

**Medallic Recognition
of New Zealand Military Service in
South-East Asia since 1950**

**Summary Consultation Document
prepared by the Medallic Recognition
Joint Working Group**

July 2011

Note: Public consultation ends
23 August 2011

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Executive Summary - Service since 1950

Some aspects of the service by New Zealand military personnel in South-East Asia between 1950 and 1989 are currently not eligible for medallic recognition. In 2005, the Minister of Defence instructed that this situation be researched and reported upon for the period 1950-1975. An independent historian was employed by the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) to research the subject and prepare a report covering the period up to 1975. His full report is available on the NZDF Medals website at <http://medals.nzdf.mil.nz/seasia/about.html>

The Medallic Recognition Joint Working Group (JWG), established by the current Government under the leadership of Independent Chair Neil Walter has received the full report, published this consultation document, and made the full copy of the report freely available on the NZDF Medals website. The JWG has concluded that in the interests of fairness and completeness it should extend the consultation to cover all military service from 1975 to the present day.

Accordingly, the JWG invites submissions on all military service from 1950- May 1975. It also invites submissions on military service in South-East Asia from May 1975 (end of the Vietnam War) to the present day.

Brief to the Independent Military Historian

The instructions to the independent historian were to assess examples of military service that do not currently qualify for medallic recognition, and assess whether that service should qualify under current criteria as “operational service”.

Service which already qualifies for medallic recognition

Most operational service up to 1966 already qualifies for some medallic recognition by New Zealand. This includes operational service in Malaya/Malaysia, Thailand, the Indonesian Confrontation and Vietnam.

Principles for medallic recognition

The assessment of service for medallic recognition is based on the Government's principles for recognising operational service. These principles were approved by Cabinet in 2000.

Peacetime service overseas may be demanding and of strategic value but is generally similar to that completed in New Zealand. Under Principle 1 of the New Zealand Government's Principles for the Medallic Recognition of Operational Service: *"Medals are awarded to recognise service that is beyond the normal requirements of peacetime service in New Zealand"*.

The Government's policy has been that *"No service is recognised by the award of a medal for operational service unless there has been operational activity involving a risk of casualties and the possible use of force may be required"*.

So while the New Zealand military presence in South-East Asia from 1950 to 1989 was part of our contribution to strategic forward defence, only operational service in relation to the conflicts in Malaya/Malaysia, Borneo, Thailand and Vietnam currently qualifies for medallic recognition.

The independent historian found no examples of service that should have been recognised under the existing guidelines.

The closing date for submissions is Tuesday 23 August 2011.

Submissions (with supporting evidence and a completed Checklist for Submissions) can be e-mailed to medals.admp@nzdf.mil.nz ; or posted to:
Medallic Recognition Joint Working Group
C/- Deputy Director Medals Policy
Defence Personnel Executive
Headquarters New Zealand Defence Force
Private Bag 39997, WELLINGTON 5045

Electronic copies of the Submission checklist; Summary of the Consultation Report and the full report can be downloaded from the NZDF Medals Website , <http://medals.nzdf.mil.nz>

We welcome your comments and submissions.

Neil Walter, CNZM
Independent Chair
Medallic Recognition Joint Working Group
12 July 2011

Note: This review will **not** consider eligibility for entitlements under the War Pensions Act 1954.

Disclaimer

This document is based on a survey of known activities by New Zealand forces in South-East Asia over the period 1950-1975. There may have been activities other than those detailed in this document, for which medallic entitlement should also be assessed. If so, this will be undertaken on a case by case basis, when any such activities are brought to the attention of the Joint Working Group and/or the New Zealand Defence Force. No research and analysis has been undertaken about the activities undertaken at Government behest by New Zealand civilians in South-East Asia during the review period.

Definitions

Period

The period covered by the Summary of Research Findings (pp.12-20 below) from the report of the independent historian starts with New Zealand's first major deployment in theatre and ends on 1 May 1975, the end date for the Vietnam War. Prior to 1955, there were New Zealand service personnel working in Malaya as attached officers with British and Fijian units. Their service has been recognised by appropriate campaign medals.

