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**THESIS**

**HISTORY OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES  
IN MALAYSIA**

by

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June 2013

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**HISTORY OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES  
IN MALAYSIA**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

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## **ABSTRACT**

From 1941 to 1990, Malaysia was involved in violent conflicts against internal and external threats. Most military literature does not emphasize the role of special operations forces (SOF) during these five decades of conflicts. This thesis highlights some lessons learned that might be useful for countries with strategic and operational concerns similar to Malaysia, details the contributions of the SOF to Malaysia from World War II to the present, and examines their utility in supporting future Malaysian national security strategies. This research also outlines the development of and a way forward for Malaysian SOF.

The author explores each conflict using the UK Defense Line of Development, which consists of training, equipment, personnel, information, doctrine, organization, infrastructure, and logistics (TEPID OIL). This is equivalent to the U.S. DoD's doctrine, organization, training and education, materiel, leadership, people and facilities (DOTMLPF), for the set of generic elements that must be brought together to generate a defense capability. Due to the importance of leadership in a conflict, the author adds "leadership" to the UK DLoD. The new acronym, for the purpose of this thesis, is TEPID OIL + L. In short, this thesis proposes that fostering SOF benefits not only irregular warfare capabilities against internal threats, but also overall national security against external conventional and unconventional threats.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

COIN–Counterinsurgency  
CPM–Communist Party of Malaya/Malaysia  
CT–Communist Terrorist  
GGK–Gerup Gerak Khas  
KD–Kapal DiRaja  
MRLA–Malaysian Races Liberation Army  
MSSU–Malaysia Special Service Unit  
PARAKU–Pasukan Rakyat Kalimantan Utara  
PASKAL–Pasukan Khas Laut  
PASKAU–Pasukan Khas Udara  
PGK–Pasukan Gerakan Khas  
RGK–Rejimen Gerak Khas  
SB–Special Branch  
SF–Special Forces  
SOE–Special Operation Executives  
SOF–Special Operation Forces  
STAR–Special Task and Rescue  
TEPID OIL + L–Training, Equipment, People, Information, Doctrine, Organization,  
Infrastructure, Logistic + Leadership  
TLDM–Tentera Laut DiRaja Malaysia  
TUDM–Tentera Udara DiRaja Malaysia  
UNGERIN–Unit Gerakan Marin  
UTK–Unit Tindakan Khas  
UTC–Unit Tindakan Cepat  
VAT 69–Very Able Trooper 69/ 69 Commandos  
WT–Wireless Telegraph

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## A. BACKGROUND

Malaysia, known as Malaya before 1963, was involved in violent conflicts against internal and external threats for five decades, from 1941 to 1990. These conflicts caused the killing and wounding of thousands of security forces and civilians, and terrorized many other citizens. Researchers have mainly focused on the Malayan Emergency from 1948–1960, which the British declared ended on 31 July 1960. The actual history of irregular warfare in Malaysia is much longer than that. The Malayan Emergency has been studied for counterinsurgency (COIN) lessons, such as effective population control, persuasion, the winning of hearts and minds, political concession, social provision, command, unified and dynamic leadership, and the need for security forces to become effective learning organizations. Seldom discussed are the SOF and their achievements during that conflict. Yet the development of effective SOF units in countering insurgents and terrorists greatly enhanced the success of COIN in Malaysia. John Arquilla, a professor and chairman of the Department of Defense Analysis at the Naval Postgraduate School, writes in his book *From Troy to Entebbe* that although they are most commonly associated with the period from World War II to the present, special operations have a long, rich tradition that reaches far back into history.<sup>1</sup> With that in mind, this thesis provides a perspective on special operations during that half-century of armed conflict in Malaysia.

## B. PURPOSE, SCOPE, AND RELEVANCE

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the contributions of the Malaysian special operations forces (SOF) to Malaysia's security against internal and external threats from World War II to the present, and their utility in supporting Malaysia's national security strategy. There has been close interest in special operations and elite military units in recent years. For the U.S. administration, SOF has become the "force of choice" and has

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<sup>1</sup> John Arquilla, *From Troy to Entebbe: Special Operations in Ancient and Modern Times* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1996), xvi.

grown considerably after 9/11.<sup>2</sup> Malaysia, as a small nation with small security forces located at the center of Southeast Asia, should consider this tool regarding its future national security posture. This thesis will study the experience of the Malaysian SOF and will also examine Malaysian national security policy and crucial issues pertaining to the nature, course, and impact of SOF in the conflicts in Malaysia.

The scope of this thesis includes the following periods: the establishment of guerrilla units to fight the Japanese occupation in Malaya (1941–1945); the incorporation of British and Malayan SOF in fighting terrorists in the Malayan Emergency (1948–1960); the Malaysian–Indonesian Confrontation in Borneo (1962–1966); and the second Malaysian counterinsurgency operation against re-emergent communist terrorists (1968–1989). This thesis will also look at the development of the modern Malaysian SOF and analyze the way forward. It will address a larger argument, that fostering SOF benefits not only irregular warfare capabilities against internal threats, but also overall national security against external conventional and unconventional threats.

The relevance of this project stems from the observation that most military literature dealing with Malaysia does not emphasize the achievements of the various SOF units in action during four decades of conflict. This thesis is intended to benefit all military and government personnel interested in SOF operations and their development in Malaysia. As SOF may become their force of choice for engagement in future conflicts, this study highlights some lessons that might be useful to countries with strategic and operational concerns similar to those of Malaysia.

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<sup>2</sup> “In the emerging strategic environment, it is clear that U.S. military power will increasingly be exercised by SOF acting by, with and through partners around the world.”-- David Barno and Travis Sharp, “SOF Power,” *Foreign Policy*, February 14, 2012, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/02/12/sof\\_power](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/02/12/sof_power) (accessed February 2, 2012); Kristina Wong, “Special Operations Forces To Do More With Less,” *The Washington Times*, February 28, 2012, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2012/feb/28/special-operation> (accessed on February 2, 2012).

## C. RESEARCH QUESTION

This thesis asks why the Malaysian SOF developed from inception into its present form; and whether its present form is optimal to support future national security requirements. To answer these questions, this thesis also explores the following additional questions:

Q1: Did the Malaysian irregular warfare experience in World War II and the Malayan Emergency contribute to success in subsequent conflicts in Malaysia?

Q2: Will development of special operations capabilities improve Malaysian national security against conventional military competitors?

## D. LITERATURE REVIEW

This thesis studies the actions of various SOF units during conflicts in Malaysia. From World War II to 1989, the British and then Malaysian governments utilized SOF to fight against the Japanese, communist terrorists, and the Indonesian armed forces. SOF were utilized more effectively and influenced outcomes more strongly during the Malayan Emergency and subsequent campaigns.<sup>3</sup> The British and Malaysians succeeded in their counterinsurgencies after governmental and military leaders redesigned their comprehensive campaign plan and considered operational practices that included SOF units. According to John A. Nagl, director of the Center for New American Security, analysis indicates that the British emphasized decentralization and small-unit operations during the Malayan Emergency. Nagl also writes that the role of the special forces was limited during the initial stage of the Emergency, but showed a gradual increase in the fighting of communist terrorists as the campaign progressed.<sup>4</sup> As an analyst and senior lecturer on irregular warfare and terrorism in the Department of Defense Analysis at the Naval Postgraduate School, Kalev I. Sepp summarizes the best practices in

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<sup>3</sup> “Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms,” *Joint Publication 1–02*. 2010 (as amended through February 15, 2012), 83, [http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new\\_pubs/jp1\\_02.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp1_02.pdf).

Counterinsurgency is a comprehensive civilian and military effort taken to defeat an insurgency and to address any core grievances. Also called COIN (JP 3–24).

<sup>4</sup> John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 51.

counterinsurgency (see Figure 1), based on more than 54 insurgencies in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including the Malayan Emergency.<sup>5</sup> Some of these practices highlight how a state or government could appropriately utilize special forces to gain success in a counterinsurgency or, on the other hand, to continue a protracted campaign that eventually failed.

SUCCESSFUL COIN PRACTICES	UNSUCCESSFUL COIN PRACTICES
<p>Emphasis on intelligence.</p> <p>Focus on populations, their needs, and security.</p> <p>Secure areas established, expanded.</p> <p>Insurgents isolated from population (population control).</p> <p>Single authority (charismatic/dynamic leader).</p> <p>Effective, pervasive psychological operations (PSYOPS) campaigns.</p> <p>Amnesty and rehabilitation for insurgents.</p> <p>Police in the lead; military supporting.</p> <p>Police force expanded, diversified.</p> <p>Conventional military forces reoriented for counterinsurgency.</p> <p>Special Forces, advisers embedded with indigenous forces.</p> <p>Insurgent sanctuaries denied.</p>	<p>Primacy of military direction of counterinsurgency.</p> <p>Priority to “kill–capture” enemy, not on engaging population.</p> <p>Battalion-size operations as the norm.</p> <p>Military units concentrated on large bases for protection.</p> <p>Special Forces focused on raiding.</p> <p>Building, training indigenous army in image of U.S. Army.</p> <p>Peacetime government processes.</p> <p>Open borders, airspace, coastlines.</p>

Table 1. Sepp’s successful and unsuccessful counterinsurgency practices.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Kalev I. Sepp, “Best Practices in Counterinsurgency,” *Military Review*, May-June 2005, 8.

<sup>6</sup> Sepp, “Best Practices,” 10.



An appropriate definition of special operations is important for this thesis. Various studies indicate that it is necessary to define special operations broadly to include SOF units from World War II until the present. A broad definition of special operations will also allow this thesis to include various military or paramilitary actions that fell outside the scope of conventional warfare in their time. John Arquilla also places significant emphasis on the *coup de main* by small forces whose aim is to achieve substantial effects in the course of a war or international crisis.<sup>7</sup> He uses a broad definition of SOF to allow the inclusion of protracted campaigns in which the government uses small forces, either independently or in concert with regular or other irregular forces, to achieve larger aims.<sup>8</sup>

The literature defines special operations vaguely, because of the broad range of activities carried out by SOF. Currently, special operations are frequently associated with three core missions: special reconnaissance and surveillance, direct action and military assistance.<sup>9</sup> A vague and under-inclusive definition of special operations will provide insufficient guidance in understanding the term. Conversely, if the definition is too rigid and narrowly focused, it unnecessarily hampers the imagination in conducting special operations. The U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) has defined special operations broadly to avoid both pitfalls:

Operations conducted in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments to achieve military, diplomatic, informational, and/or economic objectives employing military capabilities for which there is no broad conventional requirement. These operations often require covert, clandestine, or low visibility capabilities. Special operations are applicable across the range of military operations.

They can be conducted independently or in conjunction with operations of conventional forces or other government agencies and may include operations through, with, or by indigenous or surrogate forces. Special operations differ from conventional operations in degree of physical and political risk, operational techniques, mode of employment, independence from friendly

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<sup>7</sup> Arquilla, *From Troy to Entebbe*, xvi.

<sup>8</sup> Arquilla, *From Troy to Entebbe*, xvi.

<sup>9</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Special Operations*, AJP-3.5, (NATO Standardization Agency, 2009), 2-3-2-5.

support, and dependence on detailed operational intelligence and indigenous assets.<sup>10</sup>

This definition is holistic and emphasizes the joint, multinational, and interagency nature of special operations and independent operations.

According to British Brigadier General Maurice Tugwell and David Charters, a modern military historian, “special operations are small, clandestine, covert, or overt, operations of an unorthodox, frequently high-risk in nature, undertaken to achieve political or military objectives in support of foreign policy.”<sup>11</sup> James D. Kiras, who teaches terrorism and insurgency at the U.S. Air Force Air University, defines special operations as:

unconventional actions against enemy vulnerabilities in a sustained campaign, undertaken by specially designated units, to enable conventional operations and/or resolve economically politico-military problems at the operational or strategic level that are difficult or impossible to accomplish with conventional forces alone.<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, one must use caution with this definition, because as the capabilities of conventional forces improve, they may be able to perform missions that once were the responsibility of the SOF.<sup>13</sup>

During the Malayan Emergency, British Lieutenant General Sir Harold Briggs, Director of Operations in Malaya, introduced a counterinsurgency plan and established various SOF units to strengthen his plan, which directly or indirectly improved overall conditions in Malaya. The Briggs Plan had four objectives.<sup>14</sup> First, to dominate the

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10 Department of Defense, “Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms,” *Joint Publication 1–02* (2010; (as amended through February 15, 2012), 340–341, [http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new\\_pubs/jp1\\_02.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp1_02.pdf).

11 David A. Charters and Maurice Tugwell, “Special Operations and the Threats to United States Interests in 1980s,” in Colin S. Gray, ed., *Explorations in Strategy* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996), 145.

12 James D. Kiras, *Special Operations and Strategy: From World War II to the War on Terrorism* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 5.

13 Robert G. Spulak, Jr., “A Theory of Special Operations: The Origin, Qualities, and Use of SOF,” *JSOU Report 07–07* (2007), 2.

14 J. Paul de B. Taillon, *The Evolution of Special Forces in Counter-Terrorism: The British and American Experiences* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2001), 15.

populated areas and build up a feeling of complete security, which in time, would steadily increase the flow of information coming from all sources. The second objective was to break up communist organizations within the populated areas. The third was to isolate the bandits from their food and supply organizations in the populated areas, and fourth, to destroy the bandits by forcing them to attack the security forces on their own ground.<sup>15</sup> These objectives could be achieved through the coordination of the activities of the police, civil authorities, and conventional forces. With the establishment of a special intelligence unit, the Special Branch, to collect, analyze and disseminate “live” intelligence, and the role of psychological operations (psyops) units, the government effectively controlled not just the population within these areas, but also the space itself.<sup>16</sup>

There were remote, lightly populated areas and disputed areas, including jungles and swamps, which were under insurgent control. Sir Robert Thompson, a British military officer and counterinsurgency expert, writes that without special units, winning-hearts-and-minds operations could not reach everyone in these areas.<sup>17</sup> He also states that the establishment of a small, elite, mobile, disciplined, lightly equipped, and aggressive army fulfilled the military’s role in support of civil government in accordance with his five basic principles of COIN:<sup>18</sup> that the government must 1) have a clear political aim, 2) function in accordance with the law, 3) have an overall plan, 4) give priority to defeating political subversion, not guerrillas, and 5) must secure its base first in the guerrilla phase of an insurgency.<sup>19</sup>

There is evidence that the success of security forces in various conflicts in Malaysia resulted from shared experiences and lessons learned. J. Paul de B. Taillon, a professor of war studies at the Royal Military College of Canada, is convinced that due to

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<sup>15</sup>Taillon, *Evolution of Special Forces*, 15.

<sup>16</sup> Karl Hack, “Extracting Counterinsurgency lessons: The Malaya Emergency and Afghanistan,” *RUSI Analysis* (November 28, 2009), <http://www.rusi.org/analysis/commentary/ref:C4B14E068758F1/> (accessed February 29, 2012).

<sup>17</sup> Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966), 104.

<sup>18</sup> Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, 62.

<sup>19</sup> Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, 50–62.

the frequency of British involvement in irregular warfare operations, they were able to acquire and maintain a high level of combat skill among all ranks.<sup>20</sup> As a result, successful tactics and techniques evolved from earlier conflicts and grew in subsequent conflicts as well. In his study of the wars in Malaya and Vietnam, Nagl explains that the superior performance of the British army in learning and implementing successful COIN in Malaya was due to its capabilities as a learning institution, and its organizational culture.<sup>21</sup> Most of their tactics and techniques were continued and could be observed in later conflicts such as the Confrontation and the 1968–1989 insurgency.<sup>22</sup> Charters and Tugwell also write that armies do best in irregular warfare when they learn from experience, adapt their existing force structure and doctrine to the particular demands of a conflict, emphasize small-unit operations, and allowing initiative at the lowest levels.<sup>23</sup>

To succeed in special operations, Admiral William H. McRaven, the 9th commander of the United States Special Operations Command, emphasizes that SOF need to achieve “relative superiority” against the enemy. He introduces six principles of special operations in this regard: simplicity, security, repetition, surprise, speed, and purpose.<sup>24</sup> According to Colin S. Gray, a strategic theorist and defense analyst who has worked in Britain, Canada, and the United States, a SOF will achieve success when there are certain favorable conditions that require a specific context—for example, in the type of conflict, character of missions, time, and adversaries. To promote success, Gray emphasizes that SOF need to fit the policy demand, have a tolerant political and strategic culture, have political and military patrons who understand their strategic value, be assigned feasible objectives, be directed by a strategically functioning defense establishment, possess flexibility of mind, and especially, exhibit an unconventional mentality. SOF need to provide unique strategic services, find and exploit enemy

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<sup>20</sup> Taillon, *Evolution of Special Forces*, 8.

<sup>21</sup> Nagl, *Soup with a Knife*, 103–107.

<sup>22</sup> Nagl, *Soup with a Knife*, 103–107.

<sup>23</sup> David A. Charters and Maurice Tugwell, eds., *Armies in Low-Intensity Conflict: A Comparative Analysis* (McLean, VA: Pergamon-Brassey’s International Defense Publishers, 1989), 252–253.

<sup>24</sup> William H. McRaven, *Spec Ops: Studies in Special Operation Warfare Theory and Practice* (New York: Presidio Press, 1996), 4–8.

vulnerabilities, have the benefit of technological assistance and tactical competence (or excellence), with a reputation for effectiveness.<sup>25</sup> Gray also states that SOF need a willingness to learn from history.<sup>26</sup>

In general, SOF have been assigned to operations in the past with confidence that success was fairly assured. However, SOF faced greater consequences for failure than a conventional unit. Lucien S. Vandenbroucke, a foreign service officer at the U.S. Department of State, points out that SOF operations will fail if key inputs such as intelligence, interagency and inter-service cooperation and coordination, information, and advice to decision makers is poor or neglected. He also writes that failure is unavoidable when leaders command by wishful thinking, and over-control mission execution from afar.<sup>27</sup>

This study will also focus on the strategic utility of special operations and SOF in various conflicts in modern Malaysia, mainly during the Malaysian–Indonesian Confrontation, in which the use of SOF helped prevent a bigger conflict between Malaysia and Indonesia. SOF operations deterred the Indonesian army from attacking Malaysia and influenced the Indonesian government to end the escalation. This shows that developing SOF capabilities helped improve Malaysia’s security against its conventional competitors. Gray uses the term “strategic utility” to mean “the contribution of a particular kind of military activity to the course and outcome of an entire conflict.”<sup>28</sup> He categorizes several strategic utilities of special operations, among which are economy of force, expansion of choice, innovation, morale, reassurance, humiliation of the enemy, shaping the future, showcasing competence, and control of escalation.<sup>29</sup> In this study, the first two categories, namely economy of force and expansion of choice, are regarded the most important. Economy of force pertains to the achievement of significant results with

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25 Colin S. Gray, ed., *Explorations in Strategy* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996), 164–169.

26 Colin S. Gray, “Handfuls of Heroes on Desperate Ventures: When do Special Operation Succeed?” *Parameters, U.S. Army War College Quarterly*, Spring 1999, 2–24.

27 Lucien S. Vandenbroucke, *Perilous Options: Special Operations as an Instrument of U.S Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 3–7.

28 Gray, *Explorations*, 163.

29 Gray, *Explorations*, 168.

only a limited use of forces, and expansion of choice refers to the tendency of special operations to expand the options available to political and military leaders.

David C. Tucker and Christopher J. Lamb argue that SOF's strategic value rests in its ability to counter unconventional threats, both directly and indirectly, and take the lead in doing so. They also say SOF's indirect role is more important than its direct role.<sup>30</sup> Strategic effects are generated when SOF operates in conjunction with conventional forces' campaigns of attrition, and not in the conduct of isolated raids.<sup>31</sup> With an understanding of the strategic uses of SOF, Malaysia could use SOF as an unconventional deterrence to other nations when threatened. Unconventional deterrence, through punishment or denial, could persuade the opponent not to attack, defeat an anticipated attack, deny the aggressor's battlefield objectives, or prevent the targeted party from achieving its political objectives.<sup>32</sup>

In conclusion, many histories could be used to relate the development of SOF and how SOF influenced the outcome of conflicts in Malaysia. SOF units extended the reach of the Briggs Plan to all geographic areas; intelligence became more effective with the establishment of the Special Branch; and terrorists and populations were influenced by the psyops campaign. SOF units that operated deep in disputed areas restricted terrorists' freedom of movement and won the hearts and minds of rural people. Irregular warfare expertise was shared among commanders, and forces were trained based on this valuable experience. These tactics and techniques became shared doctrine and continued to be utilized in subsequent conflicts. The literature also indicates that SOF improved Malaysia's national security against internal and external threats and contributed toward the improvement of the security force's performances, directly and indirectly.

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<sup>30</sup> David C. Tucker and Christopher J. Lamb, *U.S. Special Operation Forces* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 153.

<sup>31</sup> James D. Kiras, *Special Operations Strategy* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 113.

<sup>32</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1983); Robert A. Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (London: London University Press, 1996).

## **E. METHODOLOGY**

This thesis will be conducted using historical research in various open-source documents on the topic areas. It will examine the historical evidence from the birth of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) and Force 136-Malaya in World War II, the Malayan Emergency (1948–1960), the Indonesian Confrontation (1962–1966), to the establishment of various Malaysian special operations forces to fight the CPM/MRLA in the Second Emergency (1968–1990). Additionally, this study will explore the development of Malaysian SOF units in the Post-Emergency (1990-present) and its future. By examining these histories, this thesis will identify the lessons and experiences of the previous SOF units that have left their stamp on the present-day SOF units.

This thesis will also analyze each phase of the conflicts using the UK Defense Line of Development (UK DLoD), which consists of training, equipment, personnel, information, doctrine, organization, infrastructure, and logistics (TEPID OIL).<sup>33</sup> This acronym is fairly equivalent to the U.S. DoD’s doctrine, organization, training and education, materiel, leadership, people and facilities (DOTMLPF) for the set of generic elements that have to be brought together to generate a defense capability.<sup>34</sup> Due to the important role of leaders in a conflict, the author adds “leadership” to the UK DLoD, yielding a new acronym for the purposes of this thesis, TEPID OIL + L. Finally, this thesis introduces some recommendations for consideration by the Malaysian SOF in developing and exploiting SOF in future transformations.

## **F. CHAPTER OUTLINE**

Chapter II is about the British Special Operation Executive (SOE), which organized, trained and equipped volunteers to form Force 136-Malaya to fight against the Japanese in World War II (1941–1945). They also cooperated with the MPAJA/CPM/MRLA to form guerrilla units deep inside the jungles in preparation for British reoccupation. Chapter III is the history of the Malayan Emergency (1948–1960),

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<sup>33</sup> Roger A. Foder, *Operational Analysis: Historical Perspectives and Future Challenges* (Portsmouth West, UK: Defence Science and Technology Laboratory, 2010).

<sup>34</sup> Department of Army, “The Way Forward,” *Field Manual 1 (FM 1)*, Chap. 4, June 2005, <http://www.army.mil/fm1/chapter4.html> (accessed March 24, 2012).

which saw the establishment of various special units to fight the CPM/MRLA, such as the Malayan Scouts of the Special Air Service. The British reorganized the Malayan intelligence organization, the Police Special Branch. The British also trained and equipped aborigines and Iban to perform as paramilitary forces, for example, the Senoi Praaq and Sarawak Rangers, to help the government effort. Chapter IV highlights SOF units in Operation Claret, a cross-border operation in Borneo during the Indonesian Confrontation (1962–1966). Chapter V is about the various SOF during the Malaysian Second Emergency (1968–1989), when the CPM/MRLA resurfaced and began its second armed struggle. With the legacy of British SOF units, the government of Malaysia continued to trust SOF capabilities, and commissioned a few other units such as Malaysian Special Service Unit (MSSU) and Police Commando Very Able Troopers (VAT) 69 to fight communist terrorists until their surrender on December 2, 1989. Chapter VI highlights some of the Malaysian SOF units' development in the post-conflict era (1990–present) and follows with Chapter VII, a brief analysis of the present Malaysian SOF and future requirements. This thesis offers conclusions in Chapter VIII.



