol Statistics December 1969 – November 1970¹¹⁵

The second 4 Troop also relied upon the experience of the senior NCOs to maintain and manage any perceived periods of frustrating inactivity. The experience of Wilson, Powley and the other Patrol Commanders, as well as Shattky, especially their knowledge of previous New Zealand SAS deployments in South East Asia, saw the Troop kept occupied at every conceivable opportunity. In contrast to the Australian SAS, when not on patrol the New Zealanders continued a strict daily regime of being up by a certain time each morning, parading, and carrying out 'EMUs' chores about the lines that kept 'the guys occupied rather than let them hang around all day in their tents.'¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Material sourced from AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam], 7/12/20 – 7/12/22 3 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Logs, Annexes [1-31 December 1969 to 1-18 February 1970], 7/10/15 – 7/10/24 1 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Logs, [18-28 February 1970 to 1-30 November 1970] in AWM, Canberra, and New Zealand Army 42/17/1 Part One, "Operations New Zealand 'V' Force Activity Reports, 23 August 1967 – 24 August 1970, in ANZ, Wellington.

¹¹⁶ Jack Powley, interview conducted on 6 August 2008.

Those such as Wilson and Powley would become significant mentors for a great number of New Zealand Special Forces soldiers in future years.¹¹⁷ Their particular style and approach, without compromising standards, was the yardstick by which New Zealand Special Forces senior NCOs were measured. It was also one of the key differences between the two Special Forces organisations; an ability to ‘sort it out there and then.’¹¹⁸ It was a modus operandi equally appreciated by the soldiers under their command.



Photograph 9: WO2 Danny Wilson and Sergeants ‘Tepa’ Dickson, Jack Powley, Vince Smith and Joe Murray (sitting)¹¹⁹

The fact that most of the Troop had served in Malaya and Borneo was significant. Of equal importance and value were those within the Troop who had also served in Vietnam with earlier New Zealand infantry or artillery deployments as this provided an additional level of ‘depth’ of expertise.¹²⁰ To the senior members, such as Shattky, Wilson and Powley, it was vital to maintain the intensity of activity that had been borne out, perhaps more than anything else, since the death of Campbell. Standards of discipline at Nui Dat were simply an extension of the operational professionalism demonstrated by New Zealand SAS soldiers out on patrol:

¹¹⁷ Brosnan and Henry, with Taubert, *Soldiering On*, p. 61, p. 85, p. 96, and p. 107.

¹¹⁸ Danny Wilson, interview conducted on 18 July 2008

¹¹⁹ The photograph was taken late November/early December 1970. NZSAS Archive, Wellington.

¹²⁰ Jack Powley, interview conducted on 6 August 2008.

I think that was one of the problem lessons from Graham, was ‘hey, it doesn’t matter if you are twelve months or two days away from going home.’ There are times, and there is no doubt about that, when things start to slacken off – things like dress, can’t be bothered to do things and get a wee bit complacent. But you just take a step back and have a look and say ‘hey, we’re slipping here’ or someone says ‘oh the old dress is not as good as it used to be’ that jars you back into life and you get back into it again...¹²¹

From an operational perspective, despite the lack of activity which dogged most of the Task Force, including the entire SAS Squadron, the patrolling activities of the second New Zealand SAS Troop were of considerable value. The deployment in effect allowed the ‘bleeding’ of a new generation of New Zealand Special Forces soldiers, in much the same way Borneo had provided five years earlier.¹²² The third New Zealand Troop deployment, scheduled to arrive by the middle of December 1970 also provided a similar set of experiences for a new group of New Zealand SAS soldiers. Unfortunately, as will be discussed in the following Chapter, thanks largely to an impatient political environment keen to see the withdrawal of all New Zealand forces from South Vietnam as quickly as possible, the third New Zealand SAS 4 Troop deployment would not complete its twelve-month tour.

¹²¹ Jack Powley, interview conducted on 6 August 2008.

¹²² Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008

Chapter 14

The Short Tour: December 1970 – February 1971

As with Captain Graye Shattky's early departure, Major Ian Teague left before the rest of 1 Squadron to attend Australian Army Staff College. David Horner added that while he had been an 'outgoing and imaginative commander,' the frustrations of a changing operational environment made it difficult for Teague to 'please the expectations of his soldiers.'¹ Teague's replacement, Major Geoff Chipman, took command of 1 Squadron in December 1970.²

By early November Shattky's replacement, 2nd Lieutenant Jack Hayes continued to report to Major Neville Kidd and 1 Ranger Squadron that the Task Force Area of Operations (AO) remained particularly quiet.³ It was suspected remnants of both the D445 and D440 Vietcong Battalions had moved out of Phuoc Tuy and were 'lying very low and avoiding all contact.' This, explained the Troop Commander to his OC, was the primary reason for the '7-line Patrol reports going your way.'⁴ While Hayes ostensibly commanded Shattky's Troop, he preferred to defer to WO2 Danny Wilson at least until the second group completed its tour:

I sat down with Danny – he and I spent an evening talking together...And my view was 'Danny, this is your Troop – I am not going to try and take command of this Troop. Yes, I am the OC, if you need any help or need any support, ask me – I am here to learn what the hell is going on and what I have to do here, and I'll use my rank if it's useful – to use me as an officer – but I am expecting you to make all the decisions on Graye's Troop once Graye has gone.'⁵

The handover between Hayes and Shattky was completed in two days. From then on Wilson provided the young Troop Commander with a considerable induction, including his joining patrols with Sergeants Joe Murray and Ernie Stead, which exposed Hayes to

¹ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 366.

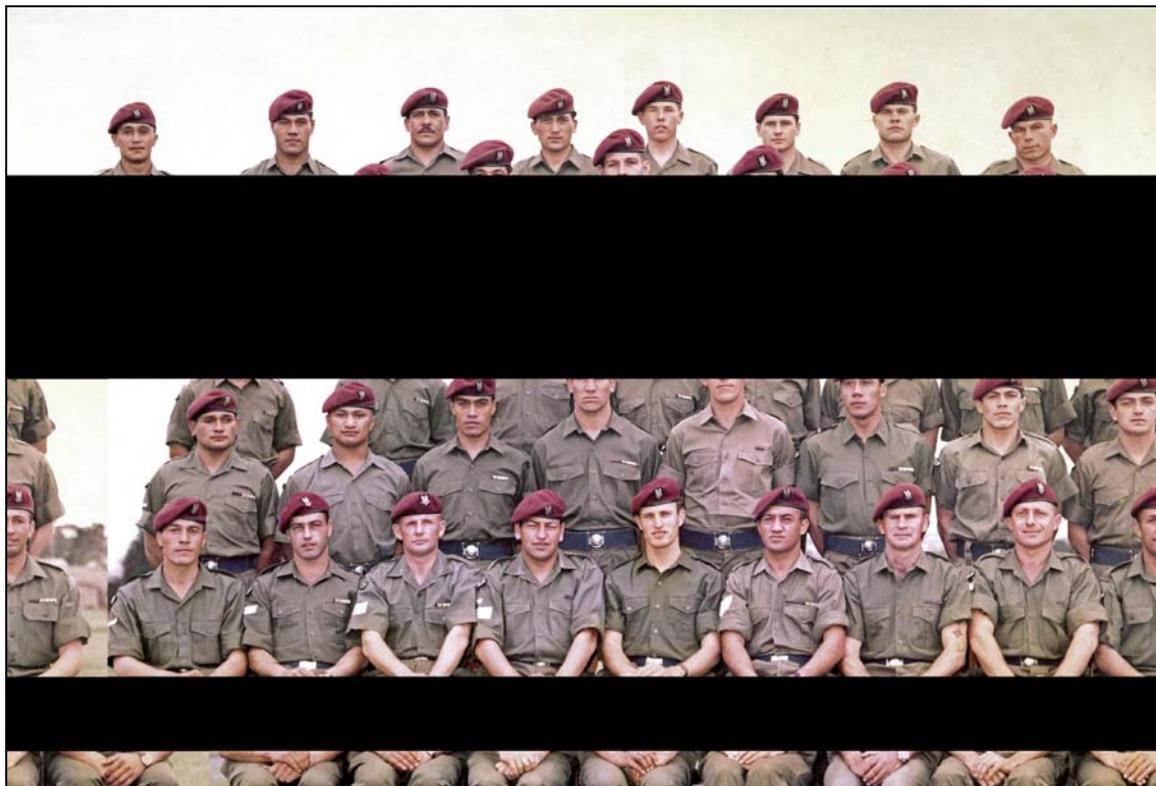
² In late August, Chipman had travelled to Nui Dat for a series of pre-deployment meetings and briefings, and has been provided a briefing on 1 Squadron operations from Shattky. 1 SAS Squadron Nui Dat, "Visit to 1 SAS Squadron Maj G.E. Chipman 27 Aug-3 Sep 70, 23 August 1970," in AWM98, R875/270/75: Visits Major Chipman OC 2SAS to 1SAS, 1970, AWM, Canberra.

³ 2nd Lieutenant Jack Hayes, "Newsletter No 1, 2 November 1970," in Kippenberger Military Archive Box 136A, New Zealand Army Museum, Waiouru.

⁴ Hayes, "Newsletter No 1, 2 November 1970."

⁵ Jack Hayes, interview conducted on 16 December 2008.

the practical necessities of operations in Phuoc Tuy province.⁶ Like Shattky, Hayes had not originally been selected to command the third 4 Troop. Concerned at a less than satisfactory performance in the final training exercise before departure, Kidd had decided not to select Captain Bruce Stevenson (a member of David Moloney's fourth detachment in Borneo who had subsequently been commissioned) and selected Hayes instead. Between being told of his command and his arrival at Nui Dat took Hayes all of ten days.⁷



Photograph 10: 4 Troop, New Zealand Special Air Service, November 1970⁸

While Hayes was a relatively young officer, he was ably supported by a wealth of experience in the form of Wilson as well as the senior NCOs of his own Troop. Those returning to South Vietnam for the second time included Percy Brown, now Hayes' Troop Sergeant, and Sergeant Michael 'Paddy' Cunningham, as well as Corporals Jack Curtis and Whi Wanoa, and Lance-Corporals Sam Peti and Dennis 'Bro' Terry. The remaining

⁶ The relative inexperience of the new 4 Troop Commander was not lost on other New Zealand elements of the Task Force as Hayes discovered during the first few weeks of his tour: 'There have been a lot of jibes handed out to me, ranging from 'classing our TF SAS as expendable' to 'you are either a bloody good 2Lt or 1 RS are bloody short of officers...' You know the answer.' 2nd Lieutenant Jack Hayes, "Newsletter, 22 November 1970," in Kippenberger Military Archive Box 136A.

⁷ Jack Hayes, interview conducted on 16 December 2008.

⁸ NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington.

Patrol Commanders, Sergeants Tony Powell, Vince Smith and Wilson's replacement, WO2 Krete Haami, were all New Zealand SAS Borneo veterans. For Hayes, like Culley, his limited SAS and operational experience was more than offset by the knowledge surrounding him. Hayes' Squadron Commander was equally impressed with the calibre of the New Zealand Troop as Hayes recounted the night Brown and the rest of the Troop arrived at Nui Dat:

And the night that he [Brown] arrived, Geoff [Chipman] turned up in our lines and said 'I want all the Kiwis to turn up in 'dacrons,' stable belts and bring your berets with you. And I want your ribbons up.' He said 'there is a reason for it.' So we all turned up in our 'dacrons' and the reason he did it was...he wanted to be able to show that the [Australian] Patrol Commanders that 4 Troop had really experienced Patrol Commanders and he introduced them all, and I wrote little notes out for each of the guys and he got up...And after that, the Aussies went 'wow' because we had very experienced guys. So we didn't have the same issues as the earlier [4] Troops had...⁹

Hayes' comments are interesting. Certainly neither Culley's nor Shattky's Troops lacked experience, nevertheless, the first two New Zealand SAS groups had something of chequered relationships with their Australian counterparts. So what was the principal difference in Hayes' appreciation of his relationship with his Australian colleagues? Perhaps, more than anything else, the answer lay with the command element of 1 Squadron in 1971. To Hayes, Chipman was 'an outstanding Squadron Commander' with an 'innovative' and 'very wide view of the world.'¹⁰

And Geoff Chipman gave people a task and walked away - and was very supportive, very, very supportive.¹¹

Chipman normally gave Hayes an advance indication – from the Patrol Tasking Tables – of when he would require 4 Troop patrols for the following month. Hayes tasked and manned the patrols, then reported this information to his Squadron Commander. In contrast to Teague, and for that matter Beesley, from the beginning Chipman was more than comfortable for these decisions to be left to the New Zealand Troop Commander, and consequently, Hayes had more autonomy than both Culley and Shattky.¹²

⁹ Jack Hayes, interview conducted on 16 December 2008.

¹⁰ Jack Hayes, interview conducted on 16 December 2008.

¹¹ Jack Hayes, interview conducted on 16 December 2008.

¹² 2nd Lieutenant J.S. Hayes, "4 Troop NZSAS – Post Operational Report South Vietnam Dec 1970 – Feb 1971, 16 February 1971," in NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington, p. 1.

Chipman had been John Murphy's 2IC during the Australian 3 Squadron tour in 1966. Not only had Chipman spent a year in the United Kingdom attached to the SBS in Poole before promotion to Squadron Commander in June 1969, but his 2IC was Captain Robin Letts who had joined the Australian Army from the British SAS. Letts had been awarded a Military Cross for CLARET operations undertaken with D Squadron in 1965.¹³ As Hayes attested, it appeared that Letts perhaps felt a more natural affinity with the New Zealanders, who mirrored much more his British SAS experiences, than his new Australian Special Forces comrades:

When Trader Teague left and Geoff Chipman took over, Robin Letts came down one afternoon and asked if he could train with us. And we said 'sure.' So he came down every day and ran with us. Because he was 2IC, he was there most days – he did go out – but most of the time he was with us. And he used to come to the range with us quite often too and watch our drills and take part, and I used to put him in a patrol and he'd have a shoot because he wanted to keep his skills up. He was very comfortable with us...And all of our guys used to call him 'Robin.'¹⁴

As far as Hayes can recall, he understood that Chipman believed the New Zealanders had 'performed far better in Borneo than the Australian SAS' and was equally keen to see his soldiers become imbued with the New Zealand Troop's attitude and professionalism.¹⁵ Chipman had not served with either of the two Australian SAS Squadrons in Borneo so it is more than likely this assessment had come courtesy of Letts. Nevertheless, it appears that the new Australian Squadron Commander saw the difference between the two ANZAC Special Forces units for himself at operational level:

And he sat on my patrol debriefs – not all of them but a good number of them, for all of the Troops – and he said "I sat in with you guys and listened to your debriefs and talked about a contact where you fired four rounds of ammunition, and I've got your peers up in Three Troop and Two Troop telling me they have fired six hundred rounds in a contact and didn't see anyone.' So he kept saying 'I have got to get your guys to influence my troops.'¹⁶

As a result, members of Hayes' Troop spent much more time with their Australian peers than did the first two New Zealand SAS Troops, not only at Troop Commander-to-Troop Commander level but also senior NCO level.¹⁷

¹³ Dickens, *SAS: Secret War in South-East Asia*, p. 247 and Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 309.

¹⁴ Jack Hayes, interview conducted on 16 December 2008.

¹⁵ Jack Hayes, interview conducted on 16 December 2008.

¹⁶ Jack Hayes, interview conducted on 16 December 2008.

¹⁷ Jack Hayes, interview conducted on 16 December 2008.

By the beginning of December 1970, all of Hayes' Patrol Commanders, save Brown, had completed orientation patrols with 1 Squadron.¹⁸ Percy Brown ultimately commanded the first all-New Zealand patrol of the third 4 Troop between 21 and 26 December 1970. The Troop Sergeant's re-introduction to Phuoc Tuy province started quickly when approximately 15 minutes after insertion the patrol sighted three enemy moving through the 'scrub.'¹⁹ While there was no doubt Brown believed the enemy had observed the patrol's insertion, he was confident that they did not know the patrol's precise location and allowed the three to continue heading away from the New Zealanders' position.²⁰ The patrol saw no further enemy and was extracted by helicopter four days later.²¹ The rest of the New Zealand patrols for December were similarly unable to find recent signs of enemy activity.

Hayes recounted that he was able to increase the intensity and diversity of 4 Troop operations during the rest of the Troop's tour because of the Australian Squadron changeover. Chipman needed to prioritise the patrolling tasks allocated to them by the Task Force and the 1 Squadron criteria used to determine priority patrolling tasks was twofold; distance from Nui Dat and the last time an SAS patrol had been in the designated AO.²² As alluded to earlier, most patrols were able to confirm there remained little or no enemy activity in the area:

Sometimes it was just negative patrolling – going back and confirming 'yeah, a year ago they went in no sign – and yep, still no sign.' But most of them were going back in to confirm that this area – the track systems we knew were so old that, that is still the track system or no there's new movement and there's new camps or whatever.²³

¹⁸ Sergeant J. Murray, "1 SAS Sqn Ops 291/70 Patrol Report, 1 November 1970," Sergeant J. Powley, "1 SAS Sqn Ops 303/70 Patrol Report, 17 November 1970," 24 November 1970," Sergeant J. Gebhardt, "1 SAS Sqn Ops 302/70 Patrol Report, 10 November 1970," and Sergeant E.P. Stead, "1 SAS Sqn Ops 314/70 Patrol Report, 30 November 1970," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries, 7/10/24 1 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Log 1-30 November 1970, and Lieutenant A. Freemantle, "1 SAS Sqn Ops 317/70 Patrol Report, 2 December 1970" and Sergeant J. P. Ward, "1 SAS Sqn Ops 381/70 Patrol Report, 6 December 1970," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries, 7/10/25 1 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Log 1-31 December 1970, all in AWM, Canberra.

¹⁹ Sergeant P. Brown, "1 SAS Sqn Ops 338/70 Patrol Report, 26 December 1970," "1 SAS Squadron Ops Log, 22 December 1970, p.274," both in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries, 7/10/25, and 4 Troop NZSAS, "Activity Report – December 1970," in New Zealand Army 15/28/2 Volume One, NZSAS Force in Vietnam, May 1968 to May 1971, NZDF Archive, Wellington.

²⁰ Brown, "1 SAS Sqn Ops 338/70 Patrol Report, 26 December 1970," pp. 1-2.

²¹ 4 Troop NZSAS, "Activity Report – December 1970."

²² Jack Hayes, interview conducted on 16 December 2008 and Horner, *SAS Phantoms of War: A History of the Australian Special Air Service* (Crows Nest, New South Wales: Allen and Unwin Pty, 2002), pp.366-370.

²³ Jack Hayes, interview conducted on 16 December 2008.

To counter some of the Troop's frustration borne out of observing little or no enemy activity, Hayes set about providing informal assistance to the remaining New Zealand rifle company attached to the Task Force by either deploying patrols into an area in advance of a larger battalion operation, or as guides for the company operations themselves. Brown's 338/70 reconnaissance patrol in December 1970 was an example of this and Hayes recalled that the patrol was deployed in order to not only:

...check if there was any signs - there wasn't - but also where the water was and where the tracks were. He came back, and Percy actually went and sat down with John McGuire and his team (the Platoon Commanders and Platoon Sergeants) and 'here's my map and here's my patrol report and this is what the area is like' and they all took copies of it.²⁴

New Zealand Company commanders such as Major John McGuire, OC of V5 between May 1970 and May 1971, were also aware of the potential up-to-date intelligence that the SAS Squadron could provide in advance of their operations. This intelligence not only included the enemy strength and positions, but also a description of the terrain, the ease or difficulty of navigation, the location of tracks and availability of water. Disappointingly, these exchanges 'tended to be on the 'Old-Pal' net; it certainly wasn't formally organised by Task Force' and, as with the first two 4 Troops which operated in South Vietnam, it appeared to Hayes the Task Force was unable or unwilling to utilise the SAS as anything more than a 'reconnaissance platoon.'²⁵

Patrol 028/71: SOPs and Smoking on Patrol

The last New Zealand patrol in South Vietnam involved in a contact took place between 31 January and 4 February 1971. Sergeant Tony Powell's recce/ambush patrol 028/71 had the joint objective of reconnoitring an area 23 kilometres north-east of Nui Dat believed to contain a Vietcong camp and, if possible, conduct a CTR to identify the enemy operating in that area.²⁶ For the first three days, the patrol heard 'signal shots'

²⁴ Jack Hayes, interview conducted on 16 December 2008.

²⁵ Jack Hayes, interview conducted on 16 December 2008.

²⁶ 2 Squadron, "Patrol 028/71, 29 January 1971" Briefing data sheet in AWM103 445: Patrol Briefing Data – 2 SAS [Special Air Service] Squadron – 1971, AWM, Canberra, p.1.

fired around their general location but did not see any enemy, nor were they able to locate the camp.²⁷

There was no single hard-and-fast rule when it came to the question of smoking on patrol. Different Patrol Commanders had different attitudes to smoking or allowing patrol members to smoke. Some, such as Fred Barclay and Graye Shattky, refused to allow smoking at all, arguing that if the New Zealanders could smell the distinctive odour of South East Asian cigarettes then it stood to reason that the enemy would ‘be able to smell Western smoke.’²⁸ Other Patrol Commanders were quite happy to smoke:

No one would have smoked in Fred’s patrol because Fred was a non-smoker... But I am a smoker – so we smoked. I mean, hey we all came home? Ten days is a long time [to not smoke]...I’ll tell you, we had just put in this OP [patrol 078/69] and Sam [Peti] was in the OP and bugger me days if Charlie didn’t stick his head in there – and Sam blew his head off! So we bugged out and we ran! And we finally stopped and I thought ‘that’s good enough.’ I sent the ‘contact’ word and was having a smoke, and Sam Peti goes ‘you all right?’ And I said ‘yeah.’ He said, ‘shit, you’d think nothing happened – you’re sitting there like you’re at the beach having a smoke!’²⁹

For those like Bill Lillicrapp who did allow members to partake, smoking on patrol was still determined by the tactical situation the patrol found itself in. Shattky’s Troop Sergeant Jack Powley, for example, had a flexible approach to the question of smoking. In the main he allowed it to take place:

Yes I [did] and I will tell you why. What happened was – I went out on one of the patrols and about three days into the patrol, I had one of them come up to me and go [hand gestures of praying then smoking - two fingers to the mouth]. And I thought ‘do you have a guy and you don’t smoke for the duration of the patrol, which means he’s going along and all he is thinking of is ‘when’s my next smoke coming?’ And that means he’s not concentrating. Or, if we think we are in a safe environment, give them a puff – and that was my [approach]. I didn’t give it to them every day or that but I would give it from the point of view that ‘what’s the use of having a bloody guy, a smoker, that all he’s thinking about is a cigarette’ which means his concentration is gone.³⁰

²⁷ Sergeant T.F. Powell, “1 SAS Squadron Ops 028/71, 5 February 1971,” in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries, 7/12/27 1 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Log 1-18 February 1971, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, p.1, and Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 369.

²⁸ Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008 and Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008.

²⁹ Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

³⁰ Jack Powley, interview conducted on 6 August 2008.

Powell was another Patrol Commander who let members of his patrol smoke when the tactical situation determined they could. Shortly after the patrol finished breakfast on the morning of 4 February, he signalled to the group that they should prepare to leave. Before moving out, the patrol 2IC Corporal Whi Wanoa decided to have one further cigarette. In no particular hurry, Powell saw no reason why the patrol could not wait a little longer for the 2IC to finish:

If I didn't have that smoke, we would have been on the receiving end – as opposed to us catching them out in the open...I lit up another smoke before Tony decided to take off. And he faced my way to check up that everyone was ready – and I just showed him my cigarette – so he said 'oh well, another couple of minutes.' By the time I had finished my smoke and we had stood up and shook out and started moving – Kelly [Ilolahia] was our scout – they [the enemy] had come in from the bush line and into the open.³¹

The area in which Powell's group had been patrolling was particularly open terrain. An initial group of enemy emerged from the tree-line approximately 60 metres from the patrol's location. Almost immediately a further four enemy were spotted approaching the patrol.³² At a range of 25 metres, both Powell and Ilolahia opened fire on the second group. The rest of the patrol then suppressed the area with a mixture of M-16, SLR and M-79 rounds, withdrew, and reported the contact.³³

Powell signalled that he believed three of the four Vietcong in the second group had been killed in the contact.³⁴ Because of the threat posed by the enemy group first seen, the patrol had withdrawn from the contact area and had not been able to carry out any form of body search.³⁵ Twenty minutes after Powell's radio transmission had been received at Squadron Headquarters, the two standby patrols – number 13 and 43 – were air-lifted to Powell's patrol location. It was determined that as soon as the three patrols joined up, they would carry out a 'sweep' through the contact area.³⁶ Just before 1000 hrs the three

³¹ Whi Wanoa, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

³² Powell, "1 SAS Squadron Ops 028/71, 5 February 1971," p.2 and 1 SAS Squadron, "Patrol 028/71 Contact – After Action Report, 5 February 1971," in AWM103, R723/1/1/3: General – Contact/Incident After Action Reports – 1 SAS Squadron, AWM, Canberra.

³³ 1 SAS Squadron, "Patrol 028/71 Contact – After Action Report, 5 February 1971."

³⁴ 1 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 4 February," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/27, p. 42.

³⁵ 1 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 4 February," p.42.

³⁶ The two standby patrols were Australian 1 Squadron patrol #13 commanded by Sergeant John Mulby and New Zealand Troop patrol #43 commanded by Sergeant Vince Smith. 1 SAS Squadron "Ops Logs, 4 February," p. 42 and Powell, "1 SAS Squadron Ops 028/71, 5 February 1971," p. 1.

patrols returned to the contact area where they discovered two dead Vietcong, a single M2 carbine rifle, two packs and a sizeable quantity of documents.³⁷

The body search yielded some interesting tactical intelligence. The information collected subsequently confirmed that the two killed were the Chief of the Chau Duc District Committee and the Commander of the C/41 Rifle Company; both highly valued Vietcong targets.³⁸ As the group carried out the body search, at least two New Zealanders, one from each of Powell's group and Sergeant Vince Smith's standby patrol number 43, observed an Australian patrol member remove the 'gold rings' from the dead Vietcong by cutting his 'fingers off':³⁹

While this search of the bodies was being made, one of the Australian soldiers began fiddling with the hand of one of the dead men. He was using a knife and I moved to see what he was doing. He was asked what he was doing by one of the New Zealand patrol members. I only remember the Aussie saying something to the effect that 'The guy doesn't need these anymore.' He was removing gold rings from the fingers and to do this he had to cut off the dead man's fingers!...I seem to remember other patrol members also not liking what was happening but I do not remember what was said or the result. We left the bodies where they fell and moved off some distance to a LZ where we were picked up and flown back to Nui Dat. Leaving the bodies and not burying them also concerned me at the time, but this is what was normally done.⁴⁰

While Wanoa said that he brought up the incident at the patrol debriefing, there appears to be no record of any further investigation or subsequent action.⁴¹ In her examination of the New Zealand military experience of the Vietnam War, Deborah Challinor made reference to a 1987 publication titled *Ashes of Vietnam: Australian Voices* written by Australian journalist Stuart Rintoul.⁴² In one section of the book, Rintoul wrote:

Australians in Vietnam were guilty of acts of barbarity. There were Australians whose morality was so eroded that they murdered villagers, raped women, tortured and killed enemy soldiers and mutilated corpses.⁴³

³⁷ 1 SAS Squadron, "Patrol 028/71 Contact – After Action Report, 5 February 1971."

³⁸ Powell, "1 SAS Squadron Ops 028/71, 5 February 1971," p. 3.

³⁹ Whi Wanoa, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

⁴⁰ Wayne Holah also recounted that night there 'was also an incident regarding Kelly Ilolahia and the watch that was taken from [one of] the dead VC. After being viewed by Intelligence the watch was given to Kelly as a souvenir. That night Kelly apparently woke up screaming – he had a bad dream in which the dead VC had come looking for his watch.' Wayne Holah, email to author dated 27 September 2008.

⁴¹ Whi Wanoa, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

⁴² Challinor, *Grey Ghosts*, pp. 157-159.

⁴³ Stuart Rintoul and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, *Ashes of Vietnam: Australian Voices* (Victoria: W. Heinemann Australia, 1987), p. xiv.

According to Challinor, the book was not well received by Australian Vietnam veterans, many of whom claimed its contents were ‘sensationalist and distorted.’⁴⁴ While there is no evidence to suggest that New Zealand or Australian soldiers carried out acts of murder, rape or torture during the campaign in South Vietnam, the experience of patrol 028/71 suggests Rintoul may have been accurate at least with the accusation that some Australian troops were responsible for the ‘mutilation of corpses.’⁴⁵ Rules of engagement, the treatment of dead and wounded enemy, and prisoners of war were issues that generated significant debate during and after the end of the Vietnam War and accusations of improper conduct were strongly contested.

For those members of the New Zealand SAS in Vietnam who prided themselves in their consummate professionalism, any demonstration of inappropriate conduct would have most certainly stood out. For example, in addition to the 11 enemy seen by Squadron patrols in September 1970, two female civilians had also been briefly apprehended by a New Zealand SAS patrol commanded by Sergeant Jack Powley in the early afternoon of 1 September:

...we were in an area where it was a restricted area and we came across sign – so we lay and of course these two women turned up...And you think ‘they are there gathering food or they are informers?’ So we picked them up. I got through to base – they said ‘hold on.’ And we were sitting there for ages. So in the end I thought ‘well, I’m not hanging around here any longer’ and I let the women go in actual fact. Then we got a message they were on the way – so I had to run down the bloody track and grab these women again. So we got them, got them back...made them sit down with their hands on their heads or their arms behind their backs – and then the MPs got off and started doing it [an interrogation of the women]. And I said ‘get out of here – we’re not sitting around here while you’re bloody taking your time.’ When we got back to base [several days later] we learnt that they’d been questioned and released. Now my [thinking] was it doesn’t matter if they were guilty or not, they would have gone back to the village. So our patrol was compromised anyway – so why the hell weren’t we pulled out or [the two women] held until we got back? I never heard any more about it...⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Challinor, *Grey Ghosts*, pp. 157-159.

⁴⁵ See Michael Sallah and Mitch Weiss’ *Tiger Force: A True Story of Men and War* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2006, p.209.) in which it was claimed that US soldiers allegedly removed the gold fillings of dead Vietnamese villagers.

⁴⁶ The handling of Prisoners of War (PW) or Detainees – ‘persons who when captured were not openly engaging in combat and whose status may be either that of innocent civilian, returnee, PW, or civil defendant’ – within the Task Force was carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Geneva Convention. According to Task Force SOPs, all PW and Detainees were to be given ‘humane treatment’ at all times and could not be ‘threatened, insulted or exposed to any unpleasant or disadvantageous treatment of any kind.’ Notwithstanding the above, the Task Force principle governing the treatment of Vietnamese

The capture of prisoners was never high on the Squadron's priority list. It had been first mooted to Major Dale Burnett's 1 Squadron in 1967 and although a number of 'snatch' patrols were deployed, they were never successful. It was considered that because of the small size of SAS patrols, any enemy capture attempt would make a patrol particularly vulnerable.⁴⁷ Several SAS patrols had occasion to take prisoners while out on patrol, but these opportunities were relatively rare. The above notwithstanding, at least six patrols were carried out in Phuoc Tuy province between October and November 1969 by American Special Forces 'snatch teams' operating from their B-53 Camp at Long Thanh.⁴⁸ The patrols were controlled from 3 SAS Squadron Headquarters and comprised either all-American Special Forces personnel or US Special Forces soldiers with indigenous 'Chieu Hoi' guides.⁴⁹ From the available records in Australian archives, none of these patrols appeared to have achieved their primary objective.⁵⁰

Although Powley and Corporal Dave Te Paa observed prisoners being captured by a United States Navy SEAL Team in June 1970, there were no instances of New Zealand 4 Troop patrols being tasked to capture Vietcong during their time in South Vietnam.⁵¹ In early 2001, a section of the New Zealand media became aware of part of an Australian published memoir *The Boy from Boree Creek: The Tim Fisher Story* in which it was claimed by Peter Rogers, a former Australian 161 Reconnaissance Flight pilot, that a New Zealand SAS Patrol had been responsible for killing two wounded Vietcong prisoners in late 1968:

Another nasho, Peter Rogers, remembers an incident with Fisher which brought home to him the awful cold-bloodedness of the war. 'We listened to a radio

PW was that their conditions 'should be no worse than those provided for' Task Force troops. 1st Australian Task Force, "Vietnam Standing Operating Procedures for Operations in Vietnam, August 1968," in New Zealand Army Non File Material A288, NZDF Archive, pp. 131-132 and Jack Powley, interview conducted on 6 August 2008.

⁴⁷ Former Australian Squadron member Lieutenant-Colonel W. 'Bill' Hindson aptly summarised the dilemma when he commented 'you never knew whether the man you had selected to capture was the Far East karate champion or the fastest draw in the North Vietnamese Army.' Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 219.