The JWG believes that it is also important to consult with stakeholders on service in South-East Asia after May 1975 (end of the Vietnam War). It accordingly invites submissions on service from 1950-1975 and also on service since May 1975.

Region

Geographically, the region known as South-East Asia is taken to cover all land between the longitudinal edges of the Indian and Pacific Oceans and latitudes from the southern sea boundary of Indonesia to the southern sea boundary of Japan in the north, and all sea and air spaces on the internal lines of communication therein.

Note: This does not include service in the Korean Peninsula and all sea and air spaces within that theatre.

Specifically, for New Zealand deployments the research focused on Malaya (called Malaysia from 16 September 1963), Singapore, Borneo, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Hong Kong and Japan, and the Java Sea, Andaman Sea, South China Sea and East China Sea.

NZDF Operational Service categories

The New Zealand Defence Force defines three categories of operational service: warlike, hazardous, and non-warlike.

- **Warlike** – In a state of declared war, or with conventional combat operations against an armed adversary, or peace enforcement between belligerents who have NOT consented to any intervention.
 - For example, Vietnam and the 1990-1991 Gulf War.
- **Hazardous** - Peace enforcement between belligerents who HAVE consented to intervention or requested assistance, or missions where casualties may be expected.
 - For example, service in Bougainville since 1997.
- **Non-warlike** – Military activities in which casualties are not expected, including peacekeeping or sanctions-enforcing missions in benign situations, disaster relief in locations where there are belligerents or other hostile groups, observer activities and other hazardous activities.
 - For example, service in Mozambique and Cambodia from 1994.

For the purposes of medallic recognition for service between 1946 and 2000 warlike campaign medals (e.g. the NZGSM 1992 Warlike) are awarded for warlike missions, while non-warlike campaign medals (e.g. the NZGSM 1992 Non-Warlike) are awarded for missions assessed as being hazardous or non-warlike.

Principles for Medallic Recognition of Operational Service

The assessment of operations for medallic recognition is based on the Government's eight principles for recognising operational service. These principles were approved by Cabinet in 2000. All eight principles are relevant for reviewing un-recognised service in South-East Asia between 1950 and 1989. They are:

- **Principle One – Service that goes beyond the normal requirements of peacetime service is eligible for recognition.**

Medallic recognition will be provided only where NZDF units or personnel are engaged in operations, whether warlike or non-warlike. In this context, non-warlike operations include peacekeeping operations or other hazardous activities. (Also see the Definitions on p.7 above). The nature of the service performed will be the primary consideration for the medallic recognition of operational service. Additional considerations include details of the area of operations, enemy faced or parties dealt with, and time served in the location. Awards may be either a specific New Zealand campaign medal or the New Zealand General Service Medal in silver or bronze.

- **Principle Two – Deserving service by New Zealand personnel should be recognised by a New Zealand award.**

Where New Zealand personnel are involved in an operation that meets the definitions described in Principle 1, that service is to be recognised by a New Zealand award.

- **Principle Three – A balance must be kept between maintaining the exclusivity of awards and recognising significant service.**

While service that meets the requirements of these principles will be recognised, the prestige of awards depends to a degree on their

exclusiveness. Service associated with a particular operation or operational area will not necessarily qualify for the recognition extended to personnel serving in that operation or operational area. For example, recognition might not be appropriate for logistic support to a deployed force or planning activities in a headquarters outside the operational area.

- **Principle Four – There should be only one New Zealand medal to recognise each period of operational service, in all but exceptional circumstances.**

Awards made under the Imperial system, prior to the establishment of the New Zealand General Service Medal, remain New Zealand medals that were awarded on the advice of the New Zealand Government. Specific New Zealand medals will not be awarded in respect of service already recognised by an existing New Zealand or Imperial award.