## **II. WORLD WAR II (1941–1945)**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

World War II was the first time Malaysians saw modern special operations forces (SOF) in action, fighting unconventionally behind enemy lines against a conventional force, the Japanese military. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the SOF experience during the Japanese occupation of Malaya and its impact on improving Malaysian security against threats. This chapter highlights Force 136's historical background, operations, and various challenges faced by its agents. Force 136's ability to conduct clandestine operations was critical in fighting the Japanese army effectively, though Force 136 were small in number. A well-extended capability management in one organization, such as Force 136, is vital for success. The Line of Development is a useful template for analyzing Force 136's fighting capabilities.<sup>35</sup>

### **B. THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION**

In 1941, the British, Dutch, French, and Americans felt the growing threat of Japanese invasion of their colonies in the Far East. Coinciding with the attack on Pearl Harbor, in the early morning of December 8, 1941, the Japanese army landed at the beach in Kota Bharu, Malaya (see Figure 1). Despite fierce resistance, Japanese troops successfully maneuvered to the south and captured Britain's once-thought-impregnable fortress of Singapore on February 15, 1942. Notably, the attacking Japanese force was much smaller than the British defending force. This was a crucial victory for the Japanese. Besides undermining the British government, the capture of Malaya and Singapore provided the Japanese with a strategic base for its military campaigns in the region and control over the Malacca Strait. The Japanese had conquered the world's leading producer of rubber and tin, resources that were vital during World War II.

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<sup>35</sup> The Line of Development acronym is TEPID OIL + L, which signifies Training, Equipment, People, Doctrine, Organization, Information, Logistics, and Leadership.



Figure 1. Japanese routes to Singapore.<sup>36</sup>

### C. FORCE 136 (MALAYA)

Earlier, on January 24, 1941, the governor of the Straits settlement, Sir Shenton Thomas, was formally informed that the Special Operations Executive's (SOE) Oriental Mission would be operating in his territories under the commander-in-chief of the Far East. By the end of January 1942, SOE Force 136 was in position to be the "left-behind parties" in Malaya. These groups of volunteers became the pioneer special operations forces in Malaya, active throughout the Japanese occupation from 1941 to 1945. It is

<sup>36</sup> The Children & Families of the Far East POW, *The Campaign in Malaya*, [http://www.cofepow.org.uk/pages/armedforces\\_m\\_campaign.html](http://www.cofepow.org.uk/pages/armedforces_m_campaign.html).

debated that, had the Force 136 Malaya Country Section been established well before the Japanese invasion—properly supported, and fully trained—it could have conducted special operations and posed serious threats to the enemy, were it given effective, clear, and timely direction from higher authority. Furthermore, if Force 136 had gained greater support, not only from the Chinese, but also from the Malays and other ethnic groups, their guerrilla warfare would have been more effective in thwarting the Japanese strategy in Malaya.

The British established SOE for the European theater in July 1940.<sup>37</sup> In Malaya, the British established Force 136, Malaya Country Section, in late 1940, with the responsibility to retaliate against the enemy by operating deep inside the Malayan jungle, behind Japanese forces, which were moving south toward Singapore. Their operations were similar to the European SOE, namely, guerrilla warfare to disrupt the enemy occupation. This was challenging for Force 136 agents, compared to their counterparts in Europe, because of their distance from bases and headquarters, difficult terrain, tropical weather, and enduring wet and damp jungles unfriendly to man.

On November 26, 1940, SOE headquarters issued a term of reference for the SOE group in Singapore. In May 1941, under cover of carrying out a study of economic and industrial trends, the British launched SOE's mission in the Far East, named Oriental Mission (OM) and spearheaded by a civilian, Valentine St. J. Killery, with Basil Goodfellow as deputy and F. Chapman Spencer and Lim Bo Seng setting up the Oriental Mission in Singapore.<sup>38</sup> Initially, there was some misunderstanding about the SOE's chain of command among senior officers in the armed services, and the OM men were considered disruptive to the organization. After that initial friction, SOE Force 136 moved ahead to cooperate with and organize Malayan resistance, subversion, sabotage, propaganda, and supplying of food, finance, arms, and munitions. Their field operatives

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<sup>37</sup> Richard Gough, *The Jungle Was Red: SOE's Force 136, Sumatra and Malaya* (Singapore: SNP Panpac, 2003), 5. Gough was a WWII veteran of Malaya and author of *The Escape from Singapore, SOE Singapore 1941–42* and *Outposts of the Empire*.

<sup>38</sup> Charles G. Cruickshank, *SOE in the Far East* (New York: Oxford University Press), 4.

wore military uniforms and were not primarily involved in the collection of intelligence.<sup>39</sup>

There was distrust of irregular warfare among the Malayan command. A proposal from the Oriental Mission to train guerrilla parties in Malaya was turned down in October 1941 by Air Chief Marshall Brooke-Popham and Major General A. E. Percival, general-in-command, Malaya. They imagined that if the British began to train guerrillas, the indigenous Malayan populations would assume the British were losing the war and would lose confidence in the government, and morale would suffer. Frederick Chapman Spencer, a Force 136 veteran, in his book *The Jungle is Neutral*, said that higher authority considered the idea of stay-behind parties, consisting of Europeans and Asiatics, to be extravagant and impracticable. Furthermore, they said that the defense of Malaya was the sole responsibility of the military and well under control. Nonetheless, Major General R. H. Dewing, chief of staff for ACM Brooke-Popham, urged the war office to consider this matter. The war office sent Alan Warren from the Royal Marines to Singapore to consider the viability of special operations in the Far East in November 1941.<sup>40</sup>

During the Japanese occupation, Force 136 planned and conducted at least twelve major operations, including Operations Gustavus, Jaywick/Rimau, Hebrides, and Oatmeal, and many others.<sup>41</sup> Though these operations did not alter the history of Malaya, they saw courage and dedication from the people involved. Force 136 did not achieve strategic utility because of various problems, such as lack of logistical support, poor communications, a harsh environment, and many others. The history of Force 136 in Malaya shows the requirements in the Malaysian Armed Forces for preparing such a clandestine paramilitary organization for any eventuality or crisis in the future. Force 136 operations involved the infiltration of agents and their resupply in Malaya in order to conduct such principal missions as intelligence gathering, sabotage, and espionage. These operations were launched as a stepping-stone for Operation Zipper, the liberation of

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<sup>39</sup> Cruickshank, *SOE in the Far East*, 13–14.

<sup>40</sup> Margaret Shennan, *Our Man in Malaya* (Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 2007), 7–8.

<sup>41</sup> Michael Bryant, “Special Operations Executive WWII Documentary,” *The BBC*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dz4HqoMd6Iw&feature=plcp> (accessed May 18, 2012); Gough, *The Jungle was Red*, 173.

Malaya from the Japanese. Force 136 used either the Allies' small number of submarines or flew in Catalina amphibious aircraft, which were limited in endurance and range. It was almost a twenty-four hours' flight from Colombo, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) to Malaya and back on the Catalinas, before the arrival of the Liberator Mark VI bombers in 1945.<sup>42</sup>

Force 136's first operation was Operation Gustavus. Basil Goodfellow, who was the OM second-in-command in Singapore, together with Richard Broome, John Davis, and Lim Bo Seng launched Operation Gustavus on 23 May 1943. This was a series of small-team insertions into Malaya by submarine and amphibious aircraft. It took two weeks after sailing from Colombo, Ceylon for John Davis and five others to land at Tanjung Hantu, Perak, between Penang Island and Kuala Lumpur. Force 136 infiltrated a few other teams utilizing this method.<sup>43</sup> The security and safety of all men and submarines in this operation were vulnerable to discovery by Japanese patrols, which presented the possibility of capture.<sup>44</sup>

Another important operation was Operation Jaywick, or Rimau, with Captain Lyon Ivon leading this daring seaborne raid in the Malayan campaign.<sup>45</sup> He recruited and trained specially selected volunteers at the "Z" experimental station outside Cairns, Australia. After nine months of training, the Jaywick party sailed from Exmouth Gulf, Western Australia, on 2 September 1943. Two weeks later, they reached the Riau Archipelago and moved close to St. Johns Island (Southern Islands, Singapore) on three two-man kayaks called 'folboats,' jam-packed with explosives, limpet mines, supplies for two weeks, and personal weapons. They sunk approximately 50,000 tons of enemy shipping using limpet mines. The Japanese responded sharply, and interrogated and tortured to death many Malays suspected of involvement with the sea raiders. The

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<sup>42</sup> Ian Trennowden, *Operation Most Secret: SOE: The Malayan Theatre* (London: William Kimber & Co. Ltd., 1978), 172–173.

<sup>43</sup> Gough, *The Jungle was Red*, 49–64.

<sup>44</sup> Gough, *The Jungle was Red*, 53.

<sup>45</sup> Lisa Lim, *1944 Operation RIMAU*, [http://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/about\\_us/history/world\\_war2/v08n10\\_history.html](http://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/about_us/history/world_war2/v08n10_history.html).

Japanese also established three counterespionage units -- Nami Kikan, Ushio Kikan, and In Ibaragi Kikan -- as a result of this operation.<sup>46</sup>

Force 136 launched Operation Oatmeal on October 23, 1944. This was the first operation for the Malay teams, led by a determined native Malay officer, Captain Ibrahim bin Ismail. Together with two other Malayan agents, they were inserted by Catalina amphibious aircraft on the east coast of Malaya, near Besut, Terengganu. They estimated this area could accommodate their maneuver, since the majority of the population were Malays. Force 136 wished to avoid the risk of failing to receive mutual support if the agents were sent into the area occupied by Chinese guerrillas from the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA). On the first attempt, Oatmeal was postponed due to bad weather. Monsoons, especially on the east coast of Malaya, and other environmental factors frequently foiled flights to Malaya. The team flew for the second time on October 31, 1944. After a long journey, they landed near Pulau Perhentian Kecil and moved to the mainland. Luck was not with them. The pro-Japanese Malay Volunteer Corps, Giyu Tai, captured them as soon as they established themselves on the mainland.<sup>47</sup>

Operation Hebrides was a second attempt by Major P. J. G. Dobree and Captain Ibrahim bin Ismail to land on the near coast of Kedah Peak, northeast of Penang Island in August 1944, after an attempt by submarine failed. Hebrides was the first airborne operation launched by Force 136 in the region. Dobree and five other Malays, excepting Ibrahim, successfully parachuted at night from Liberator Mark VIs on December 16, 1944, landing at Padang Cermin in northern Perak. They raised many Malay volunteers in this area for Askar Melayu Setia (AMS). Subsequently, Force 136 organized a few other airborne landings in Kedah, one in Raub and one in Kuala Lipis, in central Pahang.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Gough, *The Jungle was Red*, 61–62.

<sup>47</sup> Mohd Zamberi A. Malek, *Harimau Malaya: Biografi Tengku Mahmood Mahyiddeen* (Bangi: Penerbitan Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1999), 73; Shennan, *Our Man*, 100; Gough, *The Jungle was Red*, 82.

<sup>48</sup> Shennan, *Our Man*, 100; Mohd Zamberi, *Harimau*, 77.

#### D. UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

Force 136 had engaged with the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) from the beginning of their establishment in Singapore. Most of the British officers predicted that cooperation with the CPM might lead to unintended consequences. After the Japanese surrender in 1945, while the British military administration slowly began to assume administration from the Japanese, there was a power vacuum in Malaya. The CPM took this opportunity to expand their control, continuing with insurrection and mobilization. Since 1939, John Davis, a British Special Branch officer, had been in contact with a Chinese from Singapore, Lai Tek. During the war, Lai Tek, or Chang Hung, rose to become the CPM secretary general. He was a triple agent to the British and Japanese during World War II. Spencer Chapman and John Davis, representing the British government, organized a meeting with Lai Tek on December 18, 1941. The British agreed to release Chinese communists from prison, and in return, the MCP promised to provide suitable recruits to be trained as guerrillas at 101 STS, Singapore. The first twenty-five MCP youths reported on December 20, 1941 and begin their secret training at Tanjung Balai, in Singapore.<sup>49</sup> In the north, Allan Warren, who was in charge of clandestine and intelligence matters in Kuala Lumpur, took over a Chinese school on Batu Road in Perak as a SOE training school for local communist recruits, and named it STS 102. It trained only one cohort of CPM recruits, and closed before the Japanese arrived. Besides that instruction, Spencer Chapman later confessed that he taught guerrilla warfare techniques to CPM guerrillas before joining Force 136 in Perak, in return for his protection. Other British officers did the same, staying behind with the CPM and training them.<sup>50</sup>

The British officially supported the CPM after what became known as Blantan's Agreement. On November 1943, Lim Bo Seng arrived from Colombo with a document that confirmed John Davis's authority and provided a clear mandate to negotiate a military treaty with the CPM on behalf of the Southeast Asian Commander (SEAC). The British agreed to aid and strengthen all resistant elements that could be counted on to

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<sup>49</sup> Shennan, *Our Man*, 7

<sup>50</sup> Shennan, *Our Man*, 81.

assist in final preparations to eject the Japanese from Malaya.<sup>51</sup> On December 1, 1943, Force 136, on behalf of the British SEAC, and the CPM signed Blantan's Agreement at Camp Blantan. The British made it clear they expected the CPM to sustain anti-Japanese sentiments in the population, conduct limited fifth-column activity, and emphasize in their information operations the need for complete cooperation with Allied forces.<sup>52</sup> In response, Lai Tek requested British arms, ammunition, medical supplies, including doctors, military training, and financial assistance to the tune of 50,000–70,000 Malayan dollars per month. In short, the communists drew valuable benefits from the training and equipping of their guerrillas.<sup>53</sup> The CPM had collected a considerably supply of weapons, ammunition, and explosives left by the retreating British forces, but had little idea how to use them.<sup>54</sup> As Shennan writes, “the legacy of Blantan's Agreement lingered beyond Japan's surrender, adding to the postwar economic confusion in Malaya and the separation of British and CPM interests. The end game was the communist insurgency against colonial Britain.”

## **E. LINE OF DEVELOPMENT**

### **1. Training**

As a special operations unit, Force 136 emphasized training. In July 1941, initial training was conducted at STS 101 in Tanjung Balai, Singapore, and Lieutenant Colonel J. M. L. Gavin was the first commandant. Tanjung Balai is an isolated headland on the south coast of Singapore Island, appropriate for Force 136's clandestine operations training.<sup>55</sup> Force 136 evacuated and established their new training center in Calcutta when the Japanese drew close to Singapore. Force 136 Malaya Section training continued at the British Far East Military School or Camp Kharakvasla, within the Mahratta Fort in Poona near Mount Singrah, British India. The dilapidated building was converted to

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<sup>51</sup> Shennan, *Our Man*, 75.

<sup>52</sup> Shennan, *Our Man*, 76.

<sup>53</sup> Shennan, *Our Man*, 76.

<sup>54</sup> Frederick Spencer Chapman, *The Jungle Is Neutral* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co. Inc., 1949), 114.

<sup>55</sup> Shennan, *Our Man*, 9.



barracks, offices, halls, classrooms, a mess, conference rooms, and parade grounds. The course mainly covered shooting skills, assassinations, raids, canoeing, explosives and bombing, clandestine communications, intelligence gathering, camouflage, map reading, and guerrilla warfare. Practical lessons were taught almost every day. Originally, the schedule for training recruits lasted a month, but was soon extended to two months.<sup>56</sup> The training focused and prepared the recruits in sabotage and espionage roles. However, when they were deployed in the field, their chief role was gathering intelligence. There had been feedback from agents on the ground that Force 136 should emphasize training in intelligence gathering. Agents also practiced the essential maneuvers for debarking from submarines and managing ‘folboats.’ Force 136 emphasized training until their departure date.<sup>57</sup>

Training was conducted in English. Lim Bo Seng translated instructions for the Chinese “Dragon” groups. During that period, Tan Choon Tee, a Malayan student recruited in China, and Lim Bo Seng wrote every note, copied maps, translated confidential documents, and wrote reports for Kuomintang (KMT) nationalist headquarters in Chungking.<sup>58</sup> During training, Chinese trainees were divided into pro-Chinese, who were sent by the Chinese government and regarded the British as comrades-in-arms for the war, and pro-British, who were recruited directly by the British. The pro-British Chinese were overseas Chinese workers or former employees in the British service. These two groups were not trained together, to avoid mutual suspicion and jealousy. Trainees were kept a distance from one another to keep up the spirit and strength of Force 136.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Tan Chong Tee, *Force 136: Story of a WWII Resistance Fighter*, trans. Lee Watt Sim and Clara Show (Singapore: Asiapac Books, 1995), 41.

<sup>57</sup> Shennan, *Our Man*, 60.

<sup>58</sup> Chong Tee, *Story of a WWII Resistance Fighter*, 41.

<sup>59</sup> Chong Tee, *Story of a WWII Resistance Fighter*, 42.

## 2. Equipment

Guerrilla warfare requires not only capable recruits, but also the viable and effective support. Guerrillas are lightly armed groups, and require only simple equipment.<sup>60</sup> Force 136 received supplies from the British such as weapons, ammunition, clothes, food, and medicine. Force 136 standard supply deliveries were sufficient for three months.<sup>61</sup> Only limited numbers of wireless telegraphs, or WT's, were issued to patrol teams.<sup>62</sup> During the early period of war, the WT was heavy and at least six extremely able persons were required to carry a set. This made carrying a WT into a dense jungle exceedingly difficult. On 11 December 1943, during Operation Gustavus II, Lim Bo Seng brought two new lightweight Mark-II WT sets, which were well received.

Under Blantan's Agreement, the CPM asked for guns, ammunition, money, and medicine. It was estimated that more than 5,000 weapons were delivered to the guerrillas by air or sea. CPM did not hand over all of the weapons, ammunition, and other equipment to the British after the Japanese surrender in 1945, but kept it in their arsenals, later to be used against the British during the Malayan Emergency.

## 3. Personnel

British officers, not all of who had a military background, led the majority of Force 136. Some were police officers, estate managers, and civil servants who volunteered. Force 136 did search for high-caliber recruits among Asian Malays, young men who were fit and strong and could face the rigors and dangers of working in the field. Able recruits had to assimilate various skills needed for survival and successful sabotage and intelligence work. Attempts to recruit Malays in Britain failed. A principal reason for this failure was that many Malays were in a dilemma about who was the real invader in Malaya: the British or the Japanese. Some Malays did join Force 136 and performed well, such as Captain Ibrahim and Major Tengku M. Mahyiddeen.

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<sup>60</sup> Mao Tse-tung, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith (Urbana, Illinois: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1961), 82.

<sup>61</sup> Gough, *The Jungle was Red*, 49.

<sup>62</sup> "British Special Operations Executives: Tools and Gadgets Gallery," *The BBC*, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/soe\\_gallery\\_11.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/soe_gallery_11.shtml) (accessed May 19, 2012).

Force 136 headquarters therefore turned to a KMT organization of Chinese seamen in Calcutta. Initially, a pool of around 5,000 potential candidates was interviewed in the selection process. Good recruits were hard to find, because the majority were illiterate, unprepared to volunteer, or otherwise unsuitable. Lim Bo Seng, Chuan Hui Tsuan and a few others passed the selection process and became wholly dedicated to the service. As Chinese patriots and nationalists, they were involved in anti-Japanese activities and the raising of relief funds for China. Force 136's search for potential recruits was broadened to 400 Chinese exiles from Malaya, studying in Chungking, China. They were younger, and more intelligent, motivated, and resilient than those available to SOE in the initial recruitment attempts.

#### **4. Information**

Communication was important for the survival of Force 136 units. Morse code over WT was the means of communication with headquarters in Ceylon. During this period, WT was generally ineffective. Besides being too heavy for mobile operation, especially in the primitive jungles of Malaya, their range was insufficient to reach Ceylon. The distance was too far for the technology of the time.<sup>63</sup>

Besides the technical issue of the WT, there was a serious problem regarding operations security (OPSEC). In the second half of 1944, Force 136 suffered a series of critical and apparently bizarre security breakdowns. In addition to successful Japanese aerial reconnaissance, the near-destruction of Force 136 was due to information received from a Malay informant. Due to the lack of a secure system of autonomous networks or cells, they were too dependent on single sources, and over-frequent visits by agents exposed their sources to a high risk of compromise and capture.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Gough, *The Jungle was Red*, 49.

<sup>64</sup> Shennan, *Our Man*, 92.

## 5. Doctrine

Force 136 agents were trained in and used unconventional warfare tactics against the Japanese, such as the “one-minute hit-and-run” tactic. Force 136 patrols engaged their enemy for only one minute and fled the area well before the enemy sent for reinforcements. Overall, Force 136 did not have a strategic impact in the battle for Malaya, but they did have tactical effects. The Malayan population did not give full support to Force 136 because both the British and Japanese were seen as foreign invaders. Japanese propagandists promised independence to the Malay peoples, provided them work, and established security forces and police. However, the Chinese in Malaya faced racial oppression by the Japanese. Conversely, the Chinese were more hostile toward the Japanese out of sympathy to the Chinese under Japanese occupation in China.

## 6. Organization

From the beginning, Force 136 Malaya was a “stepson” to British higher authority, and was burdened by many constraints. Furthermore, officers from the Malayan Section observed that the SOE Far East headquarters was disorganized. They understood the need for a good organization. Basil Goodfellow observed that SOE India Mission Headquarters had “too many bosses, and too much attempted control from Headquarters but no compensating improvement in communications.” John Davis also complained, “reorganization is the key word everywhere and so of course everything is a balls-up. An imperial balls-up—the threat of interference in the running of the Malayan Section.”<sup>65</sup> Talented, experienced, and dedicated personnel were also important for the success of Force 136. Force 136 officers witnessed various positions being filled by unfriendly newcomers with inflated functions and dismissive attitudes. They said the proliferation of offices and sections, with the unstoppable drive to centralize operations, brought increased paperwork.<sup>66</sup>

Richard Broome also commented about the headquarters. He came across a worrying amount of fraud and “bull” involving public money, because a businessman

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<sup>65</sup> Shennan, *Our Man*, 55.

<sup>66</sup> Shennan, *Our Man*, 55.

rather than a professional administrator ran India Mission (IM). The Malayan Section arguably was the most cost-effective operation under the India Mission, due to the collective efforts of Goofellow, Broome, Davis, and Lim Bo Seng. They believed that their individual talents, mutual respect, and trust eventually brought about the successful landings of Force 136 personnel on the Malayan peninsula.<sup>67</sup>

There was rivalry between Far East wing of the Secret Intelligence Service (which used the cover name Inter-Service Liaison Department, ISLD) and Force 136, which affected the progress of the Malayan Resistance.<sup>68</sup> Both were carrying out intelligence work, simultaneously and in the same area. This was bound to create tension, especially when the sharing of transportation, specialist personnel, and signal staffs was added into the equation. John Davis said that there was a lack of trust on both sides. To protect their common security, senior officers in Colombo and Calcutta reached an agreement that when joint submarine transport could not be avoided, a procedure would be established so that one party would not compromise the other's activities. In early 1945, joint action took place in Operation Mint, in Johor and Perak. When the buildup for Malaya's liberation began, Force 136 cooperated fully in helping the existing and future ISLD parties. Both agreed to work in complete coordination and abide by the principle of "one war, one effort." ISLD units came under the tactical command of the group liaison officer (GLO) of Force 136, and all negotiations with Anti-Japanese Union Force (AJUF) were to be made by these GLOs. In order to safeguard all participants in amphibious operations, a principle was developed to avoid compromising special operations. The submarine involved would refrain from any offensive combat action during the twenty-four hours before and after its completion.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Shennan, *Our Man*, 53.

<sup>68</sup> ISLD—Inter-Services Liaison Department. Their role was intelligence gathering. Its members were taken from all three services. The ISLD was a cover name for clandestine intelligence, which was independent of, but often operated with, the British paramilitary intelligence organization SOE.

<sup>69</sup> Shennan, *Our Man*, 60.

## **7. Infrastructure**

Force 136 used a bungalow as their training camp in Singapore. In October 1942, Colin H. Mackenzie, the overall commander of the India Mission, believed the numbers of enlisted troops would not warrant establishing a new school for primary training. A special wing equipped as a guerrilla-training unit, was renamed the India Mission Eastern Warfare School, and set up in the rocky Western Ghats near Poona. This complex had all the necessary facilities: barracks, mess, offices, classrooms, conference rooms, training field, and parade ground. Major Mike Kendall, who had served in China and attended one of the first courses at No. 101 STS, Singapore, commanded this school.<sup>70</sup>

Force 136 selected Ceylon as the location for an advanced operations school and final training and holding camp for Malayan agents. Ceylon was a good choice, since its climate and vegetation were similar to that of Malaya. The island was a natural base for submarine operations, and in the absence of aircraft capable of making the round-trip from the Indian subcontinent to and from Malaya, submarines were the most feasible form of clandestine transport. Brigadier General G. H. Beyts, the senior officer of operations suggested that the holding camp be in Trincomallee. From the middle of 1943, Ceylon became home to Force 136, Group B, which included the Malayan Country Section, under the command of Colonel Christopher Hudson.<sup>71</sup> In Malaya, Force 136's operational camps were collocated with the CPM's camps, such as in Blantan, Perak. All these camps were located deep in the jungle, lacked even basic amenities, and were susceptible to monsoon weather.

## **8. Logistics**

Sustenance was critical for Force 136, so resupply was important to their survival. Jungles can provide food, but food gathering is time- and energy-consuming. Force 136 personnel carried their own initial three-month supply of provisions and equipment, the group's supplies, and a WT, if available. Resupply was one of the biggest challenges for Force 136, because of distance from headquarters, adverse weather, and the jungle

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<sup>70</sup> Shennan, *Our Man*, 53.