⁴⁸ These included 3 Squadron patrols 159/69 (Team New Mexico), 160/69 (Team Minnesota), 161/69 (Team Coral) between 19 and 23 October, and patrols 192/69, 193/69 and 194/69 in late November 1969. See AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/18, 3 SAS Squadron Narrative, Duty Officer's Log, Annexes [1-31 October 1969] and 7/12/19, 3 SAS Squadron Narrative, Duty Officer's Log, Annexes [1-30 November 1969], both at AWM, Canberra.

⁴⁹ AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/18 and 7/12/19.

⁵⁰ AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries [Vietnam] 7/12/18 and 7/12/19.

⁵¹ Appendix One contains further references to these exchanges.

conversation between a Kiwi SAS patrol and SAS HQ – what we were doing on that frequency I have no idea – after a contact. The Kiwis were reporting three Vietcong KIA and two WIA and wanted the prisoners lifted out urgently as they were still in a bad situation. The advice to them was there was no helicopter available. So, after a heated argument, the after-action report was amended to five Vietcong KIA, and the patrol [radioed back that it] was moving out...I wondered what sort of war I was in.⁵²

In late June 2001, the then CO of 1 NZSAS Group, Lieutenant-Colonel Tim Keating wrote to DCGS, Colonel Brendan Fraher and advised that he had completed an investigation of the Group's files with regard to the allegations made in the book.⁵³ Keating was confident that no New Zealand SAS patrol could have been responsible for the incident because there 'were no NZSAS patrols operating in South Vietnam at that time.'⁵⁴ Keating incorrectly reported the 'Troop did not arrive in South Vietnam until mid-1968,' and in 'the period from Boxing Day 1968 until the first independent New Zealand SAS patrols in late January 1969, New Zealand SAS personnel were attached singularly and in pairs to the Australian SAS patrols.'⁵⁵ Keating also noted that he understood that all 'patrol to HQ signals' were sent from ANPR-64 radio sets 'which only used morse code on an HF band using a one time letter pad for coded messages.'⁵⁶ While this was correct for normal procedure, it was common for SAS patrols to speak in-clear in emergencies such as when involved in a 'contact.'⁵⁷

Keating also enclosed copies of the patrol reports carried out at the time. Included in that list was the Australian 2 Squadron patrol 271/68 in which Sergeant Fred Barclay was a member in late December 1968.⁵⁸ This patrol was the only one of the 13 patrols in late 1968 that included 4 Troop members and recorded more than five enemy killed. After analysing the patrol details, including accounts from two Australians and Barclay, it seems clear patrol 271/68 was perhaps a little too 'preoccupied' with surviving to have

⁵² Rees, *The Boy from Boree Creek*, p. 66.

⁵³ Alison Horwood (*New Zealand Herald*), "More Vietnam Crossfire 30 Years On," on 30 June 2001.

⁵⁴ Lieutenant-Colonel T. Keating, "Vietnam Incident, 27 June 2001," in *New Zealand Army 15/28/2 Volume One*.

⁵⁵ The first elements of the advance party arrived in South Vietnam on 2 December 1968. At least three Australian patrols – 266/68, 267/68 and 268/68 between 27 December 1968 and 3 January 1969 - contained three members of 4 Troop attached to them during their introductory patrols, and the first all New Zealand patrol – 05/69 commanded by Bill Lillicrapp - was deployed on 7 January 1969. Keating, "Vietnam Incident, 27 June 2001."

⁵⁶ Keating, "Vietnam Incident, 27 June 2001."

⁵⁷ The AN/PRC 10 is the United States equivalent of the SARBE Mk II emergency radio. HQ AFV, "Report on SAS Communications in South Vietnam, 2 December 1966," in AWM98, R195/1/1: Communications – General – SAS, Nov66-Dec70, AWM, Canberra.

⁵⁸ Chapter Six makes reference to patrol 271/68.

made a request for prisoner extractions and probably should be discounted.⁵⁹ Despite Keating's review not being completely correct, there is no evidence to suggest that any New Zealand SAS patrol was involved in the execution of wounded Vietcong prisoners. To all New Zealand 4 Troop members, the rules of engagement were quite clear and strictly adhered to.⁶⁰

New Zealand SAS Withdrawal from South Vietnam: February 1971

...When I talked to Phuong, [the South Vietnamese] Director of Cabinet at Foreign Ministry, about planned withdrawal of SAS he said withdrawal of Battery would be much more serious as it has been here so long and most people are not repeat not aware of our other military contributions.⁶¹

Horner suggested that Shattky's post-operational report written at the end of October 1970 may have had some bearing on the New Zealand Government's decision to withdraw 4 Troop in February 1971; the inference being that with the Troop gaining little operational value from their deployment in a truly SAS Special Forces manner, it was better they be removed altogether should they finally lose, as Shattky put it, 'sight of its Unconventional and Special Warfare role.'⁶² Shattky recalled that he was not consulted to any great degree about his October post-tour report either in South Vietnam or when he returned to New Zealand.⁶³

Discussions regarding the withdrawal of New Zealand troops from South Vietnam began in earnest as early as the middle of 1969, a little over six months after 4 Troop had first arrived in South Vietnam. On 17 July, Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Permanent Head of the Prime Minister's Department, George Laking provided Prime Minister Keith Holyoake with a 'study on the future of the New Zealand forces in South Vietnam' and their subsequent withdrawal.⁶⁴ Even though the United States had begun to withdraw

⁵⁹ Interestingly enough, even though Barclay was a signaller in the patrol, his radio was destroyed not long after their first contact. Sergeant M.J. Ruffin, "2 SAS Squadron Ops 271/68 Operation SILK CORD Patrol Report, 7 January 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries, 7/11/11 2 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Log 1-31 January 1969, AWM, Canberra, pp. 2-3.

⁶⁰ Jim Bache, interview conducted on 10 June 2008.

⁶¹ Cable from Saigon to Wellington, "Troop Withdrawals, 5 March 1971," in PM478/4/6 Part 13: South Vietnam: Military Assistance from Australia and New Zealand 1st August – 30 April 1971, ANZ.

⁶² Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 366.

⁶³ Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008.

⁶⁴ George Laking to Keith Holyoake, "Vietnam: Withdrawal of New Zealand Forces, 17 July 1969" in PM478/4/6 Part 12 South Vietnam: Military Assistance from Australia and New Zealand 1st January 1969 – 31 July 1970, ANZ, Wellington, p.1.

their own forces, the New Zealand Prime Minister would nevertheless have been well aware of the potential political and economic ramifications associated with a unilateral withdrawal of New Zealand troops. Any American 'distress' would in all likelihood be demonstrated by unpleasant actions in the 'trade field' and the Australians, to whom the New Zealand forces were so 'closely associated,' would be 'exceedingly annoyed' by any plans in Wellington which appeared to undermine Canberra's approach. The New Zealand Ambassador in Washington, Frank Corner, had also recently cabled his views on any possible troop withdrawals:

Whatever we have gained by being in Vietnam would be more than cancelled out by what we lost in withdrawing: even the goodwill which we have won in the United States by our decision to stay in Malaysia after the British leave would be largely dissipated. We would be thought of only as the Ally who let America down.⁶⁵

Laking concluded his memo to the Prime Minister by stating that his assessment did not 'point in the direction of an early withdrawal of New Zealand forces...'⁶⁶

However, by mid-December 1969, the Australian Prime Minister John Gorton appeared on national television and radio and stated that Australia would begin to make arrangements for a gradual withdrawal of troops along the lines recently indicated by the Nixon Administration in the United States. Gorton added that any withdrawal plan would be carried out after 'full consultation and agreement with the South Vietnamese Government and New Zealand.'⁶⁷ Publicly, Holyoake displayed a cautiously optimistic tone and welcomed announcements by both Gorton and Nixon that could see reductions in the levels of New Zealand's military assistance.⁶⁸ At official level, however, the statements generated a much more pressing response:

You should put it to Australian external and defence, at official level, that we need to know at the earliest possible moment the terms of any recent Australian Government decision on withdrawal...We are of course anxious to keep in closest touch with Australians on this exercise from this point forward.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Cable from Corner to Laking, "Vietnam: Troop Withdrawals, 15 July 1969" in PM478/4/6 Part 12.

⁶⁶ Laking to Holyoake, "Vietnam: Withdrawal of New Zealand Forces, 17 July 1969," p.1.

⁶⁷ Statement on Radio and Television by the Australian Prime Minister, Mr John Gorton, "Talk to the Nation – Reduction of Forces in Vietnam, 16 December 1969," in PM478/4/6 Part 12.

⁶⁸ DEA cable from Wellington to Washington, Saigon and Canberra, "Vietnam, 16 December 1969," in PM478/4/6 Part 12.

⁶⁹ DEA cable from Wellington to Canberra, "Vietnam, 22 December 1969," in PM478/4/6 Part 12.

Despite being aware of a clear enthusiasm on the part of their Prime Minister to announce troop withdrawals as soon as practicable, Holyoake's advisers remained conscious that the timing of any reductions needed to be 'closely integrated' and 'fully co-ordinated' with Australia. By the middle of January 1970, Laking had concluded that any withdrawals would be carried out in phases rather than what he called a 'one out-all out basis.'⁷⁰ The Secretary of Foreign Affairs wrote that since the W3 and 4 Troop were attached as additional elements to Australian units, their withdrawal would be reasonably straight-forward, however, because of their 'special role,' the New Zealand SAS Troop 'could be most effectively employed until the last stages' of the Task Force withdrawal.⁷¹ This assessment was relayed to New Zealand Defence representatives in Canberra at the end of the month:

...As SAS patrols could be of increased importance during latter stages of 1ATF withdrawal we would not seek to withdraw New Zealand Special Air Service (NZSAS) Troop until Australia prepared to release.⁷²

By the end of February 1970, Canberra replied that they agreed with Wellington's intention to keep 4 Troop in South Vietnam until all elements of the Australian Task Force were withdrawn.⁷³ In mid-July 1970, the New Zealand MOD understood the Australians would recommend that the order of withdrawal of New Zealand combat elements - carefully phased to work in conjunction with Australian movements - occur in the order of the Victor rifle company, followed by 161 Battery, the Whiskey rifle company, and then 4 Troop. It appeared that by mid-1970 there was a clear expectation New Zealand military forces would soon begin withdrawal from South Vietnam, save 4 Troop, who would remain as long as did the principal elements of the Task Force; at the very least until the Australian SAS Squadron departed.

It is not immediately clear why this assumption changed so fundamentally in the space of a little over four months. From a financial perspective, the withdrawal of the Troop would save as little as NZ\$90,000 in direct costs to the annual Defence Vote.⁷⁴ In terms

⁷⁰ Laking to Holyoake, "Vietnam, 14 January 1970," in PM478/4/6 Part 12.

⁷¹ Laking to Holyoake, "Vietnam, 14 January 1970."

⁷² NZDEF signal from Wellington to Canberra, "Planning Level: Withdrawal of ANZ Forces from SVN, 28 January 1970," in PM478/4/6 Part 12.

⁷³ Australian DOD Memorandum to Head of New Zealand Defence Liaison Staff in Canberra, "Withdrawal of ANZ Forces from South Vietnam, 23 February 1970," in PM478/4/6 Part 12.

⁷⁴ Lieutenant-Colonel H.M.H. Salmon, "Implications of Withdrawal of 4 Troop NZSAS From South Vietnam, 15 December 1970," in New Zealand Army S.15/28/12 Volume 1.

of costs, Defence officials were aware that it would have been equally advantageous to withdraw the artillery battery first but knew the Australians had ‘made the point strongly’ that with any infantry reduction, artillery protection of the remainder became ‘increasingly critical.’⁷⁵ However, in late August 1970, the Head of the Defence Division of Foreign Affairs, Ralph Mullins, visited NZV Force and 1ATF. Mullins was told by Brigadier Bill Henderson that the reduction in the size of the Task Force’s AO had resulted in ‘little or no employment for SAS,’ and while some soldiers had been attached to nearby US units, the majority of the Squadron continued to be ‘misemployed on normal battalion reconnaissance operations.’⁷⁶ Henderson told Mullins that it was ‘his considered view’ the Task Force could ‘operate in comfort without either 161 Battery or 4 Troop SAS.’⁷⁷

By early December 1970, the New Zealand DCGS, Brigadier Ron Hassett, was also told by NZV Force that there remained ‘too many Troops for tasks and most SAS operations could be undertaken by infantry.’⁷⁸ Several days later, the New Zealand Army became aware that Holyoake had notified both the Australian and United States Governments of New Zealand’s intentions to withdraw 161 Battery and 4 Troop in early 1971.⁷⁹ The Australian Government was ‘formally advised’ on 23 December in an Aide Memoire handed to Foreign Minister William McMahon:

...the New Zealand Government has decided that it should take the Battery and SAS troop from Vietnam in February/March and the remaining rifle company by the end of 1971. Before the Government sets matters in train it should want to know that this timetable will not cause undue difficulty for the Australians, with whose New Zealand’s forces are integrated.⁸⁰

Despite the consultative tones towards the end of the note inviting the Australians to voice any concern they had of the intended course of action, the decision does appear to

⁷⁵ David Thomson, “Troop Deployments in South East Asia, 23 July 1970,” in MD23/4/1 Volume 4 Defence Aid to South Vietnam: General 6 January 1969 – October 1970, NZDF Archives, Wellington.

⁷⁶ Ralph Mullins via HQ New Zealand V Force to Wellington, “24 August 1970,” in New Zealand Army S.15/28/12 Volume One.

⁷⁷ Mullins to Wellington, “24 August 1970.”

⁷⁸ Lieutenant-Colonel Brown, “Roles of Arty Bty in 1ATF, 4 December 1970,” in New Zealand Army S.15/28/12 Volume One.

⁷⁹ Handwritten Memo to DCGS (Hassett), “23 December 1970,” in New Zealand Army S.15/28/12 Volume 1. Confirmation of the decision would be given the following month. See also CM 71/1/4, “Withdrawal of SAS Unit from Vietnam, 26 January 1971,” in Cabinet Meeting CM (71), 26 January 1971, ANZ.

⁸⁰ Note from J.G. Carter to Mullins/Weir, “Vietnam – Troop Withdrawals, 28 July 1971,” in PM478/4/6 Part 14 South Vietnam: Military Assistance from Australia and New Zealand 1st May 1971 – 30 June 1975, ANZ, Wellington.

have been a political ‘turn-about’ that senior Defence officials in New Zealand would have found as unpalatable as their Australian counterparts, especially as the Australians had been informed New Zealand would not seek to withdraw the New Zealand SAS until the Australians were prepared to release the Troop.⁸¹ That Henderson had indicated to Mullins the SAS Squadron – including the New Zealand Troop – was of little worth to him, suggests that despite whatever may have been discussed between Canberra and Wellington, the Australians could do little but accept the New Zealand announcement as a *fait accompli*. Clearly Henderson believed that the withdrawal would not greatly affect the security of the remaining elements of the Task Force as had been initially indicated.

However, this did not mean Thornton and his senior Defence officials did not feel some ‘discomfort’ with the ‘about face’ that their political masters had made. Despite the likelihood of the Holyoake Government viewing Mullins’ comments as an opportunity to announce further withdrawals before the end of 1970, it seems clear that Thornton wanted withdrawal deferred until the following year. In January and February 1970, Shattky’s Troop had provided a continuity of SAS patrol activity in Phuoc Tuy province while the Australian Squadron changeover took place. The presence of Hayes’ Troop at the same time in 1971 was no less critical for Chipman’s incoming 2 Squadron. In early 1971, Thornton travelled to Nui Dat and spoke with the New Zealand Troop Commander:

When Sir Leonard arrived...he said to me ‘I’ve just come up from the Battery and my recommendation to Defence is going to be that we pull the Battery out and you guys stay here.’ Because Geoff Chipman was with him and Geoff was all ready to prime him up and say it was really important that 4 Troop stay because of the transition. And Thornton said ‘Well we are going to be pulling out; you guys may get to November [1971], it might be a bit earlier but...my recommendation is the Battery goes next and you guys later in the year.’ He said ‘Perhaps November, we’ll see closer to the time.’ So Geoff Chipman said ‘Oh, thank God for that – I thought I was going to have to do a dance and bloody plead with him and everything else.’⁸²

Based upon the previous two SAS Squadron changeovers the New Zealanders had experienced, it was essential that they remain on operations until at least the end of February. However, this did not happen. Thornton made an effort to soften the announcement as much as possible – seemingly more for his sake in the eyes of his

⁸¹ Unknown Author, “Draft Withdrawal of New Zealand Forces from Vietnam – Background,” in New Zealand Army Non File Material ANFM A295: Withdrawal, NZDF Archive, Wellington.

⁸² Jack Hayes, interview conducted on 16 December 2008.

Australian counterparts - when he suggested to Laking in early January that it 'would be advantageous from the Australian point of view if the Prime Minister, on his return from the Commonwealth Prime Minister's Conference, could say that he had discussed the general question of troop withdrawal with Mr Gorton [and] it had been agreed that the New Zealand SAS Troop would now be withdrawn from the Australian Task Force.'⁸³ Thornton also suggested the New Zealand SAS would also have a 'particular contribution to make' to the recently announced New Zealand Training Team commitments which would 'give a reasonable explanation of why the SAS are being withdrawn at this particular time.'⁸⁴ The public announcement on 29 January 1971 confirmed Thornton's political masters agreed with the latter but not the former:

The withdrawal of the 26-man Special Air Service (SAS) Troop at the end of next month is obviously timed to coincide with the full establishment of the training team at Chi Lang...General Thornton said the Vietnamese had expressed hopes that members of the Special Air Service Troop being withdrawn from Vietnam next month would be available for the training team to pass on the benefits of their experience to RF and PF platoon leaders. It is understood that about half the instructors in the team...will be members of the SAS.⁸⁵

New Zealand SAS and NZATTV

As early as May 1962, New Zealand had been asked to consider providing jungle warfare specialists 'with a background of Malayan service' to assist Australian and United States advisers instructing South Vietnamese forces.⁸⁶ As described in Chapter One, despite being made aware of the successes of the AATTV, New Zealand officials were unwilling to meet such a request with similar instructors. By April 1970, senior New Zealand Defence officials were made aware of Australian plans to establish a group of up to 150 Army infantry and small tactics instructors to train Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) and Popular Forces/Regional Forces (RF/PF) in Phuoc Tuy province.⁸⁷ Thornton felt any subsequent amalgamation of a joint Australian-New Zealand training

⁸³ Lieutenant-General Leonard Thornton to George Laking, "Withdrawal of New Zealand SAS From Vietnam, 6 January 1971," in New Zealand Army S.15/28/12 Volume 1.

⁸⁴ Thornton to Laking, "Withdrawal of New Zealand SAS From Vietnam, 6 January 1971."

⁸⁵ David Barber, *The Evening Post* (Wellington), "Training Team Will Balance SAS Withdrawal From Vietnam," 29 January 1971.

⁸⁶ Chiefs of Staff Committee, "Joint Planning Committee JPC (62) 41 Memorandum: New Zealand Military Assistance to South Vietnam, 30 May 1962," in PM478/4/6 Part1.

⁸⁷ The announcement of the deployment of Australian advisers was timed to coincide with statements relating to the withdrawal of one of the Australian battalions attached to the Task Force. DEA cable from Saigon to Wellington, "Vietnam: Troop Withdrawals, 4 April 1970," in PM478/4/6 Part 12.

unit was unlikely to provide any discernable benefit to New Zealand from a 'national identity' perspective where Australia would once again be 'the predominant partner.'⁸⁸ Should the New Zealand Government consider a similar strategy, suggested the Chief of Defence Staff, it would be in the national interest to advocate the formation of separate Australian and New Zealand training teams.

By the end of August 1970, Cabinet had authorised the creation of the first of two 'military training projects' – known as the New Zealand Army Training Teams Vietnam (NZATTV) - to be independent of similar Australian units.⁸⁹ As a result of discussions with Thornton, the Vietnamese Joint General Staff (JGS) and the American MACV in the second half of 1970, the first New Zealand Army training component was created to provide a series of jointly-agreed five-week junior leadership courses for South Vietnamese RF and PF Platoon Commanders.⁹⁰ It was felt that the New Zealand Army's knowledge of small unit operations, combined with the standard of its junior officers and their experience in training and leadership, would be of considerable benefit in the closing stages of New Zealand's commitment in South Vietnam.⁹¹

The first NZATTV course was conducted initially as a joint New Zealand/Vietnamese venture with the expectation that full responsibility for the training be gradually handed over to the Vietnamese.⁹² The 1st NZATTV, commanded by Major David Ogilvy, was raised in early October 1970 and deployed to the South Vietnamese National Training Centre at Chi Lang in Chau Doc province in January 1971.⁹³ Of approximately 84 soldiers who made up the two 1NZATTV groups, only 15% were former 1 Ranger Squadron members.⁹⁴

⁸⁸ Extracts from the Minutes of Defence Council Meeting (DC (70) M.5), "Vietnam: Troop Withdrawals, 7 April 1970," in PM478/4/6 Part 12.

⁸⁹ Cabinet Minute CM 70/35/34, "Troop Deployments in South East Asia, 24 August 1970," in PM478/4/6 Part 13.

⁹⁰ Army General Staff, "Army Establishments South East Asia, 5 October 1970," in 42/27/8 Volume One: Training: New Zealand/Australian Army Training Team Vietnam 5 October 1970 – 20 December 1971, ANZ, Wellington.

⁹¹ McGibbon, *The New Zealand Army in Vietnam 1964-1972*, p. 32.

⁹² Army General Staff, "Army Establishments South East Asia, 5 October 1970."

⁹³ Army General Staff, "Army Establishments South East Asia, 5 October 1970" and Flinkenberg, *New Zealand Vietnam Roll*, pp. 156-157.

⁹⁴ As well as Ogilvy, this group included Captain's Graham Brighthouse, Brian Martin, Albert 'Albie' Kiwi, and Hugh Oakley-Browne, Warrant Officers Class One (WO1) Noel Jamieson and Graham 'Wally' Nash, WO2 Arthur Steele and Ernie Dix, Staff-Sergeant Krete Haami and Corporal Roger Maaka. Flinkenberg, *New Zealand Vietnam Roll*, pp.156-157 with the assistance of Wayne Holah, NZSAS Association.

The second training team, approved by Cabinet in January 1972, was deployed to assist the United States Army Individual Training Group (ITG) in the training of Cambodian infantry battalions.⁹⁵ Similar to the first training team, 2NZATTV was based outside of the familiar surroundings of Phuoc Tuy province - at Dong Ba Thin near Cam Ranh Bay, approximately 200 miles north of Saigon.⁹⁶ By the time the team was withdrawn at the end of 1972, it had assisted in the training of nine Cambodian battalions in basic infantry weapons and tactics skills.⁹⁷ Twenty percent of the second training team were former Ranger Squadron members.⁹⁸ Both 1NZATTV and 2NZATTV were withdrawn from South Vietnam in December 1972.⁹⁹

In 1972, Ian McGibbon wrote that the ‘reasons for the withdrawals of 1970-1971 were mainly political – they were relatively hurried actions to try and create in Phuoc Tuy province a military atmosphere suitable for withdrawal.’¹⁰⁰ This was generally correct and certainly the ratio of SAS instructors in both NZATTV groups fell well short of the numbers suggested by Defence officials in late 1970-early 1971.¹⁰¹ But by that time, the unit strength of 1 Ranger Squadron was astonishingly low; in 1970 it numbered 53 Regular Force soldiers. By 1972, that number reduced to 44.¹⁰² These numbers, perhaps more than any other available data, best show that neither the New Zealand Government nor the New Zealand Army felt any genuine concern for the military wellbeing of their Special Forces capability, and despite Horner’s assertion that Shattky’s October 1970 report may have had some bearing, the February withdrawal of the New Zealand Troop some four months after the report was written, was essentially coincidental.

⁹⁵ McGibbon, *The New Zealand Army in Vietnam 1964-1972*, p. 35.

⁹⁶ 2NZATTV consisted of five officers and 13 senior NCO instructors. It was also separate from its Australian counterparts. According to a NZV Force signal sent to Wellington on 23 December 1971, ‘As “Johnny come lately” we would be less than welcome there,’ precluded an attachment with the Australians anyway. NZV Force Commander to Wellington, “FANK Training, 23 December 1971,” in Def107/8/2/9 Volume One, Establishments: Second New Zealand Army Training Team (Vietnam) NZATTV, 16 February 1972 – 22 December 1972, in ANZ, Wellington and McGibbon, *The New Zealand Army in Vietnam 1964-1972*, pp. 88-89.

⁹⁷ McGibbon, *The New Zealand Army in Vietnam 1964-1972*, p. 35.

⁹⁸ Of the 32 members of 2NZATTV, seven were former 1 Ranger Squadron members and included Sergeants Ross Cameron, Michael ‘Paddy’ Cunningham, Dick Kiwikiwi and Vince Smith, Corporal Ngariki Keno and Lance-Corporal ‘Buster’ Nathan. Flinkenberg, *New Zealand Vietnam Roll*, p.157 with the assistance of Wayne Holah, NZSAS Association.

⁹⁹ McGibbon, *The New Zealand Army in Vietnam 1964-1972*, p. 35.

¹⁰⁰ McGibbon, *The New Zealand Army in Vietnam 1964-1972*, p. 30.

¹⁰¹ Barber, “Training Team Will Balance SAS Withdrawal From Vietnam.”

¹⁰² NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington.

What seemed like an ‘about face’ on the part of New Zealand to withdraw the SAS Troop earlier than had been expected, appears to be largely attributable to Brigadier Henderson when he spoke with Mullins in August 1970 although NZV Force also appears to have supported the Task Force Commander’s assessment.¹⁰³ Even if Thornton was aware of the importance of the New Zealand Troop remaining in place, if only to allow the new Australian SAS Squadron time to establish itself in South Vietnam, he was ultimately unable to convince his political masters of this as demonstrated by Chipman in his Squadron Commanders Diary:

I am reluctant to lose the Troop...The time for the reduction is inopportune and will mean that only one patrol will be able to be deployed during the period 2 Squadron is doing ‘in country training.’¹⁰⁴

Concluding Notes

The premature withdrawal of the Troop was devastating for the New Zealand and Australian SAS alike. In early February Thornton reported to Holyoake that during his visit to South Vietnam he had spoken to ‘the personnel of 161 Battery, V Company and NZSAS, as well as individuals in the logistic group. Morale was particularly high and there were no complaints of any kind...’¹⁰⁵ Of course there would have been no complaints from the New Zealand Troop – Thornton had chosen not to mention they would be leaving in four weeks time. Had he been at Nui Dat when Hayes advised his Troop of the withdrawal perhaps the report might have been slightly different:

When [Percy Brown] came off his patrol and I told him – it's the only time I ever saw him throw a rifle down; he was pissed off. Unclipped the magazine, put it in his pouch, ejected the round and just threw it on the ground and walked off. Because in his view, and as was mine, we had completed our orientation round and we were just starting to click; we were doing some good patrolling, some really good patrolling. But that happens though – soldiers do what the politicians tell them. Of course when you are young, you don't have that perspective.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ On 23 December 1970, Australian Foreign Affairs Minister William McMahon expressed regret New Zealand had decided to remove the SAS Troop in February, and asked Holyoake ‘to reconsider.’ New Zealand High Commissioner in Canberra to Prime Minister, “Defence Arrangements in South East Asia, 23 December 1970,” in PM478/4/6 Part 13.

¹⁰⁴ Major G. Chipman, AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries, 7/10/26, p. 1.

¹⁰⁵ Extract from *Report of Chief of Defence Staff’s Visit to South East Asia*, 2 February 1971, in PM478/4/6 Part 13.

¹⁰⁶ Jack Hayes, interview conducted on 16 December 2008.

Four Troop, New Zealand Special Air Service departed from South Vietnam on 27 February 1971. Chipman's Australian Squadron remained in Nui Dat until it was withdrawn with the rest of the Australian Task Force in October 1971.¹⁰⁷

During mid 1966, when the Australian SAS first arrived in South Vietnam, Major John Murphy had discussed with Brigadier Oliver Jackson, how the Task Force Commander planned to use the SAS. For Jackson, it was imperative to have intelligence on the 'whereabouts, movements and habits of the two main-force Vietcong Regiments and one of the local battalions in the province and nearby areas' and he believed that Murphy's Squadron would be 'quite invaluable in gaining' this information.¹⁰⁸ To Jackson the SAS' intelligence-gathering role was much more valuable than using the Squadron in any 'offensive and harassing role.'¹⁰⁹ It was at this time that Murphy described the role of the SAS in South Vietnam as being the 'eyes and ears of the Task Force.'¹¹⁰

In describing this initial function, Horner gave no indication that Murphy was altogether unhappy with the role the Squadron would perform. It is interesting to note that at the time, the SAS had been instructed 'not to patrol in strengths of less than ten men.'¹¹¹ Murphy persuaded Jackson that better results would come from smaller five-man patrols; no doubt his previous experience with smaller United States Special Forces teams and their success gave weightier support to his views.¹¹²

Hayes wrote in his post-deployment report that while the manner of employment of his Troop had not really changed from that undertaken by the Troops commanded by Culley and Shattky, there were still variations in how individual Patrol Commanders continued to conduct their patrols. While contacts were still limited, and perhaps even because of this, a greater emphasis had been placed on the exact identification of enemy either seen or killed. The follow-up support provided to Powell's 028/71 patrol gives illustration to

¹⁰⁷ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 390.

¹⁰⁸ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 180.

¹⁰⁹ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 180.

¹¹⁰ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 180.

¹¹¹ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 180.

¹¹² Horner also wrote that Murphy had to resist efforts to have Squadron operate under the command of the CO of 5RAR. Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 180.

the importance of conducting body searches; it also demonstrated the transition from ‘hit and run’ patrols to a more offensive strategy.¹¹³

Patrols	Sightings	Enemy	Contacts	Enemy KIA	Enemy KIA (Poss)	Enemy WIA	Own KIA	Own WIA
Australian Squadron Patrol (December 1970 – February 1971)								
Total	59	10	36	10	3	5		
Australian Squadron Patrols involving New Zealand Troop members								
Reconnaissance	5	1	3					
Recce/Ambush	10	1	10	1	2	1		
Ambush/Fighting	2							
Total	17	2	13	1				
New Zealand Commanded Patrols								
Reconnaissance	3		3					
Recce/Ambush	10		10	1	2	1		
Ambush/Fighting	2							
Total	15		13	1	2	1		

Table 4: 4 Troop Patrol Statistics December 1970 – February 1971¹¹⁴

The last New Zealand SAS Troop to South Vietnam only carried out 17 patrols before returning to New Zealand. Hayes also commented that the Task Force Commander had allowed Chipman ‘to try out many ideas’ which had led to better use of SAS patrols. This demonstrated the importance of a Squadron Commander’s appreciation of the operational environment as interpreted by his Task Force Commander, and if necessary, adapting his approach in order to secure worthwhile roles or tasks. The Task Force Commander was still Henderson when Chipman arrived to replace Teague; that he was able to garner sufficient activity for the Squadron, as well as impress the New Zealand Troop Commander, had much to do with the 2 Squadron leaders and their heavily-influenced ‘British’ approach to Special Forces operations.

Much of Hayes’ post-deployment writing embodies the inherent frustrations suffered as a result of his Troop being denied a full twelve month tour. Hayes’ immediate post-tour report, which he started to write before leaving South Vietnam, followed a similar pattern

¹¹³ Hayes, “4 Troop NZSAS – Post Operational Report South Vietnam Dec 1970 – Feb 1971, 16 February 1971,” p. 1.

¹¹⁴ Material sourced from AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries [Vietnam], 7/10/25 – 7/10/27 1 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Logs, [1-31 December 1970 to 1-18 February 1971] in AWM, Canberra, and New Zealand Army 42/17/1 Part One, “Operations New Zealand ‘V’ Force Activity Reports, 23 August 1967 – 24 August 1970, ANZ, Wellington.

evident in Shattky's 1970 report.¹¹⁵ After returning from Vietnam, Hayes was appointed Administration Officer for 1 Ranger Squadron and in April 1972 he wrote a series of papers for his Squadron Commander, Major David Moloney, who had taken over command from Neville Kidd two months earlier. In the two documents, which were only circulated within the Squadron, Hayes drew upon his own as well as the previous Troop Commanders' experiences with the Australian SAS Squadron and the Task Force.¹¹⁶

The reports bear all the hallmarks of a young Army officer fiercely proud and confident of the capabilities possessed by the military organisation of which he was part. He was equally frustrated by the political limitations placed upon his Troop which prevented many of those capabilities being demonstrated on active service. There is no doubt that both Culley and Shattky felt similar frustration as a result of their experiences, however, while both the first and second Troop Commanders had the ability to vent their disappointments over the entirety of their time in South Vietnam, Hayes was not provided a similar opportunity. For whatever reason, Moloney chose not to disseminate Hayes' papers beyond 1 Ranger Squadron:

There is no doubt that the SAS Squadron did carry out some excellent reconnaissance patrolling and a few good ambushes. It is, however, questionable whether all the information they gained was fully used by Task Force. Even taking into account the size of the Headquarters and the inherent time lag between receipt of information and reaction, there were a disquieting number of occasions where good information was gained but no reaction took place. This wasted valuable opportunities and was very dispiriting for the SAS patrols...The Battalion CO wants information about HIS area and is only interested in the surrounding area in as much as it affects him. To most COs then, the SAS are a rather distant group of soldiers who get priority over his helicopters in the middle of a troop lift, who wear camouflage suits, run everywhere and don't ever seem to give them any really important "hot" information.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Culley was not tasked with writing a post-operational report until early March 1970. It was suggested that the report should include specific examples of successes and failures and the reasons for them. The report was completed a month later and handed to Kidd. Neither the Squadron Commander, nor his Director of Infantry and SAS, Mace, felt it contained sufficient detail of the first Troop's activity. Mace went so far as to comment that the report fell 'somewhat short of the standard and content expected.' As a result, the following two reports, from Shattky and Hayes, would 'concentrate on LESSONS LEARNT.' Major Neville Kidd, "Post Operational Report – 4 Troop NZSAS, 17 April 1970" and Lieutenant-Colonel John Mace handwritten note to Colonel GS dated 5 May 1970, both in New Zealand Army S.15/28/2 Volume One, and Army Headquarters, "Post Operational Report – 4 Troop NZSAS, 4 March 1970" in Kippenberger Military Archive Box 136A.

