

Indonesian Confrontation



1964-1966

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In the Service of Silence

ANZAC DAY SPECIAL:
AUSTRALIANS IN BATTLE 1950-
2000, The Australian [Edition 1], Tue
25 Apr 2000, page 12, By
D.D.McNicoll (the following is an
extract only)

In the 1950s and 60s,
scores of Australian
servicemen died

in two military campaigns known as the Malayan Emergency and the Indonesian Confrontation ... the spread of communism after World War II led to a widespread belief in Western democracies in the 'domino effect', whereby country after country would supposedly fall under the socialist yoke as communist 'subversives' undermined governments and the rule of law. While the term was originally coined to describe events in Europe, the perceived threat of Red China and the depressed state of Asian economies allowed similar fears to flourish in Australia. It was only a matter of time, the doomsayers predicted, before the countries to our north fell to the 'commos' and the laid-back Australian lifestyle was placed at risk.

In this politically volatile environment it was not difficult for then Prime Minister, the long-serving Liberal Robert Menzies, to convince his parliamentary colleagues that Australia should send forces to help the British defend Malaya from insurgents who were officially known as 'communist terrorists'. The conflict became known as the Malayan Emergency

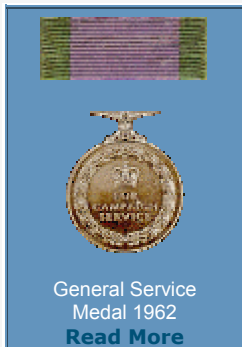
.... When Malaya achieved full independence from Britain in 1957, the role of Australian forces began to change as the locals took more responsibility for their own defence. By July 1958, most of the RAAF forces had left. The infantry forces remained. Although the Malayan Emergency was declared over on July 31, 1960, Australian forces remained in the area as part of the Commonwealth's Far East Strategic Reserve (FESR). These troops may have been looking forward to a quiet time but fighting soon broke out again -- this time in Borneo between Malaysia and Indonesia. The formation of the Federation of Malaysia followed by the unsuccessful Brunei revolt in 1962 led to Indonesia launching a policy of 'konfrontasi' against their neighbours. The Indonesian Confrontation consisted of incursions into the Malaysian regions of Sabah and Sarawak in northern Borneo.

Australian units of the FESR were deployed in 1965 after initially being used for security tasks on the Malayan Peninsula. At the end of January 1965, the Australian Government agreed to a Malaysian request for active troops and deployed the 3 RAR and a squadron of the SAS. They joined 18 British and Gurkha battalions and three Malaysian battalions. The fighting comprised ambush and skirmish actions in the jungle and the Australians were limited by not being able to chase Indonesian troops back across the border. The Australian government suppressed all news reporting of the actions and even today there is no official record of any Australian unit crossing into Indonesia in hot pursuit.

By the end of 1965 and throughout 1966, the Indonesian terrorists were increasingly replaced by well-trained and well-armed regulars from the Indonesian army. In October 1965, 3 RAR was replaced by 4 RAR and the SAS squadron replaced. An attempted communist coup in Indonesia in September 1965 changed the focus of the Indonesian army to internal matters and incursions dropped off rapidly. On August 11, 1966, a peace treaty was signed between Indonesia and Malaysia

and the confrontation was over. Twenty-three Australians were killed and nine wounded during the fighting.

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Medal Information

[Australian Service Medals \[post WWII\] - images and Facts](#)

[Medal Mounting: Australian Medals & Frames \[mounting & framing service\]](#)

Forums: Indonesian Confrontation & Military

[Britians Small Wars Message Board \[open to all nations\]](#)

Book and Publications

Historical Records and Official Publications

[Australian War Memorial Database](#)

[Roll of Honour](#)

Sound, Video and/or Moving Image

AWM : Film Database

HMAS Sydney underway to Borneo DPR/TV/160, 1964, 64 min 53 sec.

[Accession Number: F03659]

3 RAR in Malaya and Borneo 1965, Neil Brown, 1965, 33 min 20 sec.

[Accession Number: F03640]

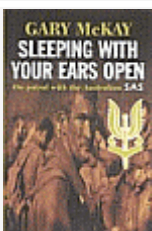
Summary: patrols, fortifications, coastwatchers, Wessex helicopters, aircraft carriers, war graves, Terendak, Kuching, Bau, Kuala Lumpur, HMS Albion.

AWM : Sound Database

Dr Peter Edwards: Address to National Press Club, 27 May 1992 on release of first volume of the Official History of Australia's involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts 1948-1975, "Crises and Commitments", 27 May 1992, 46 min.

[Accession Number: S01612]

Paperback and Hardcover



Sleeping With Your Ears Open by Gary McKay

Elite soldiers will the skill and will to survive, outnumbered they refused to accept defeat. Walk the steps of an Australian SAS patrol as they undertake operations in Boreno and Vietnam.

Australian War Books

Further Reading

Dennis P. and Grey J. *Emergency and Confrontation; Australian military operations in Malaya and Borneo 1950-1966*, Allen and Unwin and the Australian War Memorial, Sydney, 1996

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Subritzky, John *Confronting Sukarno : British, American, Australian and New Zealand Diplomacy in the Malaysian-Indonesian Confrontation, 1961-5* [John Subritzky is Policy Officer at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in NZ]