<sup>71</sup> Shennan, *Our Man*, 54.

environment. Limited numbers of resupply means, such as aircraft, ships, and submarines, further complicated the mission in Malaya. In the second half of 1942, the British set their strategic focus on North Africa. Consequently, eight submarines in the Mediterranean command that had been promised by the admiralty as Far Eastern reinforcements had not yet arrived. Therefore, Oriental Mission depended on Dutch submarine availability to launch their operations. Only from December 1943 onwards did Force 136 begin to sail using a British T-class submarine, HMS *Tally Ho*.<sup>72</sup> Overland transportation was hazardous due to Japanese ground and air patrols, roadblocks, and informants. Foot movement was arduous because of the geographical conditions and density of the jungles. Moving heavy equipment such as a WT from one site to another was strenuous labor.

## **9. Leadership**

Besides the British volunteers, many outstanding Force 136 leaders were born among the local Malaysians. These included Lim Bo Seng, Captain Ibrahim, and Major Tengku Mahmood Mahyiddeen. Lim Bo Seng was courageous, loyal, and devoted to liberating Malaya, and an excellent leader. He was a dedicated and committed leader of the KMT Chinese Dragons, and gave his life serving with Force 136. He died in Batu Gajah, the Japanese prison in Perak, on June 29, 1944. While many British officers admired the Chinese Dragons group, there were Malay agents who proved to be adept special operations soldiers. Captain Ibrahim was one of them. Although the Japanese captured him once he landed in Malaya, he managed to transmit a message to SOE headquarters while he was held captive. Many Force 136 agents owed their lives to Captain Ibrahim. Another Malay agent was Tengku Mahmood Mahyideen. He was a sergeant in the Kelantan Volunteer Force and fought the Japanese in the Battle of Kota Baharu. On January 1, 1943, he was tasked with organizing Malay Section Radio, or Suara Harimau Malaya, at All India Radio, New Delhi, with another Malay, Suffian Hashim (who became chief justice of Malaya). They began to broadcast various psychological operations and propaganda messages for the Malaya peoples to rise against

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<sup>72</sup> Shennan, *Our Man*, 55.

the Japanese. In October 1943, he was invited to join Force 136. Afterward, Lord Mountbatten gave him a commission as a major in the British Army, and he worked in the Far East intelligence and training department in New Delhi.

Among British volunteers, histories mention John Davis most. He was a Police Special Branch officer, well educated, in good health, psychologically strong, and with no desire for office work. Besides his bullheadedness and tenacity of purpose, he brought to Force 136 eleven years of experience in police work in all parts of Malaya's countryside and jungle. He volunteered because he was single with no dependents. Languages and cultural awareness give him a notable advantage in special operations. John Davis was fluent in Malay and Cantonese, and learned Mandarin while residing in Canton for two years, so he was well exposed to Chinese culture and civilization. Davis volunteered ahead of the rest to lead the initial mission, because the first would have to land "blind" and face innumerable risks. He felt he was mentally and physically fitter than the rest, single, expendable, and most familiar with the Malayan jungle.<sup>73</sup>

Force 136 could not achieve what was planned were it not for the organizing ability and facility for dealing with high-level VIPs of Basil Goodfellow. John Davis said that without Richard Broome's help and Basil Goodfellow's support, Force 136 could not have begun within such a short time.<sup>74</sup> Richard Broome, a civil servant in Malaya, was also one of the outstanding pioneers in Force 136. Captain Ivan Lyon was a superb sailor and brave man who persuaded the India Mission controller Colin MacKenzie to mount a sabotage raid against Japanese shipping in Singapore.

## **F. CONCLUSION**

Force 136 could have had a significant impact in the fight against the Japanese if they had been allowed to organize left-behind parties well ahead of the invasion. Commanders today need to understand how to utilize special operations forces such as Force 136 in this kind of scenario. In this case, many British higher commands did not initially appreciate what irregular paramilitary forces such as Force 136 could contribute

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<sup>73</sup> Shennan, *Our Man*, 50–51.

<sup>74</sup> Shennan, *Our Man*, 49.



towards the war. Cooperation with the CPM and KMT was beneficial at first, but became a burden later. These ethnic Chinese units were highly motivated to fight, out of sympathy with the Chinese people in Japanese-occupied areas. The Chinese guerrillas were well trained and sufficiently armed for their later insurrection, an unintended consequence after the Japanese surrender in 1945. The CPM decided to fight against their former ally for the sake of their communist agenda of establishing a communist state.

In conclusion, Force 136, like all SOF units, emphasized selection and training. They always gave priority to the training of their recruits. However, training needs to be aligned with the roles or operations of the units. Force 136 faced many difficulties due to the unsuitability of their equipment to the jungle environment. Force 136 handpicked their recruits so that they would have the best possible teams for their operations. They had significant problems with communications due to ineffective WT sets and poor operational security, which led to many agents' capture by the enemy. A clear doctrine would have given an understandable direction to the agents in executing their missions and saving valuable resources and lives. Force 136 agents had a clear view about the type of organization they wished to work with. They had awareness about the consequences of a failed organization.

The selection of suitable facilities also was a critical factor when Force 136 was established. Logistics was a challenge to Force 136, due to lack of appropriate transportation, vast distances from their bases to their target areas, weather, and geography. Nevertheless, Force 136 had many talented and dedicated leaders determined to enable this special unit to overcome all challenges, and execute their mission.

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### **III. THE MALAYAN EMERGENCY (1948–1960)**

#### **A. INTRODUCTION**

The Malayan Emergency was Britain's first fight against the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) and its armed wing, the Malayan Races Liberation Army, and lasted for about 12 years. This chapter examines the SOF experience during the Malayan Emergency and its impact on improving Malaysian security against threats. To achieve that, this thesis will answer questions such as why and how the British used SOF during the confrontation. Besides highlighting historical data, this thesis will use a modified model of the UK's Defense Lines of Development (DLoD) to look for ideas for the Malaysian SOF to exploit in the future.<sup>75</sup>

#### **B. THE MALAYA EMERGENCY: “WAR IN ALL BUT NAME”**

On September 2, 1945, the Japanese officially surrendered to the Allies, marking the end of World War II. American atomic bombs made Operation Zipper, the liberation of Malaya by British forces, unnecessary. In the aftermath, British officials immediately instructed the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army, or MPAJA, to hand over their weapons and disband, but this was taken halfheartedly. The Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) took this opportunity to eliminate those whom they considered Japanese collaborators, and atrocities increased across Malaya from that period.<sup>76</sup> The British government seemed ill prepared and lost its credibility to rule postwar Malaya.

In 1947, unstable conditions continued, and social unrest increased, especially within the Chinese community and the communist-dominated labor unions. The British Military Administration (BMA) introduced martial law to grapple with this insecure

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<sup>75</sup> Clive Kerr, Robert Phaal and David Probert, “A Framework for Strategic Military Capabilities in Defense Transformation,” an article for the *11th International Command and Control Research and Technology Symposium*, 2006, [http://www.dodccrp.org/events/11th\\_ICCRTS/html/papers/061.pdf](http://www.dodccrp.org/events/11th_ICCRTS/html/papers/061.pdf) (accessed February 29, 2012).

UK Defense Line of Development (Training, Equipment, Personnel, Infrastructure, Doctrine and Concepts, Organization, Information, Logistic) with an additional point, Leadership, taken from the U.S. construct. The acronym is TEPID OIL + L.

<sup>76</sup> Fredrick Spencer Chapman, *The Jungle is Neutral* (Chatto and Windus: London, 1949; reprint by Time-Life Books: Virginia, 1989), 420–423.

development, with no significant effects. By 1948, the Malay Races Liberation Army (MRLA) or CPM military wings continued attacking police stations, terrorizing civilians, and sabotaging properties. On June 16, 1948, they murdered three British planters in Sungei Siput, Perak. Sir Edward Gent, the British High Commissioner in Malaya, immediately declared an emergency in parts of Perak, which was extended to the whole country the next day. This was the beginning of the Malayan Emergency.<sup>77</sup>

The CPM mobilized MPAJA ex-members to rally in the jungle and fight against the British using tactics they learned from Force 136 during WWII. They wanted to create a Communist People's Democratic Republic of Malaya.<sup>78</sup> Mao Tse-tung inspired their armed revolution to cripple the economy through guerrilla action, force the British army out of the countryside, and establish safe or liberated areas. These areas would be used as MRLA bases, where recruits would be trained for an offensive to oust the British, backed by China if necessary.<sup>79</sup> More than 7,000 MRLA guerrillas and thousands more *Min Yuen* were made ready for action. The MRLA was organized along lines similar to the MPAJA and relied on the jungles for protection. From the security of camps in the jungles of Perak, Selangor, and Johor, they could launch surprise attacks on estates, mines, and communications in the cities, withdrawing over the mountain spine, if necessary, to take cover in the jungles of Kelantan or Pahang (see Figure 2).<sup>80</sup>

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77 Alastair Mackenzie, *Special Force* (I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd: London, 2011), 52–53.

78 Leon Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police 1945–60: The Role of the Malayan Special Branch in the Malayan Emergency* (Institute of South East Asian Studies: Singapore, 2008), xix. Dr. Leon Comber, a former Malayan Special Branch officer during the Emergency, fluent in Chinese language is also a fellow at Monash Asia Institute, Monash University, Australia.

79 Pennell J. Hickey, *Counter Insurgency Operations in Malaya, 1948–1960: The Role of Regular Force* (U.S. War College: Pennsylvania, 1971), 9; Noel Barber, *The War of The Running Dogs: the Malayan Emergency 1948–1960* (William Collins: London, 1971(Reprint Cassell: London, 2004)), 38.

80 Shennan, *Our Man*, 155–156. Min Yuen is CPM sympathizers or mass peasant organization.



Figure 2. Principal areas of activity.<sup>81</sup>

The government imposed emergency regulations, which authorized the heavy-handed use of detention, deportation, and collective punishment of entire towns or

<sup>81</sup> John Scurr, *The Malayan Campaign 1948-60* (Osprey Publishing: Oxford, UK, 1982; reprint 2006), 3.

villages, but these measures did not deter the communist terrorist (CT) from perpetrating more attacks.<sup>82</sup> Security forces were unprepared and inadequate to combat the MRLA. Regular military units were undermanned and inexperienced in jungle operations. The rank-and-file rural police were too open to intimidation.<sup>83</sup>

For two years, security forces attempted to fight the MRLA using conventional tactics: large sweep, cordon, and search for the CTs, with insignificant progress. Realizing those actions were useless, the government began to introduce special operations forces to fight the CTs, such as the Ferret Forces and Malayan Scouts (Special Air Service, or SAS). Besides that, the government reorganized its intelligence agency and saw the inception of the Special Branch (SB). The aborigines or Orang Asli and Iban were recruited to become special paramilitary forces, known as the Senoi Praaq and Sarawak Rangers, to fight the enemy.

## **C. SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES**

### **1. Ferret Forces**

On July 6, 1948, during a meeting at the Malayan district office in Kuala Lumpur, a proposal regarding the formation of a special jungle-guerrilla force for anti-insurgent operations in Malaya was tabled. John Davis, the former Force 136 commander, was named responsible for convincing, promoting, and leading the Ferret Force. This was the first tactical initiative launched against the CTs. The Ferret Force was organized as a combined civil–military initiative, with approval for five operational groups. A headquarters group, two patrols of the Malay regiment and two from the Gurkhas—twenty men total—were to be available in each group. Richard Broome, another Force 136 veteran, joined John Davis, believing the Ferret Force was the cheapest method of coping with the Emergency as well as the “best and perhaps the only method of coping with the CTs once they get through the jungle.”<sup>84</sup>

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82 Brian Drohan, “An Intergrated Approach: British Political-Military Strategy in the Malayan Emergency,” *Armor*, vol. 115, no. 1 (2006): 34–38, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/205332493?%20Accounted=12702> (accessed October 11, 2012).

83 Shennan, *Our Man*, 155.

84 Shennan, *Our Man*, 155–157.

The Ferret Force was composed of military and police personnel, Europeans with special operations experience and handpicked Asians. Working in teams, they penetrated the jungle to target and eliminate CTs on their own or in collaboration with conventional forces. Their intention was to emulate the terrorists, operating in mobile squads with local knowledge, led by officers who had already proven themselves in irregular warfare. Unfortunately, the Ferret Force was disbanded in November 1948. Though brief in duration, the Ferret Force demonstrated that the most effective military operations were by small units undertaking deep-penetration patrols into the jungle.<sup>85</sup>

The Ferret Force's first contact came when nine men of Group 1, Malay Patrol tracked a party of forty CTs through the night as they returned from a tin mine attack near Chemor, the primary tin mining region north of Ipoh, Perak. Before the alarm was given, Ferret's troopers crept to within ten yards of a sentry post. The CTs managed to flee into the darkness, leaving behind, however, a substantial quantity of ammunition and equipment. Davis really admired the Malayan's patrol capabilities. Another serious engagement was in September 1948. Three patrols from Group 1, searching for the CT camp near Kampong Jalong, north of Ipoh, discovered four CTs hiding in a hut, whom they arrested for questioning. Later, the patrols tracked through the jungle until they reached a clearing where they came under heavy fire, which lasted for at least forty-five minutes and again, the CTs abandoned their camp. The Ferrets confiscated a quantity of equipment, clothing, guns, propaganda leaflets, and other documents giving a clue as to the CTs' modus operandi. On November 1948, Richard Broome and his patrols discovered a major training camp capable of accommodating 100 insurgents and a rifle range. After two days of intermittent contact, resulting in casualties on both sides, the CTs were finally routed. The Ferret Forces received huge coverage in the news.<sup>86</sup>

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85 Shennan, *Our Man*, 161.

86 Shennan, *Our Man*, 155–160.

## 2. The Malayan Scouts (SAS)

“Control yourself and you control all”– Brigadier “Mad Mike”  
Calvert

The history of the Malayan Scouts (known as the 22nd SAS Regiment after 1958) started when General Sir John Harding, commander-in-chief of the Far East Land Forces, seeking ways to counter the insurgency in Malaya as conditions worsened, began looking for officers experienced in jungle warfare. Major Mike Calvert a veteran of the Chindits (a British India special force that served in Burma and India in 1943 and 1944, during the Burma Campaign in World War II) came forward and volunteered for a six-month fact-finding mission in Malaya to assess the situation. According to memoirist Alastair Mackenzie, who studied politics and was a former 22nd SAS troop commander, Major Mike Calvert provided a number of significant observations and gave the results directly to the director of operations in Malaya, General Sir Harold Briggs, but received little or no acknowledgement. He recommended separating the terrorists from their support element, training a deep-penetration patrol unit to locate CT encampments and either destroy them or lead conventional forces to the area, and separating the CTs from the jungle aborigines, who, it was believed, were assisting the CTs. The task was to interdict the CTs’ food and intelligence supplies by denying them support and freedom of movement. He also recommended that the police stop sending large patrols into the jungle and concentrate on protection of civilians and expansion of the Special Branch. This included moving Chinese squatters into new villages where they could be concentrated and protected. From then on, Calvert worked to launch a fresh unit, which he called the Malayan Scouts, a special force to operate in the deep jungle.<sup>87</sup>

The SAS contributed significant experience to the Jungle Warfare School in Johor and antiterrorist operations in the Malayan manual.<sup>88</sup> From 1955 to 1956, the SAS had five squadrons totaling 560 men, and in these two years, the SAS was keen to

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<sup>87</sup> Mackenzie, *Special Force*, 58; David Rooney, *Mad Mike: A life of Brigadier Michael Calvert* (Pen & Sword Book Ltd: South Yorkshire, UK, 1997; reprint 2006), 135–136.

<sup>88</sup> Director of Operations-Malaya, *The Conduct of Anti-Terrorist Operations in Malaya*, 3rd ed., 1958.



experiment, gaining valuable experience.<sup>89</sup> After nine years and 108 kills, the SAS left Malaya.<sup>90</sup> A few years later, in Borneo, the SAS played a much more dramatic and fulfilling role. The rebirth of the SAS in Malaya was the catalyst that enabled the British SAS to gain a permanent position in the UK forces' order of battle.<sup>91</sup>

Operation Sword in January 1954 was the first parachute drop by the SAS into the jungle in Kedah, northern Malaya, where they suffered three casualties. In July 1954, SAS troopers led Operation Termite, the largest combined operation in the Emergency. For General Sir Gerald Templer, the High Commissioner of Malaya, this was his first major all-military endeavor. The objective was to strike the Temiar tribes and CTs in the Korbu area and Raia Valley, due east of Kinta and Ipoh, Perak. These areas were one of the "blackest" areas in Malaya. The action involved a dawn airstrike on CT hideouts and a parachute-drop mission of 200 troopers drawn from two squadrons of Malayan Scouts, using Valetta aircraft. They were dropped close to the target. Again, many troopers suffered injuries while parachuting into trees.<sup>92</sup> They achieved the element of surprise, but the Temiar were hostile and elusive. This operation killed fifteen CTs, and many camps and supply dumps were located. This operation saw the work of the Asal organization begin to bear fruit.<sup>93</sup>

### 3. Senoi Praaq

In July 1954, General Templer proposed a second SAS squadron to the war office, but the London-based director of operations rejected his request. This led to the

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89 E.D. Smith, *Counter-insurgency Operation: 1, Malaya and Borneo* (Ian Allan Ltd: Surrey, UK, 1985), 30. Brigadier Smith served with the British Army in the Malayan Emergency and the Confrontation.

90 Harry Miller, "After 9 years and 108 kills, men of SAS are going home," *The Straits Times*, March 10, 1959, 2.

91 Mackenzie, *Special Force*, 49.

92 Mackenzie, *Special Force*, 69.

<sup>93</sup> Scurr, *The Malayan Campaign*, 26; Roy Davis Linville Jumper, *Death waits in the "Dark,"* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 38. Asal means 'original' and refers to the Orang Asli, or original people of Malaya. MRLA acknowledged that they were the original people of Malaya. The *Asal* Organization was the MRLA's surrogate forces, which consisted of Orang Asli or aborigines, and figured heavily into communist strategy. They acted as combatants, scouts, and foragers for the communists. With the help of the Alsa, the MRLA owned the jungle. The Asal had many independent units and could not be easily confronted. They were divided into regional groups and supported by eleven MRLA regiments, operating for the most part in seven western Malayan states.

formation of a small experimental unit in late 1956 named Senoi Praaq, or “war people” in the Semai tribe’s language.<sup>94</sup> Senoi Praaq was a crack unit organized to fight the communists, an efficient military and intelligence machine resembling SAS troopers, whom they eventually replaced after Malayan independence, according to an analysis by Roy Jumper, an expert in Southeast Asian political affairs and Malayan tribal politics. Initially, this was a military intelligence project to win the support of the aboriginal population. The SAS began to train a number of Orang Asli and former Asal members to become a paramilitary force. As a result, the Senoi Praaq’s deep-jungle operations proved extremely successful in the suppression of CTs.<sup>95</sup> In 1958, the Senoi Praaq held the highest number of kills on record among any security force’s units in Malaya. By 1959–1960, their kill ratio stood at 16 to 1 for killed or wounded enemy personnel.<sup>96</sup> The MRLA quickly spread the news about the Senoi Praaq’s success among them. Their reputation as ruthless killers forced the CT to abandon its activities and withdraw rather than engage this foe.

After the Emergency, a small group of Senoi Praaq helped establish the Montagnard Scouts in March 1963. This program was in response to a request from South Vietnam’s President Ngo Dinh Diem in early 1960. The Senoi Praaq mission was to teach the South Vietnamese forces what they knew, and establish an intelligence network among the Montagnards. These activities were kept secret to preserve the mission’s integrity, and were considered delicate from a political and diplomatic standpoint. The Senoi Praaq withdrew from Pleiku province as the situation in Vietnam became worse and the confrontation with Indonesia began to roll in.<sup>97</sup> The Senoi Praaq continued to serve in the Malaysian Insurgency, and today is an essential pillar in support of Malaysia’s national security arrangements.

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<sup>94</sup> Roy Davis Linville Jumper, “Malaysia’s Senoi Praaq Special Forces,” *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Vol. 13, 2000, 64–93.

<sup>95</sup> Jumper, “Malaysia’s Senoi,” 64.

<sup>96</sup> Jumper, “Malaysia’s Senoi,” 79.

<sup>97</sup> Jumper, *Death Waits*, 77–99.

#### 4. Sarawak Rangers

On April 1953, the Malayan government announced the inception of the Sarawak Rangers. These Iban volunteers, who were initially attached to military units, were officially formed into an excellent independent fighting element. The SAS selected, trained, and equipped some of them to become professional soldiers. The Sarawak Rangers evolved and made enthusiastic contributions to all conflicts in Malaya (and later Malaysia).<sup>98</sup> Earlier, in the 1930s, the Sarawak Rangers were disbanded, despite their achievements as a highly skilled paramilitary force in jungle warfare and general policing duties. In 1946, the Rangers were reunited and fought the Japanese in Borneo with Commonwealth forces. The Iban trackers were drawn from North Borneo headhunter tribes and had been serving six-month engagements with the British Civil Liaison Corps as trackers since August 1948. The original trackers' strength grew to 200 men.

There were many brave and courageous fighters among the Sarawak Rangers. Among others was Awang anak Raweng, the only Malayan recipient of the British George Cross medal during the Emergency. In an operation near Kluang, Johor on May 27, 1951, some fifty well-armed CTs ambushed Awang and his patrol. During a fierce firefight that killed many of his friends, although injured, he continued to fight and killed several terrorists. The Sarawak Rangers still keep their old Iban war cry, "Agi Idup Agi Ngelaban" (As Long As I Live, I Shall Fight) that was used by their predecessors. In all, twenty-one Iban trackers and Sarawak Rangers were killed during the Malayan Emergency.<sup>99</sup> They also saw action in the Indonesian Confrontation and Second Insurgency. They continue to share their excellent jungle skills with other soldiers from around the world the Jungle Warfare Center in Ulu Tiram, Johor.<sup>100</sup> The Royal Rangers regiment of the Malaysian army became the Sarawak Rangers' successor in 1963.

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<sup>98</sup> Scurr, *The Malayan Campaign*, 25.

<sup>99</sup> "Iban Tracker and Sarawak Rangers: The brave few," *Malaysiaflyingherald Blog*, entry posted September 4, 2012, <http://malaysiaflyingherald.wordpress.com/2012/09/04/iban-tracker-and-sarawak-rangers-the-brave-few/> (accessed October 10, 2012); *The Conduct of Anti-Terrorist Operations*, Part 2, Chap. XXI, 1.

<sup>100</sup> "Jungle warfare center as tribute to state's heroes," *New Straits Times*, 21 July 2012, [www.nst.com.my/nation/general/jungle\\_warfare-centre-as-tribute-to-state-s-heroes-1.110531](http://www.nst.com.my/nation/general/jungle_warfare-centre-as-tribute-to-state-s-heroes-1.110531) (accessed September 13, 2012).

## 5. The Special Branch (SB)

Next on the list is the Malayan Police Special Branch. It may be debatable to group the Special Branch as a SOF unit, but what justifies it are the unconventional actions taken by the Special Branch against the CTs in the Emergency, which enabled other operations to succeed. The leadership in the Malayan government became aware of the problem faced by the intelligence services from the beginning of the Emergency, and determined to improve it. Sir Henry Gurney, the High Commissioner in Malaya in 1948, recognized the importance of an efficient intelligence service in fighting communist insurrection and civil unrest, based upon his experience as chief secretary in Palestine. He said the insurrection would not be subdued by the sheer weight of security forces arrayed against it, but by reliable operational intelligence provided by the Special Branch, on which successful military operation could be mounted.<sup>101</sup> Sir Harold Briggs, in the 1950s, complained about the shortage of operational intelligence coming from the Special Branch. As a result, the army had to assume operations with little or no operational intelligence.<sup>102</sup> Anthony Short, the author of the *Communist Insurrection in Malaya, 1948–60*, says Briggs' Plan not only emphasized a comprehensive approach but also recognized intelligence as being of supreme importance.<sup>103</sup> Sir Gerald Templer, circa 1952 said, "Malaya is an intelligence war; you can never beat communism with troops alone."<sup>104</sup>

Initially, the Special Branch was not ready to take over intelligence responsibility from its predecessor, the Malayan Security Service (MSS). The Special Branch was under strength, ill equipped, and not organized to provide the army with the right sort of operational intelligence, according to a Chinese-speaking officer in the Special Branch during the Emergency, Leon Comber.<sup>105</sup> In his book *Malaya's Secret Police 1945–60*, Comber also quotes a RAND analyst, Robert W. Komer, that the Special Branch in

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101 Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police*, 71.