¹¹⁶ Lieutenant J.S. Hayes, "Project No.1 NZSAS Operations in RVN, 12 April 1972," and "Project No. 2, An Evaluation of SAS Operations in Vietnam, 15 May 1972," both in NZSAS Association Archives.

¹¹⁷ Hayes, "Project No. 2 An Evaluation of SAS Operations in Vietnam, 15 May 1972," p. 2.

Hayes wrote that with some ‘adventurous political decisions’ the Australian and New Zealand SAS could have carried out a ‘number of tasks that would have extended them to the full.’¹¹⁸ ‘[A]dventurous’ cross-border operations with American Army Special Forces, ‘camp raids’ and ‘snatch patrols’ with United States Navy SEALs were but three examples to which Hayes specifically referred. He also correctly pointed out that the ‘practice of SAS being deployed under command of a “Brigade Group” should be avoided at all costs because of the inherent limitations imposed upon SAS operations.’¹¹⁹ But those limitations were placed upon the Task Force Commanders by their political masters and no lobbying – from either Australian or New Zealand SAS Commanders – was likely to convince the Task Force to ignore those operational parameters. Nevertheless, what was more interesting, and perhaps something quite strategic in vision, was that in the second of the two 1972 papers Hayes advocated that operational roles would have been best ‘controlled by a central international Special Forces Headquarters.’¹²⁰

The concept of co-ordinated Special Forces operations at a more strategic level than Brigade – or Task Force, was several decades ahead of what would become common within twenty-first century multi-national Special Forces co-ordinated operational structures, came about as a direct result of Hayes’ visit to the United States Special Forces Directorate, within MACV Headquarters in Saigon, before he returned from South Vietnam. The Directorate was a group of mainly Army Special Forces but also attached were ‘a Marine Recon Regiment LO and two SEALs officers and about four or five others who were involved in training Montagnards.’¹²¹ Hayes recounted that his thoughts on the concept were also influenced at the time of writing by discussions he had with members of the British SAS D Squadron, during exercises in New Zealand in early 1972. Through these discussions, Hayes understood that British Special Forces ‘were moving from being SAS only, to including SBS and all the other [Special Forces] groups’ which would ultimately fall under the umbrella of a Special Forces Directorate.¹²²

¹¹⁸ Hayes, “Project No. 2 An Evaluation of SAS Operations in Vietnam, 15 May 1972,” p. 3.

¹¹⁹ Hayes, “Project No. 2 An Evaluation of SAS Operations in Vietnam, 15 May 1972,” p. 3.

¹²⁰ Hayes, “Project No. 2 An Evaluation of SAS Operations in Vietnam, 15 May 1972,” p. 3.

¹²¹ Jack Hayes, interview conducted on 16 December 2008.

¹²² The Directorate was formally established in 1987. Alistair Finlan (2002): ‘British Special Forces and the Falklands Conflict: Twenty Years On’ in *Defence & Security Analysis, Volume 18, Number Four*, p. 329.

While he admitted that the concept was not an entirely original idea, having based his thoughts on two examples, Hayes nevertheless appears to be one of the first New Zealand SAS officers to truly emphasise the correct co-ordination of New Zealand Special Forces assets should take place at a much higher, and therefore genuinely strategic, level.¹²³

Of equally significant interest in the two papers prepared by Hayes in 1972, were his final concluding remarks that pertained particularly to his experiences, albeit shared by both Culley and Shattky, with the Australian SAS in South Vietnam. Hayes wrote that as a general rule, relations between the New Zealand and Australian SAS in South Vietnam were poor. That the Australians possessed a ‘talent for ruffling the kiwi feathers’ there was no question, but Hayes also suggested the New Zealand Troops’ operational effectiveness may also have been limited by a ‘lack of professional skill at arms by our ‘Australian comrades.’¹²⁴ Accepting that New Zealand senior officials had little choice, Hayes nevertheless remained convinced, as did his two predecessors, that it had been a ‘mistake to deploy New Zealand troops under operational command’ of the Australian Task Force formation. The young Lieutenant ended his paper with the following recommendation:

That, if NZSAS ever have a choice I believe it is imperative that we are never deployed again under Australian SAS command.¹²⁵

This theme that had emerged between the Australian and New Zealand SAS in South Vietnam continued to recur for the rest of the decade. Contact between Perth and Papakura was limited to exercises, one in 1973 and one during 1975, both in Australia.¹²⁶ Certainly the prevailing attitude during the period in which Moloney commanded the New Zealand Squadron, between February 1972 and January 1973, was that the New Zealanders felt there was limited value in engaging with the Australian Regiment.¹²⁷ However, and paradoxically, the next declared New Zealand SAS deployment after Vietnam took place in Kuwait in February 1998, when a New Zealand Troop was once

¹²³ Jack Hayes, interview conducted on 16 December 2008.

¹²⁴ Hayes, “Project No. 2 An Evaluation of SAS Operations in Vietnam, 15 May 1972,” pp.3-4.

¹²⁵ Hayes, “Project No. 2 An Evaluation of SAS Operations in Vietnam, 15 May 1972,” p.4.

¹²⁶ And at least one visit by Beesley to New Zealand towards the end of 1972. Exercise IDEA EXCHANGE took place in Australia between September and October 1975. Courses included Assault Swimmers, Climbing, Survival and Small Craft Handling. Major Neville Kidd to Field Force Command, “General Course Report – Ex IDEA EXCHANGE, 28 November 1975,” in 69/1/22 Part 3: Training - New Zealand SAS, 1976, ANZ, Auckland, and NZ Army 42/17/1 Part One, “Operations New Zealand ‘V’ Force Activity Reports, 23 August 1967 – 24 August 1970, ANZ, Wellington.

¹²⁷ David Moloney, interview conducted on 20 February 2008.

again attached to an Australian SAS Squadron, under Australian operational command, as part of an international coalition of forces in readiness to counter further Iraqi posturing in the region.¹²⁸

When Neville Kidd returned as Squadron OC for a second period between 1973 and 1975, the frequency of contact increased slightly but only in an effort to maintain the capabilities of the Squadron during a period where there appeared to be little likelihood of further operational service in the immediate future. There were also substantial exercises with visiting British SAS squadrons and United States Special Forces elements during this period, and it appears New Zealanders tended to favour these relationships more than exchanges with their Australian counterparts.¹²⁹ While the relationship was not ‘particularly strained,’ it seems that neither unit made any real or genuine effort to press for a more mutually engaging exchange until closer to the end of the decade, as illustrated in a letter written by Kidd’s replacement, Major Graye Shattky to his counterpart in Perth in mid-1980:

I have been arguing the case for a closer Australia-New Zealand relationship in regard to our common responsibilities, and am certain that in the areas of training and equipment development particularly, we could be working together to avoid wasteful duplication of effort. To that end it has been accepted in principle by New Zealand that the first step is for the respective SAS Commanders to meet, appreciate each others level of capability and decide where areas of common interest exist. I understand that the Australian Army holds similar views, but to date very little, if anything at all, has actually been arranged...I have assumed, perhaps impertinently that you would favour the establishing of closer ties. Certainly, I do look forward to hearing your views and any positive suggestions you might wish to make...¹³⁰

The relationship between the New Zealand and Australian SAS appears not to have significantly altered between that which was demonstrated at the end of 1968 when 4 Troop first went to South Vietnam, and for the rest of the 1970s after their operational

¹²⁸ Fully integrated with the Australian Squadron, the New Zealand contribution, known as Operation GRIFFIN (the Australian SAS deployment was referred to as Operation POLLARD), would have the principal task of ‘conducting combat search and rescue (CSAR) missions into Iraq.’ The deployment lasted a little over 10 weeks before United Nations-brokered negotiations ended the standoff and the SAS Troop was withdrawn back to New Zealand. No active service operations were carried out. Horner, *SAS: Phantoms of War: A History of the Australian Special Air Service*, pp.474-477 and NZDF: 03450/Iraq Volume 13, Plans, Operations and Readiness: United Nations: Iraq – Special Commission: Weapons of Mass Destruction, NZDF Archive, Wellington.

¹²⁹ Neville Kidd, interview conducted on 16 July 2008.

¹³⁰ Major D.G. Shattky to Lieutenant-Colonel R. Curtis, “1 May 1980,” in Graye Shattky personal archive, viewed 25 November 2008.

campaign ended in early 1971. While there was clearly mutual respect by both parties, the experiences witnessed by the New Zealanders as a result of their exposure to the Australian Squadrons in South Vietnam, did little to change fundamental views that were firmly established during their time in Borneo. Personalities drove much of this friction, but any real tension never manifested into 'out and out' disharmony or disobedience. Such was the professional attitude of those within the New Zealand Squadron which made up the 4 Troop deployments, this attitude never impacted upon their operational performance.

The opportunity to develop a genuine 'unit-to-unit' relationship with the Australians was available but was never embraced with enthusiasm by either group. Certainly this was the case for Culley's Troop, and as Part III illustrates, it was not just the McGee incident from which this assessment can be deduced. It is arguable that a new generation of New Zealand SAS soldiers, such as those in Hayes' Troop, could have made a difference but their premature withdrawal essentially curtailed any chance of developing this relationship. That the two senior officers of the Australian 2 Squadron in late 1970, Chipman and his 2IC Letts, had a much more collaborative approach and mutual respect to Special Forces concepts and methods of operation, much more akin to the New Zealand one – because of their British Special Forces experiences – perhaps identifies the key reason for the relationship difference experienced by the third New Zealand 4 Troop deployment.

Conclusion

‘The Platforms’

I took an Australian out with me on one [patrol 010/70] – no trouble at all when he came with me. When we came back he said ‘I wish my bloody Patrol Commander was like that.’¹

It is a widely held belief that the conflict in South Vietnam marked the turning point in the evolution of New Zealand's post-war foreign and security policies. In terms of national security doctrine, combat involvement in Vietnam saw New Zealand accept the growing reliance upon the United States as the guarantor of its security, a corresponding, if reluctant, shift in alliance orientation away from the United Kingdom and a gradual increase in co-operation with Australia.² Before 1955, New Zealand defence thinking took place in terms of total mobilisation in the event of global war. After 1955, it was able to provide limited contributions to situations short of a major war, mainly in the context of alliance commitments. Through the post-World War II period, New Zealand defence policy adapted and changed as a result of changing foreign policy and national security requirements. The evolution of a New Zealand Special Forces capability after World War II also came about as a result of a security structure able to fit best with principal allies who shared strategic interests, historical experiences and constitutional ties.

The research has sought to examine the New Zealand Special Air Service experience during the Vietnam War period by answering four primary questions:

- What were the lessons learned from the challenges of operating small nationally-identified New Zealand Special Forces units in South East Asia in the 1960s and early 1970s?
- How might the success – or otherwise – of New Zealand SAS operations in Vietnam be measured?
- Compare and contrast the experiences of the New Zealand SAS in Borneo between 1965 and 1966 and South Vietnam between 1968 and 1971, and

¹ Ernie Stead, interview conducted 13 June 2008.

² Rabel, *New Zealand and the Vietnam War*, p. 348.

- To what extent did the experiences of the New Zealand SAS in Borneo influence its operations in South Vietnam?

Many 4 Troop veterans feel that the overall effectiveness of the New Zealand SAS deployment to South Vietnam was limited by a number of factors. These factors ranged from a lack of political knowledge of how to deploy SAS, to the lack of ‘professional skill at arms’ demonstrated by their ‘Australian [SAS] comrades.’³ In general, relationships with the Australians were poor. Former New Zealand 4 Troop members have argued that their Australian counterparts had a talent for ‘ruffling the Kiwis feathers,’ and while some might argue that the New Zealanders were relatively easy to ‘bait,’ it would not be correct to suggest such antagonising always went one-way. Nevertheless, this friction manifested itself throughout the entire two and a half years that the New Zealanders were deployed with the Australians, although never was it more intense than during 1969:

One night, we were all back in base, and [Sergeant] Johnno [Johnston] was given the job of Duty-NCO, Orderly Sergeant. And it was his job to clear the bar there – at a certain time. Johnno walked in and said ‘Ok chaps, that's if for the night’ type of thing. And I heard from just behind me ‘No black bastard is telling me when I can't have a drink.’ He [Johnno] nearly got killed in the rush! Some Australian with a big mouth, he just passed a racial comment which didn't go down very well. But I think that the relationship in general was okay – I wouldn't give it a hundred percent, feel about 75-80% success – as far as that went...They looked upon us a poor relative I think.⁴

In 1972 Captain Terry Culley commented that by early 1969 all patrol manning was detailed by Major Reg Beesley, including the composition of the New Zealand patrols, which complicated the command arrangements.⁵ Those command parameters, as they were articulated in the directive presented to Culley by Lieutenant-Colonel Peter Hamilton in late 1968 appeared to be not altogether different from that which the four New Zealand SAS detachment commanders had worked to in Borneo between 1965 and 1966. In South Vietnam, the New Zealand Troop Commander's superior officer for all command purposes was the Commander New Zealand Vietnam (NZV) Force and the Troop dealt directly with Saigon on all matters of national administration. Nui Dat dealt

³ Lieutenant J.S. Hayes, “Project No. 2, An Evaluation of SAS Operations in Vietnam, 15 May 1972,” in NZSAS Association Archives, Wellington, pp. 3-4.

⁴ Michael Cunningham, interview conducted on 10 June 2008.

⁵ Captain Terry Culley, “Post Operational Report - 4 Tp NZSAS, April 1970,” in NZSAS Association Archives, Wellington, p.1 and McGibbon, *The New Zealand Army in Vietnam 1964-1972*, p.80.

with pay and the New Zealand 2IC of the ANZAC Battalion was the principal CO for discipline. To add to the complexity, the Troop was under the operational control of the ATF Commander, who delegated this control to the Australian SAS Squadron Commander.⁶

As has been identified in Part III, it is here ‘command arrangements’ appear to have been the most ‘complicated’ as the interpretation of command and control over the New Zealand Troop caused friction which took some time to rectify, if in fact it was altogether completely resolved. Culley himself accepts that he perhaps could have done more to remedy the situation and develop a more positive relationship at command level. However, this ‘ANZAC command tension’ was not necessarily unique of Australian and New Zealand Army units during the Vietnam War. Much had to do with the personalities of individuals as well as the culture of the two Armies as one example from Fred Barclay attests:

He [Beesley] used to get driven to despair! He’d send a message down to tell me to get everybody that was in camp up to the cookhouse, the Mess room because the Honorary Colonel of 1 RNZIR was visiting. And he was some old Colonel said he would come in – and would walk in and say ‘Oh G’day Fred, how are you going?’ And it used to just...He [Beesley] didn’t understand that we were such a small Army, and theirs wasn’t a big Army by world standards either, but ours was so tiny...⁷

In his 1978 research paper *Military Lessons of the Vietnam War: A New Zealand Officers’ Perspective*, Harry Pappafloratos examined the relationship between ANZUS Army officers in Vietnam in an attempt to quantitatively measure just ‘how well’ the New Zealand, Australian and United States forces ‘got on.’⁸ Admittedly, the analysis was based upon the views of only 71 New Zealand Army officers, with the rank of Major or above, but the results of his investigations were nevertheless interesting.⁹

When Pappafloratos asked about the working relationship of Australian and New Zealand troops at officer level, 47% reported the relationship was characterised by ‘minor

⁶ McGibbon, *The New Zealand Army in Vietnam 1964-1972*, p.80.

⁷ Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

⁸ Pappafloratos, *Military Lessons of the Vietnam War: A New Zealand Officers’ Perspective*, p.46

⁹ The sample used by Pappafloratos was based on a list provided to him by the New Zealand Department of Defence. Of those 71 officers, 70% completed his questionnaire (6% refused and the remaining 24% did not respond). Culley was the only 4 Troop member of officer rank in 1978 invited to participate. Pappafloratos, *Military Lessons of the Vietnam War: A New Zealand Officers’ Perspective*, p.5.

problems but generally good' and 47% said the relationship was either 'excellent' or 'good.'¹⁰ The research indicated to Pappafloratos that the relationship was generally assessed as 'being positive' even if the New Zealand officers did believe the actual bond was 'not thought to be as harmonious as desired.'¹¹ The research also concluded that any clashes that had taken place between the two countries 'were passed off by many as personality clashes.'¹² This certainly resonates with 4 Troop in 1969.

While it was important for the New Zealand SAS to continue to practise and enhance their particular jungle-warfare Special Forces skills mainly developed, tested and proven in Borneo, it would be quite inaccurate to suggest the Australian SAS in Vietnam forced or compelled 4 Troop to 'conform' with any 'Australian limitations.' What is clear is the Australian SAS Squadron Commanders in South Vietnam were subjected to variations of their role either as a result of a changing tactical environment, or the different appreciation of their understood capabilities each Task Force Commander brought with him to Phuoc Tuy province, and while these changing iterations were explained at times, some members of the three 4 Troop deployments nevertheless found the evolving, and sometimes revolving, role frustrating from an operational point of view.

By the time Captain Graye Shattky's first all-New Zealand patrols began operations at the end of December 1969, the tempo of SAS operations in Phuoc Tuy province had decreased as the successes of large-scale Task Force operations began to have an impact on the enemy. As alluded to in both Chapters Eleven and Thirteen, both Australian Squadron Commanders between 1969 and 1970, Majors Reg Beesley and Ian Teague, had at times been as frustrated by the Task Force's changing attitude to SAS and the value of the Squadron in Phuoc Tuy province, as had Major John Murphy when the Australian SAS first arrived in South Vietnam in 1966. It would appear that all the Australian SAS Squadron Commanders in Vietnam experienced some dissatisfaction associated with the different Task Force Commanders and their individual expectations.

As described, quite often throughout the campaign period, a change in Task Force command also resulted in the SAS Squadron changing its operational pattern. These

¹⁰ Pappafloratos, *Military Lessons of the Vietnam War: A New Zealand Officers' Perspective*, p.49

¹¹ Pappafloratos, *Military Lessons of the Vietnam War: A New Zealand Officers' Perspective*, p.49

¹² Pappafloratos, *Military Lessons of the Vietnam War: A New Zealand Officers' Perspective*, p.49

variations had much to do with what several SAS veterans believed was an inability, deliberate or otherwise, on the part of the Task Force Commanders to use the Squadron in South Vietnam in any genuinely uniform manner, let alone in a truly strategic Special Forces capacity. This might be slightly unreasonable in that what many New Zealand SAS veterans advocated – an ability to carry out cross-border operations as in Borneo – was never going to be supported by either Australian or New Zealand political leaders. Nevertheless, it was up to the SAS Squadron Commanders to not only operate within the political boundaries as laid out for them but also successfully lobby for - by way of education - the Task Force Commander's blessing to conduct truly SAS-specific activities that would not only benefit Nui Dat but also remain valuable and worthwhile in the eyes of the SAS Squadron itself. For 4 Troop, Teague was different from Beesley in that regard, and some would argue the latter was far more 'forward thinking,' and therefore successful, in his ability to have influenced Weir and Pearson in establishing the most effective way to utilise the SAS in Phuoc Tuy. The evolution of reconnaissance ('recce') to reconnaissance/ambush ('recce/ambush') patrol operations in Chapters Seven and Eight is an example of this.

The size of the New Zealand SAS contribution to the Australian SAS Squadron between the end of 1968 and the beginning of 1971, combined with the command arrangements placed upon it, also dictated that 4 Troop deployments were never likely to be able to influence in any 'independent' or nationally-identifiable sense, as had initially been discussed in Part II, 'To Vietnam.' As discussed in Chapter Fourteen, this trend could have been substantially modified in 1971, such was the relationship that 2nd Lieutenant Jack Hayes and Major Geoff Chipman appear to have fostered, but the opportunity was never really allowed to prosper because of the New Zealand Troop's premature withdrawal at the end of February 1971. Certainly, had 4 Troop been permitted to continue operations in South Vietnam for as long as Chipman's 2 Squadron remained in theatre, much would have been done to advance the relationship between the two ANZAC SAS units.

Some fifteen months after completing his post-operational tour report in mid-February 1971, Hayes wrote two further documents which explored and evaluated New Zealand

SAS operations in South Vietnam.¹³ Using the principal hypothesis that a reconnaissance platoon from a New Zealand infantry battalion could have just as successfully carried out the task given to the SAS Squadron in South Vietnam, Hayes suggested such was the routine nature of the vast majority of SAS reconnaissance and ambush patrols that a New Zealand infantry patrol would have been physically capable of conducting the same activities.¹⁴

With both sets of forces ostensibly trained as reconnaissance troops, Hayes failed to acknowledge the fundamental reasons why such a comparison was essentially flawed. While he agreed that the SAS trained for ‘long-range patrolling behind enemy lines without support’ and that a battalion reconnaissance platoon trained for short-range patrolling within an area of operations supported by the rest of the battalion, he made no attempt to illustrate how much more difficult it would have been to keep a platoon of approximately twenty soldiers hidden whilst carrying out a reconnaissance operation. That the SAS were able to achieve the results they did in South Vietnam had much to do with the fact that their experience and tactics enabled them to avoid being observed by the enemy.¹⁵ Quite apart from these tactics and skills associated with camouflage and concealment, as described in Part III, the physical and psychological conditioning of SAS soldiers would also delineate the two groups one from the other:

Because the guys in an SAS patrol were carefully selected, you could rely on every one of them to do a particular job. Whereas, in my experience with a rifle platoon, you had some good fellows and some that you had to be very careful where you placed them or they could let the team down – not willingly, but they just weren’t the calibre; they’d get crook or they’d panic and that sort of thing. Whereas with an SAS you could guarantee you knew where you stood with the fellows because they [were] carefully selected.¹⁶

Horner commented that in a post-Vietnam evaluation, the argument that ‘ordinary infantry could do the same work as the SAS’ emerged on several occasions.¹⁷ Horner also suggested, as did Hayes in 1972, this view existed because elements within both the Australian and New Zealand SAS never genuinely believed successful operations could

¹³ Lieutenant J.S. Hayes, “Project No. 1, NZSAS Operations in Republic of Vietnam (RVN), 12 April 1972” and “Project No. 2, An Evaluation of SAS Operations in Vietnam, 15 May 1972,” both in NZSAS Association Archives, Wellington.

¹⁴ Hayes, “Project No. 2, An Evaluation of SAS Operations in Vietnam, 15 May 1972,” p.3

¹⁵ Hayes, “Project No. 2, An Evaluation of SAS Operations in Vietnam, 15 May 1972,” p.2

¹⁶ Jim Maloney, interview conducted on 17 June 2008.

¹⁷ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 236.

take place unless they were 'deep behind enemy lines as they had originally been trained.'¹⁸ Why is it that the New Zealand SAS felt that they needed a physical border to cross in order to achieve successful and valuable patrol results?

Some 4 Troop veterans were equally of the view that had the New Zealand Troop been allowed to carry out long-range reconnaissance operations on or near the Cambodian/Laotian borders, then the number of casualties would have exponentially increased. But is there any evidence to support this? The first 4 Troop observed in excess of 1,200 enemy during their time in Phuoc Tuy province. That they were able to provide such intelligence and survive is perhaps a measure of how successful the New Zealand patrols may have been further afield. SAS patrols did not take place across sovereign borders, but the presence of the enemy within the Task Force confines was arguably just as dangerous as anywhere else in South Vietnam. Ultimately, 4 Troop veterans sell themselves short when they continually lessen the value of their operations because they were not classic long-range SAS cross-border insertions. This is more a symptom of New Zealand SAS modesty, as opposed to any real critique of their operational achievements.

In early 1968 two officers from the Office of the British Defence Attaché in Saigon visited the Australian Task Force with the aim of examining the effectiveness of SAS reconnaissance operations in Phuoc Tuy province.¹⁹ The British observers understood that much of the Task Force's success up until then was due, not only to the SAS' ability to produce timely information about the enemy, but by 'harrying' the Vietcong and NVA forces they had 'helped to create a feeling of insecurity which...often resulted in the enemy moving.'²⁰ When the visitors spoke to the SAS directly, many within the Squadron believed that even though a number of new methods and techniques had been adopted in Vietnam, most felt the 'principles and methods learned in Malaya and Borneo' still remained 'sound.'²¹

¹⁸ Hayes, "Project No. 2, An Evaluation of SAS Operations in Vietnam, 15 May 1972," p.3

¹⁹ Office of the Defence Attaché, British Embassy Saigon, "Detailed Report No 36: The Special Air Service Regiment in Viet-Nam, 6 March 1968" in AWM98 R723/1/68: Reports/General – SAS LO Quarterly Reports, 1967-1968, AWM, Canberra.

²⁰ Office of the Defence Attaché, British Embassy Saigon, "Detailed Report No 36: The Special Air Service Regiment in Viet-Nam, 6 March 1968."

²¹ Office of the Defence Attaché, British Embassy Saigon, "Detailed Report No 36: The Special Air Service Regiment in Viet-Nam, 6 March 1968."

Despite the assertion from Major Dale Burnett's Australian Squadron in 1967 that any infantry unit could carry out the tasks undertaken by SAS patrols in Vietnam, the British visitors could not reconcile this assessment, believing that their hosts had been far 'too modest about their successes which [were] a direct result of the long and arduous training...as well as sound leadership down to the lowest level plus a sense of dedication at least equal to, if not better than, that of their opponents.'²² That the British could see the value in New Zealand SAS operations in Vietnam was clearly illustrated after a Squadron from 22 SAS Regiment visited New Zealand in mid-1974:

My men have returned to England with the greatest regard for the professionalism, motivation and expertise of your Squadron. The visit has also confirmed, in my opinion, what I have suspected – that our modus operandi in the jungle today in some respects takes insufficient cognisance of the developments in tactics, weaponry and skills of the opposition in the last few years. In particular, I was interested to find that ideally you operate over far smaller distances at slower patrol speeds with commensurate increase in alertness than we do. This I am sure is right, and we should make appropriate modifications to our instructions and training...²³

There seems little doubt that the McGee incident in December 1969 cast a lasting and influential shadow on the first New Zealand Troop, but did the assault of Howlett and the subsequent and seemingly inadequate punishment meted out singularly affect 4 Troop and its overall operational performance in Phuoc Tuy province during 1969 in any measurable way? Culley was always conscious of the relationship that the Troop – or at the very least, he and Eric Ball - and Beesley had possessed, but personalities aside, he was confident that the New Zealanders operational performance would nevertheless be recognised when he and Beesley discussed the matter of 4 Troop citations in December 1969.²⁴

While the decrease in operational tempo of SAS activity after 1969 is likely to have been the key reason why no member of the subsequent 4 Troops commanded by Shattky and Hayes received any awards, and irrespective of who may have been responsible for determining the New Zealand SAS should not receive any awards for gallantry during the

²² Office of the Defence Attaché, British Embassy Saigon, "Detailed Report No 36: The Special Air Service Regiment in Viet-Nam, 6 March 1968."

²³ Letter from Major David Walker to Major Neville Kidd, "26 June 1974," in Graye Shattky personal archive, viewed on 25 November 2008.

²⁴ Terry Culley, interview conducted on 21 July 2008.

campaign, both the McGee incident and his subsequent lack of adequate punishment, left an impression that ultimately sealed 4 Troop's fate, for that one incident – in the view of the Australian veterans – 'undid all the diplomatic and conciliatory work that had been put in by a lot of people...' ²⁵ Likewise, after all this time, the disappointment has not been lost on the New Zealanders either. ²⁶

Between November 1968 and February 1971, New Zealand SAS soldiers participated in 169 Australian SAS patrols in South Vietnam. Of those, 137 were commanded by the New Zealanders themselves. The combination of enthusiasm, esprit de corps and professional desire for tactical and operational success drove all three New Zealand Troops' operational effectiveness in an environment which limited a nationally identifiable demonstration of New Zealand military capability. This notwithstanding, is it possible New Zealand SAS operations in South Vietnam could ever be described as unsuccessful or regarded in any way as failures? Terry Culley reflected:

I didn't want to achieve glory but we did want to get some 'runs on the board' and be recognised as New Zealand Special Air Service – we didn't. The other thing that happened of course, is that when the war finally ended and we heard that our house on the hill that had been handed over, rather taken over by the enemy [and guys were] saying 'Jesus, we built that thing and it was given back without a bullet being fired,' you know, because the peace had been negotiated in Paris, France, or somewhere, and all that work we had done was for nothing really. We hadn't saved the world, we hadn't saved the South Vietnamese Government; the people of South Vietnam were now going to be subjected to the Communist regime from the north. And I felt a mild sensation of failure that, for one of the first times, the New Zealanders – particularly SAS – had been committed to an operation where they failed. ²⁷

Culley's sentiments as they were articulated nearly forty years after his Troop returned from South Vietnam perhaps best sum up the general overarching view posited by many 4 Troop members. In a 'black and white' sense the Vietnam War had been lost and a great number of Vietnam veterans, including former Australian, United States as well as New Zealand soldiers, felt similarly. However, a more detailed examination of the performance of the New Zealand SAS Troops in South Vietnam through this research, including the tactical and operational aspects of the campaign, produces a far more varied

²⁵ Australian SASR Association, 'Working relationships that were not too close,' in Challinor, *Grey Ghosts*, pp. 66-67.

²⁶ Kevin Herewini, interview conducted on 15 July 2008.

²⁷ Terry Culley, interview conducted on 21 July 2008.

appreciation that is significantly influenced by rank, experience and the wider knowledge of Troop members.

All of these factors impacted upon the whole of the New Zealand Ranger Squadron and it is considered by some that while neither the Australian nor New Zealand SAS saved Vietnam, it is very probable Vietnam saved the New Zealand SAS from being disbanded and its soldiers from being subsumed back into their parent New Zealand Army Corps. Even though it took two years, it seems clear there was a need to provide a continuity of sorts for the New Zealand SAS post-Borneo, if only to ensure its survival. Operations in South Vietnam enabled those New Zealand Special Forces soldiers to remain within the Squadron and do exactly what they were trained to do – that is practise their skills on active service against a genuine enemy. In this sense, the 4 Troop deployments to South Vietnam provided the New Zealand SAS with a continuity of operational development that lasted well beyond February 1971, and to this end, it must be assessed as a success.

To many SAS veterans, success or otherwise in its simplest terms was determined by whether or not the individual patrol mission was successfully accomplished. Each Patrol Commander had what he considered to be ‘a mission or an objective’ for the patrol, be it a reconnaissance task or a more offensive action in the form of ambush or a fighting patrol. From a reconnaissance perspective, the ability to report accurately on enemy activity within a patrol AO, or lack thereof, determined the success or otherwise. Certain Patrol Commanders identified a successful reconnaissance patrol as being one in which he and his soldiers were not discovered by the enemy. Others were comfortable with the knowledge that Vietcong or NVA elements were aware of the presence of an SAS patrol in a particular area, especially after a ‘contact,’ and chose to continue with a patrol operation. Certainly the operational performance by the first Troop and its record, as described in Chapter Ten, of observing over 1,100 of the 3,313 enemy seen by the entire Squadron during that period, suggests their operations were more than successful.