- **Principle Five – Awards will be continued only where the service rendered continues to meet all other requirements for the award of a medal. One crucial consideration must be the end date of a period of medallic recognition. This applies particularly to long-running operations where the situation that originally merited the award of a medal changes to the extent that such recognition is no longer appropriate, especially where the service no longer meets the definitions of warlike or non-warlike operations.**
- **Principle Six – Medals for operational service should be open for award to civilians in appropriate circumstances.**

These circumstances will include situations where the New Zealand Government deploys Police or other civilians to operations or where

civilians are working with the NZDF or other New Zealand Government contribution as part of a deployed force.

- **Principle Seven – The fairness and integrity of any award must be transparent, and such awards should also be timely. Where an award has not been created in the five years following service, as for all service reviewed in this paper, there should be evidence of a substantial grievance that requires redress, claims from individuals should be verifiable from official records, and a significant number of participants should be able to claim a medal personally.**
- **Principle Eight – Approval will be sought to wear foreign medals where the service performed is consistent with principles above.**

Guidelines for Assessing service against Principle One

The JWG will be applying the following guidelines to assess whatever service between 1950 and 1989 was operational service, which is beyond the normal requirements of peacetime service.

To be assessed as operational service, all of the following criteria should have been met:

- a. Service must be beyond the normal requirements of peacetime service. Normal peacetime duties such as training and garrison duties will not be assessed as operational service unless undertaken in a location where there is a credible threat from enemy military forces.
- b. There is a real risk of casualties from enemy activities, e.g. combat, landmines, improvised explosive devices, ambushes, assassinations, raids, etc.
- c. The use of force may be required.
- d. The existence of a defined enemy or potential enemy.
- e. That enemy by actions or statements is deemed to pose an immediate threat or immediate potential threat.
- f. The enemy has the military capability to make the threat credible.
- g. Rules of engagement have been issued.
- h. Defensive measures have been taken to the level that would apply if combat were imminent.

It is important to note that for Principle One to apply actual combat does not have to occur, only that a credible expectation of it exists.

Service 1950-1975 - Summary of Research Findings from the Independent Historian's Report

ARMY SERVICE IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA 1950-1975

Service by the New Zealand Army in South-East Asia (after the initial deployment of the NZSAS Squadron in 1955-1957) revolved around the infantry battalion based in Malaysia (until 1969) and Singapore (until 1989), with a range of attachments of supporting services. From 1969 to 1989 the battalion regularly traveled to Malaysia for training.

The battalion received regular drafts of reinforcements with the typical tour of duty being two years. Married personnel had families accompany them with accommodation provided. The battalion (1 RNZIR) after its transfer from Terendak in Malaysia 1969 remained in Singapore until 1989 and the unit then returned to New Zealand.

Deaths Overseas

Deaths overseas in peacetime or outside the 'operational areas' cannot be taken as an indication of a level of abnormal danger or threat. In fact, almost all came from illness or accidents, mostly vehicular. Though tragic, such accidents were a feature of normal peacetime training in both New Zealand and South-East Asia. Forty-two deaths among the infantry alone are attributed to accident or illness in South-East Asia from 1958-1975.

In the same period a significantly larger number of New Zealand military personnel have died in similar normal peacetime training or off-duty accidents in New Zealand.

SEATO Ground Exercises

After the South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) was formed, the Commonwealth Far East Strategic Reserve was designated as one of its

forces available for contingency planning. New Zealand units in the Reserve therefore became involved in SEATO exercises from the early 1960s.

The first involvement by New Zealand ground forces seems to have been in Exercise Rajata, an air transportation and ground Command Post Exercise (CPX) on 8-16 March 1961 in Thailand. This exercise predates the period in which medallic entitlement for service in Thailand begins (1962), and while it may have been staged to intimidate Communist Terrorist (CT) groups, it was not an operational tour of duty.