102 Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police*, 72.

103 Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police*, 1x.

104 Smith, *Counter-insurgency*, 22.

105 Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police*, 286.

1948–49 was not adequately trained and prepared to deal with the communist uprising.<sup>106</sup> From the 1950s onward, after restructuring and retraining of Special Branch operatives began, their effectiveness in the counterinsurgency showed drastic improvement. The Special Branch as an organization became better with collection, analysis, and dissemination of intelligence on the CPM organization. Comber says the Special Branch now found itself standing in the first rank of national defense, with primary responsibility for providing combat intelligence to the army, as well as safeguarding the integrity of the country.<sup>107</sup> In sum, Comber concludes that the Special Branch success was not only because it knew its enemy—could speak and understand the “political language” of the CPM—but also because its members spoke the actual languages of the different races in Malaya, and employed a set of skills that included familiarity with Malayan history, culture, religion, society, and politics.<sup>108</sup>

One of the Special Branch’s operations was Operation Jaya in Northern Malaya, from October 1959 to March 1960. The aim was to extend Special Branch coverage of target areas. Operation Jaya required arduous skill in clandestine operations to penetrate the CPM organization. Despite success in locating several old, small CT camps and other guerrilla activities, it created some difficulties in the relationship between the Special Branch and the military—i.e., the military had to carry out futile operations as covers for their cherished projects. This caused a lack of faith in the Special Branch (sometimes known as the *mata-mata* [“eyes”] in the Malay language) among the military, for which there was no compensation in the form of any results of which they were aware. In February 1958 to April 1959, the Special Branch conducted two joint operations, Operation Ginger and Operation Bintang, in central Perak. These operations were the final key counterinsurgency operations during the Emergency. The aim was to eliminate CT remnants that were believed to be hiding in Perak. It covered approximately 1,200 square miles, and an estimated population of 125,000 people. By the time the operations concluded, the government declared the whole of central Perak free from CTs. The

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106 Comber, *Malaya’s Secret Police*, 61.

107 Comber, *Malaya’s Secret Police*, 64.

108 Comber, *Malaya’s Secret Police*, 289.

Special Branch's officers were responsible for providing intelligence to the security forces and ensured success. Special Branch also conducted another "most secret" project called "Q" operations, supported by small groups of Special Branch agents disguised as CTs to persuade their erstwhile comrades to surrender. The Special Branch, with assistance from the leader of five surrendered enemy personnel, was able to persuade 90 MRLA guerrillas to surrender in less than a month.<sup>109</sup> In mid-1953, the Special Branch developed secretly the Special Operation Volunteer Force (SOVF). The SOVF was composed of surrendered enemy personnel (SEP) and other selected volunteers. Approximately 180 ex-CTs were divided into twelve platoons of fifteen men each, led by Special Branch officers. They volunteered for eighteen months and lived in police compounds, receiving salaries similar to those of regular, rank-and-file policemen. The SOVF went back into the jungle to persuade their former colleagues to surrender, using "black" propaganda,—or assassinated them.<sup>110</sup>

#### **D. LINE OF DEVELOPMENT**

##### **1. Training**

During the Emergency, all the SOF units emphasized training, and their commanders played an essential role in ensuring the success of unit training. From the inauguration of these units, they focused on the same skills, such as deep-jungle penetration patrols, small-unit tactics, immediate action drills, ambushes, marksmanship, and many others. Frequent and repetitive training ensured that SOF units became efficient in their operations. The Ferret Force's success in hunting down CTs, as John Davis knew, depended on a number of skills and tactics, and intelligence, patience, alertness, and rapid response. To attain those qualities, Ferret's volunteers went through a two-week special training to ensure "considerable efficiency." The training was short because only exceptional men would be selected as Ferrets.<sup>111</sup>

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109 Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police*, 273 & 278.

110 Alastair Mackenzie, "Rebirth of the SAS: The Malayan Emergency," *Command Post*, February 9, 2012, <http://www.commandposts.com/2012/02/rebirth-of-the-sas-the-malayan-emergency/>.

111 Shennan, *Our Man*, 156.

The Malayan Scouts began its selection course in 1952. Major Calvert himself and one NCO trained new troopers for three weeks before operation. Calvert designed his training to enhance confidence and group cohesion while retaining the ability to act effectively individually. He ensured that troopers had the ability to track, move secretly and silently, and react immediately. Training included grenade practice, immediate action drills, and live ammunition practice that sometimes disregarded the normal safety rules for field firing ranges.<sup>112</sup> The concept of individualism was advanced by pitting one man against another to increase the efficiency of both. This ‘hunter/finder’ game (see Figure 3 below) was routine as a nonlethal duel, a method of nurturing mutual regard and preparing men with jungle warfare skills.<sup>113</sup> Troopers also learned the use of explosives, setting booby traps, and communications. Since there are many rivers in Malaya, boating was one of the most useful skills taught. First aid training was important and helped everyone in deep jungle operations, including the aborigines. It was essential that every man in operations understand not only the basics of first aid to the injured, but also general health.<sup>114</sup> The medical assistance of the troopers and other security forces attracted the aborigines closer to the government.

In all, the purpose of the training was to make every man adept at surviving in jungle warfare, quick to act and react, and capable of getting a shot off a split second earlier than an opponent. All these skills were instilled and mastered through repetition. A squadron’s cycle was two months in the jungle, two weeks’ leave, two weeks’ retraining, and back to the jungle.<sup>115</sup>

The SAS did parachute training at RAF Changi Airfield in Singapore and were trained by RAF instructors for the hazardous “tree-jumping,” parachuting into the jungle canopy and descending to the ground by a rope. Their most unpopular exercise was jumping from the back of a truck traveling at about twenty miles per hour, according to

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112 Mackenzie, *Special Force*, 71.

113 J. C. Durkin, *Malayan Scout SAS: A Memoir of the Malayan Emergency, 1951* (Gloucestershire, UK: The History Press, 2011), 37.

114 Director of Operations-Malaya, *The Conduct of Anti-Terrorist Operations*, Chap. XXIII, 3rd Ed. 1958, 1–7.

115 Mackenzie, *Special Operation*, 69.

Corporal Russell, a Malayan Scouts veteran. Regarding basic discipline, Russell also notes that the Rhodesian men arrived to form a B Squadron and were not impressed with A Squadron. They began back-to-basics training, introducing parades, training, and discipline, and from then on things noticeably improved.<sup>116</sup>



Figure 3. Malayan Scouts (SAS) training, “hunter/finder” game.<sup>117</sup>

The Senoi Praaq induction training began in 1955. The initial ten men from the Temiar tribes and former Asal members became the subjects of a SAS experiment, and would later form the nucleus of the Senoi Praaq. The recruits were attached to D Squadron for their basic training, which lasted a mere three months. The focus was on the use of weapons and various killing techniques. These recruits already possessed other SAS requirements for success in jungle warfare, instilled in them since birth. The results

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<sup>116</sup> G. Russell, *From R.A.S.C Malay Scouts to 22nd SAS*, <http://www.nmbva.co.uk/Roy%20Russell%20book.pdf> (accessed July 17, 2012).

<sup>117</sup> Imperial War Museum, *The Malaya Emergency*, Media Library, <http://media.iwm.org.uk/iwm/mediaLib/55/media-55378/large.jpg?action=d>



were promising, and they decided to continue with the formation of the Senoi Praaq.<sup>118</sup> The synergy of their jungle skills and SAS combat experiences allowed a unit on the stalk to pick the time and place to confront the enemy and thereby stack the odds in its favor.<sup>119</sup>

Training for the Special Branch started two years after the Emergency was declared. Once professional training in intelligence techniques was available in the 1950s, it became necessary for all Special Branch operatives. Two Special Branch training schools were built in Kuala Lumpur to accommodate this effort. Trainees analyzed various lessons and valuable intelligence experiences from others in the school. Some of the outstanding officers went for courses arranged in London by MI5 and the London Metropolitan Police Special Branch.<sup>120</sup>

## **2. Equipment**

Long-range jungle penetration operations required all SOF units to ensure their equipment was suitable for the harsh jungle environment. Many issues such as communication, insufficient personnel stores, and others encountered by Force 136 during World War II still arose during the Emergency. Nevertheless, the SOF units maintained flexibility and adaptability to mitigate these issues.

The Ferret Forces chose to travel light. Only essential rations were parachuted to them as they tried to live off the land, minimizing the possibility of their presence being exposed.<sup>121</sup> Individuals had to prepare to live in jungle conditions on a basic rice diet.<sup>122</sup> The Malayan Scouts, Senoi Praaq, and Sarawak Rangers were flexible in their personal equipment and weapons, too (see Figure 4). Most popular were the American M1 and M2 carbines, Owen machine guns, and shotguns, which were effective in close quarters in the jungle. The most rigid standard was the practice of bringing one change of clothing and

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118 Jumper, "Malaysia's Senoi," 90.

119 Jumper, "Malaysia's Senoi," 78.

120 Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police*, 3.

121 Mackenzie, *Special Force*, 53.

122 Shennan, *Our Man*, 157.

socks, to ensure they slept dry. Troopers put on again their wet and dirty clothes in the morning before leaving base. Their clothes, some said, rotted on them. Besides the difficulty of getting correct sizes, jungle boots lasted only about three months because of the harsh, wet, damp, and humid jungle and swamp environment. The other problem in this category was insufficient maps and charts with incomplete data, making navigation in the jungle more difficult.<sup>123</sup>



Figure 4. Malayan Scouts (SAS) trooper with his shotgun and equipment.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> *Anti-Terrorist Operations*, Part 2, Chap. V, 7.; Dennis Wombell, *The building of a Malayan Jungle Fort: Fort Kemar, 1953* (North Yorkshire, UK: National Malaya and North Borneo Veterans Association), 2011, <http://www.nmbva.co.uk/Fort%20KemarNew.pdf> (accessed September 14, 2012).

<sup>124</sup> Imperial War Museum, London, *The Malaya Emergency*, Collections, <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205212433>.

The Senoi Praaq were known for being able to carry more weight than the British troopers in the jungles. They could carry three week's rations and stretch them into a month if need be. The ability to take along a fair supply of food was critical to deep-jungle patrolling. A special pack was designed exclusively for them to facilitate this purpose, allowing patrols to go deeper and stay longer in the jungle. The Senoi Praaq sometimes used traditional weapons, blowguns and poisonous darts made from the Ipoh tree, to pick off CTs one at a time in a leisurely hunt that lasted for days. This shows that the Senoi Praaq were excellent stalkers and hunters, because this sort of killing was best accomplished when the stalker was safely concealed behind thick foliage. They were free to flee if contact became too heavy.

To explore deeper and longer in the jungle, all units needed to have good communication. The problem was frequent technical difficulties with wireless telegraph or radio transmission from the jungles. Some preferred to use Morse telegraphy, which was both silent in operation and often much more effective, being more clearly received than verbal communication, although time consuming under the difficult wireless conditions in Malaya.<sup>125</sup>

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125 Wombell, *Fort Kemar*, IV.



Figure 5. SAS radio operator, Trooper Tella and his radio.<sup>126</sup>



Figure 6. Better radio.<sup>127</sup>

Throughout the Emergency, the Special Branch depended heavily on human intelligence, planting agents in the *min yuen*, detention camps, and new villages, and penetrating the communist courier system. Still, they were unable to penetrate the MNLA in the jungle because the CTs were extremely suspicious of outsiders. Later, the Special Branch used homing devices taped to radio receivers of the type known to be used by the CTs. The Special Branch ensured some radio sets bugged in this way were made available at attractively cheap prices to Chinese shops identified as covertly supplying goods to the CTs. When they operated the radio, it transmitted a signal, allowing spotter

<sup>126</sup> J. C. Durkin, *Malayan Scouts SAS: A Memoir of Malayan Emergency, 1951* (The History Press: Gloucestershire, UK, 2011), 73.

<sup>127</sup> National Army Museum, *The Malayan Emergency* (September 8, 2011), <http://www.nam.ac.uk/exhibitions/online-exhibitions/malayan-emergency>

aircraft flying overhead with a receiver to fix the location of the CT camp. These gadgets were issued by the British army research team that was attached to the director of operations' staff in Kuala Lumpur. This team developed new techniques and weapons. Its personnel often accompanied police and army patrols on operations and participated in ambushes to experience the actual effects of Malaya's climatic conditions and jungle on both men and equipment.<sup>128</sup>

### **3. People**

The government's failure to support initial recruitment was in some ways the biggest drawback of the SOF units during the Malayan Emergency. Faced with this issue, the units did manage to gather volunteers to join and performed well eventually. They showed those in higher authority that they deserved to be in these special groups. The Ferret Force obtained troopers from select military and police personnel, Europeans with special operations experience, and handpicked Asians. They were also joined by at least ten former Forces 136 men in mid-July 1948. In September 1948, another twelve British men came forward, including Chinese and Dayak Liaison Officers from Borneo. The army was willing to grant officers temporary military status for the three months, provided that their civilian employers paid their salaries. Group commanders were brevetted as acting lieutenant colonels. The major pitfalls were the civil–military bureaucracy with the civil volunteers and that the secondment of men to the Ferret Force left the rifle companies with less manpower, as claimed by some commanding officers.<sup>129</sup>

The Malayan Scouts were filled by a limited choice of soldiers who came from the Far East Land Forces (FARELF). Getting approval was difficult because of an anti-Chindit sentiment dating back to the Burma campaign among former British and Indian army officers.<sup>130</sup> Many commanding officers used this chance to remove their real troublemakers. Regularly, they sent the most unfavorable men in their units to join the Malayan Scouts. Initially, Major Calvert had to accept many unsuitable volunteers,

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<sup>128</sup> Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police*, 86.

<sup>129</sup> Mackenzie, *Special Force*, 53.

<sup>130</sup> Mackenzie, *Special Force*, 57.

including a group of French Foreign Legionnaires that had deserted from a ship going to Vietnam. In his first search, he managed to get 100 volunteers.<sup>131</sup> Later, Major Calvert gathered credible volunteers from Force 136 veterans and intelligence personnel who were in Burma with him—a Chinese interpreter and a linguist. The second source was from the former SAS, formed to fight in Korea to fill B Squadron. Calvert also selected some 120 wartime-experienced Rhodesians to form C Squadron, who proved to be the most professional of the SAS squadron, serving in Malaya from 1951 to 1953.<sup>132</sup> To ensure quality and suitability, Calvert personally interviewed all officers and recruits.<sup>133</sup> The majority of them were volunteers and older than their army counterparts. This gave the SAS fewer administrative problems and greater flexibility.<sup>134</sup>

Senoi Praaq troopers came from aborigine volunteers who met certain physical requirements and passed extensive screening and vetting procedures before acceptance (because of their prior association with the CTs). Despite the security, requirements for admission were basic, such as being able to carry a 60-plus pound pack over hills, which were passed almost without question. Jumper said that most of the Orang Asli's recruits were already good at what they later became famous for, and not without prior experience. They came from unstable areas along the range, in which the inhabitants were conditioned to warfare, and many had performed a combat function for the MRLA.<sup>135</sup> Nevertheless, some British officers viewed them with a degree of suspicion, given their past involvement with the communists, and some considered them a potential liability—incapable cowards inclined towards deceit. Because of this misperception, certain people resisted the expansion of the Senoi Praaq from the Department of Aborigines into the paramilitary domain, but this inflexibility was soon overcome.<sup>136</sup> Sarawak Ranger recruitment was similar to the Senoi Praaq's. Iban's youth received acknowledgement not only by the commanders, but also by the people on the ground,

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131 Rooney, *Mad Mike*, 139.

132 Mackenzie, *Special Force*, 60–61.

133 Rooney, *Mad Mike*, 137.

134 Mackenzie, *Special Force*, 71.

135 Jumper, "Malaysia's Senoi," 68.

136 Jumper, "Malaysia's Senoi," 77–78.

such as Corporal Russell from the Malayan Scouts. He said that aborigine and Iban trackers' abilities were exceptional and they did an excellent job in fighting terrorists.

Special Branch personnel inherited the pre-WWII Malayan Security Services problem, namely, a lack of Chinese linguists and professional men with expertise in intelligence and equipment. When restructuring began, the Special Branch recruited many locals and British fluent in Chinese. The government took the risky step of abolishing the MSS at the outbreak of the Emergency and rebuilding, virtually from scratch, an entirely new organization for intelligence gathering.<sup>137</sup>

#### **4. Information**

Information mostly came from Special Branch collaboration and joint operations with security forces on the ground, especially SOF units, focusing on the general population and Orang Asli. The Special Branch was responsible for acquiring, analyzing, and disseminating information, and did so with the aid of army unit intelligence officers. The success of the Special Branch was due to its contact with the population, knowledge of the language, and ability to infiltrate the CPM. They used various methods such as anonymous letters, secret ballots, rewards, agents, captured or surrendered enemy personnel, enemy documents, and aerial reconnaissance. By the 1950s, the Special Branch had succeeded in constructing a good model of the MNLA's order of battle and obtained a better understanding of the close relationship between the CPM and MNLA from information taken from the interrogation of captured and surrendered guerrillas, as well as analysis of captured communist documents. Captured and surrendered enemy personnel (CEP and SEP) provided valuable information on the core of the CPM/MNLA that was not available from any other source for the intelligence war.<sup>138</sup>

#### **5. Organization**

The majority of SOF units discussed here practiced a decentralized and independent command and control at the operational and tactical levels, which ensured

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<sup>137</sup> Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police*, 71.

<sup>138</sup> Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police*, 79.

timely actions in pursuing the CTs. Their organizations begin with small numbers of personnel and most of the time were understaffed. Although a few units had a short lifespan, based on their excellent records of accomplishment, higher authorities gradually allowed some SOF units to expand to suit operational requirements.

According to Mackenzie, the Ferret Force was initiated to relieve the burden on infantry battalions. The Ferret Force made its headquarters in Ipoh, Perak, with six operational groups. Its peak strength was 300 men from various backgrounds. A group consisted of four sections, or twenty tactical units of fifteen or more men, who were placed in selected areas, each commanded by a former Force 136 or Chindit veteran. For instance, Ferret Group 1, led by John Davis, comprised about 67 men (military and civilian personnel) from the Malay Regiment, Chinese liaison officers, and signals, transport, and medical orderlies. Group commanders were vested with maximum independence and freedom of action. In September 1948, a party of Ibans from Borneo and their liaison officer joined the forces, enhancing their capabilities further.<sup>139</sup>

The Malayan Emergency witnessed the largest numbers of SAS troopers deployed in a conflict since 1945 and influenced most of the SOF units during the Emergency.<sup>140</sup> In late 1955, it was reinforced by the arrival from Britain of a parachute regiment, and 133 men from the New Zealand SAS replaced the Rhodesian Squadron. They were carefully selected personnel, a third of them Maoris.<sup>141</sup> They grew to become five squadrons, four troops of sixteen men, with headquarters element and attached specialists.<sup>142</sup> The SAS organization became the basic framework for the Senoi Praaq.

It is interesting to study the Senoi Praaq, an organization that turned to be a decisive factor in the successful counterinsurgency operations in the Malayan hinterlands. What British intelligence operatives engineered as an extensive program for winning Orang Asli hearts and minds gradually became a bureaucratic entity known as the Department of Aborigines (DOA). This agency was disguised as a welfare organization

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139 Mackenzie, *Special Force*, 53; Shennan, *Our Man*, 155.

140 Mackenzie, *Special Force*, 60.

141 Scurr, *The Malayan Campaign*, 26.

142 Michael Asher, *The Regiment* (Penguin Group: London, 2007), 329–330.



devoted to protecting Orang Asli interests. The Senoi Praaq became the military arm of the DOA, designed to extract intelligence among tribal peoples in return for the distribution of material subsidies and medical attention.<sup>143</sup> After the “experiment,” the SAS trained another 160 men to form two Senoi Praaq squadrons as potential surrogates.<sup>144</sup> The SAS organized Senoi Praaq identical to their force -- a squadron of four troops consisting of four patrols or twelve five-man sections. Any one squadron thereby received a good reading of numerous map squares within a few days’ time while subjecting itself to minimal exposure. As their special missions with the Special Branch intensified, the Senoi Praaq obtained an additional 80 troopers. After 1956, the Senoi Praaq had three squadrons, which could operate independently.<sup>145</sup> Senoi Praaq made its way into the Malaysian Police on February 8, 1968. During the Second Insurgency (1968–90), the Senoi Praaq, already under the Malaysian Police, expanded to two battalions, with a strength of approximately 1,000 men.<sup>146</sup>

According to Robert Rizal, a former Ranger and a recipient of Malaysia’s second-highest gallantry award, on August 8, 1948, Sarawak Ranger’s first group of forty-nine Iban trackers was sent to Malaya to fight the MRLA. Initially, their term of service was three months only, but some chose to stay longer. Twenty-four of this original group of forty-nine was attached to the newly formed Ferret Force, Group 4. The remaining twenty-five were attached to the various Gurkha, British, and Malay battalions.<sup>147</sup>

The Special Branch had expanded considerably by the end of 1952, with 93 officers, mostly British, and 195 inspectors and police lieutenants serving. In 1953, Special Branch strength increased further to 126 officers and 279 inspectors and police lieutenants.<sup>148</sup> The Special Branch separated from the criminal investigation department

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143 Jumper, *Death waits*, 22.

144 Jumper, “Malaysia’s Senoi,” 68.

145 Scurr, *The Malayan Campaign*, 26.

146 Jumper, “Malaysia’s Senoi,” 68.

147 Robert Rizal Abdullah, “Reviving Sarawak Rangers,” *PGB Warrior Blog*, entry July 31, 2011, [www.pgbwarrior.blogspot.com/search/label/Iban%20Trackers%20and%20Sarawak%20Rangers%20%281948%20-%201960%29](http://www.pgbwarrior.blogspot.com/search/label/Iban%20Trackers%20and%20Sarawak%20Rangers%20%281948%20-%201960%29) (accessed September 1, 2012).

148 Comber, *Malaya’s Secret Police*, 72.

(CID) in 1952, fully accomplished by Colonel Young, commissioner of police. This enhanced the Special Branch's status and enabled it to develop professionally along its own lines. This move also gave a strong organizational identity, so that staff increasingly took pride in their work. Federal Special Branch headquarters was structured into seven functional areas, which included three ethnic sections (Malay, Chinese, and Indian political movements) and liaison and operations, security, trade unionism/societies, and communism sections.<sup>149</sup>

## 6. Doctrine

From the Ferret Force to the Malayan Scouts, the Senoi Praaq, and the Rangers, all followed Force 136 lines, setting out to demonstrate appropriate jungle tactics and break down the CTs' feeling of ownership of the jungle by ferreting them out from cover. They worked in teams and penetrated the jungle to eliminate CTs on their own or in collaboration with regular forces. Their aim was to imitate the CTs, operating in mobile cadres with local knowledge, led by officers who had already proven themselves in resistance or irregular warfare. The Ferret Force set precedents in the creation of other jungle penetration squads. The employment of trackers and small infantry patrols became standard practice in jungle warfare from the 1950s onwards.<sup>150</sup>

The MRLA gained a reputation for dealing effectively and empathically with the Orang Asli. They manipulated the aborigines for secure bases, providing food and early warning of the security force's arrival. The Malayan Scouts' task was to disrupt this arrangement: to gain intelligence; to deny areas for CTs to rest and retrain in; to protect and to bring administration to the aborigines and isolate them from the CTs. This indirectly exerted pressure on the CTs, even if it was only to ensure that they move elsewhere, thus disrupting established supply lines and communications.<sup>151</sup> The Scouts accomplished this by patrols of three- or four-man sections, exploring the jungle for three months or more. As time passed, they became more efficient at carrying out deep-

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<sup>149</sup> Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police*, 287.

<sup>150</sup> Shennan, *Our Man*, 156, 161.

<sup>151</sup> Smith, *Counter-insurgency*, 30; *Anti-Terrorist Operations*, Chap. XIX, 1–2.

penetration patrolling, and the introduction of the helicopter made the insertion of patrols more secure and efficient.

All units emphasized jungle ambush techniques. Ambushes required all the tricks of the soldier's trade: an eye for country, track discipline, concealment, camouflage, silence, alertness, fire discipline, marksmanship, guile, cunning, and above all self-discipline. It demanded constant training and rehearsal.<sup>152</sup> In intelligence roles, the SAS work with aborigines and the Special Branch to investigate the CTs' modus operandi. This close cooperation lasted not only during the Emergency, but also in subsequent conflicts.<sup>153</sup> Although the Malayan Scouts inspired deep-penetration operations and enhanced routine jungle patrolling techniques,<sup>154</sup> based on records, they had fewer CTs killed or captured than other exceptional conventional units. The lack of success of some of the operations was not due to any lack of determination or will, but because of prolonged failure to contact the enemy, which led to a slackening of battle procedures. Mackenzie says troopers became extremely careless, noisy, and rather bored, going around the jungle in a slaphappy way with big fires at night, dropping trash, or ration tins around the place and not hiding them.<sup>155</sup> Nevertheless, after hard lessons, they gained a wealth of experience, which played an effective role in the collection of intelligence, harassment of the CTs' lines of communications, and ruining the CTs' investment in their safe areas.<sup>156</sup> Their deep-jungle penetrations were still a better option than the large sweep, cordon, and search tactics used by the conventional infantry.