Equally, many of the 4 Troop members deployed to Vietnam between 1968 and 1971, particularly those with patrol experience in Borneo, felt that remaining undetected during a patrol, only to have their presence compromised by mounting an ambush ran counter to the true role of SAS Special Forces operations. It was largely from this strategy that emerged the belief that ‘body-counts’ were more important than the intelligence collected

by the SAS while on patrol operations. This may have been important to the younger members of the Troop, but not for the more senior such as Danny Wilson:

...a lot of them would have liked to have had a shoot-up. They don't care about anything else – they like to have a shoot-up and that's it. You know, they might have looked at it as pretty boring, but to me, as a Patrol Commander, you look at it differently to what they do. But they can only say that when they come back and nobody gets hurt. But if someone gets hurt, they might think different...Right from when I first joined the SAS they were always being told that our job was to get in there and get out without being seen – to do their job. And that's the way that I looked at it.²⁸

Nevertheless, it was universally accepted by all Patrol Commanders interviewed that the single most important measure of success of the 4 Troop deployments was quite simply that all their soldiers 'got home safely.'²⁹ That all 4 Troop soldiers, save for Sergeant Graham Campbell, returned from South Vietnam is perhaps a real and accurate measure of their operational success. Only one New Zealand SAS soldier died during either of the Borneo or South Vietnam campaigns, and Campbell's death in January 1970 accounted for the only Australian or New Zealand SAS soldier killed in action during either campaign.³⁰

In September 1972, Culley told those attending the New Zealand Army Chief of Staff's Exercise that the role of the New Zealand SAS in South Vietnam was primarily the gathering of intelligence with a secondary role of conducting offensive 'operations in one or two patrol strength.'³¹ Unfortunately, many New Zealand SAS veterans interviewed also believed that their patrol work in South Vietnam was largely unsuccessful because the tactical information or intelligence collected during the patrol missions appeared not to have been utilised in a timely fashion by the Task Force.³² Horner has written that it was 'extremely difficult to quantify' the value of intelligence reporting provided to the Task Force by SAS patrols because it was not always clear from which sources the intelligence had been gleaned.³³ Comments by Shattky and Hayes in Chapters Twelve, Thirteen and Fourteen, for example, suggest exchanges were irregular and informal. Bill

²⁸ Danny Wilson, interview conducted on 18 July 2008.

²⁹ Terry Culley, interview conducted on 21 July 2008.

³⁰ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 510.

³¹ McGibbon, *The New Zealand Army in Vietnam 1964-1972*, p. 81.

³² McGibbon, *The New Zealand Army in Vietnam 1964-1972*, p. 82 and Baker, *Dare to Win*, pp. 97-98.

³³ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, pp. 219-220.

Lillicrapp said only once did he provide a verbal intelligence report to an ‘outside Intelligence Officer.’

At a 3 Squadron party I was talking to Lieutenant-Colonel Khan, CO 5RAR, who mentioned that his next operation would be into Nui Toc Thien [sic]. I told him that I had just been up there so he sent his IO to interview me.³⁴

Regardless, the form in which SAS-collected intelligence took in South Vietnam, principally the patrol report, took on a fundamentally different appearance than the patrol report that was produced during operations in Borneo. Put simply, reports in Vietnam were far less detailed and thorough than those produced during ‘Confrontation.’ Perhaps because of this change in format, as well as the involvement of Commanders – DOBOPS for example - operating at a truly strategic level, there appears not to have been a similarly consistent emphasis and value placed on SAS-reported information in Vietnam.

With the Borneo patrol reports, not only did the Patrol Commander make firm conclusions based upon what the patrol had observed but often the debriefing officer, who was either the detachment Commander in the case of the New Zealanders or the Squadron Commander (or his 2IC) for the Australian and British Squadrons, provided an assessment which included further recommendations for either DOBOPS or the Brigade Commander to follow up. Quite often, subsequent infantry operations were carried out with the assistance of the particular SAS patrol guiding a larger assault force. For example, Operation Pine Marten was a company sized assault by Bravo Company 1/7 Gurkha Rifles against a reported group of 50 Indonesian Border Terrorists (IBT) in early October 1965.³⁵ In the post-operation report, the British company commander made the following comments in reference to the seven-man New Zealand SAS patrol which assisted the Gurkhas:

The report would not be complete without mention of the excellent work done by the NZSAS Party. Their services were invaluable, both as guides and route markers. All the difficult tasks in the cliff area were undertaken by them – they were unceasing in their efforts to make the passage of the force as easy as possible.³⁶

³⁴ Bill Lillicrapp, interview notes handed to author on 16 June 2008.

³⁵ Major D. O’Leary, “Op PINE MARTEN – 2-11 Oct 65, 18 October 1965,” in WO 305/4324, Headquarters West Brigade (Borneo): Operations Reports, TNA, London.

³⁶ O’Leary, “Op PINE MARTEN – 2-11 Oct 65, 18 October 1965.”

This level of support does not appear to have taken place between the SAS Squadron and other Task Force elements in South Vietnam or if it did, it was quite rare. Nor would infantry commanders make reference to support received from the SAS Squadron in post-operation reports. Brigade Commanders in Borneo appear to have been much more enthusiastic when it came to utilising SAS patrol information. All SAS patrol reports in Borneo went directly to DOBOPS. With DOBOPS being a former British 22 SAS Commanding Officer (from 1965 onwards this was Major General George Lea), the acceptance of the accuracy of the intelligence collected by the SAS in Borneo was far greater than was the case in South Vietnam, where Task Force Commanders were either less au fait with SAS methodology, or less willing to rely upon or utilise SAS patrol reporting in the same fashion.

The format of patrol reporting from Borneo to Vietnam also appears to have changed and the debriefing process was much shorter in South Vietnam. Australian Squadron Commanders in South Vietnam do not appear to have debriefed returning patrols in the same manner Majors Alf Garland and Jim Hughes had done with their Australian SAS Squadrons in Borneo during 1965 and 1966.³⁷ It is not clear why this process changed. Certainly the New Zealanders were aware and although some may have queried why it was common for only the Patrol Commander and his 2IC to be debriefed by the Operations Officer after the completion of a mission, it appears that the issue was not raised in any official or formal capacity during the campaign period. Jack Hayes did allude to the difference in patrol debrief procedures in his post-deployment report when he wrote ‘a patrol critique or interrogation was not done in SVN in the same way that it was done in 1 Ranger Squadron,’ but it seems no further commentary was made by any other New Zealand SAS soldier on the debriefing process used by the Australian Squadrons.³⁸ Despite Hayes post-campaign comments, the New Zealanders may not have been altogether unhappy with this difference.

In terms of intelligence dissemination, one questions why the New Zealanders felt so strongly about the misuse or non-use of the information they provided on patrol. Surely,

³⁷ Copies of all Australian SAS patrol reports for Borneo operations are contained AWM125 60 “Australian SAS Reports Volume I, May-August 65” and AWM125 61 “Australian SAS Reports Volume II, March-June 66,” AWM, Canberra.

³⁸ 2nd Lieutenant J.S. Hayes, “4 Troop NZSAS – Post Operational Report South Vietnam Dec 1970 – Feb 1971, 16 February 1971,” in NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington, p. 3.

it was not up to them to determine how or whether intelligence was used in any capacity – nor should they feel their work was largely a failure because information was not used in a timely fashion – unless there were suggestions other Task Force officers might have questioned the accuracy or veracity of the SAS patrol reporting? While disappointing, the tardy use, or non-use, of perishable intelligence by military organisations was by no means new in the history of warfare³⁹ and there appears to be no direct evidence to indicate such claims were made against the SAS intelligence reported, save the informal remarks about Australian SAS intelligence gleaned by Mace during his visit at the end of 1966.

Irrespective of the reasons why tactical intelligence on the activity and movement of the enemy may or may not have been used by the Australian Task Force, this should in no way detract from the SAS' principal role in Phuoc Tuy province which was to collect the material. Nobody could realistically argue that this was not successfully accomplished, nor that it was not carried out without the same thoroughly high level of professional standard that mirrored the New Zealand SAS' approach to intelligence-collection operations in Borneo.

Significantly, the way in which the New Zealand SAS in Borneo were able to see 'tangible' results associated with the intelligence collected on patrol between 1965 and 1966 was never replicated in South Vietnam in any comparable sense. Not only would SAS patrols during 'Confrontation' collect information on enemy activity, but the patrols after reporting the intelligence would often escort, or 'guide,' larger Commonwealth assault forces to these enemy positions. It is this inability of Borneo veterans of 4 Troop to see the 'fruits of their labours' that essentially explains their frustrations or observations in comments attached to any perceived or real misuse or non-use of collected intelligence that was experienced in the Vietnam campaign.

The limited size of the New Zealand SAS commitment to South Vietnam meant that it could never stand alone or work in any independent capacity. Political imperatives determined just exactly where the New Zealand SAS Troop could operate in South

³⁹ See Keegan, *Intelligence in War: Knowledge of the Enemy from Napoleon to al-Qaeda* and Rosenau, *Special Operations Forces and Elusive Enemy Ground Targets: Lessons from Vietnam and the Persian Gulf War* for further extrapolation of this subject.

Vietnam and with whom. Based upon historical experience, the option of being aligned under a United States Army command was unlikely to ever receive positive support from either the Holyoake Government or senior Army officers such as Lieutenant-General Leonard Thornton. While exposure to United States Special Forces operations in Vietnam imbued some 4 Troop members with an enthusiasm that joint-American operations might have provided them with a more satisfying campaign in a tactical sense, the political constraints placed upon operations forced most to accept 4 Troop was best placed within the Australian Task Force.

There was no other option but to have been attached to the Australian SAS Squadron; that was as clear to David Ogilvy when the Four Troop formation first began to take shape during 1968 as it was forty years later when he recalled the events that led up to Culley's Troop being deployed.⁴⁰ Its usefulness and strength, both to the Australian Squadron and the Task Force, came from its practical application of unique New Zealand Special Forces methodology and field-craft which had been fundamentally shaped and developed in Borneo. Those New Zealand SAS soldiers with experience of one of the four Borneo 'Confrontation' detachments deployed between 1965 and 1966 were equally able to apply this operational knowledge during the time that New Zealand SAS patrols operated in South Vietnam.

The opportunity to develop a genuine 'unit-to-unit' relationship with the Australians was available but never really embraced with enthusiasm by either group – certainly this was the case for Culley's Troop, and – as Part III illustrates - it is not just the McGee incident that drives this assessment. It is possible that a new generation of New Zealand SAS soldiers – such as Hayes – could have changed the relationship, but the premature withdrawal of his Troop essentially curtailed the opportunity. That the two senior officers of the Australian 2 Squadron in late 1970, OC Major Geoff Chipman and his 2IC Captain Robin Letts, had a much more collaborative approach and mutual respect to Special Forces concepts and methods of operation, much more akin to the New Zealand one – because of their British Special Forces background – perhaps identifies the key reason for the anomaly which was Hayes' experience.

⁴⁰ David Ogilvy, interview conducted on 27 February 2008.

Nevertheless, for many New Zealanders the principal ‘disappointment’ of the campaign was they did not have a relationship with the Australian Squadrons that allowed them to foster a genuine ANZAC-Special Forces spirit. Analysis by way of personal views shows of those 4 Troop members who were dissatisfied in some way by their experiences and relationship with the Australian Squadron, the theme of the ‘negative aspects of command’ exercised by Australian Squadron Commanders, appears to be a common thread. Some of those Troop members felt that from an overall New Zealand SAS perspective, the Troop ‘did as well, if not better, than any other SAS deployment in the history of the New Zealand Special Air Service,’ however, they remain troubled ‘the history records will not show how good it was.’⁴¹ The question of gallantry awards, or lack thereof, still disappoints many, if not all.

In the immediate post-Vietnam period there developed a school of thought that believed that the Vietnam War was a unique conflict and military trends would draw away from anti-guerrilla counterinsurgency campaigns towards more conventional warfare based on large-scale technologically advanced weapons systems. The assessment proved short-lived as asymmetric warfare remains a central tenet of campaigns to which New Zealand has committed its Special Forces over the last decade. By the time of September 11, 2001 and the subsequent United Nations-mandated deployments in Afghanistan, New Zealand officials and policymakers were more than prepared to deploy the New Zealand SAS as a genuine ‘first strike’ strategic capacity. In order to accomplish this, New Zealand officials subsequently accepted the need to provide a larger force of full Squadron size proportions, as well as the associated infrastructure and all the operational support necessary to enable New Zealand Special Forces operations to be conducted in a truly independent sense.

It was nevertheless important, at some stage, to quantify what had been experienced in South Vietnam and articulate that into a set of standards from which the Squadron could continue to evolve and develop its knowledge for not just subsequent operational campaigns but also the next generation of New Zealand Special Forces soldiers. While it could be argued that no two campaigns would ever be identical, it was still important to develop a consistency within the field craft, especially with regards to small unit patrolling. Both Borneo and South Vietnam had demonstrated to the New Zealand SAS

⁴¹ Terry Culley, interview conducted on 21 July 2008.

that the basic tenets of their jungle warfare patrolling tactics remained constant. From this emerged a basic set of New Zealand SAS SOPs. These SOPs were written, according to Neville Kidd, during Exercise 'TROPIC DAWN' at the end of 1971:

I can remember going over to Fiji with [Eric Ball] – and we were on an exercise and we parachuted into Fiji – and he and I sat up on this blinking ridge, and jungle all around us, and we just wrote the SOPs for Vietnam - because we had nothing. You see after he came back – he had come back with the experience of being over there and we just sat down and wrote out all the SOPs. That was the start of them, and they are probably long discarded now, but that was the start and we started to develop what to do in certain circumstances. And Eric would bring back all he knew from Vietnam – Terry Culley at that stage, I think he had gone – so we had to use Eric and that's where we got it and went through it carefully...⁴²

New Zealand SAS Borneo operations were significant for a variety of operational reasons. Additionally, the relationship with the British SAS contributed to the ongoing tension demonstrated during the New Zealanders' time attached to the Australian SAS Squadron in South Vietnam. The three New Zealand Troop deployments played a proportional role within each of the Australian Squadrons to which they were attached. Overall, the importance of the Vietnam campaign for the New Zealand Special Air Service was the opportunity to reconfirm the procedures and techniques, with appropriate modifications – the greater emphasis on helicopter assistance and the five-man patrol being just two examples of this - of their jungle-warfare patrolling skills. This clearly continued to be reinforced but the end of operations in 1971 represented the 'end of a development stage' where it would be difficult to take the patrolling aspect of the New Zealand SAS role much further than what had evolved in South Vietnam.⁴³ By the end of operations in South Vietnam, the SOPs and techniques from this campaign, as well as Borneo, would form the basis of New Zealand SAS patrolling field craft for at least the next twenty years.

In 2008, Jack Powley said the following:

I was talking to a guy a couple of years ago...and he was ex-Squadron, and he ran into me and he said to me 'can we have a beer?' And I said 'yeah.' And we got talking and he said 'you know what - I don't think I would hack it today in the

⁴² Neville Kidd, interview conducted on 16 July 2008. On 27 October 1971, 24 members of the Squadron were parachuted into Fiji. According to the RNZAF's 40 Squadron Unit History, Exercise 'TROPIC DAWN' was the first 'live para-drop carried out by the [40] Squadron using C130s outside New Zealand.' See RNZAF 40 Squadron Unit History, October 1971, in ANZ, Wellington, p.1.

⁴³ Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008.

Squadron.’ And I said ‘why do you say that?’ And he said ‘well, they have got all these things, they're so well trained.’ I said ‘you know it doesn’t work that way...you form a platform and each platform gets better and better, but the only reason that they get better is by that first platform. Now you are saying that you might not hack it today – they mightn’t have hacked it back then when there wasn’t the gear or the equipment.’ So you can never say that because, as anything, it gets better and better. You build a house with straw – the next one you build with brick and you learn, and everything is passed on. But you have got to have had that initial start off point and each platform gets better and better; equipment gets better as it goes along – so, I think they have built on what's gone on before them, and I think it's quite important that you never forget that.⁴⁴

The strength of New Zealand 4 Troop operations in South Vietnam, both to the Australian Squadron and the Task Force, came from its practical application of unique New Zealand Special Forces methodology and field-craft which had been fundamentally shaped and developed in Borneo. The New Zealand Special Air Service operations in South Vietnam and Borneo - the demonstration of the highest standards of patrol techniques, tracking, ambushing and fire discipline, and above all, operational professionalism that has been the hallmark of New Zealand's military history – provided the evolutionary ‘platforms’ from which today’s highly skilled and enviable New Zealand Special Forces have emerged.

⁴⁴ Jack Powley, interview conducted on 6 August 2008

Appendices

Appendix One:

New Zealand Special Air Service and Free World Forces in Vietnam

New Zealand Special Air Service and Free World Forces in Vietnam

The 4 Troop deployments to South Vietnam between December 1968 and February 1971 enabled members of the New Zealand SAS to gain first hand experience of other military forces. Of the eight Free World forces nations that provided military assistance to South Vietnam, apart from Australia of course, 4 Troop members had opportunities to observe elements of US and South Vietnamese military units during the campaign.¹ This contact usually took the form of short visits or temporary exchanges but several members did also participate in actual operations.

With an organisational structure that closely resembled that of their principal military aid donor, the United States, the South Vietnamese Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) was structured to be able to conduct offensive operations, such as reconnaissance in force operations, as well as security operations designed to defend key installations, cities/towns and supply or communication routes. The ARVN was primarily an infantry force that, by the end of 1968, consisted of ten infantry divisions with additional infantry airborne, ranger and armoured units.² All ARVN operations were supposedly closely co-ordinated with local government officials to ensure that they supported local efforts and did not 'endanger the programs of other government forces or agencies.'³

In the early 1960s US Special Forces advisers had initiated what was known as the Montagnard Mountain Scouts program. It was the template from which most US Special Forces programmes operated in Vietnam before it became the more well-known Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) program. CIDG was designed to establish bases of operations in regions of minimal government control where American and South Vietnamese Special Forces, along with other ARVN units, could train irregular strike forces for counter-guerrilla operations.⁴

¹ The eight Free World force countries included the United States, South Korea, Thailand, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, the Republic of China (Taiwan) and Spain. At the height of their commitments, in 1969, Free World force numbers totalled nearly 69,000 troops. Of those, South Korea provided approximately 49,000, Thailand 11,500 and Australia 7,670. Larsen and Collins Jr, *Vietnam Studies: Allied Participation in Vietnam*, p. v and p. 23.

² MACV, *Handbook for US Forces in Vietnam*, pp. 2-3.

³ MACV, *Handbook for US Forces in Vietnam*, pp. 2-3.

⁴ Stanton, *Special Forces at War*, p. 36.

MACV advisory teams also worked with all ARVN forces, usually down to battalion level, supposedly to provide the necessary means to co-ordinate combined US and other Free World forces operations. By the end of 1965, MACV had assumed overall control of American forces in Vietnam, including greater control over Special Forces. Andrew F. Krepinevich wrote that MACV was also keen to divert US Special Forces to more traditional unconventional warfare operations than just those within the CIDG programme. To this end, much of the programme was handed over to South Vietnamese Special Forces who were poorly trained, incompetently led, 'insensitive to the needs of the population' and therefore ill-equipped to assume the responsibility.⁵

Apart from CIDG, in May 1964 American Special Forces also established an internal unit-training programme to teach the LRRP techniques which had been developed in Vietnam. The programme expanded as more conventional Army formations arrived in Vietnam, until mid-1966, when General Westmoreland decided to formalise the training by creating a permanent three-week school for selected American and allied personnel. The Special Forces-run MACV-Recondo School was officially opened in Nha Trang on 15 September 1966.⁶

The MACV-Recondo School course emphasised physical conditioning, map reading, medical training, radio skills, intelligence gathering, patrol organisation, weapons familiarisation, and helicopter drills.⁷ From the time the School opened until its closure in December 1970, 5,625 personnel attended training, but only 3,357 graduated.⁸ The total course lasted 20 days.⁹ WO2 Eric Ball and Sergeants Fred Barclay and Windy McGee were the only New Zealand Troop members to attend the School before it closed in December 1970.¹⁰ All three completed the course and graduated.¹¹

⁵ Krepinevich, Jr, *The Army and Vietnam*, p.72.

⁶ According to Stanton, General Westmoreland personally chose the 'Recondo' title as a derivative of the American Army terms 'reconnaissance, commando and doughboy.' Stanton, *Special Forces at War*, pp. 254-257. McNeill records that 'Recondo' stood for 'Reconnaissance and Training.' McNeill, *The Team: Australian Army Advisers in Vietnam 1962-1972*, p.200.

⁷ Stanton, *Rangers at War: Combat Recon in Vietnam* (New York: Orion Books, 1992), pp. 300-306.

⁸ Stanton, *Special Forces at War*, p. 257.

⁹ Stanton, *Rangers at War*, p. 300.

¹⁰ Stanton, *Special Forces at War*, pp. 254-256.

¹¹ NZDF, "M329877: McGee W.A." and "M35339: Ball E," in NZDF Personnel Archive, Wellington and New Zealand Ministry of Defence, 'Certificate of Service in the New Zealand Army, J677105 Warrant Officer Class One Frederick Donald Barclay, NZSAS Association Archive, p.3.

In 1966 an Australian SAS officer, Captain Peter McDougall, had been attached to the School.¹² The success of that initial secondment, as well as the results from Australian SAS operations in Phuoc Tuy province since the Squadron's arrival in 1966 encouraged General Westmoreland to press for a larger Australian input into the training of the South Vietnamese.¹³ By 1968, Westmoreland requested that MACV consider additional ways in which training assistance could be given to the South Vietnamese. At the same time, he convinced the South Vietnamese High Command that ARVN reconnaissance companies should receive similar training to that given to American troops at the MACV-Recondo School. Senior Australian officers, such as Major-General Tim Vincent, Commander AFV, equally saw this as an opportunity to introduce additional Australian-trained LRRP forces, carrying out SAS-type operations, into the province.¹⁴

The quality that the Australian and New Zealand Army had, which the ARVN forces sadly lacked as far as the Task Force was concerned, was the constant maintenance of high standards. Although well-equipped and relatively well-trained by the United States, ARVN forces consistently struggled to counter the NVA and Vietcong insurgency. A combination of poor morale, war-weariness, lack of political and ideological motivation, over-reliance on American-inspired tactics that emphasised heavy weapons and vehicles, and mediocre leadership all contributed to the view held by Australian and New Zealand observers in South Vietnam.¹⁵

Any attempt to instil such ANZAC professionalism in South Vietnamese troops operating within the Task Force AO, by way of further training, was expected to remedy the deficiency. The initial proposal to establish an SAS LRRP school at Van Kiep, near Baria, had been drafted by Australian Captain Tony Danilenko in late 1967.¹⁶ The proposal called for experienced SAS senior NCOs to train 'three teams of five every six

¹² McNeill, *The Team: Australian Army Advisers in Vietnam 1962-1972*, p.200 and Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 237.

¹³ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 237.

¹⁴ McNeill, *The Team: Australian Army Advisers in Vietnam 1962-1972*, p.200 and Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, pp. 234-235 and p.237.

¹⁵ Edwards, 'Some Reflections on the Australian Government's Commitment to the Vietnam War,' p. 23.

¹⁶ Danilenko, who had commanded a patrol that had gone missing in Borneo during the time David Moloney's command in 1966, was killed in April 1968 while leading a Montagnard Mobile Strike Force that came into contact with an NVA Division crossing from Laos into Vietnam. Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, pp.237-238 and McNeill, *The Team: Australian Army Advisers in Vietnam 1962-1972*, p.329.

weeks,' so as to produce in due course enough South Vietnamese Rangers could make up a squadron able to carry out operations on behalf of the Task Force.¹⁷

The Australian SAS Squadron did not have sufficient resources to undertake this training role in its entirety, so the Van Kiep School operated under the command of the AATTV.¹⁸ All School advisers had previous operational experience in Vietnam, either with earlier AATTV teams, or SAS postings.¹⁹ While the Squadron did assist when it could, by 1968 2 Squadron OC Major Brian Wade had been tasked to provide advice and guidance on the content of the course, co-ordinate the School patrol activity within the Task Force patrol programme, and arrange helicopters and support forces.²⁰

Ian McNeill noted that the Van Kiep LRRP courses were the first courses in which 'Australian advisers instructed directly' rather than merely advised South Vietnamese forces.²¹ He added that the 'willingness of the South Vietnamese to submit their students to the authority of the advisers at the LRRP Wing was accepted by the Australians as South Vietnamese acknowledgement of their mastery of the subject.'²² While the AATTV advisers were responsible for the content of the course as well as making final determination of passes and failures, just how much learning was achieved remained questionable.

As with the MACV-Recondo School syllabus, the Van Kiep courses consisted of physical training, weapon handling, map reading, field craft, first aid, helicopter operations, live firing, communications, tactics, demolitions, patrolling and river crossing techniques and instruction, culminating with three weeks of operational patrolling in which students undertook one three-day reconnaissance patrol and two five-day reconnaissance/ambush patrols.²³ The patrols were usually made up of an Australian Warrant Officer, a signaller

¹⁷ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 238.

¹⁸ When controlled by the AATTV, the Van Kiep School would become known as the 'Long Range Patrol Wing.' Bruce Davies and Gary McKay, *The Men Who Persevered: The AATTV – The most highly decorated Australian unit of the Vietnam War*, (Crows Nest, New South Wales: Allen and Unwin, 2005), p.136.

¹⁹ McNeill, *The Team: Australian Army Advisers in Vietnam 1962-1972*, p.202.

²⁰ McNeill, *The Team: Australian Army Advisers in Vietnam 1962-1972*, p.202.

²¹ McNeill, *The Team: Australian Army Advisers in Vietnam 1962-1972*, p.202.

²² McNeill, *The Team: Australian Army Advisers in Vietnam 1962-1972*, p.202.

²³ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 318.

and a group of South Vietnamese students. The senior NCO came from either the AATTV attached to the school, or from the Australian SAS Squadron in theatre.²⁴

In late May 1969, New Zealand 4 Troop Lance-Corporal Joe Wharehinga was included in an 11-man Van Kiep patrol, commanded by Australian Warrant Officer John Grafton with eight South Vietnamese 'Ranger' soldiers.²⁵ The patrol, VK2 (08/69), was carried out between 28 April and 1 May.²⁶ At the same time Lance-Corporal Jack Curtis accompanied Australian Warrant Officer Barry Young and eight ARVN troops on VK3 (09/69) for a training patrol of similar length.²⁷ It appears the patrols offered little value for the New Zealand Troop from an information-gathering perspective; there is no indication that the two were debriefed by Culley or any other New Zealand Troop member of their experiences with the ARVN soldiers.

New Zealand SAS and ARVN Training

In early November 1969, Army Headquarters in Wellington sent a signal to NEWZARM in Singapore indicating that a recent newspaper article had reported that the Australian and New Zealand SAS were assisting in the training of 'ARVN Special Forces near the Cambodian border.'²⁸ As both Wellington and NEWZARM were unaware of such assistance being provided, they were anxious for clarification. It was 3 Squadron OC Major Reg Beesley who replied to Lieutenant-Colonel Kevin Fenton on 19 November. His signal read:

No change to activities has occurred. Information contained in press report is ill-founded. Persons NZSAS are not engaged in any training assistance to ARVN.²⁹

²⁴ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 318.

²⁵ Grafton would be killed in August during a Squadron parachuting accident in Australia. Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 305.

²⁶ Warrant Officer J.M. Grafton, "Van Kiep LRP Trg Wing Ops 08/69, 2 May 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries, 7/12/13 3 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Log 1-31 May 1969, AWM, Canberra, p. 1.

²⁷ Curtis was designated 2IC for the patrol. Warrant Officer B. Young, "Van Kiep LRP Trg Ops 09/69, 2 May 1969," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries, 7/12/13, p. 1.

²⁸ Army Headquarters Wellington, "Training Assistance to ARMV Forces, 9 November 1969," and HQ NZV Force Signal to Culley, "Training Assistance to ARVN Forces, 14 November 1969," both in New Zealand Army Non File Material ANFM A234: S.C59.6, Deployment: NZSAS, 4 November 1968 – 20 November 1969, NZDF Archive, Wellington.

²⁹ Major Reg Beesley, "For Commander NZV Force from OC 3 SAS Squadron, 19 November 1969," in Army Non File Material ANFM A234.

It is not clear why Beesley responded to the signal and not Culley.³⁰ Apart from the two Van Kiep patrols involving Wharehinga and Curtis, Beesley was technically correct.³¹ However, in September 1969 Sergeant Fred Barclay had spent six weeks attached to a Mobile Advisory Team (MAT) at the Van Kiep School training South Vietnamese units.³² Tasked to train a platoon-sized group each day, the work of the five-man team of senior NCOs (and an ARVN interpreter) included instruction on ‘patrol formation for both day and night for open and close country’ and ‘ambush techniques for both day and night’ using Australian tactics.³³

It is fair to say Barclay was less than impressed with the students. During his secondment, Barclay reported that one South Vietnamese company at Dat Do had numerous desertions and a mutiny immediately prior to the team arriving. Another Company Commander was jailed for ‘misappropriating Company funds’ and there were numerous thefts of ammunition, rations, and petrol.³⁴ The availability of the soldiers was also often limited to two hours per morning and two hours in the afternoon because they were still ‘required for guard and sentry duties and night ambushes.’³⁵ On more than one occasion, Barclay observed troops being ‘brought direct from a night ambush position to a day’s training.’³⁶

Barclay felt that while the private soldiers were easy to instruct and very keen to learn, the ARVN officers and senior NCOs, most of whom did not participate in the actual training, proved to be the principal problem.³⁷ Whilst the actual Company Commander

³⁰ Culley was not out on patrol nor was he on leave.

³¹ Both patrols had taken place in Phuoc Tuy province, some distance from the Cambodian border.

³² Captain Terry Culley, “Training of Regional and Popular Force Troops in the Republic of Vietnam (RVN), 3 September, 1970,” in New Zealand Army S.15/28/13 Volume 2 New Zealand Forces in Vietnam – Training Assistance South Vietnam Forces September – December 1970, NZDF Archive, Wellington.

³³ Culley, “Training of Regional and Popular Force Troops in the Republic of Vietnam (RVN), 3 September, 1970.”

³⁴ Culley, “Training of Regional and Popular Force Troops in the Republic of Vietnam (RVN), 3 September, 1970.”

³⁵ Culley, “Training of Regional and Popular Force Troops in the Republic of Vietnam (RVN), 3 September, 1970.”

³⁶ Culley, “Training of Regional and Popular Force Troops in the Republic of Vietnam (RVN), 3 September, 1970.”

³⁷ Maitland and Weiss also suggest that many officers were either ‘poorly trained, fearful of making mistakes’ or ‘constantly shifting initiative and responsibility to ever-higher levels of authority.’ Many senior South Vietnamese officers were also known to be corrupt and routinely supplemented their income by trading goods on the black market, stealing official funds, exploiting prostitution and dealing in drugs, while the lower ranks often committed extortion and sometimes even outright robbery against the local

also appeared to be very enthusiastic, Barclay reported that South Vietnamese Patrol Commanders had a habit of telling their platoons at the completion of a day's training that they were to forget what they had learnt as they (the Commanders) did not agree with the tactics. Barclay also noted that during two instances in which different student groups had come under actual enemy fire, both the companies had withdrawn to their compounds rather than counter the attacks.³⁸

Sergeant Jack Powley, who replaced Barclay as Troop Sergeant in December 1969, had similar experiences when he spent two weeks in February 1970 attached as a Task Force instructor.³⁹ Powley was perhaps a little more tolerant:

...they were a very mixed bunch because again I think you have got to understand, it was explained to me that these guys – to them it was a bit of a holiday; they were away out of the fighting for six weeks or whatever it was from there. So they weren't that interested [so we had] just a wee bit of trouble in getting them motivated.⁴⁰

Apart from the subsequent New Zealand Army Training Team Vietnam (NZATTV) deployments, most New Zealand contact with ARVN forces was controlled by the Australians.⁴¹ Research carried out in 1978 indicated that many New Zealand Officers felt this contact was 'not enough considering that the 1ATF was there to help Army of the Republic of Vietnam.'⁴² Many also believed that the lack of contact was the result of the Australians' overall attitude to the South Vietnamese; both civilian and military. To some New Zealanders, the Australians were justified in their caution:

Vung Tau really scared me. You were walking around, no weapons and a whole lot of drunk Australians, millions of Vietnamese and the big rumour – and I think it was true – was that they [VC] used it as a sort of rest and recuperation base as well.⁴³

population. Terrence Maitland and Stephen Weiss, *Raising The Stakes* (Boston: Boston Publishing Company, 1982), p.51 and Spector, *United States Army in Vietnam*, pp.278-281.

³⁸ Culley, "Training of Regional and Popular Force Troops in the Republic of Vietnam (RVN), 3 September, 1970."

³⁹ Powley was attached to the 18 ARVN Division Training Centre, BLACKHORSE between 13 and 27 February 1970. 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, "Activity Report – February 1970, 6 March 1970," in AWM103 R723/1/79: Reports – General - New Zealand SAS Activity Reports, 1969-1970, AWM, Canberra.

⁴⁰ Jack Powley, interview conducted on 6 August 2008.

⁴¹ Pappafloratos, *Military Lessons of the Vietnam War: A New Zealand Officers' Perspective*, p. 48.

⁴² Pappafloratos, *Military Lessons of the Vietnam War: A New Zealand Officers' Perspective*, p. 48.

⁴³ Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

Any political enthusiasm for providing military training to the South Vietnamese would not manifest itself until towards the end of 1970 when the first NZATTV unit was drawn together. Those early experiences of Barclay and Powley probably tempered any enthusiasm for New Zealand SAS members to conduct training of the local forces on a full-time basis. In hindsight, the role of the New Zealand SAS within the Task Force - the role that they were primarily tasked to carry out - was much more satisfying than any possible subsequent training responsibilities and the New Zealand SAS experience of the South Vietnamese was less than satisfactory. Attachments with their American Special Forces counterparts offered many more altogether enlightening opportunities and experiences.