In subsequent exercises New Zealand contributed small numbers of observers to the exercises mainly in the Exercise HQ. This pattern characterised New Zealand involvement in SEATO exercises until they ended in the mid 1970s.

Exercise Dhanarajata

Exercise Dhanarajata (sometimes rendered Dhana Rajata) was a SEATO exercise held in the eastern border region (Ubon province) of Thailand in mid-1963, and was the first with major participation by New Zealand ground troops in Thailand. It came after the NZSAS deployment in Thailand in June-September 1962, which begins the period when operational service in Thailand qualifies for New Zealand medallic entitlement.

Exercise Dhanarajata does not currently qualify for medallic recognition because it is not considered by HQ NZDF to have involved any operational service. The exercise took place from 11-19 June, with all 1 RNZIR personnel arriving back in Terendak between 7 and 14 July 1963. It was described by a SEATO committee as *“largely a political exercise”*.¹

Other Thailand Service

Some service in Thailand 1962-1971 qualifies for a non-warlike clasp to the New Zealand General Service Medal (NZGSM). 1 Ranger Squadron,

¹ Margin note on JAPC(63)4, Principal Admin Officer's Committee Joint Admin Planning Committee Exercise Pool Expenses: SEATO Ground Defence Ex 1963, p1. 'SEATO Exercises', EA w2668 120/5/4, part 6, Archives NZ, Wellington

NZSAS, was deployed to Thailand between June and September 1962. The NZSAS were supported in theatre by three RNZAF Bristol freighters with ground crew personnel. Engineers were sent to Operation Crown, the Mukdahan airfield project in Thailand, 1964-65, and to the Thailand Feeder Road project between 1966 and 1971.

RAAF Butterworth

The Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) had based air combat units at RAAF Base Butterworth as part of its contribution to the Far East Strategic Reserve since 1958, but handed the base to Malaysia in a bilateral arrangement in March 1971. In support of its Malaysian ally, New Zealand offered to contribute infantry companies to perform airfield defence duties there from March 1971 to July 1973.

Army HQ in Wellington at the time looked upon the tours to Butterworth as *“providing valuable training opportunities... including ranges”* for shooting practice. While there might have been slightly increased tension at the time, Communist Terrorist (CT) activity was of very slight significance to the New Zealand deployments to Butterworth, and did not characterise the tours there in any way.

Live Ammunition

The question of live ammunition being issued has also been cited by some ex-service personnel as a reason why service in South-East Asia, notably exercises, should qualify for medallic entitlement.

Live ammunition was issued in a range of exercises in the area, but this was to be *“carried for life-saving purposes in accordance with 28 Inf Bde Training Instruction No 8”*. The Administration Instructions were more specific as to its use: the live ammunition was *“only to be used if confronted by tigers and elephants”*.

When it was issued, live ammunition was usually in a single magazine, taped up to indicate that the contents were live. For most exercises unless there was a particular need for live ammunition, blank ammunition was issued.

Jalan Ulu Exercises

As well as personnel based in Singapore, the Army at times sent troops from New Zealand to participate in exercises in the Singapore / Malaysia region. A series of exercise deployments were the 'Jalan Ulu' exercises.

They were primarily to test 1 RNZIR in jungle conditions, alongside units of the Malaysian Army. They also involved relatively large contingents (up to company size) from units in New Zealand (usually 2/1 RNZIR, but with some Territorial Force soldiers).

The series started in September 1972, with a deployment of engineer troops to a Singapore exercise. The first deployment from New Zealand was Jalan Ulu II, 26 March–30 April 1973, when troops went to participate in Ex King Cobra, a 28 ANZUK Brigade exercise. The Jalan Ulu series continued until at least Jalan Ulu 28, 1-7 March 1986.

NAVAL SERVICE IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA 1950-1975

In 1955 New Zealand agreed to base a warship in Singapore as part of this country's contribution to the Commonwealth Strategic Reserve. Up to 1960 New Zealand's warships took part in operations during the Malayan Emergency. The crews on these deployments, and on many of the Royal New Zealand Navy (RNZN) deployments to South-East Asia during the Confrontation with Indonesia (8 December 1962 to 11 August 1966), have received British Commonwealth / New Zealand medallic recognition for their operational service in the Malaya/Singapore and/or Borneo operational areas.