The Senoi Praaq emulated SAS doctrine and tactics. Unlike the SAS, the Senoi Praaq operated exclusively in the jungle and did not experiment in other areas of irregular warfare.<sup>157</sup> Initially, they were attached to regular infantry units in area of operations referred to as Bamboo Operations Areas (BOA), between Malaya's mountain ranges.

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152 Smith, *Counter-insurgency*, 25.

153 Mackenzie, *Special Force*, 70.

154 *Anti-Terrorist Operations*, Part 2, Chap. IV, 4.

155 Mackenzie, *Special Force*, 62.

156 Mackenzie, *Special Force*, 73.

157 Jumper, *Death waits*, 19.

According to Jumper, the Senoi Praaq proved more proficient in jungle craft than the SAS/Iban troopers they were intended to replace, so much so that they were truly hampered by restrictions placed upon their movements during joint operations. Eventually, the Senoi Praaq was given the green light to operate alone, thanks to the persistence of their commander, R.O. Noone. The Senoi Praaq also collaborated with Special Branch in the establishment of an extensive intelligence network. Usually, two troopers accompanied an officer to a location where Orang Asli were known to live, to remain within the vicinity for a protracted period of time in hopes of gathering intelligence about the MRLA and Asal. The troopers posed as innocent members of neighboring settlements and secured information through displays of friendship. This cooperation led to the formation of a third squadron, making its size more akin to that SAS regiment.<sup>158</sup>

## **7. Infrastructure**

It was important to have various infrastructures that were conducive, suitable, and strategically located close to the area of operations during this period. By September 1950, the Malayan Scouts moved from Johor Bahru, in the south, to Dusun Tua, nine miles southeast of Kuala Lumpur, a strategic location in the center of Malaya. This was the Scout's headquarters and base camp combined, closer to the area of operations. Nevertheless, both were dilapidated, gloomy camps with inadequate training facilities.<sup>159</sup> They were neither provided with neither a suitable administrative infrastructure nor administrative and quartermaster staff to support the new unit. Since there was neither the time nor facilities for training, much of it had to take place on football pitches and other clear spaces around the camp.<sup>160</sup>

In 1952, security forces began to build a series of jungle forts in selected aboriginal areas to win their support and establish legitimacy for the

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<sup>158</sup> Jumper, "Malaysia's Senoi," 82.

<sup>159</sup> Rooney, *Mad Mike*, 139.

<sup>160</sup> Mackenzie, *Special Force*, 59 & 62.

government.<sup>161</sup> During operations, jungle forts were of the essence in deep jungle patrols, for the food denial program and for quarantining Orang Asli from the CTs. The SAS and other security forces built and operated from these forts, which later became the permanent Police Field Force's garrisons. Several forts had a short airstrip for light aircraft, and most had helicopter landing pads for resupply and other administrative and logistics matters. Some considered jungle forts as of little value for the military, but useful for the civic action programs they provided, such as medical, educational and trading facilities, and they did win the aborigines over to the government side. The jungle forts, therefore, provided the best link between the security forces, the government, and the aborigines.<sup>162</sup>



Figure 7. Fort Brookes: One of the jungle forts in the Malayan jungles.<sup>163</sup>

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161 *Anti-Terrorist Operations*, Chap.III, 3rd Ed., 7.

162 "Aborigines must be set free from Reds," *The Straits Times*, December 2, 1953, 8.

163 Roy Follows, *The jungle beat*, (Shropshire, UK: TravellersEye, 1999), 97.  
[http://www.fight4thepjm.org/images/RF\\_off\\_target.jpg](http://www.fight4thepjm.org/images/RF_off_target.jpg).

In moving towards excellence, the Special Branch concentrated on training, and established two training schools in Sentul and Salak South, Selangor, in January 1951. The Special Branch training school assumed greater importance, and not only to local officers. Indeed, later it became a regional training center and earned for itself a reputation outside Malaya as a center of excellence for the training of intelligence officers. Officers from neighboring countries and as far afield as Hong Kong and Australia attended the courses.<sup>164</sup> The Special Branch also established joint police and military operation intelligence rooms and ensured that army intelligence and Police Special Branch were trained together to avoid frictions. Special Branch took over a top secret interrogation center, the “White House,” that had been established by the British Army Research Team, to handle the reception, interrogation and the aftercare of enemy personnel. This house, located at Kuala Lumpur Police Training Depot, was well-concealed and patrolled by armed guards. Auster aircraft used a short landing strip that ran alongside the center to fly in high-level captured or surrendered guerrillas for interrogation and communist documents for translation.<sup>165</sup>

## **8. Logistics**

Logistical support was not a major problem for the SOF units because of their small size. Because the SAS adopted the deep-jungle penetration method, they spent considerable time and energy on actually walking into the operational area. To mitigate this problem, the SAS tried a new, hazardous, tree-jumping technique, although there were frequent casualties.<sup>166</sup> This was before the regular availability of troop-carrying helicopters. The arrival of Sikorsky S-55 helicopters in 1953 in larger numbers in Malaya changed matters dramatically (see Figure 8). Initially, all helicopters flew from Singapore, but for the sake of efficiency, all of them were repositioned in Kuala Lumpur. Helicopters were used for a multitude of purposes. Besides carrying troops and supplies, they flew captured CTs and documents that were urgently requested by the Special

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164 Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police*, 3.

165 Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police*, 85–86.

166 Mackenzie, *Special Force*, 65.

Branch, evacuated SOF personnel, and performed many other missions.<sup>167</sup> Clearing a landing area in the jungles with machetes and explosives was a tough, risky, but fun, job. Most of the time, the only way to secure resupplies was through airdrops and helicopters, but receiving one announced a unit's presence in the area to the MRLA. These SOF troopers also used traditional transportation during patrols, such as bamboo rafts and mules (see Figure 9).<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Smith, *Counter-insurgency*, 28.

<sup>168</sup> Durkin, *Malayan Scouts*, 47.



Figure 8. SAS helicopter insertion.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Bersayap Tentara, *The Malayan Scouts SAS–Malaya Emergency* (n.d.), <http://wingsoldiers.co.uk/sas-malaya.html>, under “SAS Malaya.”





Figure 9. The Malayan Scouts using bamboo raft.<sup>170</sup>

## 9. Leadership

There were many outstanding leaders born during the Emergency. The SOF units would not have outclassed others without dedicated and enthusiastic leaders. The Ferret Force saw the leadership of John Davis and Richard Broome, who were well known as steadfast leaders since their tour of duty with Force 136. Another example is Lieutenant Colonel Walter Walker, who later became the first commandant of the new FARELF's Jungle Warfare Training Center in Johor. Walker, who was a Chindit veteran, became the administrative commandant, responsible for the training and assessment of Ferret Force requirements and for issuing arms and equipment, and was a strong supporter of the Ferrets.

Major Michael Calvert showed enthusiasm in regenerating the SAS, sharing his knowledge and experience in irregular warfare. He was one of the principal contributors to the Briggs plan. He showed determined leadership, creative thinking, and good analytical assessment on the Malayan situation. He introduced the three-man jungle patrol, which some said would fail. He wanted his officers to develop creative ideas and

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<sup>170</sup> Special Air Service Regimental Association, "Brief history of the Regiment-Post war" (n.d.), <http://www.marsandminerva.co.uk/images/content/history/malayaRaft.jpg>, under "History."

adapt to new challenges. He was loyal to his subordinates but not afraid of risking casualties. However, his volcanic eruptions of temper made many fear him, and he was reported to be a binge drinker. Colonel Woodhouse said, “Calvert’s weakness was that he did not seem to appreciate the importance of good discipline.”<sup>171</sup>

Other outstanding SAS leaders were John Sloane and John Woodhouse. Sloane took over in autumn 1951, when Calvert had to leave Malaya because of illnesses and stress after several years of continuous warfare. Sloane had no special forces experience, but brought a strong measure of discipline and normal military order to the regiment. He was a formidable leader, and tackled problems which affected the Scouts. They began to rebuild their reputation, and once again, the Malayan Scouts became an efficient and formidable jungle fighting unit. Woodhouse was one of the Malayan Scouts’ intelligence officers, not only loyal to his leader, but to his unit. He once said, “I could never leave this regiment or desert the man who made it.” He was brave enough to challenge Calvert, his superior, when he worried about the breakdown of discipline within the unit and could not understand why Calvert failed to take action. Under his leadership, the A Squadron improved considerably, and became highly efficient, fit, and tougher. This laid the foundation of later SAS successes in Malaya, Borneo, and elsewhere.<sup>172</sup>

For the Senoi Praaq, R. O. D. Noone, with his intelligence background in his pocket, aggressively lobbied for the Senoi Praaq in military and civilian political circles. He designed a strategy to win over the aborigines and achieve good relations with them and worked tirelessly towards his objectives.<sup>173</sup> The other leader was Mohamed Ruslan Iskandar Abdullah, the last Anglo commander of the Senoi Praaq, who went native. He was a former SOVF leader before joining the Senoi Praaq, who wanted more action and was highly motivated, adventurous, and innovative, and brought many improvements to the Senoi Praaq.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Rooney, *Mad Mike*, 142–147.

<sup>172</sup> Rooney, *Mad Mike*, 148.

<sup>173</sup> Jumper, *Death Waits*, 41.

<sup>174</sup> Jumper, *Death Waits*, 167.

Sir William Jenkin was dedicated to improving the Special Branch. He had a distinguished career, and was the first trained professional intelligence officer to take over the Malayan Special Branch, in June 22, 1950. He emphasized the importance of recruiting more Chinese officers and reorganized and strengthened the Special Branch in the interest of efficiency. He established joint operation intelligence rooms, ensured that the police and army worked together, and established two Special Branch training schools. He introduced the first post-war systematic training in investigation, intelligence analysis, and dissemination techniques. He was also the one who demanded that security forces focus attention on the Malayan-Thai frontier.<sup>175</sup> Another actor for the Special Branch was Mr. John H. Morton, the first director of intelligence. He analyzed the Special Branch's problems and presented clearly his recommendations for changes to his superior, Templer, who supported him in all issues. During his tenure, he saw the lack of a clear division of effort in the field of intelligence between the police and military. The police were not producing intelligence that the military could use, and Morton took steps to improve the situation.<sup>176</sup>

On the other hand, there is also an example of bad leader, Major General Sir Charles Boucher. John Davis described him as a "jack-in-the-box little general," selfish and ignorant.<sup>177</sup> He hardly took time to acquaint himself with the local situation and had countless disagreements with others. Having different opinions is acceptable, but Boucher was too arrogant and did not appreciate his subordinates in many ways. Fortunately, many matters resolved when Boucher left Malaya in 1950.<sup>178</sup>

## **E. CONCLUSION**

During the first two years of the Emergency, government actions were blunt and inefficient. Fighting the guerrillas using conventional approaches showed insignificant results. Large forces, sweeping the jungle, cordoning, and searching for the CTs were

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<sup>175</sup> Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police*, 131–145, 286.

<sup>176</sup> Sunderland, *Antiguerrilla*, 20–21,

<sup>177</sup> Shennan, *Our Man*, 161

<sup>178</sup> Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police*, 65.

measures they could avoid by fleeing and ambushing the conventional forces in return, or just running to live another day. Thanks to the few who appreciated irregular warfare approaches in fighting bands of communist guerrillas in the thick jungles, the Ferret Force, Malayan Scouts (SAS), Senoi Praaq, Sarawak Rangers, and Special Branch were able to change the game, manipulating the strategy of the CTs in the same pitches. Their unconventional actions against CT vulnerabilities throughout the Emergency supported the master plan and helped win hearts and minds among the people, especially in rural areas and deep jungles.

Most of the units' lines of capabilities replicated each other or their predecessors. As an example, Force 136 inspired the SAS, who handed this knowledge down to the Senoi Praaq and Sarawak Rangers. These SOF units stayed strong, facing tough challenges, until the end of the Emergency, because they had excellent leaders who were keen and made good judgments from accurate and reliable information, emphasizing training and organization. With that in hand, they worked religiously at adapting doctrine to overwhelm the enemy, e.g., in deep-jungle penetration, emphasizing intelligence, winning hearts and minds, and applying comprehensive approaches to the right target audiences. Those strengths enabled them to face threats not only the CTs, but also from others who do not want to understand the situation and support their subordinates, and they faced a tough bureaucracy during recruiting. Nevertheless, they exhibited some weaknesses, especially due to equipment and technology that was unreliable and not robust enough for the harsh jungle environment. Additional challenges were inadequate transportation, depilated infrastructure, and the lack of training facilities. The majority of these issues were mitigated slowly as everyone accumulated more experience during the Emergency. On July 31, 1960, the Malayan Emergency officially ended after twelve years of struggle against the CPM and MRLA guerrillas.

## **IV. THE INDONESIAN CONFRONTATION (1963–1966)**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

Malaysia (or Malaya before 1963) experienced ruthless conflicts from late 1941 to 1989. Among these was the Malaysian Confrontation from 1963 to 1966. The Confrontation could have escalated and become a full-scale war between Malaysia and Indonesia were it not handled wisely by the British and the government of Malaysia. This thesis argues that during the Confrontation, the British used SOF appropriately in conjunction with conventional forces and succeeded in deterring the Indonesian aggressors from achieving their military and strategic objectives. The purpose of this chapter is to examine what the SOF experienced during the Confrontation and its impact on improving Malaysian security against its threats. To achieve that, this essay will answer questions such as why and how the British used SOF during the Confrontation. Besides highlighting historical experience, this chapter will use a modified model of the Lines of Development (DLoD) to look for ideas that the Malaysian SOF might exploit in the future.<sup>179</sup>

### **B. THE CONFRONTATION**

Soon after the British declared the Malayan Emergency ended, another conflict began to arise on Malaysian soil. The conflict was an intermittent war waged by Indonesia to oppose the formation of Malaysia. President Sukarno of Indonesia opposed what he called a “British neocolonialist” project. He had his own ideas for a greater East Asian federation, or MAPHILINDO, under his leadership and hoped to prevent the formation of Malaysia by using diplomatic, ideological, and military means, if necessary.<sup>180</sup> In January 1963, the Indonesian foreign minister announced a policy of confrontation towards Malaysia, and later, in July, President Sukarno declared the “crush

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<sup>179</sup> Clive Kerr, et al., “A Framework.”

<sup>180</sup> MALPHILINDO—acronym for Malaysia, Philippines, and Indonesia.

Malaysia” campaign following the signing of the London Agreement by the Malaysian prime minister.<sup>181</sup>

The Brunei revolt in December 1962 was the beginning phase of the Confrontation.<sup>182</sup> Armed incursions, bomb attacks, and acts of subversion and destabilization were the mark of this conflict. The initial threat was a small, lightly armed, indigenous, communist or Tentera Nasional Kalimantan Utara (TNKU)-inspired insurgency with limited popular support. The Brunei Revolt was short lived and ended in May 1963, when British and Sarawak irregulars hunted down the rebels.<sup>183</sup> Sukarno was also surprised by the revolt in Brunei. Nevertheless, he managed to manipulate it to gain military support from the rebels and, eventually for intervention by Indonesian regular forces.

The second stage (April 1963–April 1964) began when Indonesia sponsored raids into Borneo with the aim of raising guerrilla forces and establishing semi-permanent camps (see Figure 10). At this point, the enemy was the Indonesian-supported TNKU irregulars, Indonesian Border Terrorists (IBT) and some Indonesian volunteers. Their goal was to destabilize the border areas. Slowly, regular Indonesian units began to appear in the conflicts.<sup>184</sup> The Indonesian army and Marine Corps began to conduct overt operations in northern Borneo and Malaysia in the third stage of the Confrontation (April 1964–1966). There were reports that Indonesian troop strength grew as big as almost 30,000 in 1965. The British and the government of Malaysia responded with four infantry brigades and commando battalions, four small Special Air Services (SAS) squadrons, the Royal Air Force, Fleet Air Arms, and a few navy ships, which totaled about 17,000 personnel at the peak of the conflicts.<sup>185</sup>

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181 Marsita Omar, *The Indonesian and Malaysian Confrontation* (Singapore: National Library Board, 2007) [http://infopedia.nl.sg/articles/SIP\\_1072\\_2010-03-25.html](http://infopedia.nl.sg/articles/SIP_1072_2010-03-25.html), (accessed February, 29 2012).

182 Harun Abdul Majid, *Rebellion in Brunei: the 1962 Revolt, Imperialism, Confrontation and Oil* (Cornwall, UK: I.B. Taurus & Co. Ltd, 2007).

183 Harun, *Rebellion*.

184 Scott R. McMichael, “British Operations in Malaya and Borneo, 1948–1966,” in *An Historical Perspective on Light Infantry, Research Survey*, Chap. 3, Part. II, no. 6, 121–141 (Fort Leavenworth, KS: USCGSC, 1987).

185 McMichael, “British Operations.”

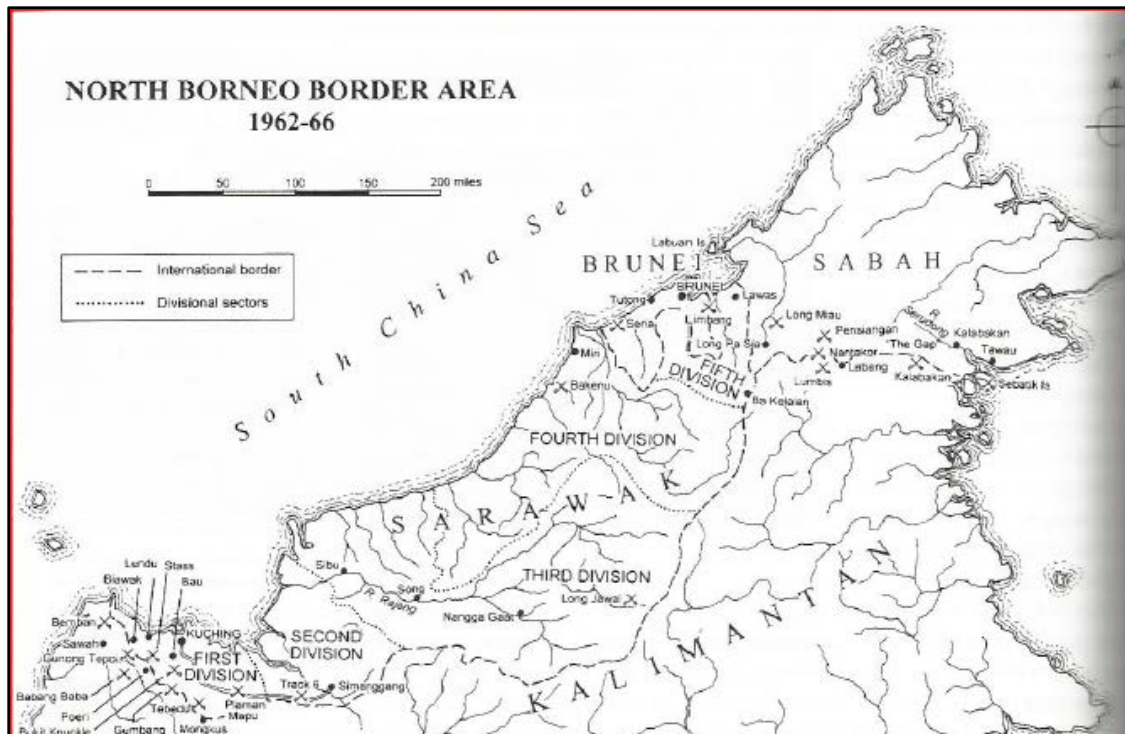


Figure 10. The Indonesian Confrontation<sup>186</sup>

From the middle of 1964, the Director of Borneo Operation, Major General Walter Walker, introduced Operation Claret to stop Indonesian incursions by forcing them on the defensive. Elite and special units conducted these special operations with the utmost secrecy inside the Indonesian border. As time went on, these deep strikes increased in distance, beyond the borders, as retaliation for the Indonesian threats. Operation Claret proved to be an integral factor in the successful conclusion of the military campaign. The Confrontation started to lose its intensity as Indonesian domestic problems arose. Eventually, Indonesia and Malaysia signed a peace agreement on August 11, 1966. Both nations accepted the agreement as a win-win situation.<sup>187</sup>

General Walker, who commanded this campaign, was experienced in jungle warfare. A Burmese campaign veteran, he worked with the Ferret Force as the first

<sup>186</sup> Will Fowler, *Britain's Secret War: The Indonesian Confrontation 1962-66* (Osprey Publishing: Oxford, UK, 2006; reprint 2010), 8.

<sup>187</sup> Mazlan Nordin, "The End of Confrontation," *Malaysian Journal of Communication*, Vol. 21 (2006).

director of the Jungle Warfare School in Johor before he was appointed as the brigade commander of Gurkhas in the Malayan Emergency. His goals were to prevent the escalation of the Brunei Revolt and early Indonesian-sponsored raids into an open war, as in Vietnam, and to win the opening rounds and maintain dominance over a potentially long period. Walker's plan was to meet each incursion with extreme violence, demonstrating that the smallest violation of the border would result in swift, merciless retaliation against enemy forces.<sup>188</sup> Some considered his plan "the most offensively natured defensive strategy in military history."<sup>189</sup> In order to achieve his goals, Walker introduced his "ingredients for success," which consisted of unified operations (joint); timely and accurate intelligence; speed, mobility, and flexibility of security forces; security of bases; domination of the jungle; and winning hearts and minds. These ingredients had the "taste" of the Malayan Emergency, as introduced by Briggs and Templar.

### **C. OPERATION CLARET**

In the second half of 1964, security forces in Borneo were authorized to cross the Indonesian border in hot pursuit of the enemy, with strict procedures. This restriction was introduced to keep the conflict from escalating and to demonstrate clearly to the world that Indonesia was the aggressor.<sup>190</sup> Operation Claret was part of Walker's strategy to stop the Indonesian incursion by forcing them on the defensive. Walker gave the generic term, "special operation" to Operation Claret in order to maintain its secrecy. Operational security was at the highest level, and only the commanding officer and one select unit in each battalion were fully aware of the special operation's planning and execution. Furthermore, British policymakers did not want the public to know about Claret. SOF units played roles in Claret, due to their capabilities and small size—they were in the best position to conduct cross-border reconnaissance when this operation was finally authorized. The SOF began reconnoitering enemy bases and their lines of

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188 Mazlan, "The End."

189 Mazlan, "The End."

190 McMichael, "British Operations."



communication. Usually, SOF patrols led conventional forces in raiding or setting up ambush parties to enemy targets. They proved to be one of the winning elements of the military campaign in Borneo.

Most of the time, the security forces denied the existence of Operation Claret and made up stories for every operation to show that the war was still being fought on the Malaysian side of the border. The Indonesians did the same thing. They purposefully said that they did not know about Claret and assumed it just an extension of routine ambushes carried out south of the ill-defined border by Malaysian security forces. The Indonesian military was not willing to disturb this fabrication, as it made them out to be more successful than they really were in the eyes of the people in Jakarta. Claret intensified in late 1965, when Major General George Lea, another SAS officer, took over from Walker.<sup>191</sup> Until the end, Claret remained in secrecy and indirectly allowed the Indonesians to withdraw with respect when their military approach was ineffective.

#### **D. SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES**

##### **1. Special Air Services (SAS)**

I regard 70 troopers of the SAS as being as valuable to me as 700 infantry in the role of hearts and minds, border surveillance, early warning, stay behind, and eyes and ears with a sting.<sup>192</sup>

—Lt. Col. John Woodhouse

After the Brunei Revolt, Lieutenant Colonel John Woodhouse, the 22nd SAS commander and a Malayan Emergency veteran, arrived in Borneo.<sup>193</sup> Soon after, SAS troopers arrived after Woodhouse convinced Major General Walker that the SAS could become eyes and ears by establishing a forward-deployed intelligence/communication network right in the jungle, with the natives near the border. The SAS operated in patrols of four men and lived for four-month tours in a village or longhouse, building trust and exercising eyes-and-ears capability with the locals and Borneo Border Scouts (BBS). The

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<sup>191</sup> McMichael, “British Operations.”

<sup>192</sup> McMichael, “British Operations.”