New Zealand SAS and US Military Forces in Vietnam

To most of the New Zealand military forces in Vietnam, the relationship with American troops was a 'satisfactory' one.⁴⁴ Although they got on well, and there is even evidence to suggest that 'socially, the New Zealanders preferred the Americans to the Australians,' it was acknowledged the Americans were 'not good combat troops except in their mechanised technological warfare.'⁴⁵ As the New Zealand military commitment in Vietnam progressed, their regard for their American counterparts fell as American military standards, exacerbated by issues associated with conscription, began to take effect.

Operationally, the New Zealand SAS' exposure to the regular US Army soldier in Vietnam was courteous and brief. For example, Captain Graye Shattky was attached to the 3rd Tactical Fighter Wing, USAF at Bien Hoa between 19 and 21 April 1970 to 'gain practical experience in Forward Air Controller (FAC) procedures.' Between 8 and 19 August 1970, Sergeant Ernie Stead and Trooper Keri Tahana were attached to the 1st Marine Reconnaissance Battalion at Da Nang where they observed 'operational techniques' employed by the Battalion in the I Corps area, and Sergeant Tepa Dickson

⁴⁴ Pappafloratos, *Military Lessons of the Vietnam War: A New Zealand Officers' Perspective*, p. 46.

⁴⁵ Pappafloratos, *Military Lessons of the Vietnam War: A New Zealand Officers' Perspective*, p. 46.

and Lance Corporal Bill Taare spent ten days on attachment to the 173rd Airborne Brigade in early November 1970.⁴⁶

Attachments, while providing opportunities to learn American techniques and to garner a first-hand appreciation of their application of infantry tactics in Vietnam, also allowed the new New Zealanders to identify some of the inherent weaknesses in the US Army. In September 1970, WO2 Danny Wilson spent some time attached to the 173rd Airborne Brigade where he took part in a 'Reconnaissance Team' operation.⁴⁷ For Wilson, who had been a member of Major Mal Velvin's detachment to Thailand in 1962 and had some knowledge of American methods, the attachment certainly reinforced his views of the US infantry in Vietnam:

...it was no wonder they were getting killed all the time. We came across a body on the side of a track and so I pointed it out to the Patrol Commander – and the first thing they were going to do was go up and turn it over. So I stopped them, and of course there was a wire – the body was booby-trapped. I pointed the wire out, and he said 'what?' And I said 'the bloody thing is booby-trapped!'⁴⁸

Relationships between the Australian SAS Squadrons in Vietnam and their American Special Forces counterparts continued to develop as a result of associations with long-range patrolling training programmes such as the MACV-Recondo course and those Australian SAS members previously attached to AATTV units. Two years before commanding the first Australian SAS Squadron deployment to South Vietnam, Major John Murphy had commanded the first AATTV group to operate with US Special Forces.⁴⁹ When Murphy returned with his Squadron in 1966, he faced a number of problems including a perceived resistance by Australian HQ to provide him with sufficient basic equipment, such as radios, rations, footwear and weapons, to be able to operate. To alleviate these deficiencies, Murphy flew to Nha Trang and re-established his relationship with the US 5th Special Forces Group.⁵⁰ The close relationship between US Special Forces and the Australian SAS continued from then on.

⁴⁶ 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, "Activity Report – April 1970, 15 May 1970" in AWM103 R723/1/79, Sergeant Jack Powley, "Activity Report – August 1970, 9 September 1970," in New Zealand Army 15/28/10 Volume Two, and 2nd Lieutenant Jack Hayes, "Newsletter No 1, 2 November 1970," in Kippenberger Military Archive Box 136A, New Zealand Army Museum, Waiouru.

⁴⁷ 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, "Activity Report – April 1970, 15 May 1970" in AWM103 R723/1/79.

⁴⁸ Danny Wilson, interview conducted on 18 July 2008.

⁴⁹ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 174.

⁵⁰ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, pp. 181-182.

By dint of this Australian-US relationship, the first New Zealand Troop was also exposed to American Special Forces units through this association. Depending upon the patrol and leave schedules, members of the New Zealand Troop had some opportunities to visit their US counterparts, either together with Australian Squadron members or by themselves. As well as Ball, Barclay and McGee completing the MACV-Recondo course, both Sergeants Bill Lillicrapp and 'Johnno' Johnston successfully completed the 'Reconnaissance Team Leaders' and 'Exploitation Force Leaders' courses respectively, at the US Army Combat Reconnaissance School.⁵¹

After the 'Exploitation Force Leaders' course, Johnston spent a further three weeks with the American Special Forces instructing a platoon of indigenous Montagnards in basic jungle warfare and patrolling techniques.⁵² The final part of the course was a five-day operation which took the six American, Australian and New Zealand instructors and approximately 90 Montagnards, on a company-size search-and-destroy operation:

We were carrying two-inch mortars, we carried Claymores and heaps of M-60 - I think every second Montagnard had an M-60 machine gun. But the thing about these little fellows when you stopped for a break, after about day one, they'd become very lazy – tired. And what they used to do was they would hide their mortar bombs under leaves, or behind trees, or they would pull the back of a claymore off because they had run out of hexamine cooker to boil their water and as we know that C4 in the Claymore – it's beautiful fuel and you can get a brew just like that...⁵³

By 1970 Shattky was able to organise, through NZV Force in Saigon, a number of visits and attachments for members of the second 4 Troop to American Special Forces units on a much more structured and pre-planned basis.⁵⁴ Far more important than how the visits were facilitated, was that Shattky saw the need to expose as many New Zealand SAS Troop members as possible to a wider range of Special Forces operations 'so that they would go back to the unit knowing that it wasn't just the Australian way – just the Vietnam way.'⁵⁵ In July 1970, Shattky, Sergeant Joe Murray and Lance-Corporal John Tuahine were attached to A Company, 5th Special Forces Group at Bien Hoa for four

⁵¹ NZDF, "M329877: McGee, W.A."

⁵² Copy of Joe T. Johnston interview by Christopher Pugsley, 2 November 1992, for the NZDF Malayan Oral History Project, held in NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington.

⁵³ Copy of Joe T. Johnston interview by Christopher Pugsley, 2 November 1992. For additional comments on the provision of 'Recondo' training of Montagnard and other indigenous forces by US Special Forces see Plaster, *SOG: The Secret Wars of America's Commandos in Vietnam*, pp.48-49.

⁵⁴ Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008.

⁵⁵ Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008.

days⁵⁶ and two weeks later, the New Zealand Troop hosted five American Special Forces members on a return visit.⁵⁷ In September, Shattky again visited elements of the US 5th Special Forces Group, but this time in I Corps and II Corps areas:⁵⁸

I observed Green Beret A-Team operations on the Cambodian and Lao borders and was particularly impressed during time spent with an irregular Montagnard battalion. These Hmong tribesmen were recruited, trained and led very effectively by Green Beret officers and NCOs to interdict the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The contacts I and other Troop Members made during these excursions were to prove very useful when planning, years later, joint Special Forces training exercises in New Zealand.⁵⁹

New Zealand SAS and MACV-SOG

By the time 4 Troop soldiers were able to observe US Special Forces' activities in Vietnam, the American units were heavily involved with not only instructing South Vietnamese forces, but also carrying out further unconventional warfare roles. In 1964 American President Lyndon Johnson authorised OPLAN34A, a plan to use clandestine unconventional warfare operations (indigenous forces, psychological operations, direct action raids and reconnaissance missions) to undermine North Vietnamese political and military support in South Vietnam.⁶⁰ Operations were carried out within the classified 'Studies and Operations Group' (SOG) element of MACV – later known as MACV-SOG.⁶¹ Similar to the origins of David Stirling's L Detachment Special Air Service title in 1941, the SOG title was also a cover deception designed to disguise its actual function.⁶²

⁵⁶ They received briefings on the 'organisation and conduct of CIDG operations' and also visited a number of Special Forces "A" camps in the III Corps area. Shattky's visit was between 10 and 13 July 1970. 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, "Activity Report – July 1970, 10 August 1970" in AWM103 R723/1/79.

⁵⁷ The Special Forces visit took place between 24 and 27 July, 1970. 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, "Activity Report – July 1970, 10 August 1970."

⁵⁸ 4 Tp NZSAS Nui Dat, "Activity Report – July 1970, 10 August 1970."

⁵⁹ Graye Shattky, email correspondence with author on 21 November 2008 and 21 February 2009. Sections of this material is also contained in Ron Crosby, *NZSAS*, p. 230.

⁶⁰ Prados, *The Hidden History of the Vietnam War*, pp.40-42 and Dockery and Brutsman, *Navy SEALs: A History Part II: The Vietnam Years*, p. 92.

⁶¹ According to one estimate, at its height MACV-SOG totalled some 2500 US personnel and 7000 Vietnamese. Maitland and Weiss, *Raising The Stakes*, p.145.

⁶² In 1941, a British officer based in Cairo, Captain Dudley Clark, had developed a deception operation that the Allies had trained a 'full brigade of parachutists' in the Middle East by dropping 'three foot-tall-dummy parachutists close to Italian POW camps, in the hope that the Italians would write letters back home telling of the training descents. Clark had named the bogus brigade the 1st Special Air Service Brigade. When Stirling received permission from General Auchinleck to establish a genuine unit, he was told that from the outset, the unit would be known as 'L Detachment of the Special Air Service Brigade.' Stirling was content with the title; the name would provide a dual operational and deception role for the newly

Formal exchanges between the Australian SAS Squadron and 'Project Delta' - those members of the 5th Special Forces Group who were responsible for training South Vietnamese soldiers for covert operations into North Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia – were authorised by the Australian Task Force in August 1966.⁶³ Lillicrapp had mixed feelings as to the value of the instruction he and his Australian 3 Squadron counterpart, Sergeant John Robinson, experienced during the 'Reconnaissance Team Leaders' course in 1969:

About forty clicks from Nui Dat, north-west, there was a place called Long Thanh...there was a Special Forces camp called 'B-53' and the American boss was a bloke called Major Ponzillio. And he was right out of the movies, you know; big guy, over six foot, huge, cigars, 45's, the whole bit...And what they were doing, they were training these mostly young guys – probably they were E5's that's equivalent to Corporal...to be reconnaissance team leaders for incursions into Laos and Cambodia and doing recons on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. That's what the course was about...it was all big on theory and bugger all on practical in actual fact. We did map reading, basic demolitions, signals and codes – I didn't attend the codes lessons, obviously they wanted to keep that to themselves – medical training, ambushing, lessons learned...because a lot of them had been across the border and done a lot of jobs you know...I quite liked the basic medical because what they were using was intravenous drips and blood expanders because we had nothing like that. So they taught us how to do that...Demolition training was very dangerous – no worries about safety distances – they were just cutting steel from here to the [pointing] house across the road. And there was an old building there and I had my Aussie mate, old Johnny Robinson with me, and I said 'fucking let's get behind here.' And when they let it off there were bits whistling through the air - no one got hit but it was a bit ropey. They demonstrated the ambush drills which was bad you know – guys walking up and down the track, this was outside the wire, wasn't too impressed with that. Yeah – some of it was good, some not so good.⁶⁴

MACV-SOG was composed of five key sections, and was responsible for a wide range of clandestine sabotage and psychological operations in North and South Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Southern China.⁶⁵ MACV-SOG tasks included regular cross-border

formed group. And it would give Clark 'some flesh and blood parachutists instead of totally bogus ones.' Stevens, *The Originals: The Secret History of the Birth of the SAS in their own words*, p.18, Jones, *SAS Zero Hour*, p. 126 and 185 and Stanton, *Special Forces at War*, p. 253.

⁶³ Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, pp. 184-185.

⁶⁴ Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

⁶⁵ These included Covert Naval Operations (OP-37); Air Support (OP-32 "Air Studies Branch" and OP-35 "Air Studies Group"); Psychological Operations (OP-39); Airborne Operations (OP-34, responsible for training and despatching agents and teams into North Vietnam to run resistance movements), and; "Ground Studies Group" (OP-35), responsible for reconnaissance missions in Laos and eventually Cambodia. Rosenau, *Special Operations Forces and Elusive Enemy Ground Targets*, p. 15.

incursions to disrupt Vietcong, Khmer Rouge (Cambodian), Pathet Lao (Laotian) and North Vietnamese forces operating within their own territories.⁶⁶ Of those five sections, the OP-35 ‘Ground Studies Group’ was created to deal with a variety of strategic and operational problems associated with interdicting the Ho Chi Minh Trail.⁶⁷ OP-35 missions identified Ho Chi Minh Trail targets such as vehicle formations, portering points, troop concentrations and road bypasses. They also attacked storage facilities, captured prisoners, deployed mines and sensors, and conducted bomb damage assessments (BDA).⁶⁸ Lillicrapp observed some of this during his visit to Camp B-53:

In the signals [training], they had wire-tapping because they were striking a lot of telephone lines on the Ho Chi Minh Trail and what they would do is hook up a tape recorder to it and leave it.⁶⁹

Typical MACV-SOG cross-border operations were carried out by reconnaissance teams made up of one or two US Army Special Forces NCOs and up to nine indigenous personnel. The indigenous members of the reconnaissance teams included Nungs (a Sino-Vietnamese ethnic group who had often served in previous conflicts as mercenaries) or Vietnamese who had defected and become part of the ‘Chieu Hoi’ (‘Open Arms’) amnesty programme.⁷⁰ As with Johnston’s and Lillicrapp’s experiences, Barclay’s appraisal of such operations is similarly worth noting:

Somebody had told me that I wasn’t to go out of South Vietnam and we flew in this bloody Hercules, about four [US Special Forces] patrols, and there were six in a patrol, so about twenty-four of us. And we landed on this big bloody ridge and got put into helicopters and got put into this patrol, and, I’m only guessing, I had a map but I had no idea where that sat in the map of South Vietnam. And we went in, patrolled away, set up a LUP and an OP and we saw vehicles, field guns bloody hundreds of soldiers. And we came out again, got extracted, and it worked like clockwork. And we went back to the same Special Forces fort on this big ridge, got picked up by this Hercules and flown back to Nha Trang. And nobody asked me, when I got back to Nui Dat, what I did. When I got back...the hair on my chest had gone white – and I was thirty-one years of age!⁷¹

⁶⁶ Stanton, *Special Forces at War*, p. 252.

⁶⁷ Rosenau, *Special Operations Forces and Elusive Enemy Ground Targets*, pp. 15-16.

⁶⁸ Rosenau, *Special Operations Forces and Elusive Enemy Ground Targets*, p. 17.

⁶⁹ Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

⁷⁰ Valentine, *The Phoenix Program*, pp. 281-282.

⁷¹ MACV-SOG’s OP-32 was based at Nha Trang as well as a separate field at Bien Hoe. Six specially modified C-130 Hercules transport aircraft, known as the 15th Air Commando Squadron, were deployed to Nha Trang in 1968. These aircraft, with no identifiable markings – and painted black – were also equipped with an array of electronic counter-measures that could defeat Vietnamese surface-to-air missile batteries, and state-of-the-art Forward-Looking Infrared Radar that could monitor agent teams once they had been inserted across the Cambodian or Laotian borders. The aircraft were also known to have been piloted by

In his 2001 publication *Special Operations Forces and Elusive Enemy Ground Targets: Lessons from Vietnam and the Persian Gulf War*, William Rosenau states that quite apart from providing ‘a sort of primitive but effective jungle warfare skill that complimented American technological sophistication,’ the indigenous forces also assisted with the reduction, proportionally, of US casualties.⁷² Unfortunately, this was not a view widely subscribed to by senior US military officials.

In *Special Forces, Strategy and the War on Terror: Warfare by other means*, Alastair Finlan suggested that the employment of US Special Forces in Vietnam could be divided into a number of distinct periods ‘with varying degrees of success.’⁷³ While the earliest Special Forces deployments involved training the local Vietnamese units to fight the Vietcong, in the early 1960s the CIDG initiative saw small detachments deployed to outlying villages to provide what those in Borneo would have described as a ‘hearts and minds’ role; a ‘host of support services, from medical expertise to organising the defence of the villages to cut off communist infiltration.’⁷⁴ By the end of 1963, control of the CIDG programme was transferred to MACV and conventional military officers which, according to Finlan, marked the end of an ‘effective unconventional counter-guerrilla strategy.’ Based on these changes, it was no wonder that the likes of Robert Thompson, Dick Noone and Ted Serong saw little hope of the Americans truly understanding the value of effective counterinsurgency operations and the worth of local forces.⁷⁵ Lillicrapp was able to appreciate the difference between US Special Forces and Australian and New Zealand SAS operations in Vietnam:

The thing to remember though is that [US] Special Forces in those days – they were really trainers. They weren’t, we were patrollers, we were on the ground – they were trainers, training the ethnic people. They’d go on patrol – there’d be

Taiwanese aircrew to enable further ‘deniability.’ Plaster, *SOG: A Photo History of the Secret Wars*, p.297, Singlaub and McConnell, *Hazardous Duty*, p.74 and Fred Barclay, interview conducted on 19 July 2008.

⁷² Rosenau, *Special Operations Forces and Elusive Enemy Ground Targets*, p. 17.

⁷³ Finlan, *Special Forces, Strategy and the War on Terror*, p. 33.

⁷⁴ Finlan, *Special Forces, Strategy and the War on Terror*, p. 33.

⁷⁵ By the end of 1970, even Robert Thompson was advising President Nixon that despite some success in pacification programmes, neither MACV’s CIDG operations, nor the Phoenix Programme (carried out in conjunction with the South Vietnamese police and intelligence services), were likely to eliminate the Vietcong political apparatus from the country. New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) cable to Wellington, “Vietnam, 7 December 1970,” in Prime Minister 478/4/1-AAD Republic of Vietnam - Political Affairs, General, Volume 114, 25 November – 10 December 1970, in Archives New Zealand, Wellington, Rosenau, *Special Operations Forces and Elusive Enemy Ground Targets*, p. 17, and Finlan, *Special Forces, Strategy and the War on Terror*, p. 34.

three Yanks and five Montagnards. The whole thing was totally different to what we were doing. I think people have got to understand that.⁷⁶

In 1986, William Darrel Baker wrote that during its time in South Vietnam, the New Zealand SAS 'could have been used very effectively as a training organisation for local military forces.'⁷⁷ While he correctly asserted that the role of training indigenous troops was an 'accepted use for the SAS' and had been determined as one of three key functions as early as 1965,⁷⁸ the role was 'denied them' in South Vietnam because a single Troop of New Zealand SAS was never in a position to logistically offer sufficient numbers of instructors and also carry out their primary long-range reconnaissance mission. Besides, US Special Forces and AATTV units had provided this instruction to both ARVN units and indigenous guerrilla forces since the early 1960s. Those New Zealand Troop members who did get an opportunity to observe such training appeared to have been happy to remain as observers:

I remember one incident very clearly – we were all out at the [US Special Forces training] range. And of course in Vietnam, the amount of air traffic there, always had helicopters going through and this was a deliberate attempt by one of the soldiers on the mound - as the helicopters were going through – [a Montagnard student] lifted the barrel to have a go at a helicopter. And of course the American E6 Special Forces bloke, he picked it up straight away and the young fellow was taken away...They could never be sure they had cleared them out because there was just too big a job to vet them all.⁷⁹

New Zealand SAS and US Navy SEAL Teams in Vietnam

Having evolved from the US Navy Underwater Demolition Teams (UDT) established during World War II, the first Navy SEAL (SEa, Air and Land) Teams were commissioned in January 1962 and began operations in Vietnam later that same year.⁸⁰ The role of the UDT units was primarily one of hydrographic reconnaissance and the clearance of obstacles in advance of Naval or Marine amphibious landings. In Vietnam SEAL Teams were responsible for conducting the Navy's clandestine unconventional

⁷⁶ Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

⁷⁷ Baker, *Dare to Win*, p. 89.

⁷⁸ The other two were long-range reconnaissance and close cooperation with brigade-divisional formations. Major (retired) W.J.D. Meldrum, *NZSAS Unpublished Memoirs* (no date provided), NZSAS Association Archives, Wellington, p.2 and General Staff Policy Statement 1/64, "1 Ranger Squadron NZSAS – Training Directive 1965/1966, Annex 'C' to 1 Inf Bde Gp 94.24, 22 October 1965," in New Zealand Army 15/15, SAS (Ranger Sqn) – FE, October 1965 – December 1972, Volume I, NZDF Archive, Wellington.

⁷⁹ Copy of Joe T. Johnston interview by Christopher Pugsley, 2 November 1992.

⁸⁰ Dockery and Brutsman, *Navy SEALs: A History Part II: The Vietnam Years*, pp.30-36.

warfare and counter-guerrilla operations in the Vietnamese maritime and riverine environments.

By 1967 the US Navy SEAL contribution to MACV-SOG had been transformed from a single training role, to providing combat platoons to assist with the ‘neutralisation of the Vietcong infrastructure.’⁸¹ This included the capture of prisoners as well as the ‘liberation of American and South Vietnamese prisoners’ in the Mekong Delta region.⁸² In order to target the Vietcong infrastructure in the IV Corps area (the area which included the Mekong Delta) MACV-SOG created Provincial Reconnaissance Units (PRU); paramilitary units made up of local militias, indigenous people, recruits from the Chieu Hoi programme and mercenaries, for use in Cambodia and Laos. The PRU teams were led by SEAL Team advisors and were one of the more notable elements of the ‘Le Loi’ Accelerated Pacification program, most commonly known as the ‘Phoenix program.’⁸³ PRU teams were of various strengths but most tended to be small-sized which specialised in reconnaissance, intelligence collection, or ‘snatch-teams.’⁸⁴

The Australian SAS Squadrons in Vietnam began conducting joint-operations under the auspices of training exchanges with SEAL Teams and their PRU units in September 1967.⁸⁵ As was described in Chapter Twelve, Jack Powley may have been a little rusty in his small-boat handling skills, but the Australian Squadron’s amphibious insertions carried out at the end of May 1970 provided a timely refresher for the New Zealand Troop Sergeant. At the beginning of June, the day after the four patrols had been

⁸¹ Operations would include sabotage, demolition, intelligence collection, and the training and advising of ‘friendly military or paramilitary forces in the conduct of naval special warfare.’ Dockery and Brutsman, *Navy SEALs: A History Part II: The Vietnam Years*, p.36.

⁸² Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 382.

⁸³ Critics of the ‘Phoenix Program’ argue that the PRU teams were no more than ‘CIA assassination squads’ that were used to murder the estimated 70,000 that made up the Vietcong Infrastructure (VCI) in South Vietnam. In 1971, CIA officer William Colby (who had been the senior CIA officer in Vietnam responsible for MACV-SOG activities) testified before the United States Congress that between 1968 and 1971, 28,000 members of the VCI had been captured, 17,000 defected and 20,000 had been killed. Summers Jnr, *Vietnam War Almanac*, p. 283. For further reading on the ‘Phoenix Program’ see Sheehan, *A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam* (New York: Vantage Books, 1989), pp.730-735, John Prados, *The Hidden History of the Vietnam War* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1995), pp.204-220, and Valentine, *The Phoenix Program*.

⁸⁴ The primary mission of the PRUs was the ‘gathering of intelligence on key members of the Vietcong political infrastructure and indicting [capturing] or eliminating them whenever possible.’ Dockery and Brutsman, *Navy SEALs: A History Part II: The Vietnam Years*, p.213.

⁸⁵ AWM95 Australian Army Commanders’ Diaries, 7/10/9, 7/10/10 and 7/10/11, 1 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Log 1-30 September, 1-31 October and 1-30 November 1967, all in AWM, Canberra and Horner, *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle*, p. 230.

inserted, Powley and Corporal Dave Te Paa made a liaison visit to the US Navy's 2nd SEAL Team base at Nha Be. According to Shattky, 'valuable experience was gained by observing the techniques' of the unit during the twelve-day attachment.⁸⁶ According to Powley:

We found them quite scary in procedures and stuff like that – like one day patrol, we went out and were walking along and one [SEAL member] just disappears in the distance. So we just said to each other 'we'll watch each other's back.' Another time we went out - it was a night patrol up the Delta – we went in with one of the [inaudible] boats. We went out to catch a prisoner – we had a captured/surrendered person with us. We went in, I think the briefing was 'get your shit together, we are away in half an hour,' you know...not a hell of a lot impressed at the time.⁸⁷

Later on in November 1970, Sergeant Joe Murray and Corporal John Tawhara also spent time attached to SEAL Teams in the Mekong Delta area.⁸⁸ Prior to this (in September 1970) a SEAL member, 'Master Chief M. Spencer,' had been a member of Murray's patrol 256/70, on an eight-day reconnaissance patrol conducted east of Nui May Tao in Bin Tuy province.⁸⁹ Two other New Zealand patrols conducted in October 1970 included SEAL members on exchange with the Australian Squadron.⁹⁰

US Special Forces: An Assessment⁹¹

Shelby Stanton suggested that the US Special Forces contribution to MACV-SOG's lengthy campaign of cross-border raiding and other extra-territorial missions revolutionised modern concepts of high-level ground reconnaissance and earned

⁸⁶ Captain Graye Shattky, "Activity Report – June 1970, 9 July 1970," in New Zealand Army 15/28/10 Volume Two, New Zealand Forces Overseas – Vietnam: Operational Summaries, Reports, NZDF Archive, Wellington.

⁸⁷ Jack Powley, interview conducted on 6 August 2008.

⁸⁸ Jack Hayes, "Newsletter No 1, 2 November 1970."

⁸⁹ Two enemy were sighted by the patrol on 21 September 1970. Sergeant J.T. Murray, "1 SAS Sqn Ops 256/70 Patrol Report, 24 September 1970," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries, 7/10/22 1 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Log 1-30 September 1970, AWM, Canberra, pp. 1-2.

⁹⁰ A 'Corporal Dalbo' and a 'Corporal Sparks' were attached to Lance-Corporal John Tuahine's 262/70 and Sergeant Ernie Stead's 279/70 reconnaissance patrols respectively. Lance-Corporal J. A. Tuahine, "1 SAS Sqn Ops 262/70 Patrol Report, 1 October 1970" and Sergeant E.P. Stead, "1 SAS Sqn Ops 279/70 Patrol Report, 19 October 1970," both in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries, 7/10/23 1 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Log 1-31 October 1970, AWM, Canberra.

⁹¹ A large body of literature continues to be produced on the activities of US Special Forces during the Vietnam War. This research does nothing more than provide a small narrative overview based upon the relatively limited exposure elements of 4 Troop had with their American counterparts between 1969 and early 1971.

American Special Forces ‘a legacy of proven strategic performance.’⁹² Rosenau added that the Special Forces elements of MACV-SOG provided US policy-makers with the ability to generate ‘high political return’ with ‘relative low cost, operational flexibility and plausible deniability’ – perhaps a similar strategic value as SAS CLARET operations had offered in Borneo between 1964 and 1966.⁹³ While MACV-SOG probably did create a ‘strategic impact’ against enemy forces while only involving a fraction of the total US Special Forces effort in Vietnam, as Stanton suggested, it never appeared to be absolutely or whole-heartedly embraced by the wider US military who viewed small-unit actions as an adjunct or ‘aid’ to a big-unit strategy; not an alternative.⁹⁴

By 1968, the condition of American Special Forces in Vietnam ‘reflected years of continued combat and high cumulative losses which inevitably eroded the overall quality’ of its personnel.⁹⁵ In an effort to keep replacement levels consistent, US Special Forces were compelled to carry out ‘direct recruitment of selected soldiers’ as soon as they arrived in Vietnam. While high physical standards and intelligence prerequisites for Special Forces selection were maintained, the Americans were at times forced to accept non-parachute qualified personnel or members of the Army with little or no specialised signals, medical or demolitions training.⁹⁶ By the time that New Zealand SAS soldiers were able to make their own appreciations of the calibre of their American counterparts in 1969, their assessment was equally mixed:

I liked the Americans, very generous and friendly. The older Special Forces Trooper was a very professional [individual]. The younger tended to be loud, brash and overconfident. I didn’t compare them with the SAS because their role was to train and advise the local Special Forces. Most Special Forces operations had South Vietnamese Special Forces persons attached or vice versa.⁹⁷

This view had not altered since the Squadron’s first experiences with US Special Forces in Thailand in 1962. Even then, observers such as Rod Dearing described the American

⁹² Stanton, *Special Forces at War*, p. 253.

⁹³ Rosenau, *Special Operations Forces and Elusive Enemy Ground Targets*, pp. 15-16.

⁹⁴ Stanton, *Special Forces at War*, p.253 and Krepinevich, Jr, *The Army and Vietnam*, pp. 232-233. For an additional, and particularly useful, assessment of the strategic utility of US Special Forces in Vietnam that supports both Stanton and Rosenau, see Finlan, *Special Forces, Strategy and the War on Terror*, pp. 31-36.

⁹⁵ Meyer, *Across the Fence: The Secret War in Vietnam*, p. 103, Colonel Francis John Kelly and the United States Department of the Army, *CMH Publication 90-23: Vietnam Studies: U.S. Army Special Forces 1961-1971* (Department of the Army, Washington D.C., 1973), p.168 and Stanton, *Special Forces at War*, p. 211.

⁹⁶ Meyer, *Across the Fence: The Secret War in Vietnam*, p.54 and Stanton, *Special Forces at War*, p. 211 and pp. 236-237.

⁹⁷ Bill Lillicrapp, interview notes handed to Author on 16 June 2008.

Special Forces as ‘more training oriented than we were. We were more operationally oriented...’⁹⁸

Despite the relative success of small-unit operations during the Malayan Emergency and Confrontation in Borneo, Michael Asher also suggested that in the 1960s, US Special Forces – or at least their senior commanders – were unable to reconcile themselves to the ‘small-is-beautiful-the-man-is-the-Regiment’ axiom advocated by the British SAS.⁹⁹ US Special Forces bore little resemblance to the SAS and, as Lillicrapp observed, the ‘Green Berets were basically an airborne group trained along the lines of the Parachute Regiment,’ groomed to train foreign nationals.¹⁰⁰ Shattky’s impression of the Americans supported this assessment:

There were obvious signs that the SF organisation was feeling the strain of the continuing and ever-increasing commitment; it was clear that many of the younger officers and men were not necessarily of the same calibre and there were strains between field operators and some senior SF staff and commanders who lacked experience in the field... I met a number of SEALs and couldn’t help but be impressed by their aggressiveness and ‘guts and glory’ attitude which reflected their Marine commando heritage. I saw them as raiders or assault troops rather than clandestine Special Forces. I don’t think Jack Powley was so impressed – I recall sending him on attachment and him returning, shaking his head in disbelief.¹⁰¹

To Powley, it was equally important to qualify any statements made as to the calibre of US Special Forces in Vietnam, either Army Special Forces or Navy SEAL Teams:

You know a lot of individuals were very good – just their procedures and their tactics, just ridiculous and stupid...But when you think about some of those jobs that they did with their Green Berets going in – they were far harder and tougher, and into hotter areas and all that type of thing, than we’ve ever seen - so we have just got to weigh that up with what we saw...We forget that they had other patrols that went out on the Ho Chi Minh Trail, OPs and all those types of things, so you’ve got to be very wary on one hand saying they’re hopeless. But they had some very good ones – we never saw or operated with those ones [though].¹⁰²

Vietnam provided the United States with a laboratory in which it could examine counterinsurgency techniques. Before 1965, the Vietnam War – very much akin to

⁹⁸ Copy of Lieutenant-Colonel Rod Dearing interview by Christopher Pugsley, 23 October 1992, for the NZDF Malayan Oral History Project, held in the NZSAS Association Archive, Wellington.

⁹⁹ Asher, *The Regiment*, p. 362.

¹⁰⁰ Bill Lillicrapp, interview conducted on 16 June 2008 and Asher, *The Regiment*, p. 362.

¹⁰¹ Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008.

¹⁰² Jack Powley, interview conducted on 6 August 2008.

‘Confrontation’ – was an undeclared conflict ‘waged under cover of a simple military aid program’ with Army Special Forces advisers training and mobilising the Montagnard, and other indigenous groups, to conduct a guerrilla war against the Vietcong and NVA.¹⁰³ The arrival of the Marines to Da Nang in March 1965 brought not only the influence of commanders of large-scale conventional forces but also a public commitment to support the South Vietnamese Government.¹⁰⁴ That the South Vietnamese were not a united collective of indigenous groups saw the Special Forces training operations with the Montagnards effectively running counter to declared official American policy. Enthusiasm for a wide-scale counterinsurgency strategy, as had been advocated by Thompson and Serong, simply declined from this point.¹⁰⁵

The absence of senior officer influence in lobbying for further use of Special Forces in Vietnam, as well as the lack of genuine enthusiasm on the part of senior officers in Saigon for unconventional warfare, was also compounded by the views held by senior Defence officials and their political masters in Washington.¹⁰⁶ After Kennedy was assassinated in November 1963, American regard for unconventional warfare operations was no longer strongly supported by its Commander-in-Chief. Equally debilitating was the influence of the United States State Department by limiting MACV-SOG cross-border operations. This was due largely to a Johnson Administration policy which allowed South East Asian-based US Ambassadors to approve, modify or veto MACV-SOG para-military operations taking place in their countries of responsibility.¹⁰⁷

In 1991, retired Major-General John Singlaub, the MACV-SOG Commander between 1966 and 1968, wrote that the mission of the ‘SOG was similar to that of the OSS [United States Office of Strategic Services] or British SOE [Special Operations Executive] during World War II: strategic and tactical intelligence, resistance operations, guerrilla warfare,

¹⁰³ Prados, *The Hidden History of the Vietnam War*, p. 34.