RNZN service off the Malay Peninsula from 1 August 1960 to 16 August 1964

RNZN service off the Malay Peninsula between 1 August 1960 and 16 August 1964 currently does not qualify for New Zealand medallic recognition.

New Zealand's focus changed from 1961 to participating more in the SEATO air, land and sea exercises held around the region, and flag-waving ship visits to ports in various friendly nations.

This left little time to undertake service in support of army border operations, and there are no known instances of support by naval vessels to operations in the northern border area off the Malay peninsula: whether by gunfire support, the use of landing parties, or by intercepting seagoing vessels carrying suspected Communist Terrorists. Given the long distance inland to where the CTs were operating, it seems doubtful whether the RNZN ships would have been able to provide any assistance, even if required. There is also no evidence of any threat to RNZN ships from CTs in this period.

The most eventful and dangerous activities undertaken by RNZN ships off the northern Malay peninsula, or any other area of the Malay peninsula, between August 1960 and August 1964 were exercises with other navies

and activities such as when HMNZS PUKAKI “rescued 2 people from [a] capsized dinghy“.

RNZN service off Borneo from 1950 to 7 December 1962

Numerous RNZN ships transited through the waters off Borneo or visited Borneo between 1950 and 7 December 1962. Some naval vessels also exercised in these waters. [added by DDMP on 30 Mar 11 as otherwise there is a disconnect with Peter Cooke’s full report].

RNZN service off Borneo from 8 December 1962 to 11 August 1966

Most RNZN service off the coast of North Borneo between 24 December 1962 and 11 August 1966 does not meet the strict criteria for the General Service Medal 1962 with clasp ‘Borneo’ which is 30 days service in theatre. Qualifying days for this medal must involve “operating off the coast in support of the forces ashore and upriver”. The distance off the coast was defined as “within sight of shore” or around 20 nautical miles, to exclude high-seas sailing activities.

RNZN service in South-East Asia from 12 August 1966 to 1975

In the period 1966 to 1975 the Type-12, Whitby and Leander class frigates, HMNZS TARANAKI, OTAGO, BLACKPOOL and WAIKATO were deployed to Singapore to meet New Zealand’s obligations to the CSR (and its successors), SEATO and the Five Power Defence Arrangement (FPDA).

A routine deployment for one of these frigates in the period 1966 to 1975 in South-East Asia usually included:

- periods of overhaul and maintenance in Singapore.
- sporting matches, visits, ceremonial events, and day-to-day maintenance tasks in Singapore.
- exercising and training in the Singapore Exercise Areas, the waters off Singapore and both coasts of Johore.
- deployments to exercises with other Commonwealth Strategic Reserve (CSR), SEATO and ANZUK forces in the Gulf of Thailand,

South China Sea or around the Philippines, or occasionally starting in one locale and ending in another. These often involved working in close proximity to Allied warships.

- gunnery exercises – both live and blank.
- helicopter flying exercises – ship to ship and ship to/from shore.
- routine efficiency/training exercises conducted on most voyages, such as man-overboard, casualty exercises, full-power trials or defence stations for all or part of the crew.
- visits to friendly ports on flag-waving activities (this included ports in Malaysia, Philippines, Japan and, less often, South Korea, Taiwan and Indonesia).
- occasional search-and-rescue activities, usually while en route.
- voyages in and out of theatre, and end of deployment, usually returning to Auckland via the Indonesian archipelago, Darwin, Townsville or other Australian ports.

SEATO Naval Exercises

SEATO was an anti-communist Cold War alliance that New Zealand joined in 1954. Among other activities New Zealand's membership involved participation in maritime exercises which carried a small measure of risk.