<sup>193</sup> James Paul and Martin Spirit, “The SAS in Borneo,” in *Britain’s Small Wars*, <http://britains-smallwars.com/SAS/index.html> (accessed March, 5 2012).

hearts-and-minds strategy and assurances of village security to the people paid substantial dividends in intelligence. Valuable information was transmitted to SAS headquarters using the Morse radio set, the only reliable method of communication in the jungle at that time. This arrangement meant that despite the scarcity of troops, the SAS were able to detect the majority of Indonesian incursions into Borneo. Armed with this border intelligence and with the skillful use of a limited number of helicopters, the security forces led by the SAS could ambush raiders on their return to Kalimantan.<sup>194</sup>

In the early phase of the Confrontation, only one squadron of the 22nd SAS, that is, less than 100 troopers, was stretched thinly along the Borneo borders to conduct Operation Claret. Major General Walkers decided to train other units such as the Guards Independent Parachute Company, the Gurkha Independent Parachute Company, and 'C' Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, of the parachute regiments, who were all converted to the SAS role.<sup>195</sup> From February 1965, Australia and New Zealand started to deploy their SAS units together with other units into Borneo. The Australian SAS's first patrols took place on the Malaysian side of the border and were mainly intended to obtain topographical information on tracks, rivers, and villages, as well as conducting surveillance of known border-crossing points and shadowing Indonesian infiltrators. Patrols were ordered to avoid contact, but if an incident took place a shoot-and-scoot policy was employed. Offensive action was to be avoided unless specifically ordered. Most patrols were instead engaged in hearts-and-minds operations. [ A film showing an encounter between an SAS patrol and some villagers is on this site.<sup>196</sup> ]

## 2. Senoi Praaq

The British tried to establish a paramilitary force called the Borneo Border Scouts (BBS), modeled after the Senoi Praaq during the Emergency. According to Jumper in his book *Deaths waits in the Dark*, the BBS were incapable of withstanding pressure, and

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<sup>194</sup> McMichael, "British Operations."

<sup>195</sup> Raffi Gregorian, "CLARET Operation and Confrontation, 1964–1966," *Conflict Quarterly*, Vol. X1, No. 1, (Winter 1991): 46–72.

<sup>196</sup> "The SAS in Borneo," <http://se-asia.commemoration.gov.au/australian-operations-in-indonesian-confrontation/sas-in-borneo.php>

thus they were more of a liability than an asset. The BBS were poorly trained by the SAS, which were too busy at the time with operational matters, leaving this critical task to the Gurkhas. After a bloodbath at Long Jawi, near Belaga, in Sarawak, on September 28, 1963, Richard O. D. Noone and his deputy, Norman Herbolt, were tasked to establish Sabah Border Scouts (SBS), and this new unit was set up in May 1964 using mainly Murut tribesmen based in Keningau, in Sabah. They conducted training based upon their experience during the Emergency and what they had learned from the SAS. Mentored by the Senoi Praaq, the BBS worked alongside the SAS, providing the scouts and trackers to lead a majority of the missions in the Claret operation.<sup>197</sup>

In the peninsula of Malaya, numerous smaller raids by the Tentera Nasional Malaya—similar to the North Kalimantan National Army (NKNA)—served as an umbrella organization for disaffected Malays and Chinese opposed to the regime of Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia's Prime Minister. The Senoi Praaq troopers were employed at Pontian, Johor, and in the north of Singapore Island on a trial basis to gauge their utility in lowland areas, and they fell straight back into stride. The Senoi Praaq again showed their true colors and helped other security forces to retaliate, not only against the TNM, but also against Indonesian regular troops.

One can argue about SOF units during the Malaysian Confrontation. This thesis highlights not only the SAS-conducted Operation Claret, but also other light infantry who became elite units and performed as the SAS did.<sup>198</sup> They conducted counter-guerrilla actions, suppression of insurgencies, and raids on enemy positions behind their own lines, as Eliot Cohen notes in his *Commandos and Politicians*.<sup>199</sup> In this conflict, small and discrete military actions were used to signal to the Indonesians the British and other

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<sup>197</sup> Jumper, *Death Waits*, 139.

<sup>198</sup> Eliot A. Cohen, *Commandos and Politician: Elite Military Units in Modern Democracies* (Harvard: Center of International Affairs, 1978), 20.

Light infantry—skirmishers and raiders, armed, by and large, only with portable infantry weapons, with a common tactical doctrine that emphasized small-unit actions, mobility, surprise, and close quarters combat. They were small groups of men intending to cause disproportionate destruction, relative to their size. Such groups could survive for long periods behind enemy lines by relying on airdrops for supplies, and they could receive up-to-the-minute instructions from headquarters by radio.

<sup>199</sup> Cohen, *Commandos*, 18.

Commonwealth members' commitments and intentions. They offered the governments a better chance of success in performing a sensitive operation like Operation Claret.

## **E. LINE OF DEVELOPMENT**

### **1. Training**

Before the Confrontation, most of the SAS troopers had served in the Malayan Emergency a few years earlier. Nonetheless, Walker required the troops to acclimate to the jungle, and train on tactics at the Jungle Warfare School in Kota Tinggi Johor prior to deployment to Borneo. Medical skills were also essential knowledge to the SAS, since they were needed for winning the hearts and minds of the natives, as in the Malayan Emergency. Nevertheless, differences did exist between the tactical style of operations used in Borneo and in Malaya. The Indonesian army maneuvered in big numbers and rarely moved in groups smaller than a platoon in the jungle. On the other side, SAS training gave more attention to small-group tactics, conservation of ammunition during firefights, and the favoring of ambushes, especially at rivers, which might last for long periods. In theater, each operation followed months of reconnoitering, planning, and rehearsing of every possible detail, including fields of fire for machine guns, silent plotting for artillery and mortar fire, approach routes, etc. Non-commissioned officers had to be proficient in calling for ground-fire support, because the air force was not allowed to conduct bombing operations.

### **2. Equipment**

Helicopters were of utmost importance to operations during the Confrontation. Helicopters helped implement Walker's plan of forward deployment, contributed to tactical mobility, and provided relief or ambush forces. A SAS "setup drill" team could be emplaced quickly in several places, cutting off the enemy regardless of his direction of flight. Walker estimated that an infantry battalion with ten helicopters was worth more than a brigade on foot. With helicopters, security forces defeated the enemy even though they were outnumbered. The weather often restricted operations, and air navigation was difficult. The joint headquarters centrally controlled the helicopters, but deployed them widely throughout the area of operations.

The SAS troopers preferred the AR-15 rifle, which was short, lightweight, and demonstrated utility in close-range fighting in heavy vegetation, as compared to the self-loading rifle. A belt-fed machine gun was too heavy and too susceptible to malfunctions. They also preferred the two-inch mortar, even though had limited utility in the jungle, because the 81mm mortar was too heavy. Walker complained that many items of equipment weighed too much for light infantry. He identified tactical radios, air-ground radios, jungle clothing, and rations as items that needed to be lighter.

### **3. Personnel**

The SAS in Borneo was characterized by the highest standards of self-discipline and field craft, resistance to mental stress, relentless pursuit of excellence in operations, dogged perseverance in going to one step further than required, and great confidence in itself. Some approached the standards of the aborigines in jungle craft and tracking. Endurance was essential for the SAS troopers, due to the distance they covered during patrols, along with meticulous attention to detail. They were always isolated and exposed, under constant nervous stress from the danger of detection, and had to be keen observers, anticipating, making minute decisions, choosing the best route, and measuring options in event of emergency. Additionally, during the Malayan Emergency, the SAS experienced long-range reconnaissance, improved their language, hearts and minds, and raiding qualities, and trained in special operations, signaling, medicine, and linguistics. This made the regiment well suited to its assigned tasks in Borneo.

### **4. Infrastructure**

Though the SAS operated deep in the jungle and close to the natives, there were jungle bases or border forts well forward that would deny the enemy access to northern Borneo and provide the British a variety of advantages (see Figure 11). Compared to the jungle forts in the jungles of Malaya during the Emergency, these encampments were bigger and stronger to defend from enemy intrusion. These bases were never meant to serve as static defense forts, but functioned as widely separated, secure havens for men conducting constant patrolling—a place for returning patrols to rest, relax, eat hot food, and take showers. The bases protected nearby villages, served as a focal point for

intelligence collection, and carried out civic action programs for the villagers. Jungle bases normally included an infantry company, a mortar detachment, a landing zone, an artillery section with one or two 105-mm guns, and living space for extra forces if needed. Occasionally, the base included a helicopter detachment, operated by one platoon on a rotational basis. They were constructed on high ground and fortified with trenches, sandbag bunkers, wire, punji stakes, Claymore mines, and overhead cover. Vegetation around the perimeter was cleared to improve fields of fire, and sentry dogs enhanced the early warning of enemy approach. SAS troopers usually help other units build jungle airstrips for light aircraft to transport troops and cargo. During the Confrontation, they built several hundred landing zones along the frontier, which allowed them easy entry to hot spots or possible ambush locations for friendly forces, as well as a place to pick up patrols and evacuate casualties.



Figure 11. Border Fort during Confrontation.<sup>200</sup>

## 5. Doctrine

The SAS also emphasized winning hearts and minds in Borneo. They accomplished this through constant patrolling, deterring enemy attacks, immediate reaction, direct help, and assistance in village self-defense. They treated people with respect and offered kind treatment in all matters of mutual interest. SAS honored the headmen and did not dictate to the people directly. They consulted the headmen, explained their operations and policies, observed local customs, and adhered to rigorous guidelines for behavior when in contact with the natives. The most important service provided for the natives was medical aid.

There was mild debate concerning who should conduct long-range reconnaissance patrols. These operations demonstrated that both the SOF and conventional forces could be successful. However, only the most experienced and able troops were employed for

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<sup>200</sup> "Confrontation," IWM FES 64/242/4 in Will Fowler, *Britain's Secret War: The Indonesian Confrontation 1962–66* (Osprey Publishing: Oxford, UK, 2006; reprint 2010), p. 22.

this task. Nevertheless, the SAS still performed most of the deep patrolling. Lieutenant Colonel Woodhouse clearly understood the SOF's roles, and their capabilities convinced Walker how to deploy them during the Confrontation. The SAS carried out and sometimes led others in raids and ambushes on enemy targets. There were many river ambushes conducted, due to the geography of Borneo, and the enemy used rivers as their line of communication frequently. SAS also conducted remote ambushes, but these were not effective against the enemy. Most of the time, the SAS were able to guess accurately the likely withdrawal routes of the raiders and ambush the enemy on the way back to the border using various helicopter landing zones and roping areas, which were cut at 1,000-yard intervals along the frontier. The security forces and SAS used close air and artillery support widely in Borneo, because the Indonesians presented better targets than the terrorists in Malaya.

## **6. Organization**

Walker established a joint headquarters in one building and set the pattern for all lower levels of operation.<sup>201</sup> He insisted that naval and air force commanders support his operational concepts. He ordered the Fleet Air Arm to base its helicopters ashore and used commando ships to ferry personnel from Singapore and for local logistical support. He forced the RAF to relax its formal procedures and emphasis on centralized operations. He also brought police and civil authority onboard in this campaign. The SAS kept all the commanders informed and maintained a close relationship with the infantry by assigning liaison officers. Walker also introduced his "Golden Rules," and these instructions assisted him in managing the operation effectively, ensuring success, and maintaining secrecy.<sup>202</sup>

## **7. Information**

Operation CLARET emphasized early warning, and it was critical to success. Information regarding the enemy came from two primary sources: the border tribes and

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<sup>201</sup> McMichael, "British Operations."

<sup>202</sup> McMichael, "British Operations."



the armed forces themselves. Police were few and there was no Police Special Branch in the forward locations. The border tribes were adept in the jungle, easily concealed, and their hunting activities often brought them into contacts with the enemy. Furthermore, they had relatives or trading partners in Kalimantan that gave them easy passage through the border. They would not help unless they were sure of protection, so the SAS maintained a frequent and visible presence, living in many isolated villages and patrolling to win the trust of the people. The SAS provided support and advice on the villagers' self-defense and were careful in operations not to endanger the villagers. The Border Scouts also helped to create a fine intelligence network, collecting information about the enemy and giving it to the SAS.

## **8. Logistics**

The security forces utilized commando amphibious ships to transport people, equipment, and the supplies to and from Singapore. They also used them within Borneo for the same reason. Due to the harshness of the terrain and lack of decent roads, the wider decentralization of forces and improvement in helicopter technology and techniques, the British provided 90 percent of their logistics effort during the Confrontation by air. The British also used hovercraft and other watercraft in resupplying units, especially at night. The SAS created food caches for emergency use. They also attempted to supplement light rations with jungle forage, but this consumed too much of their time. Every SAS trooper carried a two-week ration on patrol.

## **9. Leadership**

Major General Walker was an infantry officer who understood and appreciated light infantry tactics and SOF deep-jungle operations. He applied his vast experience in jungle warfare effectively during the Confrontation. Woodhouse, who was an experienced SAS commander and a Malayan Emergency veteran, gave firm advice to his commander on how to use SOF and prevented it from being utilized as a conventional unit. George Lea, also an SAS officer, kept the operational tempo at the highest level. He followed the doctrine and concepts laid out by Walker, and understood the importance of the strategic use of SOF during the Confrontation.

## **F. CONCLUSION**

Special Operations Forces are essential in conflicts such as the Confrontation, mainly as an unconventional deterrence against external threats. Walker designed Operation Claret to stop the Indonesian incursion by forcing them into a defensive posture. Walker and his successor used SOF units cautiously and covered them in full secrecy so that they could achieve their strategic utility. The SAS mastered their operating environment and, deployed in conjunction with conventional forces, succeeded in assisting the government to its political objectives. The British and other Commonwealth forces were able to deter Indonesia from achieving its military and strategic objectives, preventing the Confrontation from escalating and becoming a full-scale war.

In their future use of special operations, the Malaysian SOF should not neglect the various lessons learned during the Confrontation. The Defense Line of Development (TEPIDOIL + L) model could assist SOF commanders in developing the capabilities needed to meet future challenges. The Confrontation showed a need for helicopters, hovercraft, and other kinds of equipment suited for jungle operations. In the final analysis, however, personnel proved more important than equipment. Leaders must know how to deploy SOF, understanding their capabilities and limitations. Mastery of other elements, such as training, information, doctrine, infrastructure, and organization, would ensure that SOF operates at highest performance levels to achieve success.

## **V. THE MALAYSIAN INSURGENCY (1968–1989)**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter focuses on the development of Malaysian SOF units during the Second Emergency, sometimes referred to as the Malaysian Insurgency. The scenarios were almost the same as in the Malayan Emergency and Indonesian Confrontation in Borneo a few years before. At this time, Malaysia was progressing well economically and socially after almost a decade of independence from the British. Malaysian security forces were almost through with a “Malaysianization” process. SOF units and conventional forces slowly adapted the changes and continued keeping Malaysia a peaceful independent country, allowing further progress and development. However, the communists accused the government of Malaysia of being just another British–United States puppet, and challenged it with a renewed insurrection. This time, the security forces not only had to hunt the CTs in Peninsular Malaysia’s jungles, but also in Sarawak. This period was the testing ground for Malaysian SOF units fighting on their own, without extra hands from their colonial master, the British. While continuing to use available SOF units such as the Police Special Branch and Senoi Praaq to harass the CTs unconventionally, the government of Malaysia also formed new SOF units such as the Malaysian Special Service Regiments and Police 69 Commandos (VAT 69). This chapter will analyze these authentic Malaysian special forces units and highlight their line of capabilities.

### **B. THE MALAYSIAN SECOND EMERGENCY**

Although the initial Emergency was declared ended by July 21, 1960, the remnants of the CPM and the MRLA guerrillas had not been eliminated, nor did they surrender to the security forces. The CTs took a strategic move and withdrew across the Malaysian–Thai border. Two years after the Indonesian Confrontation, the CPM resurfaced and began to raise the communists’ red flags on buildings in Kuala Lumpur, Penang, and many other places. Anti-government pamphlets were found pasted on walls of a flat in Loke Yew Street, and shop houses urged the people to continue the CPM’s

struggles to overthrow the government in Malaysia and Singapore. The Chinese Communist Party supported the CPM through Radio Peking to mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the insurrection in Malaya in 1948 by the CPM.<sup>203</sup>

The CPM perceived the withdrawal of the British and other Commonwealth forces as an excellent opportunity to take over and rule the country. On June 1, 1968, Chin Peng, the CPM secretary general, issued a directive for a renewed general MRLA offensive and began sending guerrillas south of Thailand's border to reconnoiter their old "playgrounds," especially in north Perak. A revamped MRLA, trained in new Viet Cong tactics, equipped with various American weapons from Vietnamese and Cambodian battlefields, began to emerge from the Betong Salient (near the Malaysian–Thai frontier) to establish bases in the northern states and take the fight to Malaysian soil once more.<sup>204</sup> On June 18, 1968, the CTs successfully ambushed a 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Police Field Force convoy near the border town of Kroh, Perak. That brutal ambush left sixteen policemen dead, seventeen wounded, and three trucks severely damaged.<sup>205</sup> The Malaysian government then declared the Second Emergency, which last for almost 21 years of agony for the Malaysians.

Subsequently, the CTs managed to hit a variety of targets such as the east–west highway in northern Malaysia, destroy numerous trucks, and sabotage railway lines. Military installations and police posts were also struck with some frequency. The central headquarters for the Police Jungle Field Force and the Sungai Besi airbase, Kuala Lumpur, became their target. MRLA elite killer squads assimilated several high-profile security forces' officers. The garrisons at the jungle forts reported frequent contacts with the CTs, who continued harassing and targeting the Orang Asli.<sup>206</sup> Eventually, the CPM

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203 "Troops step up the hunt in towns, red flags go up overnight," *The Straits Times*, May 21, 1968.

204 Chin, Peng, Ian Ward, and Norma O. Miraflor, *My Side of History* (Singapore: Media Masters, 2003), 465 & 453.

205 National Archives of Malaysia, "Darurat Angkara Komunis," (n.d.), [http://www.arkib.gov.my/en/darurat-angkara-komunis1?p\\_p\\_id=56\\_INSTANCE\\_K3Lr&p\\_p\\_life\\_cycle=0&p\\_p\\_state=normal&p\\_p\\_mode=view&p\\_p\\_col\\_id=column-3&p\\_p\\_col\\_count=1&page=1](http://www.arkib.gov.my/en/darurat-angkara-komunis1?p_p_id=56_INSTANCE_K3Lr&p_p_life_cycle=0&p_p_state=normal&p_p_mode=view&p_p_col_id=column-3&p_p_col_count=1&page=1).

206 Jumper, *Death waits*, 173–174; Sharom bin Hashim and Mohamed Ghazemy Mahmud, *The Malaysian Army's Battle against Communist Insurgency in Peninsular Malaysia, 1968–1989* (Kuala Lumpur: Army Headquarters, Ministry of Defence, 2001), 6.

surrendered on December 2, 1989, after unsuccessful battle with the Malaysian security forces.

## **C. SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES**

### **1. The Malaysian Armed Forces**

#### *a. The Malaysian Special Service Unit (MSSU)*

About three years before the Second Emergency was declared, the defense minister, Tun Abdul Razak Hussein, and the chief of the armed forces, General Tunjku Dato' Osman Jiwa, discussed a plan to retaliate for Indonesian troop incursions into Malaysia. They agreed that the Tentara Nasional Indonesia (TNI) must be eliminated before they could reach the Malaysian coast. The decision was made to organize a special raiding unit for conducting a surprise attack on TNI bases close to the Malaysian coast, such as in Riau and Sumatera. This new strategy was known as Counter Indonesian Confrontation (CIC) and was crucial as an action to be taken by the Malaysian Armed Forces.<sup>207</sup> Tun Abdul Razak turned to the British once again to establish a special unit, later called the Malaysian Special Service Unit (MSSU). The forty Royal Marine (RM) commandos under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Tiffin from Burma Camp, in Ulu Tiram, Johore, were assigned this task. Tiffin then selected Major Bacons to lead a team of two officers and a staff sergeant to conduct the first training regime in January 1965. On February 19, 1965, after six weeks of challenging training that focused on physical and mental strength and various combat skills, four officers and eight enlisted graduated from the first Malaysian Commando Cadres course. Lieutenant Colonel Tiffin presented them with the Green Beret and the blue lanyard that are their symbols to this day. On February 25, 1965, Major Abu Hassan Abdullah became the first MSSU commanding officer and Warrant Officer II Ariffin Muhammad was selected as the first squadron sergeant major. This new unit was attached to the 4<sup>th</sup> Royal Malay Regiment in Majidee Camp, in Johor Bahru. Their primary mission was to train more commandos, and by May

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<sup>207</sup> Ahmad Ridzuan, *Rejimen Gerak Khas* (Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publisher, 2011), 6; "Gerak Khas–Lahir dari ilham Tun Razak," *Utusan Malaysia*, August 9, 2003.

1965, the MSSU pioneers and the RM team managed to train three more troops to become one squadron of 120 commandos.

Immediately after came their first mission, to raid the TNI base in Pulau Djemor, a launching base for the TNI to cross the Straits of Malacca and infiltrate into Peninsular Malaysia. Once the intelligence was received, the MSSU was put on high alert. The mission was canceled at the last minute after the situation in Jakarta became more favorable to the Malaysian government. On another occasion, an MSSU platoon led by Lieutenant Zainuddin was covertly infiltrated into Kuala Mentadak in Pulau Sebatik, east of Sabah. Their tasks were to gather intelligence on the TNI, especially the Clandestine Communist Organization (CCO) activities in that island.<sup>208</sup> Lieutenant Zainuddin split his men into smaller patrols of three men each. The MSSU troopers observed the TNI's deception plan: they would change their uniforms each time they had parades to confuse Malaysian Security Forces and pretend that they had greater actual strength. This valuable information was passed to the army headquarters in Tawau, Sabah.

The Indonesians slowly showed signs of ceasing their aggression towards Malaysia. On May 27, 1966, a group of twenty-six officers from the TNI led by First Admiral O. B. Syaaf, visited Kuala Lumpur for a friendship mission called "Misi Muhibbah." They met Tun Abdul Rahman, the Malaysian prime minister, and handed him a declaration to end the Confrontation. Nevertheless, as the Indonesian Confrontation officially ended in mid-1966, some began to look at the MSSU as irrelevant and wanted to disband it. Major Borhan, the MSSU commander, received a

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208 Sarawak Information Service, *The danger within* (Sarawak: Government Printing Office, 1965); Francis Chan and Phyllis Wong, "Saga of communist insurgency in Sarawak," *The Borneo Post*, September 16, 2011, <http://www.theborneopost.com/2011/09/16/saga-of-communist-insurgency-in-sarawak/>.

Clandestine Communist Organization (CCO) is a communist group that appeared in Sarawak, mainly involving the local Chinese, who fought the Malaysian federal government in 1963–1966 over the sovereignty of North Borneo. Though the territorial conflict had been inactive since 1963, the CCO did not sign a peace accord with the Malaysian government until October 1990. The CCO had the support of the Indonesian government, which simultaneously engaged British-backed Malaysia in an interstate conflict called the Confrontation, between 1963 and 1966 over the same territory in North Borneo. About 700–800 CCO members and supporters slipped across the Sarawak border into Indonesia where they received intensive training in guerilla warfare. It was this group that formed the core of the communist guerrilla units — Pasukan Rakyat Kalimantan Utara (PARAKU) and Pasukan Gerilya Rakyat Sarawak (PGRS).

letter from headquarters ordering him to prepare to disband the MSSU. He went to the ministry of defense and appealed for the existence of the MSSU. While the decision-makers were still undecided about the future, MSSU troopers were involved in a mission that elevated their status. Just before Malaysia's tenth independence day, on August 31, 1967, Trooper Maamor, one member of a six-man team, heroically fought and killed seven of Pasukan Rakyat Kalimantan Utara (PARAKU) guerrillas.<sup>209</sup> This news immediately changed the perception of the MSSU and the idea to disband it vanished under the carpet in the ministry of defense. MSSU continued and became a permanent unit in the Malaysian army's order of battle.<sup>210</sup>

There were many operations accomplished by the MSSU before the Second Emergency. Among them was Operation Apas Balong, in April 1966, near Slim Pompon, Tawau, Sabah, and Operation Sabir (Sapu Bersih) in the jungle near Tebedu, in Serian, Sarawak. In the earlier event, MSSU carried out a search-and-destroy mission on a group of TKNU guerrillas led by Nordin from the CCO and Lieutenant Leous Legos. After a few days of tracking the guerrillas, they found various traces of TKNU activities in that area. They found the enemy resting in a palm oil worker's hut and attacked them. A few days later, the enemy surrendered to the Tawau police due to serious injuries from the previous engagement. They agreed to show their training camp, which could accommodate twelve guerrillas, and their latest weapons, FAL FN 7.62mm rifles.<sup>211</sup> Operation Sabir (Sapu Bersih) was the first combined operation with the TNI after the Confrontation to eliminate the remnants of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regiment, People of Sarawak Guerrillas (PGRS). The No. 2 Troops, a MSSU detachment led by Captain Hussin Awang Senik, was tasked to capture or kill Lai Pak Kah, the leaders of the PGRS, his deputy Loo Kong, and others in that organization. From January 19 until January 25,

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209 Phang Chung Shin, "Insurgency ended with Sri Aman Accord," *The Borneo Post*, March 11, 2012, <http://www.theborneopost.com/2012/03/11/insurgency-ended-with-sri-aman-accord/>.