¹⁰⁴ Prados, *The Hidden History of the Vietnam War*, p. 87.

¹⁰⁵ Dick Noone would also be frustrated by the South Vietnamese reluctance to utilise the indigenous groups for possible counterinsurgency operations. Frank Walker, *The Tiger Man of Vietnam* (Sydney: Hatchett Australia Pty Ltd, 2009), pp. 234-238.

¹⁰⁶ For example, all US Divisional Commanders in Vietnam were of the rank Major-General. MACV-SOG’s forces amounted to the size of a US Division but its various commanders never held a rank higher than that of Colonel. Singlaub and McConnell, *Hazardous Duty: An American Soldier in the Twentieth Century*, p.292, Meyer, *Across the Fence: The Secret War in Vietnam*, p.237 and Major Danny M. Kelly II (2005): *The Misuse of the Studies and Observation Group as a National Asset in Vietnam* (MMAS Thesis, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas), p. 43.

¹⁰⁷ Richard H. Shultz Jnr, *The Secret War against Hanoi* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1999), p.214.

sabotage and covert 'black' psychological operations.'¹⁰⁸ He added that the 'biggest and most important activity was the cross-border OP-35 Reconnaissance Teams were responsible for reconnaissance missions in Laos and Cambodia.'¹⁰⁹ Of all MACV-SOG activities, Singlaub believed that OP-35 was responsible for the 'greatest degree of tactical success against enemy targets.'¹¹⁰

As early as 1965, General Westmoreland had requested permission to carry out conventional military operations against enemy units in Laos and Cambodia but had been denied this by the geopolitical strategic circumstances that limited the conflict to essentially South Vietnam. For example, the US Ambassador to Laos, William Sullivan limited MACV-SOG operations to within a few kilometres over the border and restricted the use of US aircraft.¹¹¹ Later in 1967, MACV-SOG operations were allowed to take place across the Cambodian border, however, Richard Shultz suggested that these appeared to have even more restrictions placed upon them than those in Laos two years earlier.¹¹² Westmoreland also added that not only was MACV-SOG not under his direct authority, but every operation 'had to be approved in advance by the Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State, and the White House.'¹¹³ Westmoreland may have embellished this slightly, but any escalation in the conflict without the expressed countenance of the sovereign government was out of the question and would lead to an increase in international condemnation and, more importantly, a continuing decrease in domestic support.

At the time, there was no real or established US military doctrine that enabled Special Forces to operate with or complement conventional forces operations. It could be argued that this lack of fit was similarly absent in Australian and New Zealand military applications. Certainly, just where did the SAS fit into the wider New Zealand Army roulement would provide an ongoing debate for further decades. The lack of such a coordinated approach in Vietnam would mean that operationally, conventional forces - be

¹⁰⁸ Singlaub and McConnell, *Hazardous Duty: An American Soldier in the Twentieth Century*, p.295.

¹⁰⁹ Rosenau, *Special Operations Forces and Elusive Enemy Ground Targets*, p.15 and Singlaub and McConnell, *Hazardous Duty: An American Soldier in the Twentieth Century*, p.297.

¹¹⁰ John Singlaub interview conducted by Major Kelly on 4 March 2005, in Kelly II, *The Misuse of the Studies and Observation Group as a National Asset in Vietnam*, p. 63.

¹¹¹ Shultz Jnr, *The Secret War against Hanoi*, p. 215.

¹¹² Shultz Jnr, *The Secret War against Hanoi*, p. 237.

¹¹³ William C. Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports* (New York, Da Capo Press Incorporated, 1976), p.107.

they United States or Australian Task Force – never appeared to readily accept or consistently capitalise on the value that Special Forces reconnaissance operations could have provided.

Valuable intelligence about the amount and types of materiel and manpower being moved along the Ho Chi Minh Trail, continually identified the strategic significance of the route. Ultimately, restrictions placed on cross-border operations forced American Military commanders to attempt destruction of the trail by air strike. Because of these limitations, the small OP-34 and OP-35 clandestine reconnaissance units, the only units allowed to operate close or over the borders, were made vulnerable to enemy forces. Unlike with SAS patrols in Phuoc Tuy province, if these units encountered strong opposition, they could not rely on readily available helicopter support, be it extraction or light fire teams.

In 1973 Colonel Francis John Kelly completed the US Department of the Army's official overview of the US Special Forces in Vietnam between 1961 and 1971.¹¹⁴ In his concluding remarks, Kelly suggested that for the first time in its history the United States found itself 'waging a military and political contest at the same time' with military decisions very much viewed by subsequent political consequences.¹¹⁵ Beginning with a relatively austere organisation which lacked clear objectives with co-ordinated support programmes over a wide geographic operational area, US Special Forces took some time before they achieved operational successes.¹¹⁶ It could be suggested that such a situation mirrored that which confronted British policy-makers in Borneo and the use of Special Forces to conduct low-profile, cross-border operations was perhaps a useful option to counter the significance of the Ho Chi Minh Trail. However, without genuine political willingness to support such operations, as there had been for CLARET operations in Borneo, as well as a lack of enthusiasm from senior military officials, the added value MACV-SOG Special Forces units could have contributed was essentially negated. Many 4 Troop veterans posit that cross-border reconnaissance operations were their expertise, and had they been allowed to carry them out, their operational value and net strategic worth could have been considerably enhanced:

¹¹⁴ Kelly and the United States Department of the Army, *CMH Publication 90-23: Vietnam Studies: U.S. Army Special Forces 1961-1971*, p. 163.

¹¹⁵ Kelly and the United States Department of the Army, *CMH Publication 90-23: Vietnam Studies: U.S. Army Special Forces 1961-1971*, p.163.

¹¹⁶ Kelly and the United States Department of the Army, *CMH Publication 90-23: Vietnam Studies: U.S. Army Special Forces 1961-1971*, pp.167-170.

Well, I think I certainly saw – firstly – that we would have been more usefully employed at a strategic level, reporting on movement along Main Supply Routes. So from a reconnaissance point of view I thought we would have been more usefully employed locating enemy Headquarters, formation Headquarters, operating at just that higher level because you know basically we never engaged with anything beyond local battalion or perhaps regimental strength.¹¹⁷

Possible alternative roles, as suggested in Shattky's comments, were mainly borne out of frustrations associated with only being able to conduct operations within the confines of the Australian Task Force AO – essentially the boundary of Phuoc Tuy province – and mirrored US policy-makers by their refusal to allow American forces to conduct cross-border operations further west or further north. Had Special Forces operations such as MACV-SOG's Op-35 been more closely linked to conventional fighting and cross-border restrictions reduced or dropped completely, the unconventional warfare contribution would have been much more considerable.¹¹⁸

Concluding Notes

It is clear the United States was made aware shortly after 'Confrontation' operations ended in October 1966 that the New Zealand SAS might now be available for operations in South Vietnam. The Americans knew a New Zealand Squadron would 'help fill the need for long-range patrols and reconnaissance' and although it could be used effectively in any Corps area, it was to be used in the III Corps Tactical Zone under the operational control of the United States II Field Force headquarters.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, the Americans planned that a New Zealand SAS Squadron would not only be 'employed alone' but also operate in unspecified 'remote areas' – observing and reporting on enemy numbers, positions and activities.¹²⁰

This significant geographic area encompassed not only Phuoc Tuy province and other key provinces but also a substantial portion of the Vietnamese-Cambodian border. Although there is no documentary evidence to suggest New Zealand officials, military or otherwise, were made aware of such American intentions, the early recommendations submitted by

¹¹⁷ Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008.

¹¹⁸ Kelly II, *The Misuse of the Studies and Observation Group as a National Asset in Vietnam*, p. 66.

¹¹⁹ Larsen and Collins Jr., *Vietnam Studies: Allied Participation in Vietnam*, pp. 107-108.

¹²⁰ Larsen and Collins Jr., *Vietnam Studies: Allied Participation in Vietnam*, p. 108.

Defence and Foreign Affairs officials to Cabinet in 1967 did make reference to the deployment of a full New Zealand SAS Squadron to South Vietnam, which, if successful, would have provided the opportunity for independent operations at a strategic level. However, while having New Zealand forces under the command of a larger Australian Task Force contingent was palatable, forces under direct command of the United States Army, at that time in New Zealand's post-World War II political and military history, was quite simply out of the question. A direct attachment of an independent SAS Troop or Squadron (even though the unit numbers would also prevent this) to US Special Forces was therefore never a serious possibility.

In his book Baker suggested that there had been allegations 4 Troop soldiers took 'part in joint allied operations' outside of Phuoc Tuy province but such suggestions had 'remained difficult to confirm officially.'¹²¹ Shortly after the first Australian SAS Squadron/5th Special Forces Group 'Project Delta' exchange had commenced in September 1966, one Australian SAS Sergeant had been 'slightly wounded' in a contact near the Cambodian border. When this news reached AFV HQ, the SAS Squadron Commander, Murphy, was summoned to Saigon and reminded of the 'political imperative' that Task Force troops, including the SAS, not be 'used outside the III Corps Tactical Zone.'¹²² Visiting other Allied Forces or observing operations outside of the immediate Task Force AO was similarly a particularly sensitive issue for any of the New Zealand elements in South Vietnam; the directive applied equally to 4 Troop members.

Both the US Army Special Forces and US Navy SEAL Teams provided instruction as well as specific specialised strategic and reconnaissance units for MACV-SOG programmes, including 'Phoenix Program' activities and it is probable that several members of 4 Troop did take part in American 'Phoenix Program' operations during their time in South Vietnam.¹²³ That several New Zealand SAS members were able to observe, at first hand, MACV-SOG operations outside of Phuoc Tuy province, either

¹²¹ Baker, *Dare to Win*, p. 89.

¹²² Major J.M. Murphy, "3 SAS Sqn Commanders Diary Narrative, 13 October 1966," in AWM95 Australian Army Commanders' Diaries, 7/12/21 3 Special Air Service Squadron Narrative Duty Officers Log 1-31 January 1970, AWM, Canberra, p. 7.

¹²³ It is understood that 'Phoenix' was believed to be a 'loose English translation' of the name of a Vietnamese mythological bird called Phung Hoang that had similar mystical powers and could fly anywhere. Alex Abella, *Soldiers of Reason: The Rand Corporation and the Rise of the American Empire* (Orlando, Florida: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2008), p.181 and Summers Jnr, *Vietnam War Almanac*, p.283.

close to the Cambodian/Laotian border with Army Special Forces or in the Mekong Delta region with Navy SEALs, there can be little doubt. The subsequent release of US archives has confirmed the ‘B-53’ camp at Long Thanh, mentioned by Lillicrapp, was the ‘primary agent-training site’ for preparing and dispatching MACV-SOG’s OP-34 airborne operations.¹²⁴

The lack of any real detailed reporting of these attachments and the fact that members of Captain Terry Culley’s Troop only thought to apprise their Troop Commander of these experiences thirty-five years after they took place, attests that those involved clearly understood the inherent political dangers of such attachments, or more importantly, the political and personal ramifications if members had been injured or killed whilst being party on these visits.¹²⁵ Still, perhaps the New Zealand SAS would not have been what it was if its members had not carried out such explorative excursions?

One interesting consequence of the New Zealanders’ exposure to Special Forces units in South Vietnam was the extent that the name ‘1 Ranger Squadron’ limited their access to Special Forces opportunities. When the New Zealand SAS was first established in 1955, it was named 1st Squadron, New Zealand Special Air Service (1 Sqn NZSAS) in line with the Rhodesian and British Squadrons.¹²⁶ On re-activation in 1959, the New Zealand unit was again named 1 Squadron NZSAS but in early 1963, Major Mal Velvin lobbied for a title change - 1st Ranger Squadron, New Zealand Special Air Service (1 Ranger Sqn NZSAS) – to link the current Squadron with the volunteer units No.1 and No.2 Companies of the Forest Rangers, Fifth Division, which had fought from August 1863 to February 1866 during the Maori Wars.¹²⁷ Velvin, as well as his Director of Infantry and SAS Lieutenant-Colonel Jock Aitken, argued that Forest Rangers units had had a similar role to the present SAS. In support of this argument, Aitken quoted the notice appealing for volunteers to join the unit in August 1863 had contained the words:

¹²⁴ Kelly II (2005): *The Misuse of the Studies and Observation Group as a National Asset in Vietnam*, p.15.

¹²⁵ Bill Lillicrapp interview conducted on 16 June 2008.

¹²⁶ Brigadier R.M. Gurr, “Change in Title of Unit from 1 Ranger Sqn NZSAS to 1 Sqn NZSAS, 22 June 1971,” in New Zealand Army 77/2/22 Volume One, Organization – New Zealand Special Air Service Squadron, September 1959 – 31 July 1975, ANZ, Auckland, author unknown, “A History (and a Little Mystery) Behind the Title – 1 Ranger Sqn,” in *The New Zealand Special Air Service Journal (Free Glance)*, Volume Four, Number 3, April (1986), p. 21 and Baker, *Dare to Win*, p. 55.

¹²⁷ Gurr, “Change in Title of Unit from 1 Ranger Sqn NZSAS to 1 Sqn NZSAS, 22 June 1971,” and Stowers, *Forest Rangers: A History of the Forest Rangers during the New Zealand Wars*, p. 9.

The Government, urged by the Press and the public, resolved to form a small corps of picked men, used to the bush and to rough travelling and camp life, to scout the forests and hunt out the parties of marauders.¹²⁸

Velvin was also likely to have been influenced by his experiences with American Rangers and Special Forces in Thailand the previous year. In his submission, the New Zealand Squadron Commander stated the role of the New Zealand SAS also 'equated with the United States term of "Ranger."' ¹²⁹ The name change was submitted to the Army Board on 9 July 1963 but rejected, according to Chief of General Staff (CGS) Major-General Leonard Thornton, because the Minister of Defence, Dean Eyre, was not particularly taken with the title which he thought 'might not appeal to the troops.'¹³⁰ By early August, the name '1 Special Forces Squadron' was mooted by Aitken. Thornton disapproved of this name because it sounded 'too special,' and recommended either '1 Ranger Squadron SAS or 1 Commando Squadron SAS.'¹³¹ After several months of deliberation, the Army Board formally re-designated 1 Special Air Service Squadron, NZSAS to 1 Ranger Squadron, NZSAS on 15 September 1963.¹³²

After the 4 Troop deployment in South Vietnam ended, a case was submitted by Major Neville Kidd to have the unit re-named '1 Sqn NZSAS' on the basis that the modern usage of the word 'Ranger' within the New Zealand SAS title had limited 4 Troop's access to various US and South Vietnamese Special Forces opportunities. Kidd argued the US Army 'Ranger' term simply denoted an officer or soldier that had completed a 'Ranger course of a few weeks duration involving living off the land, navigation and survival.'¹³³ Kidd added that the confusion had prevented 'members to gain attachment to US "Special Forces" units' and recommended the unit should be allowed revert to its original title.¹³⁴

¹²⁸ Lieutenant-Colonel Aitken, "NZ Special Air Service – Nomenclature, May 1963," in Army Department 209/3/222 Volume One, Organisation and Formation – 1 Ranger Squadron – SAS, ANZ, Wellington.

¹²⁹ Author unknown, "A History (and a Little Mystery) Behind the Title – 1 Ranger Sqn," p. 21.

¹³⁰ Thornton suggested to Aitken that he might like to suggest some alternatives; the Chief of General Staff (CGS) thought that 'Light Commandos SAS' might be an option – but nevertheless believed that the Defence Minister would accept Forrest Rangers if 'nothing more harmonious was forthcoming.' Major-General Leonard Thornton, "Title – NZSAS, 12 July 1963," in Army Department 209/3/222, Volume One.

¹³¹ Thornton, "Title – NZSAS, 18 July 1963."

¹³² The note also added the 'NZSAS Corps remains as a link with the SAS of the British Army.' Major-General Leonard Thornton, "Re-designation – 1 SAS Sqn, 9 September 1963," Army Department 209/3/222, Volume One.

¹³³ Gurr, "Change in Title of Unit from 1 Ranger Sqn NZSAS to 1 Sqn NZSAS, 22 June 1971."

¹³⁴ Gurr, "Change in Title of Unit from 1 Ranger Sqn NZSAS to 1 Sqn NZSAS, 22 June 1971."

However, in a note to his CGS, Major-General Les Pearce on 14 October 1971, Deputy-CGS Brigadier Robin Holloway wrote that even though the title was liable to be misunderstood ('Ranger = US Rangers, Forest Ranger = employee of the Forestry Department and SAS has been attributed to the RNZAF'), he considered this 'was no time to make a change' because the Squadron was 'widely known as the Ranger Squadron and PR releases frequently allude to its New Zealand historical origin.'¹³⁵ Pearce agreed and no further action was taken.¹³⁶ The name did not change until both the 1 New Zealand Special Air Service Squadron (1 NZSAS) and its supporting depot establishment, the New Zealand Special Air Service Centre (NZSAS Centre), were formally established on 1 April 1978.¹³⁷

Notwithstanding the limited opportunities afforded to the New Zealanders, the importance of New Zealand SAS contact with US Special Forces units in Vietnam was significant. Those initial contacts subsequently became 'instrumental' in the ability to develop New Zealand-US Special Forces relationships that continued long after the end of the New Zealand SAS' deployment to South Vietnam. Participation in the multinational Special Forces 'SPECWAREX' and 'GONFALON' exercises, up until 1984, became the culmination of what those such as Shattky and 2nd Lieutenant Jack Hayes had 'imagined might be possible' when the exchanges and visits took place in 1969 and 1970.¹³⁸

¹³⁵ Brigadier R.H.F Holloway, "Title of 1 Ranger Sqn SAS, 14 October 1971," Army Department 209/3/222, Volume One.

¹³⁶ Kidd again wrote to HQ Field Force Command again in mid-July 1975 complaining that the Squadron's official title continued to 'cause embarrassment and confusion, particularly when associating with overseas Special Forces.' Kidd also wrote that Von Tempski, the most well-known commander of the Forest Rangers, 'was well noted for his arrogance and flagrant disobedience' and any association between the two units through the word 'Ranger' would not be in the best interests of the SAS. Major Neville Kidd, "Change of Title and Change of Beret – 1 Ranger Sqn NZSAS, 14 July 1975," in New Zealand Army 77/2/22 Volume One.

¹³⁷ The new establishment, including official name changes, was signed off by Lieutenant-Colonel Evan Torrance, Director of Infantry and SAS. Unit History 1 NZSAS Squadron, April – December 1978, New Zealand Special Air Service (NZSAS) Association Archive, Wellington, p.1 and the Directorate of Infantry and Special Air Service, Wellington, "Infantry Heads of Corps Conference May 1978 – Record of Major Matters Considered, 7 June 1978," in 27/2/1 Conferences – RNZIR/NZSAS, ANZ, Wellington, p.4.

¹³⁸ See Chapter 14. Graye Shattky, interview conducted on 25 November 2008.

Appendix Two:

4 Troop NZSAS Patrol Activity 9 December 1968 - 3 December 1969

4 Troop NZSAS, 9 December 1968 - 3 December 1969

Ptl No.	Ops No.	Dates	Patrol Commander	Patrol Members	Task	Infil/Exfil	Infil YS	Exfil YS	Contacts	OWN KIA	OWN WIA	EN KIA	EN WIA	Details of sightings	Miscellaneous details	Results of Medevac
#22/23	264/68	29 Nov-3 Dec	Sgt M.J. Ruffin	Sgt A.F. Stewart (2IC), Lcpl K.C. Lampard (sig), Cpl I.R. Ramsey (medic), Pte M.A. Honinger (rfn), Pte B.P. Kennedy (rfn), Pte G.D. Smith (rfn), Pte B.H. Blake (rfn), Pte A.W. Stewart (rfn), Pte A.J. Callaghan (rfn), Cpl B. Morunga RNZIR (rfn)	A	Hel/Hel	525897	526897	No					1 sighting, total 2	Ptl was left behind on FSPB FLINDERS	
#23	1/68, Operation STELLAR BRIGHT	9-22 Dec	Sgt M.J. Ruffin	Pte M.A. Honinger (2IC), Pte D.N. Mitchell (sig), Pte B.P. Kennedy (medic), Cpl B. Morunga (rfn)	R	APC/APC	574732	614722	No						APC infil, Operation STELLAR BRIGHT - Op on enemy camp not successful	
#14	1/68, Operation STELLAR BRIGHT	9-22 Dec	2Lt T. Nolan	Lcpl R. Kerkez (2IC), Pte A.P. Bowden (sig), Pte D.J. Cullen (medic), Cpl P.M. Duffy (rfn), Sgt W.A. McGee (rfn)	R	APC/APC	531754	532754	Yes			1		1 2 sightings, total 7	Op STELLAR BRIGHT - 1 x Garrand rifle captured. Photo in Malone Book, p132.	
#15	267/68	27 Dec-2 Jan	Sgt P.T. Sheehan	Lcpl K.G. Pember (2IC), Cpl P. Brown (sig) , Pte T.F. Davies (medic), Sgt W.J. Lillcraapp (rfn) , Lcpl J. Murray (rfn) , Pte G.C. Shneider (rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	399842	412815	No						Camp located at YS400844 (friendly) with trip flares still set	
#33	268/68	27 Dec-1 Jan	Sgt V.W. Martin	Cpl A.R. Murray (2IC), Sgt J. Johnston (sig) , Cpl M.A. Cunningham , Lcpl R.W. Burton (medic), Pte W.J. Button (rfn), Lcpl M.K.P. Wharehinga (rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	407787	424804	Yes					Not seen	Patrol member at latrine was engaged by Sniper. Estimated 6-8 enemy engaged LUP with searching rounds. Patrol failed to break contact even after LFT assistance.	
#11	266/68	28 Dec-3 Jan	WO2 S.R. Scutts	Cpl D.H. Wright (2IC), Lcpl J. Kidner (sig), Lt T. Culley (rfn) , Cpl S.T. Taniora (rfn) , Cpl J. Northover (rfn) , Sig R.T. Callaghan (rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	399861	399865	No						Heard movement on FIRESTONE Trail - no enemy seen	
#14	269/68	28-31 Dec	2Lt T. Nolan	Cpl P.M. Duffy (2IC), Pte D.J. Cullen (sig), Pte A.P. Bowden (medic), Lcpl G.H. Lobb (rfn), Pte K.G. Smith (rfn), 2Lt P.J. Fitzpatrick (rfn), Pte K.D. Tonkin (rfn), Pte I.F. Franklin (rfn), Lcpl B. Ngapo , Lcpl M.J. Cocker , Pte W.P. Gibson (rfn)	Amb	APC/Hel	313658	327645	Yes			3			1 M1 Carbine captured - Patrol Commander wrenched knee on extraction. Estimated enemy camp on hill	
#22	270/68	30 Dec-4 Jan	Sgt A.F. Stewart	Cpl I. R. Ramsay (2IC), Cpl R. Keno (medic) , Pte A.W. Stewart (rfn), Sgt W.A. McGee (rfn)	R	Hel/Hel	653638	658645	No						Recce Zone - AO DOOKIE WEST. One enemy heard in creek but not seen	
#23	271/68	30 Dec-2 Jan	Sgt M.J. Ruffin	Pte M.A. Honinger (2IC), Pte D.N. Mitchell (sig), Pte B.P. Kennedy (medic), Sgt F.D. Barclay (rfn)	R	Hel/Hel	653638	651628	Yes 3			2	7	1 2 sightings, total of 79 plus in area YS6461	Operation SILK CORD. Barclay WIA - shrapnel to head, remained on duty. Believed to have been in contact with VC Company of 70 plus. Patrol dropped all packs	
#34/35	272/68	30 Dec-4 Jan	Lt D.S. Procopis	Lcpl E.A. Nagle (2IC), Lcpl K. Herewini , Pte G.D. Smith/Lcpl J.N. Easley, Pte L.C. Alver (rfn), Sgt V. Delgado (rfn), Pte B.C. Moore (rfn), Cpl P.G. Bercene (rfn), Pte J.B. Rice (rfn), Pte J.W. Harper (rfn)	R	Hel/Hel	713633	682595	No							
#12	275/68	30 Dec-4 Jan	Sgt J.B. Considine	Pte D.B. Jones (2IC), Pte R.E. Wallis (sig), Tpr D.M. Terry , Lcpl R.C. Maaka	R	Hel/Hel	713634	735670	No						Task - recce "Zone AO DOOKIE"	
#24	276/68	30 Dec-4 Jan	2Lt R.A. Dempsey	Lcpl J.H. McKenzie (2IC), Pte K.F. Bowen (sig), Pte B.H. Blake (medic), Lcpl J.H. Bache (rfn)	R	Hel/Hel	742637	717614	No						Lots of wildlife - deer, pigs, monkeys - all tame	
#25	277/68	30 Dec-4 Jan	Sgt D.W. Scheele	Cpl T.W. Lewis (2IC), Pte D.J. Fisher (sig), Lcpl R.T. Williams (medic) , Lcpl W. Wanoa (rfn)	R	Hel/Hel	742636	762644	No						Patrol operation was on the coast	
#42	05/69	7-12 Jan	Sgt W.J. Lillcraapp	Lcpl W. Wanoa (2IC), Cpl P. Brown (sig), Lcpl J.T. Murray (medic), Lcpl R.T. Williams (rfn)	R	APC/APC	328799	329801	No					11 sightings, total seen 33. All seen in YS322083	Good OP position and Op drills - commended by Australian Squadron Commander. Patrol infil/exfil APC - Lillcraapp commented "APC dropped patrol in centre of trail which endangered patrol security."	
#44	08/69	12-17 Jan	Lt T.N. Culley	Cpl S.T. Taniora (2IC), Cpl J.K. Northover (sig), Lcpl J.H. Bache (medic), Tpr S.A. Peti (rfn)	R	APC/APC	331804	331804	No					3 sightings - 19 in total		
#41	10/69	12-17 Jan	Sgt W.A. McGee	Cpl R. Keno (2IC), Lcpl R.C. Maaka (sig), Lcpl M.J. Cocker (medic), Lcpl K. Herewini (rfn)	R	APC/APC	298815	287784						1 sighting - total 5 at YS298814	Enemy were in "Tiger Camouflage suits - possibly friendly." Enemy did not try to engage patrol but moved off.	
#43	11/69	12-17 Jan	Sgt J.T. Johnston	Cpl M.A. Cunningham (2IC), Lcpl B. Ngapo (sig), Lcpl M.K.P. Wharehinga (medic), Lcpl D.A. Pewhairangi (rfn)	R	APC/APC	340817	323828	No							
#12	12/69	14-17 Jan	Sgt J.B. Considine	Lcpl K.S. Pember (2IC), Sgt F.D. Barclay (sig) , Pte D.B. Jones (medic), Sig R.R. Taylor (rfn)	R	Hel/Hel	306844	312848	Yes 3			4		3 sightings - total seen 16	Contacted large enemy forces, great numbers of bunkers in areas	
#42	15/69	17-21 Jan	Sgt W.J. Lillcraapp	Lcpl W. Wanoa (rfn), Cpl P. Brown (2IC), Lcpl J. Murray (sig), Lcpl R.T. Williams (medic)	R	APC/Hel	331801	331801	Yes		GSW 1	1		5 sightings - total seen 17	Possible base identified at YS334799. 1 Chicom K54 pistol, 2 lbs of documents captured	Murray shot in hand - returned to NZ as result of GSW
#41	26/69	31 Jan-5 Feb	Sgt W.A. McGee	Cpl R. Keno (2IC), Lcpl K. Herewini (sig), Lcpl R.C. Maaka (medic), Lcpl M.J. Cocker (rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	273912	279908	No						Old VC Position located. 2 caches found in position - 650lbs of rice and 2 HE RPG rounds (used within 14 days). Cache not disturbed.	

#43	27/69	31 Jan-5 Feb	Sgt J.T. Johnston	Cpl M.A. Cunningham (2IC), Lcpl B. Ngapo (medic), Lcpl M.K.P. Wharehinga (sig), Lcpl D.A. Pewhairangi (rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	415777	435726	No		
#31	01/69	22-27 Feb	Lt T.N. Culley	Cpl J.K. Northover (2IC), Lcpl J.H. Bache (sig), Lcpl M.K.P. Wharehinga (medic), Tpr S.A. Peti (rfn)	R	Hel/Hel	276854	287876	No		1 member medevac 251410hrs due to high temperature, nausea and dizziness - suffering from virus infection of throat and chest - hospitalized.
#33	02/69	22-27 Feb	Sgt W.J. Lillcrapp	Cpl P. Brown (2IC), Lcpl B. Otene (sig), Lcpl R.T. Williams (medic), Lcpl W. Wanoa (rfn)	R	Hel/Hel	228863	243846	No		2 sightings - total seen 8. All seen from OP YS238863
#35	03/69	22-27 Feb	Sgt F.D. Barclay	WO2 E. Ball (2IC), Cpl K. Herewini (sig), Lcpl R.C. Maaka (medic), Lcpl D.A. Perwhairangi (rfn)	R	Hel/Hel	336848	334861	No		2 sightings - total seen 72. All seen in OPS YS333864
#34	23/69	18-27 Mar	Sgt J.T. Johnston	Cpl M.A. Cunningham (2IC), Lcpl B. Ngapo (sig), Lcpl R.D. Curtis (medic), Lcpl M.K.P. Wharehinga (rfn)	R	Hel/Hel	396907	393901	No		Patrol suspected an enemy camp/RV was located in vicinity of YS4091 - pattern of signal shots
#35	26/69	19-21 Mar	Sgt F.D. Barclay	WO2 E. Ball (2IC), Cpl J.K. Northover (sig), Tpr S.A. Peti (medic), Lcpl D.A. Pewhairangi (rfn)	R	Hel/Hel	307857	304846	No		1 sighting - total seen 3 on Medevac/Extraction LZ
#33	28/69	20-29 Mar	Sgt W.J. Lillcrapp	Cpl R. Keno (2IC), Cpl B. Otene (sig), Lcpl R.T. Williams (medic), Lcpl W. Wanoa (rfn)	R	Hel/Hel	368802	370824	No		Patrol winched out - Patrol Commander ill for 24 hours before being medevaced. During medevac 3 VC seen due to suspected enemy compromise patrol extraction.
#32	35/69	1-7 Apr	Cpl P. Brown	Lcpl M.J. Cocker (2IC and scout), Lcpl K. Herewini (sig), Lcpl R.C. Maaka (medic), Tpr D.M. Terry (rfn)	R	Hel/Hel	305858	271871	No		Barclay in hospital with Glandular fever - kept under observation
#35	40/69	2-9 Apr	WO2 E. Ball	Cpl J.K. Northover (2IC and sig), Lcpl D.A. Pewhairangi (scout), Lcpl N.H.N. Tito (medic), Tpr S.A. Peti (rfn)	R	APC/Hel	364726	288733	No		Patrol found 4 pappits 4' x 6', sharpened bamboo stakes in bottom.
#12	42/69	9-15 Apr	Sgt E. Kelly	Cpl P.B. Bye (2IC), Pte J.R. Jesser (sig), Lcpl J.H. Bache (medic) , Pte J.C. Hay (rfn)	R	Hel/Hel	546582	545581	No		1 sighting - total seen 1 at YS289723
#33	46/69	15-23 Apr	Sgt W.J. Lillcrapp	Lcpl R.T. Williams (2IC), Lcpl K. Herewini (sig), Lcpl D.A. Pewhairangi (medic), Lcpl W. Wanoa (scout)	R	APC/Hel	321694	305728	Yes 1	2	8 sightings - total seen 125
#34	47/69	15-23 Apr	Sgt J.T. Johnston	Cpl M.A. Cunningham (2IC), Lcpl M.K.P. Wharehinga (sig), Lcpl R.D. Curtis (medic), Lcpl B. Ngapo (scout)	R	APC/Hel	317689	317670	No		2 sightings - total seen 4 (2 at YS309699 - contact site, and 2 at YS306715
#32	48/69	20-28 Apr	Sgt F.D. Barclay	Cpl P. Brown (2IC), Lcpl N.H.N. Tito (sig), Lcpl R.C. Maaka (medic), Lcpl M.J. Cocker (scout)	R	Hel/Hel	703719	709698	No		1 sighting - total seen 2 at YS13762
VK3	09/69	28 Apr-1 May	WO2 Young	Cpl R.D. Curtis (2IC) , Sgt Thang (sig), Sgt Hoa (medic), Cpl Hoan, Pte Phuoc, Pte Hai, Pte Nho, Pte Thanh, Pte Hon	R/A	APC/APC	254835	255830	No		3 sightings - total seen 10
VK2	08/69	28 Apr-1 May	WO2 J. Grafton	WO Set (2IC), Lcpl M.K.P. Wharehinga (sig) , Sgt Luc (medic), Pte Nhan, Pte Thanh, Pte The, Pte Trune, Pte Xe, Pte Dahn, Sgt T.S. Khan	R/A	APC/APC	283675	270669	No		Patrol Commander medevaced on second day of patrol
#31	52/69	28 Apr-6 May	Capt T.N. Culley	WO2 E. Ball (2IC), Cpl S.T. Taniora (scout), Cpl J.K. Northover (sig), Tpr D.M. Terry (medic), Tpr S.A. Peti (rfn)	R	Hel/Hel	710698	704691	No		Orientation patrol to Australian and NZ LRRP drills for ARVN Rangers.
#41	57/69	2-7 May	Lt C.A.M. Roberts	Lcpl M. Kerkez/ Sgt F.D. Barclay (2IC) , Pte M.J. Malone (sig), Pte A.E.K. Stewart (medic), Pte T.S. Hancock (rfn)	R	Hel/Hel	527870 and 551883	551883 and 544886	Yes 2	2	Woodcutters working in the area. Patrol observed defensive postion constructed by NVA
#34	62/69	8-16 May	Sgt J.T. Johnston	Cpl M.A. Cunningham (2IC), Lcpl M.K.P. Wharehinga (sig), Lcpl R.D. Curtis (medic), Lcpl J.H. Bache (scout)	R	Hel/Hel	653856	640840	No		12 sightings - total seen 22
#33	64/69	8-13 May	Sgt W.J. Lillcrapp	Lcpl R.T. Williams (2IC), Lcpl N.H.N. Tito (sig), Lcpl P.B. Otene (medic), Lcpl D.A. Pewhairangi (scout)	R	Hel/Hel	650628	668621	No		15 sightings - total seen 42
#32	66/69	9-19 May	Sgt W.A. McGee	Cpl P. Brown (2IC), Lcpl M. Cocker (scout), Lcpl K. Herewini (sig), Lcpl R.C. Maaka (medic)	R	Hel/Hel	655763	678782	Yes	1	Patrol was extracted after 3 days and re-inserted the next day. All enemy seen were NVA. Patrol was followed and approached a number of times but enemy did not fire until aircraft arrived. LFT received ground fire on both extractions.
#35	71/69	20 May-1 June	Sgt F.D. Barclay	WO2 E. Ball (2IC), Lcpl N.H.N. Tito (sig), Lcpl J.W. Matten (medic), Sgt C.A.T. Jennison (GP Comd), Sgt E. Kelly (Gp Comd), Cpl R. Keno (Gp Comd), Cpl P.F. Bye (Gp 2IC), Lcpl B. Ngapo (Gp 2IC), Lcpl D.A. Pewhairangi (Gun Gp), Pte J.R. Jesser (rfn), Pte J.D. Petrie (rfn), Pte N.J. McCormack (rfn), Pte J.C. Hay (rfn), Pte A.A. Ingram (rfn), Pte A.W. Ing (rfn), Lcpl B. Otene (Gun Gp)	A	Hel/Hel	384827	337808	No		3 sightings - total seen 7 (5 at YS652854 and 2 at YS656852
											Female voices heard. Patrol forced to extract after 2nd casevac (day 2 and day 5)
											3 oxen killed in contact. 1 SKS rifle and documents captured during contact. Rifle gifted to NZSAS
											5 sightings - total seen 45 in area YS342815
											1 Total VC sighted 9, total ox carts 5
											Camp located at YS343815 (occupied by 25 plus VC). Possum resup 2 x M16 to replace unserviceable weapons. Weapons dropped and patrol had to commence search with no success. 4 patrol members suffered heat exhaustion - 2 medevaced and one carried 400m by patrol to extraction LZ.