Transits of the Straits of Taiwan (or Formosa)

These Straits were transited by ships of the RNZN at least 17 times between 1960 and 1975.

One of the reasons for transiting the Straits of Taiwan other than to get from A-to-B was to assert New Zealand's position on the Straits of Taiwan as an international waterway in accordance with the law of the sea (exercising a right to sail through international waters).

Transits of the Indonesian Straits

From the late 1950s Indonesia claimed sovereign rights over waters in its archipelago that other nations (including New Zealand) regarded as international waters. During Confrontation New Zealand military aircraft avoided Indonesian airspace but our naval vessels continued to transit waters within the Indonesian archipelago.

Indonesia had first claimed waters out to the 12-mile limit in 1958, a claim which would have affected passage by other nations' ships through a number of its straits. If accepted this would have turned the Java, Banda, Flores and Malacca seas and the Straits of Macassar into internal waterways. New Zealand responded in accordance with its Commonwealth Strategic Reserve partners, and took guidance from the Commander Far East Fleet over the passage of warships.

Passage by RNZN warships was still made, but with heightened levels of precaution and without any visible measure that could be seen as provocative. Occasionally an Indonesian warship was seen. In times of tension RNZN ships transited these waters while at defence stations or action stations, but "no actual incidents occurred".

The issue came to a head in August 1964 when Indonesia attempted to close the Sunda Strait during a naval exercise. Britain challenged this attempted closure of an international waterway. Indonesia relented and thereafter Commonwealth warships were able to transit through the various Indonesian straits, provided due notice was given. New Zealand vessels continued to do so and the issue faded.

The Confrontation with Indonesia ceased in August 1966 when Indonesia signed a treaty with Malaysia, which New Zealand had supported. From this time, New Zealand's naval vessels were generally on cordial terms with those of this former enemy, though New Zealand ships are likely to have

been shadowed by Indonesian vessels or monitored electronically while transiting these waters. Some persons have argued that tension continued to varying degrees up until 1976 and that this was particularly evident in the period leading up to the major International Law of the Sea conference in 1976. More documentary evidence needs to be located to better determine the perceived level of threat from 1967 to 1976.

AIR FORCE SERVICE IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA 1950-1975

As part of the Commonwealth Strategic Reserve, New Zealand based a range of aircraft in theatre between 1950 and 1975.

Hazards

New Zealand aircraft crashed in South-East Asia but these crash rates were lower than the comparative crash rates in New Zealand over the same time period.

RNZAF personnel serving in South-East Asia suffered from non-work-related accidents, mostly vehicular. Other deployed RNZAF personnel died of natural causes while on tours of duty. Over the same period of time, however, dozens of Air Force personnel died in New Zealand of similar causes: accident, illness or disease.

Servicing Embassies

New Zealand air units based in Singapore were used for a wide range of diplomatic-support purposes, such as servicing New Zealand Embassies in the region. The unit also helped Allied embassies, such as the British Embassy in Jakarta in 1968.

Medevac

Medevac, or the air evacuation of personnel for medical reasons, was an important humanitarian function for the RNZAF. Such tasks can be characterised as urgent, unscheduled and sometimes hazardous, and were usually assigned to the helicopters with fixed wing used mainly for repatriation flights back to Australian or New Zealand hospitals.

Other Activities

Long-distance flights were conducted out of the region. Regular Vietnam schedules were flown from 1964 to 1975, in support of: the New Zealand

military forces deployed to Vietnam, the MFAT-funded civilian humanitarian and surgical teams at Qui Nhon, and the New Zealand Embassy in Saigon.

The RNZAF personnel involved in these flights have received operational medallic recognition for their service in a war zone.

VIPs also had access to RNZAF aircraft where such use was deemed to be in New Zealand's interests. Senior Service Chiefs could also expect the RNZAF squadrons to ferry them in the region. Members of Parliament (MPs) first toured the region using RNZAF planes early in 1957. These flights continued throughout the period of review.