Pasukan Rakyat Kalimantan Utara (PARAKU) is the armed wing of the North Kalimantan Communist Party (NKCP), the successor of the Sarawak Communist Organization that was active from September 19, 1971, in the Malaysian province of Sarawak in northern Borneo. The chairperson of the NKCP was Wen Min Chyuan, who had been a leading member of the Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP) 1960–1964. The membership of NKCP was predominantly ethnically Chinese.

210 Ridzuan, *Rejimen*, 71.

211 Ridzuan, *Rejimen*, 44–45.

1968, the No. 2 Troop managed to kill another eight PGRS guerrillas from several ambushes. During this operation, the MSSU began a trial with new camouflage uniforms.<sup>212</sup>

In 1968, the MSSU moved from Johor to Sebatang Karah Camp, in Port Dickson. A year later, it moved again to Sungai Udang Camp, which became the “home of the green beret.” In 1970, the MSSU was rebranded with a more Malaysian title, as 1 Rejimen Gerak Khas Malaysia (RGKM), and further expanded after the race riots of May 13, 1969. During this restructuring process, in July 1972, RGKM invited a platoon of Indonesian special forces (Kopassandha) for three months of crosstraining on long-range patrols. Integration was easy because of their similar languages and most of the MSSU had trained in Batu Djajar, Indonesia, earlier. They also conducted the first combined operation to search and destroy the remnants of PARAKU guerrillas on the Sarawak frontier, called Operation Rajawali.<sup>213</sup>

The RGKM continued to contribute its expertise in hunting down CTs in the Peninsula and the remnants of PARAKU guerrillas in the Sarawak jungles, with other security forces, until the end of the Second Emergency. Among major offensives that involved the RGKM were operations Gurun, Cengkau, Kelong Empat, Gubir, Selamat Sawaddee, Kijang, Asli, Indera and Gonzales. Although some troopers were killed in action and many were wounded, the RGKM were able to keep constant pressure on the CTs to split into smaller groups and be on the run most of the time. With the determination and the courage of the troopers of the RGKM: the CTs begun to reduce their activities and eventually decided to surrender to the security forces.

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212 Ridzuan, *Rejimen*, 74–75.

213 Ken Con Boy, *Kopassus: Inside Indonesia's Special Forces* (Jakarta: Equinox Publishing, 2003), 192.



*b. Pasukan Khas Laut (PASKAL)*

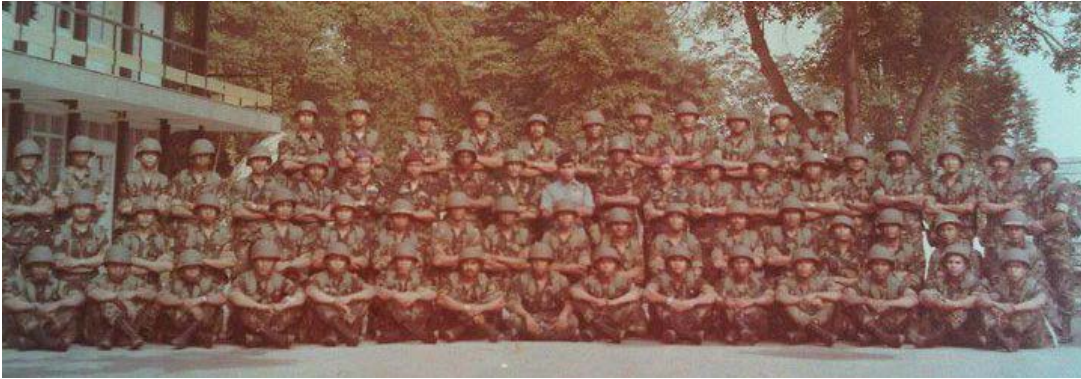


Figure 12. PASKAL's pioneers, circa November 1978.

The PASKAL, or Naval Special Forces, belongs to the Royal Malaysian Navy. This maritime special force was trained by officers from the UK's Special Boat Service (SBS) in the mid-1960s. In 1977, while still in *Kapal Diraja Malaya* (HMS or KD Malaya) in the Woodlands, Singapore, the Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN) saw a need to maintain safety and security for all its bases and assets. The first cohorts of officers were sent to locations such as the Special Warfare Training Centre (SWTC) located at Sg Udang Camp, Melaka, or for Marine training in Surabaya, Indonesia, and with Royal Marine commandos in the UK. The Unit Komando TLDM was under the administration of the RMN Security Regiment (PORTELA). On 1 October 1982, the Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN) formed the Pasukan Khas Laut (PASKAL).

The original cadre was trained by KOPASKA, the Indonesian Navy Combat Diver unit. PASKAL then consisted of eight officers and 87 enlisted men, and was officially established after the Malaysian government began to enforce its exclusive economic zone (EEZ), which extends 200 nautical miles from Malaysia's coastline. In 1988, the unit took on responsibility for antipiracy and hostage rescue operations at sea. There was a requirement to protect Malaysian offshore stations called "Gugusan Semarang Peninjau" or GSP, near the disputed Spratly Islands.<sup>214</sup> Since 1983, the

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<sup>214</sup> Hamden Ramli, "Cabaran Paskal," *Utusan Malaysia*, February 1, 2006; Royal Malaysian Navy, *Sejarah PASKAL*, June 2012, <http://www.navy.mil.my/kdpanglimahitam/index.php/sejarah-penubuhan-paskal>.

PASKAL's personnel have been located in offshore stations, particularly in Layang-Layang atoll, as well as in several RMN ships.<sup>215</sup> The PASKAL's new task under the National Security Directives (MKN) No. 18 was to prepare and be ready with maritime counterterrorism assault teams for the security of national interests offshore, and to handle any maritime crisis.<sup>216</sup>

*c. Pertahanan Darat Udara (HANDAU)*

The history of the Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) special forces unit begins in the 1970s, after the attack on Sungai Besi Air Base by the CTs. The attackers fired a mortar fitted on a small lorry, and a high-explosive round hit a DHC-4 Caribou aircraft parked on the base's dispersal area.<sup>217</sup> The HANDAU, an acronym for Pertahanan Darat dan Udara (ground and air defense) was the descendant of the RAF Regiment (Malaya) during the Emergency, established with a strength of 1,054 all ranks (Figure 13). Its depot, which includes the training school, was established at Kuala Lumpur in 1947. The first two squadrons were named the 91st and 92nd Rifle Regiments, and were declared operational there in January and April 1948, respectively.<sup>218</sup> At the beginning, the HANDAU's role was identical to that of the RAF Regiments, which was to provide security to all RMAF bases and their valuable assets.<sup>219</sup>

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215 "Spratly island conflicting claims," *Global Security.org* (n.d.), <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/spratly-conflict.htm>.

216 Tentera Laut DiRaja Malaysia, *Recruitment Brochures* (Lumut: RMN).

217 Tenteta Udara DiRaja Malaysia, *Organisasi TUDM: PASKAU*, <http://www.airforce.gov.my/organisasi/paskau/>.

218 Kingsley M. Oliver, *Through Adversity: The history of the Royal Air Force Regiment 1942–1990* (Northamptonshire, UK: Forces & Corporate Publishing Ltd, 1997), 197–199.

219 Tentera Udara, *Organisasi TUDM: PASKAU*, <http://www.airforce.gov.my/organisasi/paskau/>; "SOF in Malaysia," *Tripod blog*, (n.d.): *SOF in Malaysia*, [http://members.tripod.com/~gerak\\_khas/frameset.html](http://members.tripod.com/~gerak_khas/frameset.html).



Figure 13. The RAF Regiment (Malaya) was also employed as infantry against the CTs during the Malayan Emergency.

In late 1967, the RMAF received Nuri Sikorsky S61-A4 helicopters and the HANDAU took other roles besides providing force protection teams, becoming the air rescue operators' door gunners and escorting the Nuri flying into forward locations. In April 17, 1976, the CTs shot down a Nuri in an operation near Gubir, close to the Malaysian–Thai border, where it crashed and killed all the crew and the two air rescue operators.<sup>220</sup> On November 14, 1989, HANDAU was involved in a rescue operation after another Nuri helicopter crashed on the slopes of Gunung Gerah, near the Kelantan–Perak border.<sup>221</sup>

<sup>220</sup> Ridzuan, *Rejimen*, 133.

<sup>221</sup> "Nuri's 18th Crash In 39 Years," *Bernama.com*, July 17, 2007, [http://bernama.com/bernama/v3/news\\_lite.php?id=273932](http://bernama.com/bernama/v3/news_lite.php?id=273932).

## 2. Royal Malaysian Police (RMP)

### a. 69 Commandos (*Very Able Trooper or VAT 69*)



Figure 14. 69 Commandos, circa 1970s.<sup>222</sup>

The history of the 69 Commandos began when the Tun Dr. Ismail, who was minister of home affairs and internal security, proposed the formation of a special unit trained in guerrilla warfare to combat communist terrorists. The responsibility for organizing this new unit was given to Dato' Merican Sutan, the police director of public security. In their early days, the 69 Commandos were called by various names, such as Charlie Force and Special Project Unit (SPU). In 1972, the government officially accepted this unit as the Very Able Troopers, or VAT 69, which later took the title of the 69 Commando (see Figure 14).<sup>223</sup>

Initially, the Police Field Force sent 52 men to the MSSU camp in Sebatang Karah, near Port Dickson, in the state of Negri Sembilan. Only nine passed, and two died in accidents during the course, so this project was halted. Still determined to organize a special force on its own, the police turned to the British SAS for assistance. On October 1969, 1,600 PPH personnel from several battalions volunteered to join this

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<sup>222</sup> *Utusan Malaysia*, December 14, 2006, [http://www.utusan.com.my/pix/2006/1214/Utusan\\_Malaysia/Polis\\_&\\_Tentera/te\\_01\\_big.jpg](http://www.utusan.com.my/pix/2006/1214/Utusan_Malaysia/Polis_&_Tentera/te_01_big.jpg), (under Polis & Tentera).

<sup>223</sup> Muhammad Fuad Mat Nor, *69 Komando* (Bandar Seri Iskandar, Perak: Muhammad Fuad Publisher, 2011), 1–20.

new unit. After the selection process, only 60 personnel qualified to undergo the basic commando training. As the formation of VAT 69 was highly classified, all training was conducted at Fort Kemar, deep in the jungle of Perak, where transportation was limited to helicopter and small aircraft only. A group of instructors from the British SAS (Special Air Service) who were already seasoned from the Malayan Emergency and the Indonesian Confrontation supervised the first training. On completion, only thirty-six personnel managed to get through. They actually formed the first troop of 69th Commando Battalion. The British SAS continued to train the 69 until 1976. In 1977, the New Zealand SAS was involved in training more commandos. As a result, three new squadrons were born. The NZ SAS also conducted a special course to train VAT 69's own instructors.<sup>224</sup>

The first troop of 69 Commandos started its initial operations in the 1970s and successfully deployed against the CTs. VAT 69 frequently conducted special operations to support the Special Branch in combating subversive organizations and terrorist activities. They also supported other Malaysian SOF units and other conventional forces in various joint operations. The 69 Commandos killed many CTs and seized numerous weapons, equipment, documents, and food dumps. Their reputation spread not only among security forces, but also to their adversaries, the CTs. The terrorists, when possible, avoided the 69's commandos, who also were known as the *lok kow* ("69" in Chinese dialect). As a result, the Royal Malaysian Police expanded the unit and gave it its own employment warrant. VAT 69 was established, structured, and trained identically to the SAS, to execute special security services such as long-range patrols for collecting enemy information and identifying target and enemy locations in the deep jungle or rural areas. They also executed offensive operations using special weapons, equipment, and tactics against the enemy.

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224 Fuad, *69 Komando*, 1–20.

**b. Unit Tindakan Khas (UTK)**

Unit Tindakan Khas (UTK) or the Special Action Unit, is the second special forces unit belonging to the RMP along with VAT 69 (see Figure 15). The UTK was formed after the Japanese Red Army (JRA) or Nihon Sekigun, laid siege to the U.S. consulate office and took 52 civilians hostage on August 4, 1975. Five JRA terrorists held members of the U.S. consulate and the Swedish chargé d'affaires as hostages within the American Insurance Agency building, which housed several embassies in Kuala Lumpur.<sup>225</sup> Since then, UTK troopers have been trained and equipped primarily as a special weapons and tactics (SWAT)-style unit, but with a difference, in that UTK operatives operate mostly in plain clothes and also perform undercover missions that are categorized as high risk and critical situations.<sup>226</sup>



Figure 15. UTK ready for action, circa 1990s.<sup>227</sup>

The UTK has approximately 300 members. The unit operates to execute special security services such as antiterrorism and counterterrorism in Malaysian urban areas, supporting the police on missions such as dealing with armed criminals and

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<sup>225</sup> Crime and Investigation Network, “KL Under siege,” *History Channel Asia*, citvasia.com, <http://stardefense.blogspot.com/2012/05/pasukan-gerakan-khas-pgk.html>; <http://discoverelitepolice.com/2012/03/pasukan-gerakan-khas-pgk/>.

<sup>226</sup> Polis Di Raja Malaysia, *Laporan Tahunan PDRM 2009* (Bukit Aman: PDRM, 2009), 136.

<sup>227</sup> Tuah, “Malaysian Police UTK,” *Militaryphoto.net*, Nov. 2006, <http://www.militaryphotos.net/forums/showthread.php?108150-Malaysian-Armed-Forces-Pictures> (under Malaysian Armed Forces pictures).

escorting and protecting top leaders and VIPs.<sup>228</sup> On October 1985, the UTK was involved in a hostage rescue operation involving two doctors who were held by a group of six armed convicts led by Jimmy Chua, a notorious criminal and former police inspector from Singapore, in Pudu jail, in Kuala Lumpur. After a six-day negotiation, the hostages were rescued, while the gang was recaptured.<sup>229</sup>

## **D. LINE OF DEVELOPMENT**

### **1. Training**

In early 1965, only 15 volunteers qualified for the first batch of the Basic Commando Cadre course. They underwent training for six weeks, three phases of training at Mount Austin Estate, just outside of the Far East Land Forces Training Center, Ulu Tiram, Johor. First was the land phase, where the cadres did physical training and various obstacle courses such as a scramble and Tarzan course, and *junam maut* (death plunge), to boost their confidence and *esprit de corps*. The cadres also enhanced their various skills in unarmed combat and handling light and heavy weapons. Second was the maritime phase. All cadres had to be able to paddle the assault boat and canoe, perform river crossings, conduct insertions from the sea, attack on enemy's camp, and execute extraction. They also learned to survive in the mangrove jungles and swamps. The third phase was the dark water phase, where they were divided into smaller groups to plan, infiltrate, sabotage, and exfiltrate without being discovered by the enemy. These training exercises encompassed their mission to conduct surprise attacks on the small Tentera National Indonesia (TNI) bases close to the Peninsular Malaysian coast, such as in Riau and Sumatera. As the Confrontation continued, another six similar courses were conducted in 1965. Major Abu Hassan, the first MSSU commanding officer primary, was tasked to continue recruiting and training the new cadres. Three more groups were organized and trained by the officers and trooper from the first group, who were trained by the Royal Marine Commandos. The MSSU began sending men for advanced training in order to prepare the commandos for future operations such as parachute training,

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<sup>228</sup> Norafifi Ehsan, "To protect their lives," *The Star*, December 29, 2007, <http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2007/12/29/nation/19881348&sec=nation>.

<sup>229</sup> Shanti Gunaratnam, "We rescued 2 hostages in Pudu," *The News Straits Times*, April 24, 2011.

diving, sniping, and other courses in Indonesia, Australia, and New Zealand. Between 1970 and 1973, a contingent of 400 commandos from 1 RGKM went to Batu Djajar, in Surabaya, for the Indonesian commando and basic parajump course.<sup>230</sup> The Confrontation came to an end in 1966.

For the Police Commandos 69, in October 1969, only 60 personnel were qualified after the selection process to undergo basic commando training at Fort Kemar, located deep in the jungle of Perak, where transportation was limited to helicopters and small aircraft. A group of instructors from British SAS supervised the first training. From the first day, these cadres were told to think and apply guerrilla tactics like the CTs. On completion, only thirty personnel managed to get through the grueling training and were allowed to wear the sand-brown beret, similar to the British SAS. They formed the first troop of the 69th Commando Squadron. In 1977, the New Zealand SAS was involved in training another three new squadrons and conducted a special course to train VAT 69's own instructors.<sup>231</sup> In 1978, 69 Commandos began to qualify its troopers in parachute jumping. About 65 men went for airborne training at Hua Hin, the Thailand Police Parajump School. Subsequently, some of them continued with the free-fall parachuting course in PULPAK. 69 Commandos also invited instructors from New Zealand for this purpose.<sup>232</sup> The 69 Commando expansion program was completed in 1980, when it had four fully equipped special forces squadrons and its own logistics unit. Since its establishment, VAT 69 HQ and their special warfare training center remains in Ulu Kinta, Northern Brigade General Operation Forces (PGA) Camp, in Perak.

## **2. Equipment**

The MSSU troopers were trained to use light and heavy weapons such as the heavy-barrel L1AI self-loading rifle (HBSLR), which weighs more than 4.3kg, and other machine guns, such as the Bren light machine gun, mortar, and 84mm Carl Gustav recoilless antitank rifles. MSSU's latest personal weapon at the time was the 7.62mm

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230 Ridzuan, *Rejimen*, 88–89; Con Boy, *Kopassus*, 191.

231 Fuad, *69 Komando*, 16–20.

232 Syaril A. Kadir, "A.Rahim–saksi dua pelatih payung terjun mati," *Utusan Malaysia*, June 6, 2003.



L1A1 SLR, but some were still using the Lee-Enfield MK1 rifles, M1 carbine and Sterling L2 (A3) Mark 4 machine gun. At the beginning, MSSU equipment was not much different from that of a conventional infantry battalion. Some exceptional equipment they used was the two-man Klepper kayak (known as a *folboat* during World War II), and speedboats for seaborne infiltration. Uniforms and jungle boots were important in the jungle environments and Malaysian climate. As a new unit, the MSSU also made a trial of new camouflage uniforms during Operation Sabir in 1968, in Tebedu, Sarawak.<sup>233</sup> The MSSU began to receive their new M16A1 rifles in late 1969.

The 69 Commandos were issued 7.62mm FN-FAL rifles, Barrettas, and the G33. Some used M16A1 rifles, as these were in wide use by the Americans in the Vietnam War. Radio communications with base and aircraft and helicopter improved. According to one of the former 69 troopers, some of the signal units used to improvise Claymore mine cables as their radio antennas, since it was functional and quick to set up and disassemble during patrols.

### **3. People**

Many young soldiers and policemen showed their interest in these new special units that their organizations wanted to establish. Nevertheless, due to the high standard of physical and mental requirements, only few volunteers passed the first selection phase.<sup>234</sup> In late 1964, some 1,000 volunteers from various units and backgrounds turned out for the initial MSSU selection and assessment process. Only 350 passed and continued to the second assessment phase in Sungai Besi, Kuala Lumpur. From that, only fifteen were qualified for the initial commando cadres training in Ulu Tiram, Johor. Among them were five officers and ten enlisted. The MSSU initial instructors were from the forty British Royal Marine Commandos led by Lieutenant Colonel Tiffin from Burma Camp, Ulu Tiram, Johor. Major Bacons was the chief instructor, and four others assisted

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<sup>233</sup> Ridzuan, *Rejimen*, 75.

<sup>234</sup> "Usah langgar sumpah komando," *Utusan Malaysia*, August 2, 2003; Amir Sarifudin, "69 Komando miliki kemahiran unik," *Utusan Malaysia*, November 11, 2004.

him. Only twelve passed the training, among them members of the Malay Regiment, military police, armor, and engineers.<sup>235</sup>

For the Police 69 Commandos, in October 1969, bigger crowds applied than for the MSSU in 1965, with about 1,600 policemen from various ranks and units, but they came mainly from several field force battalions. After the initial selection process, only 60 personnel were qualified to undergo basic commando training. At the end, thirty-six personnel managed to get through the grueling training in the deep jungles at Fort Kemar, one of the jungle forts on the Perak frontier. Later, the New Zealand SAS that had replaced the British SAS also conducted a special course to train VAT 69's own instructors.<sup>236</sup>

#### **4. Information**

At the peak of the Second Emergency, the RGKM and the Army Intelligence Corps formed the Special Combat Intelligence Team or Rejimen Khas Perisikan Tempur (RKPT). The RKPT had a close cooperation with the Special Branch, not only gathering enemy intelligence but able to kill or capture enemy high value targets. This move further increased the efficiency of the army in combating the CTs, and many operations were conducted by RKPT troopers. They were able to react quickly and covertly in suspected enemy locations, either to conduct surveillance and reconnaissance or lay an ambush. The 69 Commandos also operated to support, or had been supported by, the Special Branch. Based on the information given them, the troopers conducted operations, and this intelligence cycle continued until the CPM and MRLA organizational structure was fully known. The Special Branch was now more knowledgeable and experienced and sufficiently manned by professional intelligence officers to face the Indonesian Confrontation, the PARAKU armed revolution in Sabah and Sarawak, and the Second Emergency.

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<sup>235</sup> Ridzuan, *Rejimen*, 13.

<sup>236</sup> Fuad, *69 Komando*, 17.

## 5. Doctrine

The Army's MSSU and Police 69 Commandos adopted almost the same doctrine and tactics. Due to differences in intentions during their establishment, they had their own approaches and focus. The principal task for the MSSU (later RGKM) during the Indonesian Confrontation was to carry out seaborne infiltration across the Malacca Straits and then sabotage TNI bases. The commandos concentrated their training and tactics on small-unit operations and small-scale amphibious assaults by concentrating on small-boat and canoe delivery techniques. This later became the nucleus of the MSSU's Special Boat Troops, which closely resembled the British Special Boat Services (SBS).<sup>237</sup>

MSSU and the 69 Commandos quickly and effectively became experts in long-range reconnaissance and surveillance missions and deep-jungle penetration tactics. The MSSU continued perfecting these tactics, and all troopers were required to master *ronda kumpulan kecil*, or RKK, which are similar to long-range reconnaissance patrols (LRRP). Most of the time, they laid ambushes at known "rat routes" in the jungles along the Sarawak-Kalimantan border and waited many days covertly to observe the TNI regulars and their guerrillas. Groups of three or four troopers operated independently to track the PARAKU guerrillas and engage them when the right opportunities arose. The difference from other units was that the MSSU's RKK did not use trackers in their team. RKK also inspired all infantry units to form their own combat intelligence sections or UCIS, which operated in five-man teams. Everyone was either a trained signaler, combat medic, demolitions expert, or other specialist. This new unit showed high return-of-investment.<sup>238</sup>

During the Second Emergency, besides performing missions independently, the RGKM (previously known as the MSSU) also provided troopers to the Rejimen Khas Perisikan Tempur, a new intelligence-cum-strike force unit for the army. The RKPT not only gathered enemy combat intelligence, but was also able to conduct kill-or-capture missions on CPM or MRLA high-value targets. As told by a former trooper of this unit,

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<sup>237</sup> "Skuadron Perahu Khas terlatih dalam misi perairan," *Utusan Malaysia*, August 2, 2003.

<sup>238</sup> Komando Kedai Kopi blog, <http://excdo.blogspot.com/>.

they usually operated as five or six troopers, sometimes with the Special Branch operatives. One of the RKPT operations was Operation Murai on August 6, 1976, near Sungai Chentang, in Pahang. The RKPT patrol was disguised as a government land surveyor authority. After laying in wait for two days in their ambush position, a rubber tapper's house, they killed two CTs in close-quarter combat.<sup>239</sup> Afterwards, the RKPT became the 91 Gerup Operasi Perisikan (GOP).<sup>240</sup>

RGKM also adopted SAS jungle forts and hearts and minds projects in Operation Asli. Troopers from RGKM were tasked to organize the aborigine's resettlement program or *Rancangan Penempatan Semula* (RPS), and they began with the establishment of a forward base in Brinchang, in Pahang, utilizing a former British Army camp. From that point, a patrol of five to six men was positioned close to the Orang Asli villages such as in Post Terisu, Brooke, Kuala Mensun, Telanok and Bertam.<sup>241</sup>

## 6. Organization

By late 1965, MSSU strength increased from fifteen to 268 officers and enlisted soldiers, representing various races and backgrounds in Malaysia. MSSU was organized into three combat troops, one administration troop, and one element of the boat troops. On January 1966, just after the separation of Singapore from Malaysia, some thirty-one members in the MSSU decided to return to the island of Singapore. Lieutenant Tan Khee Peng, Sergeant Ramdan, and Corporal Jeetram Singh led the group and become the pioneers of the 1<sup>st</sup> Singapore Commando Battalion. Lieutenant Colonel Tan later became the first commanding officer of this new unit. From January 1970, the MSSU became the 1 Rejimen Gerak Khas Malaysia (1 RGKM), or 1<sup>st</sup> Malaysian Special Forces Regiment and Lieutenant Colonel Borhan Ahmad became the first commanding officer after he came back from staff college in India.