#34	72/69	25-29 May	Sgt J.T. Johnston	Lcpl M.K.P. Wharehinga (2IC), Lcpl R.D. Curtis (rfn), Lcpl J.H. Bache (medic), Lcpl K. Herewini (sig), Cpl L. McCann (152 sig Sqn)	R	Hel/Hel	294710	294710	No				Nil - Used 'Starlight' night scope to observe enemy activity at night along the ENGINEER Trail (OP at Trig 467)	On the afternoon of 25 May, the patrol was visited by no less than the Commander 1ATF, Pearson, the Commanding Officer of 5 RAR, Lieutenant-Colonel C.N. Kahn and five other Australian staff officers for fifteen minutes. Not surprisingly perhaps, the patrol saw no enemy for the duration of their operation.
#32	77/69	6-18 June	Sgt W.A. McGee	Lcpl R. C. Maaka (2IC and medic), Lcpl M.J. Cocker (scout), Lcpl K. Herewini (sig) Tpr D.M. Terry (rfn)	R/A	APC/Hel	620832	625825	No					Camp at YS657827 recently occupied
#33	78/69	6-18 June	Sgt W.J. Lillcrapp	Cpl S.T. Taniora (2IC and medic), Cpl J.K. Northover (sig), Lcpl B. Ngapo (scout), Tpr S.A. Peti (rfn)	R/A	APC/Hel	627847	636865	Yes 1	3		7 sightings - total seen 23 (22 in YS645856)	1 x 7.62 K54 pistol captured. All enemy carrying heavy packs and moving NW.	
#34	82/69	11-22 June	Sgt J.T. Johnston	Cpl M.A. Cunningham (2IC), Lcpl R.D. Curtis (sig), Lcpl W. Wanoa (medic), Lcpl J. H. Bache (rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	697885	663883	No			3 old unoccupied defensive positions found - could be reoccupied immediately	Patrol observed booby traps at YS674884 (not touched - photos taken also). Also observed Possum carrying out unauthorised recon in patrol area on 18 June	
#31	90/69	5-14 July	WO2 E. Ball	Cpl S.T. Taniora (2IC and scout), Cpl J.K. Northover (medic) Lcpl N.H.N. Tito (sig)	R	Hel/Hel	368897	376882	No			4 old positions showing occasional use, found	Catani J. Maloney was rifleman attached to patrol - had been sent to South Vietnam by Ogilvy	
#32	93/69	8-16 July	Cpl P. Brown	Lcpl M.K.P. Wharehinga (2IC), Lcpl R.D. Curtis (sig), Lcpl J.H. Bache (medic), Lcpl W. Wanoa (scout)	R	Hel/Hel	284906	263896	No			16 sightings - total seen 195 all from YS262902	Patrol extracted by rope. Squadron Commander commented 'Very professional job on OP - large numbers seen, without being sprung, indicated good position. Firing of artillery in patrol area too.	
#34	94/69	8-15 July	Sgt W.A. McGee	Cpl M.A. Cunningham (2IC), Lcpl R.C. Maaka (medic), Lcpl K. Herewini (sig), Lcpl M.J. Cocker (scout)	R	Hel/Hel	285905	318875	Yes 1	2		2 sightings - total seen 16 (4 at YS299909 and 12 at YS314896)	2 old positions were also found. Enemy killed were last 2 of 12 walking through ambush - 'remainder of enemy bolted'. McGee returned to the scene of the contact that night and recovered 1 pack and SLR magazine belonging to patrol member - McGee stayed out all night and RV'd with patrol at 0935hrs the following day.	
#35	104/69	23 Jul-6 Aug	Sgt F.D. Barclay	Cpl S.T. Taniora (2IC and scout), Lcpl N.H.N. Tito (sig), Lcpl R.T. Williams, Lcpl R.C. Maaka (medic)	R/A	Hel/Hel	347645	331619	Yes 1	2		1 sighting - total seen 3 (at YS331635)	3 camps located - all unoccupied. Patrol had contact at YS329637 and was reinforced by Patrol #16 for 1-2 Aug only	
#16	104/69	1-2 Aug	Maj R.P. Beesley	WO2 E. Ball (2IC), Lcpl M.K.P. Wharehinga (sig), Lcpl K. Herewini (medic), Cpl M.A. Cunningham (rfn), Cpl P. Brown (rfn), Lcpl B. Ngapo (rfn), Lcpl W. Wanoa (rfn), Lcpl R.D. Curtis (rfn), Tpr S.A. Peti (rfn), Pte R.H. Bain (rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	320636	331619	No				Assist Patrol #35 - see above. Patrolled rapelled into AO?	
#33	108/69	24 Jul-2 Aug	Sgt W.J. Lillcrapp	Sgt J.T. Johnston (2IC), Lcpl D.A. Pewhairangi (medic), Pte M. Gray (sig), Pte M. Fagan (rfn)	R	Hel/Hel	326718	317724	No				Enemy activity quiet and little movement in area YS3171 since 1ATF ops approximately one month earlier	
#32	109/69	5-13 Aug	Cpl P. Brown	Lcpl R.D. Curtis (2IC), Lcpl K. Herewini (sig), Tpr S.A. Peti (medic), Lcpl W. Wanoa (scout), Pte R. Bain (rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	693832	657835	Yes 2	2 lt	4	2 4 sightings - total seen 12 plus	Camp at YS706835. Patrol also located cache containing 70-100lbs black ammunition, candles and other miscellaneous items. Friendly WIA remained on duty	
#31	112/69	6-17 Aug	Capt T.N. Culley	Cpl R. Keno (2IC), Lcpl R. Pilkington (152 Sig Sqn), Lcpl M.J. Cocker (scout), Lcpl D.A. Pewhairangi (medic between 7-17 August), Tpr D.M. Terry (medic from 6-7 August)	R/A	Hel/Hel	584710	576699	No				Terry Medevaced out and replaced by Pewhairangi on 7 August	Terry RTNZ - suffering from renal cholic 19 Aug 1969
#34	113/69	6-17 Aug	WO2 E. Ball	Cpl M.A. Cunningham (2IC), Lcpl J. Graydon (medic), Lcpl B. Ngapo (scout), Lcpl M.K.P. Wharehinga (sig)	R/A	Hel/Hel	537834	537837	Yes	2		6 sightings - total seen 30	Identified possible camp at YS5284 from noise and enemy movement. Patrol captured 1 x AK47 rifle - gifted to NZSAS	Graydon medevaced (he was medic too)
#35	120/69	22-Aug	Sgt F.D. Barclay	Sgt W.J. Lillcrapp (2IC), Cpl S.T. Taniora (scout), Lcpl M.K.P. Wharehinga (sig), Lcpl J.H. Bache (medic), Lcpl R.T. Williams (rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	692813	692813	Yes	1 lt	2	1 1 sighting - total seen 3 (on LZ)	Barclay slightly wounded (shrapnel wound to leg and chin - remained on duty). Patrol ran into a position on edge of LZ	Barclay treated and discharged - last patrol for him on tour.
#41	124/69	29 Aug-6 Sep	Lt C.A.M. Roberts	Cpl S.T. Taniora (2IC), Pte M.J. Malone (sig), Lcpl J.H. Bache (medic), Lcpl R.T. Williams (rfn), Lcpl K. Herewini (rfn), Lcpl G. Daw (rfn), Pte P.F. Callaghan (rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	812866	810866	No				Security Group - Sgt F.J. Roberts, Pte K.J. Campbell, Pte W.F. Bowser, Pte A.W. Ing, Pte R. Kluczniak, Pte M.C. Gray only with patrol for 46 minutes on 29 August	1 Australian RT
#33	125/69	31 Aug-8 Sep	Sgt W.J. Lillcrapp	Cpl R. Broadhurst (2IC), Pte J. Dodd (sig), Pte J. Hay (rfn), Lcpl B. Ngapo (scout and medic)	R/A	Hel/Hel	676782	695809	No				At YS695808 at approximately 072000H patro lreceived 2 rounds HE from 155mm Arty located to south - rounds impacted within 1000m of patrol location. No clearance granted by Squadron Base for targeting this area.	
#31	126/69	31 Aug-10 Sep	Capt T.N. Culley	Cpl J.K. Northover (2IC), Lcpl D.A. Pewhairangi (scout), Lcpl M.K.P. Wharehinga (sig), Cpl D. Brown (medic)	R/A	Hel/Hel	804798	785790	No				Helicopter forced down on insertion due to power failure - changed aircraft at Xuyen Moc. Linked up with Patrols #12 and #33 to defend area	
#32	130/69	7-18 Sep	Sgt W.A. McGee	Lcpl R.D. Curtis (2IC), Lcpl M.J. Cocker (scout), Lcpl R.C. Maaka (sig)	R/A	Hel/Hel	555848	555864	No			1 sighting - total seen 14 (all from YS544882)	Camp seen at YS543877 had been used the previous night. Patrol extracted by rope.	
#34	137/69	16-27 Sep	Sgt J.T. Johnston	Cpl M.A. Cunningham (2IC), Lcpl R.C. Maaka (sig), Lcpl J.H. Bache (medic), Lcpl R.Keno (rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	408787	407817	Yes 2	1 lt	6	2 17 sightings - total seen 107 (all from 2 OP YS406793 and YS403817)	First ambush on 3 VC. Second ambush 14 VC - 5 VC KIA (BC) and 1 WIA. No gallantry awards!	

#12/31	133/69	17-23 Sep	Sgt P.F. Bye	Lcpl N.L. McKelvie (2IC), Pte R.K. Sutton (sig to 17 Sept), R/A Pte G.H. Holusa (medic to 17 Sept), Pte W. Campbell (rfn) - #31 Cpl P. Brown (rfn), Cpl J.K. Northover (rfn), Lcpl D.A. Pewhairangi (rfn), Lcpl B. Ngapo (rfn), Lcpl W. Wanoa (rfn), Pte R.H. Bain (rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	739874	729864	Yes 1	2	1 sighting - total seen 2	Contact was for #12. Reinforcement patrol for Patrol #12 (Australian) after medevac of 2 Australian patrol members (Sutton and Holusa) on 17 September.		
#33	141/69	21 Sep-2 Oct	Sgt W.J. Lillicrapp	Cpl S.T. Taniora (2IC and medic), Lcpl K. Herewini (rfn), Lcpl N.H.N. Tito (sig), Lcpl M.K.P. Wharehinga (rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	663919	652913	Yes 1	2	1 2 sightings - total seen 29, all at YS659929	Track ambushed likely to be Line of Communication towards Nui Hot with possible enemy camp located at YS660929.		
#16	148/69	27-28 Sep	Maj R.P. Beesley	Sgt J. Jewell (2IC), Lcpl R.C. Maaka (sig), Lcpl R.D. Curtis (medic), Cpl P. Brown (rfn), Lcpl W. Wanoa (scout), Pte R.H. Bain (rfn), Pte W. Henderson (rfn), Pte B. Williams (rfn)	R	Hel/Hel	634958	628859	No		1 sighting - total seen 4	Patrol was sent in to search for Private Fisher (member of Australian patrol #11) who fell off rope. C Coy, 9RAR was also called in to search with no success. The only 4 Troop patrol where members rappelled into Phuoc Tuy province. Ngapo was also on board the aircraft, as part of the patrol – but the karabiner connecting him to his rope became jammed and he was not able to leave the helicopter.		
#31	152/69	10-20 Oct	Capt T.N. Culley	Cpl P. Brown (2IC), Lcpl J.K. Northover (sig), Lcpl B. Ngapo (medic), Lcpl W. Wanoa (scout), Pte I. Moore (rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	548922	546914	No		Two camps identified as being used as transit camps	Recommendation that patrols be issued with calsigns and frequencies of all friendly units operating in vicinity of patrol AO made		
#32	153/69	10-15 Oct	Sgt W.A. McGee	Cpl R.D. Curtis (2IC), Lcpl D.A. Pewhairangi (medic), Lcpl D. Makara (sig), Lcpl M.J. Cocker (scout)	R/A	Hel/Hel	677957	687960	Yes 1	2	16 sightings - total seen 173	Suspected camp located at YS677951. In contact, patrol was chased by 10-20 VC. Patrol dropped all packs and HF comms were made on the move. Rope extraction not a success as aircraft crashed on LZ dragging patrol 60-100m along LZ. Patrol gave aid to aircrew. McGee recommended that conventional troops operate in the area.	All patrol members were taken to 1 Fd Hospital for check - all discharged. Makara subsequently discharged?	
#34	156/69	12-22 Oct	Sgt J.T. Johnston	Cpl M.A. Cunningham (2IC), Cpl R. Keno (rfn), Lcpl R.C. Maaka (sig), Pte B. Morgan (medic)	R/A	Hel/Hel	858789	895782	No			1 patrol member with bad cough		
#33	168/69	29 Oct-3 Nov	Sgt W.J. Lillicrapp	Sgt M.J. Van Droffelaar (2IC), Lcpl N.H.N. Tito (sig), Lcpl B. Ngapo (medic), Cpl P. Brown (rfn), Cpl S.T. Taniora (rfn), Lcpl W. Wanoa (rfn), Pte P.R. Saxton (rfn), Pte J.R. Cuzens (rfn), Pte L.A. Liddington (rfn), Pte B.J. Williams (rfn), Pte K. Byrom (rfn)	Amb	Hel/Hel	663919	663919	Yes 1	1 lt	5	3 sightings - total seen 22 (all from YS657928)	Painting Ambush - Five packs dropped during extraction from ambush.	Shrapnel wound to face of one Australian - treated at hospital and discharged
#33	177/69	8-10 Nov	Sgt W.J. Lillicrapp	Lcpl W.J. McCormack (2IC), Pte D.R. Brown (rfn), Pte L.A. Liddington (sig), Pte P.R. Saxton (medic) Pte S.J. Walker (rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	564778	563779	No			camp sighted at YS564779	Reinforcement patrol to assist Australian Patrol #19 (177/69) - patrol sent in at request of #19 Patrol Commander	
#34	178/69	3-10 Nov	Sgt J.T. Johnston	Cpl G. Daw (2IC and medic), Pte I.C. Moore (sig), Pte D.J. Luhlaman (6RAR), Pte L.J. O'Shea (6RAR), Pte L.A. Faver (6RAR)	R/A	Hel/Hel	709699	706685	No			Camp at YS707704 - occupied within last 48 hours	Numerous tracks in AO thought not to have been used for approximately 6 months. Three 6RAR soldiers on this patrol	
#31	180/69	11-19 Nov	Capt T.N. Culley	Cpl J.K. Northover (2IC), Lcpl D. Makara (sig), Lcpl K. Herewini (medic), Lcpl M.J. Cocker (scout), Lcpl D.A. Pewhairangi (rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	563862	551899	No	1 lt			One soldier wounded by LFT suppression of exfiltration at LZ (shrapnel to neck)	Treated at 8 Fd Ambulance station and discharged
#35	181/69	11-19 Nov	Cpl M.A. Cunningham	Cpl R. Keno (2IC), Lcpl M.K.P. Wharehinga (sig), Lcpl R.C. Maaka (medic), Lcpl J.H. Bache, Cpl R.D. Curtis	R/A	Hel/Hel	729845	745848	No			1 sighting - total seen 24 (all in OP YS741857)	Two old camps found in good condition	
#33	188/69	23 Nov-1 Dec	Sgt W.J. Lillicrapp/SSgt D.W. Wilson	SSgt D.W. Wilson, Lcpl N.H.N. Tito (2IC and sig), Lcpl W. Wanoa (scout), Lcpl R.C. Maaka (medic), Pte C.E. Johnson (rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	348646	323633	No				Wilson took over patrol - Lillicrapp extracted after being bitten by snake on 27 November.	
#34	196/69	25 Nov-3 Dec	Sgt J.T. Johnston	WO2 E. Ball (2IC), Sgt G.J. Campbell (medic), Lcpl B. Ngapo (scout), Pte G.W. Franklin (sig), Pte A.F. Jones (rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	791756	784754	Yes 1		1	2 sightings - total seen 5. Enemy were heard in rice paddy as well (YS792753)	Campbell on orientation patrol	
Total	Patrols										Contacts	EN KIA EN WIA sightings		
	73										27	54 9 179 sightings - total seen 1187 2 poss		

Appendix Three:

**4 Troop NZSAS Patrol Activity 23 November 1969 - 30 November
1970**

4 Troop NZSAS, 23 November 1969 - 30 November 1970

Patl No.	Ops No.	Dates	Patrol Commander	Patrol Members	Task	Infil/Exfil	Infil YS	Exfil YS	Contacts	OWN KIA	OWN WIA	EN KIA	EN WIA	Details of sightings	Miscellaneous details	Results of Medevac
#44	187/69	23 Nov-1 Dec	Sgt C.J. Dwyer	Lcpl P.F. Callaghan (2IC), 2Lt M.R. Eddy (rfn), Pte D.N. Crompton (sig), Pte M.C. Gray (medic), Sgt J.T. Murray (rfn)	R	APC/Hel	313666	316671	No					1 sighting - total seen 1 (at YS307673)	Orientation patrol - camp at YS304682	
#23	195/69	25 Nov-3 Dec	Sgt A. Foxley	Lcpl C.J. Jackson (2IC), Lcpl J.D. O'Brien (sig), Pte B.J. Williams (medic), Lcpl M. Kerkez (rfn), Sgt E.P. Stead (rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	829811	804799	No						Orientation patrol	
#15	201/69	3-11 Dec	Sergeant J.M. Robinson	Capt D.G. Shattky (2IC) , Lcpl A.J. Twynam-Perkins (sig), Pte R.K. Beard (medic), Pte A.W. Ing (rfn), Pte J.C. Hay (rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	859789	841764	No						Orientation patrol. Brush hut in camp location believed to have been enemy dressing station, medical supplies destroyed in situ - 20lbs of corn destroyed also.	
Operation STIRLING	Pathfinder Group	15 Dec		Tpr T.W.J. Moffitt (medic) of Op STIRLING Pathfinder Group deployed on 15 December 1969												
Operation STIRLING	Security Group	16-Dec		Capt D.G. Shattky, Lcpl L. Peni, Lcpl A.S. Puia, Lcpl J.A. Tuahine, Tpr W.L. McCallion, Tpr C.J. McMahon, Tpr D.P. Sexton, Tpr J.W.R. Osborne, Tpr W.M. Taare, Tpr K. Tahana												
#31	217/69	28 Dec-4 Jan	Capt D.G. Shattky	Lcpl J.A. Tuahine (2IC), Lcpl T.W.H. Heremaia (rfn), Tpr J.W.R. Osborne (sig), Tpr T.W.J. Moffitt (medic), Tpr K. Tahana (scout)	R/A	Hel/Hel	729835	725841	No					Camp at YS706835	First all 4 Troop patrol from 2nd Detachment. Resupply of PRC-64 radio. Patrol report contains good drawings of camp - used within 10 days, in excellent order (well, fireplace and food utensils in area)	Tuahine medevaced with PUO - nearly four weeks in hospital
#32	218/69	28 Dec-4 Jan	Sgt G.J. Campbell	Lcpl A.S. Puia (2IC and sig), Lcpl G.F. Sutherland (medic), Tpr W.M. Taare (scout), Tpr W.L. McCallion (rfn), Tpr G. Kotiau (rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	667864	664865	Yes 1			2 (BC)	1		Old camp at YS681866 re-occupied immediately . 1 x AK47 CIA	
#33	219/69	27 Dec-2 Jan	Sgt E.P. Stead	Lcpl D. Te Paa (2IC and sig), Tpr T.H. Maaka (medic), Tpr J.R.S. Tawhara (scout), Tpr C.J. McMahon (rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	641897	664875	No						Patrol located old Chicom stick grenade booby trap. Patrol infiltrated into FSPB PICTON	
#34	220/69	27 Dec-2 Jan	Sgt J.T. Murray	Lcpl L. Peni (2IC), Tpr D.P. Sexton (medic), Tpr O.T.O. Simmonds (scout), Tpr R. Martin (rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	641897	640914	No					1 sighting - total seen 3	Enemy group rested for 15minutes - 20m from patrol	
#22	005/70	3-11 Jan	Sgt I.L. Stiles	Lcpl K.L. Jackson (2IC), Pte J.D. Pile (sig), Sgt J. Powley (medic) , Pte R.J. Mickelberg (scout), Pte K.A. Bovill (rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	703941	707938	Yes 1			2 (BC) 1 poss		1 sighting - total seen 3	Orientation patrol	
#33	010/70	11-19 Jan	Sgt E.P. Stead	Lcpl D. Te Paa (2IC), Tpr T.W.J. Moffitt (medic), Tpr G. Kotiau (scout), Tpr C.J. McMahon (rfn), Lcpl C.J. Jackson (rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	785792	766771	No						signal shots during patrol indicate a possible enemy camp at YS8076	
#34	011/70	11-19 Jan	Sgt J.T. Murray	Lcpl L. Peni (2IC), Tpr R. Martin (sig), Tpr D.P. Sexton (medic), Tpr O.T.O. Simmonds (scout)	R/A	Hel/Hel	804800	829793	No						Further Recce/Ambush tasks in vicinity of Route 364 in YS8379	
#31	013/70	13-20 Jan	Capt D.G. Shattky	Tpr J.R.S. Tawhara (2IC), Tpr J.W.R. Osborne (sig), Lcpl T.W.N. Heremaia (medic), Tpr K. Tahana (scout)	R/A	Hel/Hel	826776	828753	Yes 1			1 poss		2 sightings - total seen 4	Camp at YS823765. Patrol directed LFT strike into camp. 2 secondary explosions and automatic weapons heard firing from camp	
#32	014/70	13-14 Jan	Sgt G.J. Campbell	Lcpl A.S. Puia (2IC), Lcpl G.F. Sutherland (sig), Tpr T. Maaka (medic), Tpr W.M. Taare (scout), Tpr W.L. McCallion (rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	829810	832802	Yes 1		1			No enemy seen	Sgt G.J. Campbell - KIA GSW to head. Comms to base gained via Possum relay. Taare (scout) and Maaka (medic) did particularly well during contact	Entire patrol winched out during Dustoff
#35	023/70	23-31 Jan	SSgt D.W. Wilson	Cpl R.T. Broadhurst (2IC), Pte K.A. Bovill (sig), Pte A.W. Ing (medic/scout), Lcpl D.R. Brown (rfn), Lcpl T.R. Bradshaw (rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	565691	580705	No						Resupply of PRC-64 radio and	1 Australian medevaced suffering from severe stomach pains
#32	030/70	1-8 Feb	Sgt J. Powley	Tpr W.M. Taare (2IC and PC from 8 Feb), Lcpl G.F. Sutherland (sig), Tpr T.H. Maaka (medic), Tpr W.L. McCallion (rfn), Lcpl T.W.H. Heremaia (rfn)	R	Hel/Hel	713821	723848	No					Patrol located cache at YS707946 - several spools of US trip-wire	Large training camp located at YS712871. 1 room (60' x 40' sunken 5' into the ground and complete with lectern and seats for 40. Mess hut 50' x 20' with 2 large underground ovens. Tools, clothes, utensils found in camp. Not believed to have been used for 2 months by large groups. 1 or 2 used occasionally	Powley medevaced - severe skin allergy
#31	035/70	8-13 Feb	Capt D.G. Shattky	Lcpl J.A. Tuahine (2IC), Tpr T.W.R. Osborne (sig), Tpr K. Tahana (scout), Lt Z.A. Simon (rfn), Sgt R.T. Percy (rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	695810	707802	No						During exfiltration, mine exploded on LZ - helicopter unable to fly. Patrol secured LZ location while US Chinook removed helicopter. Patrol extracted later by another helicopter	
#43	039/70	15-21 Feb	Sgt E.P. Stead	Cpl D. Te Paa (2IC and sig), Tpr T.W.J. Moffitt (medic), Tpr G. Kotiau (scout), Tpr C.J. McMahon (rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	837828	828823	No						signal shots heard throughout duration of patrol	
#45	040/70	17-23 Feb	SSgt D.W. Wilson	Lcpl G.F. Sutherland (2IC and sig), Tpr T.H. Maaka (medic), Tpr W.M. Taare (scout), Tpr W.L. McCallion (rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	774801	791787	No						Patrol heard enemy movement and saw hand-held flare ignited. LFT suppressed area - patrol extracted by winch	
#44	041/70	22-28 Feb	Sgt J.T. Murray	Lcpl L. Peni (2IC), Tpr R. Martin (sig), Tpr D.P. Sexton (medic), Tpr J.R. Tawhara (scout), Tpr O.T.O. Simmonds (rfn)			830788	825775								
#41	042/70	26-28 Feb	Capt D.G. Shattky	Lcpl J.A. Tuahine (2IC and medic), Tpr J.W. Osborne (sig), Tpr K. Tahana (scout), Lcpl A.S. Puia (rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	529738	535736	No						Extraction of patrol of the Commander 1ATF - 6RAR deployment	

#43	060/70	11-17 Mar	Sgt E.P. Stead	Lcpl D. Te Paa (2IC), Tpr T.W. Moffitt (sig), Tpr G. Kotiau (scout), Sgt T. Dickson (medic)	R/A	Hel/Hel	858788	864780	No		2 enemy voices heard	Camp discovered at YS866780 and 6 caches located in the immediate area - used in the last 48 hours. Patrol extracted by winch
#45	061/70	14-20 Mar	Sgt J. Powley	Tpr W.M. Taare (2IC and scout), Lcpl G.F. Sutherland (sig), Tpr W.L. McCallion (medic), Lcpl T.W.H. Heremaia (rfn), Tpr P.W. Marshall (rfn)	R	Hel/Hel	785844	810864	No		1 sighting - total seen 1 (on insertion at LZ)	No action on LZ - enemy ran away
#44	067/70	15-21 Mar	Sgt J.T. Murray	Lcpl L. Peni (2IC), Tpr R. Martin (sig), Tpr D.R. Sexton (medic), Tpr J.R. Tawhara (scout), Tpr O.T.O. Simmonds (rfn)	R	Hel/Hel	755878	753885	No			
#41	072/70	23-29 Mar	SSgt D.W. Wilson	Sgt T. Dickson (2IC), Lcpl A.S. Puia (sig), Lcpl J.A. Tuahine (medic), Tpr K. Tahana (scout), Tpr J.W. Osborne (rfn)	R	Hel/Hel	712636	684644	No		3 sightings - total seen 24 all from OP at YS692632	Patrol recommended further Recce tasks in areas of old camps encountered at YS688627 and YS692629.
#43	075/70	26 Mar-1 Apr	Sgt E.P. Stead	Cpl D. Te Paa (2IC), Tpr T.W.J. Moffitt (sig), Tpr C.J. McMahon (medic), Tpr G. Kotiau (scout)	R	Hel/Hel	702909	727892	No		2 camps located at YS727898 and 727896 - used recently and in good condition	In first camp patrol located 4 x Chicom claymores, 7.62 SMG magazines, ammunition, detenators, half ib chicom explosives, cable electrical, NVA webbing, tools and kitchen utensils. Some documents brought back to base - remainder destroyed in situation. Patrol also located cache platform containing 20 empty bushel sacks. Patrol extracted by winch
#42	085/70	7-13 Apr	Sgt T. Dickson	Lcpl W.M. Taare (2IC and scout), Lcpl G.F. Sutherland (sig), Tpr T.H. Maaka (medic), Tpr W.L. McCallion (rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	663605	688600	Yes	2 poss	2 sightings - total seen 9 at YS663607 (enemy engaged on second sighting)	Patrol located old Friendly Forces camp that had all rubbish pits dug up in previous 24 hours by VC. First sighting - 7, two in camouflage suits and all enemy in very good physical condition with good equipment. Patrol extracted by winch.
#45	089/70	9-15 Apr	Sgt J. Powley	Lcpl J.A. Tuahine (2IC), Tpr J.W. Osborne (sig), Lcpl A.S. Puia (medic), Tpr K. Tahana (scout), Tpr P.W. Marshall (rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	594916	565918	No			
#44	103/70	19-25 Apr	Sgt J.T. Murray	Lcpl L. Peni (2IC), Tpr J.W. Osborne (sig), Tpr D.P. Sexton (medic), Tpr O.T.O. Simmonds (scout), Tpr W.L. McCallion (rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	585736	590739	No			
#43	104/70	20-26 Apr	Sgt E.P. Stead	Cpl D. Te Paa (2IC and sig), Tpr T.H. Maaka (medic), Tpr G. Kotiau (scout), Tpr T.W. Moffitt (rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	638738	638738	No			Received water resupply during patrol
#41	113/70	30 Apr-7 May	Capt D.G. Shattky	Tuahine, Osborne, Puia, Tahana, Marshall	AMB	Foot/LR	495623	471660	No			Night ambush near IATF base. Friendly Forces TOAR patrol almost fired on patrol.
#42	121/70	8-15 May	Cpl D. Te Paa	Lcpl G.F. Sutherland (2IC and sig), Tpr T.W.J. Moffitt (medic), Lcpl W.M. Taare (scout), Tpr W.L. McCallion (rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	583007	592825	No		1 sighting - total seen 3 on extraction LZ	Enemy not engaged by patrol due to heavy under-growth. LFT suppressed area during extraction.
#44	122/70	6-12 May	Sgt J.T. Murray	Lcpl L. Peni (2IC), Lcpl G. Mach (sig), Tpr L.A. Liddington (medic), Tpr O.T.O. Simmonds (scout), Sgt L.E. Fraser (rfn), Tpr G.M. Antonovich (rfn), Tpr J.D. Pile (rfn), Tpr J.E. Wilshire (rfn), Tpr L.C. Cullen (rfn)	AMB	Foot/LR	448669	487658	No		Ambush compromised by Civilians	Commander recommended use of Jungle Greens near Civilian Access areas to disguise unit's true identity
#44	131/70	17-24 May	Sgt J.T. Murray	Lcpl L. Peni (2IC), Lcpl A.S. Puia (sig), Tpr T.H. Maaka (medic), Tpr O.T.O. Simmonds (scout), Lcpl J.R. Tawhara (rfn)	R	Hel/Hel	308754	327762	No		Company size camp located at YS308754 in good condition.	All bunkers in camp connected by trenches. Civilians illegally in area - camp to be destroyed by sappers
#43	136/70	22-29 May	Sgt E.P. Stead	Cpl D. Te Paa (2IC and sig), Tpr D.P. Sexton (medic), Tpr G. Kotiau (scout), Tpr C.J. McMahon (rfn)	R	Hel/Hel	367864	362841	No			Patrol winched out by helicopter
#42	143/70	31 May-5 Jun	Sgt T. Dickson	Lcpl W.M. Taare (2IC and scout), Lcpl G.F. Sutherland (sig), Lcpl L. Peni (rfn), Tpr W.L. McCallion (medic)	R	Boat/Hel	605579	641613	No		Heard female voices at various times	Camp at YS633609. Bunker systems at YS634608 and YS637611. Infiltration by US Coastguard WPB and Gemini inflatable boats
#44	150/70	6-13 Jun	Sgt J.T. Murray	Lcpl J.R. Tawhara (2IC), Lcpl A.S. Puia (sig), Tpr T.H. Maaka (medic), Tpr O.T.O. Simmonds (scout)	R	Hel/Hel	609920	618902	No			Patrol winched out
#24	154/70	8-15 June	2nd Lt L.C. Behm	Lcpl M.R. Krassovsky (2IC), Cpl N.K. Bainbridge (sig), Tpr T. Sexton (medic), Tpr W.W. Carter (scout)	R	Hel/Hel	658589	618598	No			Heard numerous shots during patrol
#42	155/70	8-15 June	Sgt T. Dickson	Lcpl W.M. Taare (2IC and scout), Lcpl G.F. Sutherland (sig), Tpr T.W.J. Moffitt (medic), Tpr P.M. Marshall (rfn)	R	Hel/Hel	648605	617608	No		22 sightings - total seen 69 (all from OP on entrance to occupied camp)	OP on occupied camp at YS637612 - mainly parter movement. Orientation patrol for Marshall - 'excellent effort by all members of patrol.'
#41	157/70	12-Jun	WO2 D.W. Wilson	Lcpl J.A. Tuahine (2IC), Tpr J.W. Osborne (sig), Tpr R.E. Meadows (medic), Tpr K. Tahana (scout), 2Lt M.R. Eddy (rfn)	R	Hel/Hel	631939	631939	No			See 156/70 (Patrol #23) - #23 contact with enemy just before RV with Wilson's patrol
#41	161/70	14-21 Jun	WO2 D.W. Wilson	Lcpl J.A. Tuahine (2IC), Tpr J.W. Osborne (sig), Tpr R.E. Meadows (medic), Tpr K. Tahana (scout), 2Lt M.R. Eddy (rfn)	R	Hel/Hel	753793	743811	No			Patrol located old abandoned VC pack - destroyed in situ
#43	166/70	20-23 Jun	Capt D.G. Shattky	Cpl D. Te Paa (2IC and sig), Tpr D.P. Sexton (medic), Tpr G. Kotiau (scout)	R	Hel/Hel	820715	821723	No			Patrol extracted by Commander IATF due to US operations in patrol AO
#45	172/70	22-29 Jun	Sgt J. Powley	Lcpl G.F. Sutherland (2IC and sig), Tpr T.M. Maaka (medic), Tpr T.W. Moffitt (scout), Tpr W.L. McCallion (rfn)	R	Hel/Hel	579705	562709	No			Patrol located a number of old bunkers. Patrol winched out. 1 member with 24-hour fever
#41	177/70	28 Jun-5 Jul	Lcpl J.A. Tuahine	Lcpl J.A. Tawhara (2IC and scout), Lcpl A.S. Puia (sig), Tpr P.M. Marshall (medic)	R	Hel/Hel	347855	360862	No			Patrol had task of OP land-cleared area

