

AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION

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The Hon Malcolm Turnbull, MP
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

February 16th, 2018

Dear Prime Minister

**Reference: Rifle Company Butterworth Malaysia
Claim for Warlike Service Classification Service 1970-1989**

The Air Force Association is a national and state-based organisation that is concerned for the wellbeing of former and serving Air Force members and their families. Its membership is approximately 8,600 who are situated in all states and territories. Although the Association's primary focus is on Air Force personnel, it provides support when needed to former and serving members of other Services. The Rifle Company Butterworth Group has sought the Association's opinion and assistance with its request for a 'warlike' service classification to be afforded to the company's stated period of service in Malaysia.

Rifle Company Butterworth was deployed from Australia to protect RAAF and other Australian assets at Air Base Butterworth. There has been a plethora of evidence contained in declassified documents, which strongly suggests the company's deployment was far greater than its current 'peacetime' classification. The Rifle Company Butterworth Group has had several unsuccessful submissions to Government to have the company's service classification upgraded to 'warlike', and sought your intervention in the matter in a letter to you in January 2016. Based on history and documents available, the Air Force Association considers the deployment of the rifle company during its heightened operational period warrants a higher service classification.

We suspect the declared company's purpose for deployment as 'training' may have clouded decisions to retain the 'peacetime' service classification. Setting aside any possible political reasons at the time for describing the deployment as such, there seems no logical reason for continuing to view the operation as a 'training' or 'peacekeeping' deployment. History attests the irrefutable ongoing threats from communist terrorist action in the region from the end of 1970 through to the end of the Second Malaysian Emergency in late 1989. Company personnel were tasked on armed patrols and subject to Rules of Engagement. There was an expectation of casualties. Declassified documents acknowledge there was a likely engagement with armed

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belligerent elements. A Military Threat Assessment of the company's deployment circumstances would indicate existence of serious operational and environmental threats.

The rifle company's deployment circumstances compare most favourably to those of other ADF deployments that have been granted a 'warlike' service classification, which causes concern that the Rifle Company Butterworth Group's requests for a review of decisions to upgrade the service classification of the company's deployment may have been prejudiced by earlier judgments. The Air Force Association believes there is a compelling argument supporting an upgrade of the company's service classification during the stated period. Consequently, in the interests of fairness and transparency, and most of all of those who served in the rifle company, the Air Force Association strongly requests the Rifle Company Butterworth's deployment during the period 1970-1989 be examined by an independent body to determine the correct service classification.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Carl Schiller'.

Group Captain Carl Schiller, OAM CSM (Retd)
National President