#44	179/70	30 Jun-7 Jul	Sgt J.T. Murray	Lcpl L. Peni (2IC and scout), Lcpl F.C. Nathan (sig), Cpl K. R Thompson (medic)	R	Hel/Hel	331770 323770	No	Woodcutters (civilians) in area	Re-supply of PRC-64 by Sioux helicopter
#42	186/70	8-15 Jul	Sgt T. Dickson	Lcpl W.M. Taare (2IC and scout), Lcpl G.F. Sutherland (sig), Tpr R.E. Meadows (medic), Lcpl J.R. Tawhara (rfn)	R	Hel/Hel	309734 349723	No		Enemy movement in area within last 48 hours - mark trails by breaking saplings at waist height
#43	191/70	12-19 July	Sgt E.P. Stead	Cpl D. Te Paa (2IC and sig), Tpr D.P. Sexton (medic), Tpr G. Kotiau (scout), Capt B. Bestic (rfn)	R	Hel/Hel	621760 609747	No		Bestic attached to Patrol as rifleman
#41	196/70	18-25 Jul	WO2 D.W. Wilson	Lcpl J.A. Tuahine (2IC), Tpr J.W. Osborne (sig), Tpr K. Tahana (scout), Tpr T.H. Maaka (medic)	R	Hel/Hel	340700 367692	No	Old camp at YS354760 - used in previous 10 days	Civilians were out of Civilian Access Area (as usual)
#44	198/70	22-29 Jul	Sgt J.T. Murray	Tpr T.W. Moffitt (2IC and sig), Tpr C.J. McMahon (medic), Tpr W.L. McCallion (scout), Tpr P.M. Marshall (rfn)	R	Hel/Hel	379800 384766	No		
#45	199/70	22-29 Jul	Sgt J. Powley	Lcpl A.S. Puia (2IC), Lcpl F.C. Nathan (sig), Cpl K. Thompson (medic), Tpr O.T.O. Simmonds (scout)	R	Hel/Hel	579778 595764	No		One patrol member with heavy cough
#43	205/70	28 Jul-2 Aug	Sgt E.P. Stead	Tpr D.P. Sexton (2IC), Tpr J.W. Osborne (sig), Tpr R.E. Meadows (medic), Tpr G. Kotiau (scout)	R	Hel/Hel	631938 642937	No	Civilian woodcutters in area	Patrol aborted due to illness of 'key patrol member' - winched out
#42	209/70	3-10 Aug	Sgt T. Dickson	Cpl D. Te Paa, Cpl J. Hingst, Lcpl W.M. Taare (2IC and scout), Lcpl G.F. Sutherland (sig), Tpr W.L. McCallion (medic), Tpr T. Davison, Tpr W. Henderson	F	Hel/Hel	309651 330688	No	Camp located at YS328662 - small camp located 50m north	40 plus sleeping areas in larger camp - believed to have been used four days previously by transit group. Smaller camp had bamboo piped water supply. Patrol also located booby trap made from RPG round - also found 2 x US-type smoke grenades in abandoned camp.
#41	212/70	3-5 Aug	Capt D.G. Shattky	Sgt J. Powley (2IC), Lcpl A.S. Puia (sig), Lcpl J.A. Tawhara, Tpr T. Maaka (medic), Tpr K. Tahana (scout)	AMB	Hel/Hel	357683 357683	No		Patrol tasked at short notice to react to suspected enemy movement. Ambushed with no results.
#44	215/70	12-18 Aug	Lcpl J.A. Tawhara	Lcpl J.A. Tuahine (2IC and medic), Lcpl A.S. Puia (sig), Lcpl F.C. Nathan (rfn), Tpr G. Kotiau (scout)	R	Hel/Hel	590730 595762	No		
#43	227/70	21-28 Aug	Sgt E.P. Stead	Cpl D. Te Paa (2IC and sig), Lcpl L. Peni (rfn), Tpr D.P. Sexton (medic), Tpr O.T.O. Simmonds (scout)	R	Hel/Hel	611963 612963	No	Transit camp at YS617964 - used within 7 days	Stead recommended that 'where possible it may be to our advantage to remain behind in and enemy area after friendly forces have withdrawn, so as not to alert the enemy with our normal insertion procedure.'
#42	231/70	23-29 Aug	Sgt T. Dickson	Lcpl W.M. Taare (2IC), Lcpl G.F. Sutherland (sig), Tpr W.L. McCallion (rfn), Tpr T. Maaka (medic)	R	Hel/Hel	811719 823704	No	Transit camp located by patrol	Dickson commented 'Patrol could have carried out a recon for river crossings for a future operation in the area. As the Squadron was not asked about info of this nature, little attention was paid to suitable vehicle crossing places.'
#45	234/70	27 Aug-3 Sep	Sgt J. Powley	Lcpl A.S. Puia (2IC and sig), Lcpl F.C. Nathan (scout), Tpr R.E. Meadows, Tpr C.J. McMahon	R	Hel/Hel	415794 431784	No		Patrol found some equipment on track and set up an OP - 2 female civilians who returned to collect equipment were captured and evacuated to 1ATF for questioning
#41	237/70	31 Aug-7 Sep	Sgt J.T. Murray	Tpr K. Tahana (2IC and scout), Tpr J.W. Osborne (sig), Tpr P.N. Marshall (medic), Tpr G. Kotiau (rfn)	R	Hel/Hel	389870 366863	No		All tracks and old camps in AO were overgrown.
#42	246/70	6-9 Sep	Sgt E.P. Stead	Lcpl L. Peni (2IC and scout), Lcpl G.F. Sutherland (sig), Tpr T. Maaka (medic)	R	Hel/Hel	805860 797854	No	Located training camp at YS805855 - had models of huts built	Patrol heard voices on road - enemy not seen
#45	254/70	14-21 Sep	Sgt T. Dickson	Lcpl A.S. Puia (sig), Lcpl W.M. Taare (2IC), Tpr T.W.J. Moffitt (medic), Tpr W.L. McCallion (rfn)	R	Hel/Hel	355789 345785	No	Camp at YS345800 - 14 T-shaped bunkers were found all in good conditions	Patrol discovered a 'lot of US 'C' rations located in camps - ex blackmarket or foraged.' Other old complexes in area
#43	256/70	16-23 Sep	Sgt J.T. Murray	Lcpl J.A. Tawhara (2IC), Lcpl F.C. Nathan (sig), Tpr O.T.O. Simmonds (scout), Tpr G. Kotiau (medic), Master-Chief M. Spencer (USNavy SEALs)	R	Hel/Hel	810866 811861	No	1 sighting - total seen 2. Patrol heard further 7 but not seen	Numerous shots heard during patrol.
#41	257/70	20-27 Sep	Sgt J. Powley	Tpr J.W. Osborne (2IC and sig), Tpr C.J. McMahon (medic), Tpr T. Maaka	R	Hel/Hel	611775 620761	No	Patrol located cache of 6x4 gallon drums of (?) linseed oil destroyed in situ	One patrol member severely gashed forehead on exiting helicopter during infiltration - medevaced immediately from LZ
#44	262/70	24 Sep-1 Oct	Lcpl J.A. Tuahine	Tpr K. Tahana (2IC and scout), Tpr D.P. Sexton (medic), Tpr P.N. Marshall (rfn), Cpl D. Te Paa (sig), Cpl Dalbo (US)	R	Hel/Hel	573654 569655	No		Patrol located one well
#45	268/70	29 Sep-5 Oct	WO2 D.W. Wilson	Lcpl L. Peni (2IC), Lcpl J.A. Tawhara (scout), Tpr T.W.J. Moffitt (sig)	R	Hel/Hel	594578 623593	No		10 wells located around swampy area YS6160, all in good condition
#42	269/70	2-9 Oct	Sgt T. Dickson	Lcpl W.M. Taare (2IC and scout), Lcpl G.F. Sutherland (sig), Tpr R.E. Meadows (medic), Tpr W.L. McCallion	R	Hel/Hel	819836 819836	No	Camp located that had been used by transit VC groups	VC moving through the area - numerous shots heard
#44	271/70	4-11 Oct	Sgt J.T. Murray	Tpr T. Maaka (2IC), Tpr O.T.O. Simmonds (scout and sig), Tpr C.J. McMahon (medic)	R	Hel/Hel	394747 394745	No		
#41	273/70	6-13 Oct	Lcpl J.A. Tuahine	Tpr J.W. Osborne (2IC and sig), Tpr K. Tahana (scout), Tpr P.N. Marshall (medic)	R	Hel/Hel	320711 312672	No		Patrol located 'old RAP (?) many empty medicine phials in old damaged complex'

#43	279/70	12-19 Oct	Sgt E.P. Stead	Cpl D. Te Paa (2IC and sig), Tpr G. Kotiau (scout), Tpr D.P. Sexton (medic), Cpl 'Sparks' (US)	R	Hel/Hel	591802 609781	No				A US Gunship was firing into patrol #43's AO at the time of insertion - had not been cleared by Squadron Headquarters.
#45	284/70	18-25 Oct	Sgt J. Powley	Lcpl L. Peni (2IC), Lcpl J.A. Tawhara (scout), Lcpl A.S. Puia (sig), Tpr T.W.J. Moffitt (medic)	R	Hel/Hel	298733 288719	No				
#42	283/70	22-29 Oct	Sgt T. Dickson	Lcpl W.M. Taare (2IC), Lcpl G.F. Sutherland (sig), Sgt E.P. Stead (rfn), Tpr R.E. Meadows (medic)	R	Hel/Hel	622783 631768	No				Nobody using area at present - lot of cattle tracks
#44	291/70	25 Oct-1 Nov	Sgt J.T. Murray	Lcpl F.C. Nathan (2IC), Tpr T. Maaka (medic), Tpr O.T.O. Simmonds (scout), 2nd Lt J.S. Hayes (rfn)	R	Hel/Hel	616796 610792	No				Patrol members suffered flu, bad feet and eye trouble
#41	296/70	30 Oct-6 Nov	Lcpl J.A. Tuahine	Tpr J.W. Osborne (2IC and sig), Tpr K. Tahana (scout), Tpr P.M. Marshall (medic)	R	Hel/Hel	646825 667831	No				Possible enemy activity in SE edge of swamp at YS6783 (swamp is well wooded) - recommend patrol into this area.
#43	297/70	1-9 Nov	Cpl D. Te Paa	Sgt E.P. Stead (2IC and sig), Tpr D.P. Sexton (medic), Tpr G. Kotiau (scout), Tpr W.L. McCallion (rfn)	R	Hel/Hel	821756 820760	No				Patrol extended to try and trace shots
#23	302/70	9-Nov	Sgt J. Gerbhardt	Cpl G Mawkes (2IC), Tpr D.J. Smith (medic), Tpr L.C.Cullen (scout), Tpr W. Moore (sig), Tpr S. Garces (rfn), 2nd Lt J.S. Hayes (rfn)	R	Hel/Hel	824752 824752	Yes	1 poss	1 sighting - 4 seen		Hayes was also a late addition to Sergeant Jack Gerbhardt's 1 Squadron reconnaissance patrol 302/70 which was contacted by an enemy force of at least four on insertion. That patrol lasted approximately forty minutes.
#42	301/70	7-14 Nov	Cpl L. Peni	Lcpl F.C. Nathan (2IC), Lcpl A.S. Puia (sig), Tpr T.W.J. Moffitt (medic), Tpr O.T.O. Simmonds (scout)	R	Hel/Hel	664776 643799	No				Possible check or ambush on camp at YS649801 recommended
#44	303/70	10-16 Nov	Sgt J. Powley	Lcpl G.F. Sutherland (2IC and sig), Tpr T. Maaka (medic), Tpr K. Tahana (scout), 2nd Lt J.S. Hayes (rfn)	R	Hel/Hel	616796 610775	No				Patrol recommends further checks on the fence encountered.
#41	310/70	17-24 Nov	Sgt J.T. Murray	Lcpl J.A. Tuahine (2IC), Lcpl J.A. Tawhara (sig), Tpr R.E. Meadows (medic), Tpr P.M. Marshall (rfn)	R	APC/Hel	280705 289684	No				Patrol heard one voice and sounds of ox cart - possible civilians but not seen
#45	312/70	21-23 Nov	Lcpl W.M. Taare	Sgt T. Dickson (2IC), Tpr T.W.J. Moffitt (sig), Tpr D.P. Sexton (medic), Tpr W.L. McCallion (scout)	R	Hel/Hel	668838 657835	Yes 1	2 1 (BC)	2 sightings - total seen 1 (enemy KIA seen twice - shot second time)		Moffitt accidentally shot by SLR - while moving outside LUP. Taare accidentally wounded by AD from XM-148. 40mm grenade did not explode. Taare was in winch when accident occurred
#43	314/70	24-30 Nov	Sgt E.P. Stead	Cpl D. Te Paa (2IC), Lcpl A.S. Puia, Tpr J. W. Osborne (sig) Sgt T.F.A. Powell (medic)	R	APC/Hel	790791 835796	No				No enemy in area. Puia medevaced with Malaria
Total	Patrols											
	77								6	5 (BC)	35 sightings - total seen 120	
										4 poss		

Appendix Four:
4 Troop NZSAS Patrol Activity 25 November 1970 - 14 February
1971

4 Troop NZSAS, 25 November 1970 - 14 February 1971

Ptl No.	Ops No.	Dates	Patrol Commander	Patrol Members	Task	Infil/Exfil	Infil YS	Exfil YS	Contact	OWN KIA	OWN WIA	EN KIA	EN WIA	Details of Sightings	Miscellaneous details	Results of Medevac
#19	317/70	25 Nov-2 Dec	Lt A.W. Freemantle	Sgt M.A. Cunningham (2IC), WO2 K. Haami (Medic), Tpr W. Henderson (Rfn), Sig R.M. Mounsey (Sig)	R	Hel/Hel	638777	641798	No						Patrol recommended that future operations be tasked in Y56479 area.	
#31	381/70	29 Nov-6 Dec	Sgt J.P. Ward	Cpl D.H. Jensen (2IC), Tpr N. McCulloch (Scout), Tpr C.K. Brown (Sig), Tpr R.T. Shuard (Medic), Sgt V.T. Smith (Rfn)	R	Hel/Hel	609741	623756	No						Patrol discovered M67 HE grenade and M16 magazine in new condition. Holes also in LZ	
#44	338/70	21-26 Dec	Sgt P.B. Brown	Cpl L. Burberry (2IC), LCpl D.M. Terry (Medic), Tpr V.K. Timu (Sig), Tpr J.W. Thompson (Scout)	R	Hel/Hel	837776	835795	No					1 sighting - total seen 3 (while moving off LZ)	Enemy in khaki and moving through jungle - patrol suspected that enemy seen observed patrol insertion	
#43	339/70	23-28 Dec	Sgt V.T. Smith	LCpl F.C. Nathan (2IC), LCpl S.A. Peti (Scout), Tpr P.L. Wikaire (Sig), Tpr P.B. Shield (Medic)	R	APC/Hel	753828	730746	No							One patrol member medevaced with 'boils'
#42	346/70	27 Dec-2 Jan	Sgt T.F.A. Powell	LCpl W. Wanoa (2IC), LCpl J. Ilolahia (Scout), LCpl J.B. Adlam (Sig), Tpr W.O. James (Medic)	R	Hel/Hel	769779	784761	No						Many old bunkers in the patrol area - estimated no movement in area for previous 6-12 months	
#41	351/70	3-8 Jan	Sgt M.A. Cunningham	LCpl A.L. Robbie (2IC), Tpr A.F. Robinson (Sig), Tpr T.S.W. Babbington (Medic), Tpr J.K. Kingi (Scout)	R/A	Hel/Hel	633756	655761	No						Patrol heard numerous shots	
#43	007/71	8-15 Jan	Sgt P.B. Brown	Sgt V.T. Smith (2IC), LCpl R.D. Curtis (Rfn), Tpr P.L. Wikaire (Rfn), Tpr P.B. Shield (Scout), Cpl W.J. Holah (Medic), Cpl L. Burberry (Sig), LCpl D.M. Terry (Rfn), Tpr J.W. Thompson (Scout), Tpr V.K. Timu (Rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	560827	559822	No						Fighting patrol. Patrol saw no evidence of significant movement in the area	
#42	012/70	14-20 Jan	Sgt T.F.A. Powell	LCpl W. Wanoa (2IC), LCpl J. Ilolahia (Scout), LCpl J.B. Adlam (Sig), Tpr W.O. James (Medic)	R/A	Hel/Hel	520841	520841	No						Patrol checked 'agent report on trench system - NIL'	
#45	016/71	18-21 Jan	2lt J.S. Hayes	Sgt A.W. Roser (2IC), Tpr S.W. Rodgers (Medic), Sig M. Hollaway (Sig), LCpl F.C. Nathan (Rfn), Tpr W.T. Tarapipipi (Rfn), Cpl L. Burberry (Rfn), LCpl B. Ainsley (Rfn), LCpl C.E. Hannaford (Rfn), Tpr R.C. Swanson (Rfn), LCpl T.C. Horne (Rfn)	A	Hel/APC	834836	833835	No						Stay behind ambush on area of mine incident. In Patrol Commanders opinion, 'ambush compromised repeatedly by air activity in area and also by the approach of APCs 100m South of main ambush position on 19 January.	
#41	021/71	21-29 Jan	Sgt M.A. Cunningham	LCpl A.L. Robbie (2IC), LCpl S.A. Peti (Rfn), LCpl D.M. Terry (Medic), Tpr J.K. Kingi (Scout), Tpr A.F. Robinson (Sig)	R/A	Hel/Hel	834836	833835	No					Voices heard - enemy not seen	Patrol extracted on 28 Jan and reinserted to aid Australian patrol #35 (022/71) on camp assault and demolitions task.	
#43	024/71	25 Jan-1 Feb	Sgt V.T. Smith	Cpl R.D. Curtis (2IC), Tpr P.L. Wikaire (Sig), Tpr G.W. Babbington (Medic), Tpr P.B. Shield (Scout)	R/A	Hel/Hel	646914	642915	No						Patrol located 17 x 2.75" French air/ground rockets, from French occupation - destroyed in situ	
#35	022/71	28-29 Jan	Sgt M.A. Cunningham	LCpl A.L. Robbie, LCpl D.M. Terry, Tpr J.K. Kingi, Tpr A.F. Robinson	R/A	Hel/Hel										
#44	025/71	25-30 Jan	WO2 K. Haami	Sgt P. Brown (2IC/Sig), Cpl W.J. Holah (Medic), Tpr J.W. Thompson (Scout), Tpr V.K. Timu (Rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	752829	777843	No						AO 'showed little sign of enemy use'	
#42	028/71	31 Jan-4 Feb	Sgt T.F.A. Powell	LCpl W. Wanoa (2IC), LCpl J. Ilolahia (Scout), LCpl J.B. Adlam (Sig), Tpr W.O. James (Medic), Tpr W.T. Tarapipipi (Rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	574860	577880	Yes 1			2 (BC) 1 poss		1 sighting - total seen 10 plus	Patrol reinforced by both Standby patrols for sweep of contact area. Enemy observed moving tactically on compass bearing and covering tracks. Enemy KIA identified as leader Chan Due Guerrillas and Battalion 2IC of D445.	
#2	028/71	4-Feb	Sgt V.T. Smith	Cpl W.J. Holah, LCpl J.W. Thompson, Tpr P.L. Wikaire, Tpr V.K. Timu	R/A	Hel/Hel	571881	577880								
#41	033/71	5-11 Feb	Sgt M.A. Cunningham	LCpl A.L. Robbie (2IC), Cpl F.C. Nathan (Rfn), Cpl J.B. Adlam (Medic), Tpr J.K. Kingi (Scout), Tpr A.F. Robinson (Sig)	A	Hel/Hel	861844	851839	No					No movement in area for 7 days	Ambush task at Y5848857. Much activity in US area to North and East (Brigade operation on Nui Be). Patrol extracted by rope.	
#43	035/71	6-14 Feb	Sgt V.T. Smith	Cpl R.D. Curtis (2IC), Tpr P.L. Wikaire (Sig), Tpr G.W. Babbington (Medic), Tpr P.B. Shield (Scout)	R/A	Hel/Hel	365825	368823	No						Patrol resupply with water (air drop containers-OFF)	
#44	036/71	6-14 Feb	Sgt P.B. Brown	Cpl L. Burberry (2IC/Sig), LCpl D.M. Terry (Medic), LCpl J.W. Thompson (Scout), Tpr V.K. Timu (Rfn)	R/A	Hel/Hel	382885	367869	No						Patrol heard numerous shots. Located a shallow grave - 1 x Vietnamese GSW's (suspect from V5 ambush)	
Total	Patrols															
	17								1						2 (BC) 1 Poss	2 sightings - total seen 13 plus

Appendix Five:
Contact Statistics August 1968 – February 1971

Contact Statistics December 1968 - February 1971

		Victor Coy	Whiskey Coy	Enemy	Casualties	Aus Casualties	Total Enemy	SAS	Enemy	Sightings/Seen	Patrols	Patrol days	Miscellaneous Notes
1968	December	0 contacts	1 contact	1 KIA	0	3 KIA, 25 WIA	44 KIA, 1 DOW, 5 WIA	3 contacts	5 KIA (BC), 1 WIA	6/19	15	160	13 Recce patrols and 2 Ambush. 4 Troop NZSAS officially joined the Australian Squadron on 12 December.
1969	January	1 contact	6 contacts	2 KIA, 1 WIA	1 KIA, 2 WIA	6 KIA, 3 DOW, 26 WIA		9 contacts	13 KIA (BC), 1 KIA (Poss), 1 WIA	129/812	32	147	1 Australian KIA (shot accidentally) and 1 Aus/2 NZ WIA. Most successful month of 2 Squadron tour - in terms of VC sighted.
	February	13 contacts	12 contacts	19 KIA, 2 WIA, 2 PW	8 WIA	6 KIA, 3 DOW, 34 WIA	52 KIA, 25 WIA, 3 PW	2 contacts	1 KIA (BC), 1 KIA (Poss)	9/99	16	86	Handover month from 2 Squadron (1-21 Feb) to 3 Squadron (22-28 Feb). All three 3 Squadron patrols for February carried out by 4 Troop NZSAS.
	March	5 contacts		2 KIA, 2 PW		2 WIA	25 KIA, 3 WIA, 2 PW	6 contacts	5 KIA (BC), 4 KIA (Poss)	20/71	26	151	All reconnaissance patrols.
	April	8 contacts	1 contact	9 KIA, 4 WIA	5 WIA	1 KIA, 1 DOW, 10 WIA	7 KIA, 2 WIA	3 contacts	6 KIA (BC), 1 KIA (Poss)	21/178	21		All reconnaissance patrols.
	May	relieved	4 contacts	10 KIA		5 KIA, 48 WIA	25 KIA, 15 WIA	8 contacts	16 KIA (BC)	87/947		153	
	June	11 contacts	7 contacts	21 KIA, 18 WIA	2 KIA, 4 WIA	5 KIA, 58 WIA	93 KIA, 24 WIA, 4 PW	5 contacts	8 KIA (BC), 2 KIA (Poss), 1 WIA	26/153	11	110	1 RPG, 1 M79, 1 AK47 and 2 Chicom pistols captured during month
	July	2 contacts		5 KIA	1 KIA, 2 DOW, 5 WIA	10 KIA, 64 WIA	27 KIA, 15 WIA	3 contacts	5 KIA (BC), 5 KIA (Poss)	40/308	14	102	1 SMG (K43) and 1 SKS rifle captured during month
	August	0 contacts	0 contacts	0 contacts	2 KIA, 8 WIA	4 KIA, 94 WIA	79 KIA, 3 WIA, 2 PW	13 contacts	21 KIA (BC), 2 KIA (Poss), 3 WIA	29/78	19	159	18 Recce patrols and 1 Ambush patrol
	September	2 contacts	4 contacts	5 KIA	2 WIA	1 KIA, 10 WIA	29 KIA, 6 WIA, 1 PW	10 contacts	20 KIA (BC), 6 KIA (Poss), 3 WIA	28/160	19	165	1 Australian WIA, 1 Australian MIA (Fisher) and 1 AK47 and M1 Carbine captured during the month
	October/November	4 contacts	1 contact	4 KIA	2 KIA, 3 WIA	8 KIA, 32 WIA	74 KIA, 4 WIA, 3 PW	7 contacts	15 KIA (BC), 2 WIA	51/364	16	141.5	1 AK47 captured
	December	1 contact	2 contacts	5 KIA		10 KIA, 33 WIA	83 KIA, 16 PW	4 contacts	9 KIA (BC), 2 KIA (Poss)	9/38	20	125.5	1 AK47 captured. Six additional sightings with 32 enemy sighted.
	1970	January	3 contacts	6 contacts	9 KIA, 3 PW	7 WIA	4 KIA, 15 WIA	45 KIA, 16 PW	9 contacts	20 KIA (BC), 7 KIA (Poss)	14/68	22	151.5
February								1 contact	2 KIA (BC) 1 KIA (Poss)	2/13	13		9 3 Sqn Recce patrols and 4 1 Sqn Recce patrols
February/March		6 contacts	3 contacts	7 KIA	1 KIA, 6 WIA	17 KIA, 109 WIA	74 KIA, 8 PW						
March								6 contacts	3 KIA (BC), 3 KIA (Poss)	16/58	32	140	12 Recce patrols, 19 Recce/Ambush, 2 Ambush and 1 Surveillance patrols. Some documents captured during month
April		5 contacts	6 contacts	10 KIA	1 KIA	3 KIA, 22 WIA	41 KIA, 1 PW	11 contacts	9 KIA (BC), 12 KIA (Poss), 3 WIA	24/63	32	120	29 Recce/Ambush, 2 Surveillance and 1 Ambush patrols.
May		0 contacts	1 contact		1 KIA, 3 WIA	4 KIA, 43 WIA	40 KIA, 6 PW	6 contacts	3 KIA (BC), 3 KIA (Poss), 1 WIA	8/30	24		19 Reconnaissance patrols, 4 Recce/Ambush and 1 Ambush patrol
June								5 contacts	3 KIA (BC), 6 KIA (Poss)	12/25	36	169	All reconnaissance patrols. 1 AK47 and 1 M16 captured during the month.
July		3 contacts	2 contacts	2 KIA, 1 WIA, 1 PW	5 WIA	10 WIA	22 KIA	3 contacts	4 KIA (BC), 1 KIA (Poss)	8/17	22	148	OC commented that 'Due to current restrictions on 1ATF TAOR there is a distinct lack of SAS tasks. Sir Leslie Munro also visited.'
August		1 contact	0 contacts		1 WIA	1 KIA, 28 WIA	39 KIA, 7 WIA, 7 PW	5 contacts	4 KIA (BC), 1 KIA (Poss), 1 WIA - 1 WIA (Poss)	11/32	29	154	OC Commented 'The 1ATF restricted TAOR still exists and hence the continuing lack of proper SAS tasks.'
September		2 contacts	6 contacts	10 KIA, 2 WIA, 1 PW	0	0	21 KIA, 2 WIA, 5 PW	3 contacts	2 KIA (BC) 1 PW	5/11	25	134	23 Recce/2 Fighting and 2 Ambush patrols. 2 Operations mounted for 7RAR also. 1 M1 Garrand and 1 M1 Carbine captured.
October		3 contacts	2 contacts	2 WIA	1 KIA, 2 WIA	2 KIA, 4 WIA	9 KIA, 4 WIA, 3 PW	3 contacts	1 KIA (BC), 1 KIA (Poss) 1 WIA	3/25	27	132	All 27 patrols were Recce patrols
November		2 contacts	0 contacts	1 KIA, 1 WIA (PW)	2 NZSAS WIA	4 WIA	9 KIA, 2 WIA, 2 PW	6 contacts	2 KIA (BC), 3 KIA (Poss), 2 WIA (Poss)	7/17	27	150	Two NZSAS casualties during month (Moffitt and Taare).
December	1 contact	0 contacts	2 KIA		1 DOW, 16 WIA	42 KIA, 21 WIA, 1 PW	5 contacts	4 KIA (BC), 3 KIA (Poss), 2 WIA (BT)	2/4	27	129	All 27 patrols were Recce patrols. 3 AK47s captured.	
1971	January							3 contacts	4 KIA (BC), 2 WIA (BT), 1 WIA (Poss)	6/21 plus	21	112	9 Recce, 9 Recce/Ambush, 3 Ambush patrols. Weapons captured included 2 x M1 Carbines, 1 Chicom Type 50, 1 Chicom Type 58, 1 82mm mortar, 4 x SKS, 1 x M79 and 1 x M16 rifle.
	February							2 contacts	2 KIA (BC)	3/12 plus	13	83	2 Recce, 6 Ambush, 5 Recce/Ambush patrols carried out. 1 x M2 Carbine captured.
	Total	70 contacts	70 contacts	126 KIA, 31 WIA, 10 PW	12 KIA, 2 DOW, 63 WIA	90 KIA, 9 DOW, 703 WIA	925 KIA, 138 WIA, 80 PW	150 contacts	203 KIA (BC), 64 KIA (Poss), 26 WIA	594/3764	573	3217.5	

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