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239 "Muit Ahmad—Sumber inspirasi komando baru," *Utusan Malaysia*, August 8, 2003; [http://kbmyaf.byethost18.com/TDM\\_KRD.htm](http://kbmyaf.byethost18.com/TDM_KRD.htm); <http://army.mod.gov.my/krd/index.php/sejarah-/wira-kor-?showall=1> [http://xnuripilot.blogspot.com/2011/07/seorang-pahlawan-yang-luput-dimakan\\_04.html](http://xnuripilot.blogspot.com/2011/07/seorang-pahlawan-yang-luput-dimakan_04.html).

240 Tentera Darat Malaysia, *91 Grup Operasi Perisikan*, <http://army.mod.gov.my/krd/index.php/pasukan-kor-risik-diraja/91-gop.>; Tentera Darat Malaysia, *92 Anggota Tentera Cawangan Khas*, <http://army.mod.gov.my/krd/index.php/pasukan-kor-risik-diraja/92-atck>.

241 Ridzuan, *Rejimen*, 136.

Under the 3<sup>rd</sup> Malaysian Plan (1976–1980) in the Malaysia’s New Economy Policy, the Special Warfare Training Center was established on August 11, 1976, and a year later, 2 RGKM was formed. In 1981, due to the expansion of the armed forces and RGKM, Grup Gerak Khas Headquarters was established in Imphal Camp in Kuala Lumpur to act as the brigade headquarters for special forces regiments. The headquarters group also included combat support units and service support units.<sup>242</sup> Once again, a decision to rename the organization was made and 1 RGKM became 21 Rejimen Komando and 2 RGKM became 22 Rejimen Komando. Two new units were also formed, Rejimen 11 Gerak Khas (11 RGK) and Rejimen 12 Gerak Khas (12 RGK), in later years. 12 RGK was later disbanded because of Malaysian army restructuring and modernization, according to Brig. Gen. Ahmad Rodi Zakaria, the 21 GGK commander.<sup>243</sup>

PASKAL in the 1980s consisted of only seven officers and 78 enlisted sailors. They were organized into squadrons, each with several platoons. The smallest unit was known as a boat troop, filled with seven commandos. Each boat troop has personnel trained in sabotage, underwater demolition, and naval gunfire support. PASKAL also had its own combat intelligence team, whose roles include maritime tactical intelligence, counter-intelligence, and psychological operations. Other capabilities included maritime hostage rescue, antiterrorism; sabotage, special intelligence, close protection, and underwater warfare. These skills were developed slowly as their strength increased. PASKAL headquarters remains at Lumut Navy Base, Perak, after its relocation from Woodlands, Singapore in the early 80s. PASKAL usually has had a small detachment at Terumbu Layang-Layang (Swallow Reef) in the disputed areas of the Spratly Islands, South China Sea, since 1983.

From only thirty-six troopers who passed the arduous training in Fort Kemar, the 69 Commando Unit continued to expand to four fully equipped infantry squadrons with their own logistics unit. This expansion program was finally completed in 1980. Since its

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<sup>242</sup> ShadowSpear, *21 Gerup Gerak Khas*, January, 29, 2009, <http://www.shadowsppear.com/malaysia-special-operations/1045-21-grup-gerak-khas.html>.

<sup>243</sup> Gaya Tentera, “Usah langgar sumpah komando,” *Utusan Malaysia*, August 2, 2003.

establishment, 69 Commando Headquarters has been located in the Northern Brigade, Police Field Force Camp, in Ulu Kinta, Perak. Once under the direct order of the northern brigade commander, VAT 69 is now responsible to the internal security/public order director (KDN/KA). The UTK also began to grow, and eventually the unit strength reached approximately 300 men. After their basic training in Ulu Kinta, the operators are transferred and continue their advanced training at the main base in Kuala Lumpur.

## **7. Infrastructure**

At its beginning, the MSSU did not have its own camp. They occupied other units' facilities, the first of which was in Majidee, in Johor Bahru. In December 1966, MSSU moved to Segenting Camp, near Port Dickson. In 1968, MSSU moved again to a new place at Sebatang Karah, also in Port Dickson.<sup>244</sup> Finally, in October 1969, MSSU moved to Sungai Udang Camp, and this became the home of the Malaysian Special Forces. Aligned with the expansion of the armed forces, Pusat Latihan Peperangan Khas (PULPAK), or the Special Warfare Training Centre, was established on 1 August 1976 to fulfill the training requirements of MSSU personnel. After the establishment of PULPAK, the Second Regiment of Special Services was established on 1 January 1977. All three units were based in Sungai Udang, Melaka.

After moving from Singapore, PASKAL headquarters has remained in Lumut Naval Base, in Perak. PASKAL continues to develop various infrastructures, which include headquarters, training areas, shooting ranges, and many others. Since 1983, PASKAL has positioned men, usually a small detachment at Swallow Reef, in the disputed Spratly Islands in the South China Sea. They live in temporary cabins in the middle of the ocean to protect the Swallow Reefs from intrusions (see Figure 16).

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<sup>244</sup> Ridzuan, *Rejimen*, 49.



Figure 16. “The Last Frontier” Semarang Barat Atoll in South China Sea.<sup>245</sup>

From 1980 onwards, the Air Force HANDAU began to establish their operational units in each air base. The first was the 102nd Squadron at Sungai Besi Air Base. In all, eleven HANDAU squadrons were established throughout Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah, and Sarawak.<sup>246</sup>

For the 69 Commandos, battalion headquarters has remained in Ulu Kinta, Perak, since its inception. They continue to develop the camp with various facilities to accommodate the needs of a special forces unit, which includes administration, operations, training facilities, health clinic, family quarters, and so on. Nevertheless, 69 Commandos, from its inception, has conducted its commando courses in the actual environments that they are going to operate in: the dense jungles. For example, in Fort Kemar, the cadres get used to climbing and descending hills and navigating through the thick jungles most of the time, even to get a water supply. They quickly learn to master the jungles and life in that harsh environment. The UTK, since their roles are more orientated towards urban environments, have their base in the police headquarters in Bukit Aman and police depot in Kuala Lumpur.

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<sup>245</sup> Ridzuan, *Rejimen*, 145.

<sup>246</sup> Tentera Udara, *Organisasi PASKAU*.

## 8. Logistics

There is little evidence to indicate that SOF units, either from the military or from the police, faced problems with logistics during the Second Emergency. Although there were issues, because of the nature of the SOF units, which operated in small groups, they managed to mitigate their problems in a timely fashion. Light aircraft and helicopters were still widely used by SOF units in this conflict, similar to the situation in the Malayan Emergency and the Confrontation.<sup>247</sup> At the beginning of the Second Emergency, the Malaysian Air Force had just received about thirty brand new Nuri S61A-4 utility helicopters, which maintained the security forces' momentum to combat the CTs. They not only became essential to operations, but also a morale booster to the SOF personnel deep in the jungles. Nuri helicopters served with distinction all over Malaysia, although some unfortunately were lost in the line of duty.



Figure 17. Nuri helicopter partially submerged during resupply mission at Swallow Reef (Terumbu Layang-Layang), South China Sea.<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> Ridzuan, *Rejimen*; Fuad, *69 Komando*.

<sup>248</sup> Nor Ibrahim Sulaiman, "Terumbu Semarang Barat Kecil," March 31, 2011, [http://xnuripilot.blogspot.com/2011\\_03\\_01\\_archive.html](http://xnuripilot.blogspot.com/2011_03_01_archive.html).



## 9. Leadership

As in previous conflicts, many heroes and leaders emerged during the Second Emergency. They showed charisma in leading their SOF units in combat missions in the jungles and in facing the bureaucracy in the higher echelons of their headquarters. Lieutenant Colonel Borhan Ahmad was the first administrator of MSSG, responsible for expanding the army RGKM. He began to explore various activities, including sports and other army activities for the RGKM to take part in. During his tenure, the RGKM saw many developments; for example, the PULPAK began organizing its own basic commando training and sending people for parajump courses in Indonesia, New Zealand, and Australia. He strengthened ties with Indonesian through combined trainings with Rejimen Para Komando Angkatan Darat TNI, or RPKAD, and also sent soldiers for Indonesian commando training, in phases from 1971–73.<sup>249</sup> He initiated combined programs with other countries such as Indonesia, Britain, New Zealand, Australia, and the United States, in order to improve knowledge and get new experiences in special aspects of SOF operations. Colonel Borhan later rose to become the only chief of Malaysian armed forces from the RGK from 1994 to 1995.

First Admiral Prof. Dr. Hj. Sutardi bin Kasmin was the first commanding officer of PASKAL. He was considered the ‘godfather’ of the unit. Adm. Sutardi was keen, hardworking, fit and always passionate about learning. He graduated from Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, England in 1971. He qualified not only in the PASKAL basic commando course but also the Indonesian Marine Commando course in Surabaya, the U.S. Navy SEAL/BUDS course and the riverine warfare course in Vallejo, California, U.S.A., in 1977. He presented a new policy for the PASKAL on September 24, 1984, in order to improve the administration and management of the PASKAL for his superiors. Various other improvements for the PASKAL were achieved during his tenure. His doctoral studies included research on integrated coastal zones management.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> Ridzuan, *Rejimen*, 88–89.

<sup>250</sup> Mohamad Zaidi Saad, “Jejak Perwira: Laksma (B) Prof. Dr. Hj. Sutardi bin Hj Kassim TLDM,” *Buletin PASKAL*, Bil. 23, Tahun Ke-9, Januari-Jun 2009, 11.

Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Mohd Zabri Abdul Hamid was the police officer who is most remembered among the members of the 69 Commando and the police in general. In July 1970, Zabri joined the 69 Commando and was appointed as a commando chief instructor from April to August 1971, to train new cadres for the 3rd 69 Commando Platoon in Fort Legap, deep in the jungles of Perak. He led many missions, showed outstanding warrior spirit and excellent jungle warfare skills that were admired by everyone in the unit, including his superiors. Unfortunately, on September 3, 1975, ASP Zabri was killed when he stepped on a booby-trap set up by the CTs, while taking two wounded men to a helicopter extraction point. He was an inspiration to his men, up to the moment of his death.<sup>251</sup>

## **E. CONCLUSION**

During the Second Emergency, five Malaysian SOF units from all three military services and the Malaysian Police were established. The first and the largest was the Malaysian Special Service Unit (MSSU). Although it was established at the end of the Confrontation, the MSSU managed to participate in some operations against the TNI regulars and their proxy guerrillas in Sabah and Sarawak. This was a small digression from their objective, to cross the Straits of Malacca and create havoc on the Indonesian side. The navy and the air force also saw the importance of and need for their own special units, initially using them for force protection of bases and assets and then expanding their niche capabilities. Further, the Police took responsibility to counter the CTs wholeheartedly by organizing the 69 Commandos and the Special Action Unit, or UTK. The 69 Commandos become a legend and an outstanding unit that has been respected not only by friends, but by foes.

All these developments proved that Malaysian soldiers and policemen could be trained, organized, and equipped as special forces in irregular warfare. They have achieved an exceptional record in counterinsurgency operations. Once again, these units' strengths are based in their people and their leadership. They went through rigorous training and adopted doctrine and tactics that helped them repeatedly overcome their

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<sup>251</sup> Fuad, *69 Komando*, 40–41.

enemies. Even though some still have some challenges with equipment, logistics and infrastructure, all SOF units punch well above their weight.

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## **VI. POST-EMERGENCY (1990–PRESENT)**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter is about the development of Malaysian SOF units after the Second Emergency. The scenarios have changed, as Malaysians have been exposed to the greater world and connected to various kinds of people, thanks to globalization and the explosion of the Internet and computer technology (ICT). Malaysian security forces, especially the SOF units, have adapted to the changes and continued to keep Malaysia a peaceful and harmonious democratic country, so as to allow continuous progress and development. The Malaysian armed forces have extended their services outside Malaysian borders, becoming involved with other free countries to support United Nations missions. This chapter highlights the development of Malaysian SOF units after the end of the Second Emergency, and their capabilities.

### **B. POST-EMERGENCY SCENARIO**

On December 2, 1989, the Communist Party of Malaysia (CPM) agreed to end its armed struggle and signed an official peace treaty with the Malaysian government. This agreement influenced the North Kalimantan Communist Party (NKCP) guerrillas to lay down their arms as well, in 1990. Since then, Malaysian security forces have not been involved with any major conflicts. For future years, the government of Malaysia is concentrating on pursuing economic growth and industrialization. Malaysia has adopted an independent, non-aligned foreign policy and practices flexible policies of multiculturalism in education and culture.<sup>252</sup> Malaysia continued its economic growth in the 1990s, successfully diversifying its economy from dependence on exports of raw materials to the development of manufacturing, services, and tourism, achieving a multi-sector economy. Thus, Malaysia must protect its national interests outside its borders to enjoy this development.

Nevertheless, this success comes with diverse new challenges to Malaysian peace and security. Immigrants have supplemented the labor force, and Malaysia has gradually

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<sup>252</sup> Cheah Boon Kheng, "The Communist Insurgency in Malaysia, 1948–90: Contesting the nation-state and social change," *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies*, no. 11, June 2009, 132–152.

become a melting pot for immigrants, mainly from other countries with the potential to import with emigrants various illegal activities, organized crime, and even terrorism. According to a U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) assessment, Malaysia is still a source or transit country for humans, drugs, and other contraband trafficking activities. It is rated as Tier Two on the watch list, because Malaysia does not fully comply with the minimum standards for eliminating trafficking. The same source notes Malaysia is making significant efforts to curb these crimes.<sup>253</sup>

Malaysia also faces many transnational issues with its neighbors. Although these disputes were well handled diplomatically and prevented from escalating into confrontation, it is worthwhile to be cautious. Besides issues with the Spratly Islands and China's military action in the South China Sea, Malaysia has reasonable disagreements with Singapore. Issues over fresh water deliveries to Singapore, land reclamation, bridge construction, and maritime boundaries in the Johor and Singapore Straits are discussed at the highest level. Although in 2008, the International Court of Justice awarded sovereignty of Pulau Batu Putih to Singapore, it did not rule on maritime regimes, boundaries, or disposition of the South Ledge, an islet within that area (see Figure 18).

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<sup>253</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, *The world fact book: Malaysia* (October 16, 2012). In 2000, the U.S. Congress passed the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), reauthorized in 2003 and 2005, which provides tools for the U.S. to combat trafficking in persons, both domestically and abroad. One of the law's key components is the creation of the U.S. Department of State's annual Trafficking in Persons Report, which assesses the government response (i.e., the current situation) in some 150 countries with a significant number of victims trafficked across their borders who are recruited, harbored, transported, provided, or obtained for forced labor or sexual exploitation. Countries in the annual report are rated in three tiers, based on government efforts to combat trafficking.

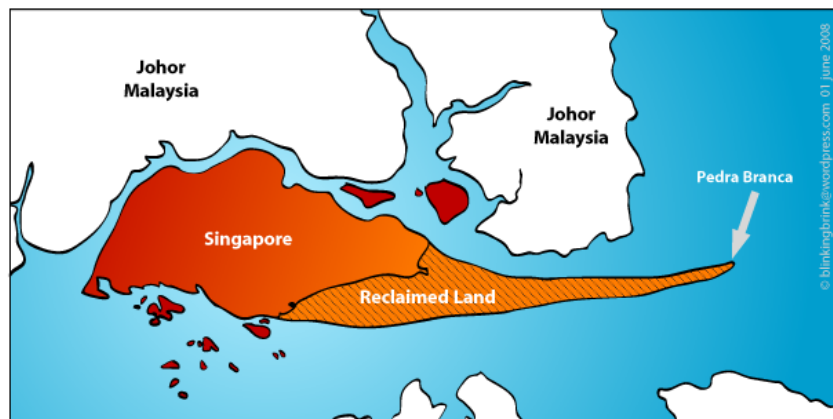


Figure 18. Pulau Batu Putih in the southern portion of Johor.<sup>254</sup>

Land and maritime disputes continue to complicate Malaysian–Indonesian relations. Issues continue with Indonesia on areas such as Tanjung Datu and Camar Bulan, near Sarawak, and the Ambalat oil block in the Celebes Sea, east of Sabah. In addition to these, the spillover of insurgency in southern Thailand, the Philippines’ latent claim on the Sabah state, and Mindanao’s insurgency, which inspired illegal cross-border activities and kidnapping on the east coast of Sabah, all require action. Piracy, especially in the Straits of Malacca, although reduced, is still one of the biggest concerns of the Malaysian government.<sup>255</sup> After the 9/11 terrorist attacks on America, Malaysia did not only observe and listen, but has taken proactive measures to combat terrorist groups such as Jemmah Islamiah (JI) and Abu Sayaff Group (ASG). The Malaysian government, indeed, took many drastic measures to train, equip, and organize dedicated counterterrorism forces and intelligence units to face eventualities. Although occasionally involved with actual crises, these units conduct numerous joint and combined counterterrorism exercises and training to ensure their readiness at the highest level.

Furthermore, Malaysian security forces are also consistent with the national commitment to international peace and stability by actively supporting the efforts of the United Nations. The Malaysian armed forces (MAF) and Royal Malaysian Police (RMP)

<sup>254</sup> “Our neighbour’s nightmares after 23 May 2008,” Blinkingbrink Blog, June 1, 2008, <http://blinkingbrink.wordpress.com/category/cartoons/page/2/>.

<sup>255</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, “Malaysia’s Transnational Issues,” October 16, 2012.

have always maintained a proud tradition of excellence in all United Nations missions, and have participated in more than twenty countries since the Congo in 1960. On the other hand, Malaysia is also always willing to offer its help in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) efforts.

In sum, after five decades of conflict, Malaysia is enjoying its economic growth in peace and harmony. Without a significant internal threat, Malaysian security forces, especially the military, are slowly driving towards becoming more conventional and giving less attention to counterinsurgency forces by focusing on external threats, piracy, United Nations peacekeeping operations, HADR, and counterterrorism. This is the scenario that Malaysian SOF units are facing after the end of the Second Emergency.

## **C. SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES**

### **1. Malaysian Armed Forces**

#### ***a. Gerup Gerak Khas (GGK)***

After the end of the Second Emergency, the Malaysian army emerged as one of the foremost exponents of counterinsurgency in the world.<sup>256</sup> The army continued expanding, aligning with the economic achievement that Malaysians accomplished in the post-conflict era. After several restructurings, GGK grew into approximately a brigade-size formation, with three operational regiments: 11 RGK, 21 GGK and 22 GGK. GGK became the largest SOF unit in the Malaysian order of battle and the strategic forces for the chief of army, together with another elite force, the 10 Brigade (Para). Although the army in general has moved towards conventional forces, the GGK continuously trains its commandos in unconventional warfare, such as guerilla and anti-guerilla warfare, subversion, sabotage, espionage, counterterrorism, and their highly regarded jungle warfare skills. The commandos are also schooled in direct action operations, special reconnaissance, and other skills similar to most Special Forces in the world. The GGK saw action overseas under the United Nations' flag in Cambodia, Somalia, Western Sahara, Namibia, Bosnia, Timor Leste, and in the southern Philippines, among others.

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<sup>256</sup> Jane's, "Special Forces (Land)," *Jane's Amphibious and Special Forces*, December 9, 2011.



Currently, it has small contingents in Lebanon, and in the anti-piracy mission in the Gulf of Aden, Somalia.

In this post-conflict era, some of the changes to GGK are the special skills and expertise that the GGK troopers acquire, besides being equipped with the latest modern equipment. The GGK organizes various small units that have their own niche capabilities to suit specific roles, such as the Unit Lawan Keganasan (ULK) or counterterrorism unit. All commandos must be trained to face any kind of conflict, and are thus required to have multiple skills, according to the 7<sup>th</sup> GGK commander, Brigadier Ahmad Rodi. Rodi also states that the GGK can pursue all these developments because, at present, GGK has sufficient commandos and Malaysia is facing a new kind of threat, compared to the early days.<sup>257</sup>

***b. Pasukan Khas Laut (PASKAL )***

After the end of the Second Emergency, the PASKAL became a dedicated force to face any conflict that escalated within the Malaysian EEZ. In 1991, the PASKAL received a decree from the Malaysian Security Council, Order No. 18, that mandated it to take responsibility, as the maritime counterterrorism force, for conducting missions such as anti-piracy, anti-shipping, and anti-oil rig hijacking to protect Malaysian national interests.<sup>258</sup> Although that is their primary mission, PASKAL commandos are also trained to conduct offensive operations in enemy territory, secure beachheads, conduct small-scale amphibious operations, perform deep-penetration reconnaissance, conduct in-harbor sabotage, board ships, clear mines, and conduct many other tasks. For any given mission, PASKAL commandos are ready to be deployed to the area of operations via sea, land, or air. PASKAL insertions and extraction techniques extended to another stage and became stealthier with the arrival of the new Scorpene submarines. In that regard, the PASKAL keeps a detachment of its commandos on alert in Telok Sepanggar, Sabah, the Malaysian navy's submarine headquarters. In 2003, the PASKAL restructured its organization to enhance its combat capabilities. The unit established a new headquarters

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<sup>257</sup> Gaya Tentera, "Usah langgar sumpah komando," *Utusan Malaysia*, August 2, 2003.

<sup>258</sup> Tentera Laut DiRaja Malaysia, *Sejarah KD Panglima Hitam*, <http://www.navy.mil.my/kdpanglimahitam/index.php/sejarah-penubuhan-PASKAL>.

and formed a few more operational units in Sabah, Sarawak and in the peninsula, together with its special warfare school. In 2005, the PASKAL commissioned the first operational unit under this plan, KD Semporna, on the east coast of Sabah, and the second, KD Panglima Hitam, in Lumut Naval Base, in April 2009.<sup>259</sup>

To maintain PASKAL readiness, many exercises have been conducted, whether in-house, joint, or combined, including exercises Naga Emas, Ular Emas, Jerong Emas, Wira Laut East, Balance Mint (with U.S. Navy SEALs), Malphi (with the Philippines Naval Special Operation Group), and many others. Most of these exercises focused on anti-piracy cum counterterrorism training in the narrow waterway of the Malacca Straits, in the South China Sea, Sulu Sea, and abroad. All PASKAL elements were involved in those exercises and were supported by other Malaysian navy units, the National Security Council and other private and government agencies. Such exercises were substantiated as important to the nation and to PASKAL readiness.<sup>260</sup>

On December 18, 2008, the PASKAL saw its first action in the Gulf of Aden, near Somalia, during Operation Fajar. They saved a Chinese ship, *Zhenhua 4*, the same day the United Nations Security Council decided to be more assertive against Somali pirates.<sup>261</sup> In January 2009, the PASKAL experienced another successful anti-piracy mission in the same area when its commandos saved an Indian tanker, MT *Abul Kalam Azad*, from pirates.<sup>262</sup> On January 20, 2011, PASKAL and other SOF units in the joint maritime counterterrorism assault teams successfully thwarted an attempted hijacking by Somali pirates on a Malaysian tanker, MT *Bunga Laurel*, in the Gulf of Aden and saved twenty-three crew members. Three pirates were wounded in the

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259 AMMD, "Sejarah Penubuhan KD Panglima Hitam," *Buletin PASKAL*, Bil. 23, Tahun ke 9, Jan-Jun 2009.

260 "Navy commandos serve warning on pirates in Melaka Straits," *Utusan Malaysia*, March 1, 2001; "Kerismas Exercise 22 proves commandos can neutralise pirates," *Utusan Malaysia*, March 22, 2002.

261 Lester Kong, "Quick response from RMN ship saves vessel," *The Star*, December 20, 2008, <http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2008/12/20/nation/2859907&sec=nation>.

262 Lester Kong, "RMN helps Indian tanker," *The Star*, January 2, 2009, <http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2009/1/2/nation/2929832&sec=nation>.

shootout, four were captured on board, while eleven managed to flee away.<sup>263</sup> Besides these operations, PASKAL sent its men to United Nations missions such as UN Malcon East in Lebanon, Timor Leste, Mindanao, and many other places.

*c. Pasukan Khas Udara (PASKAU)*

In 1996, the Royal Malaysian Air Force took initiative to reorganize and was renamed HANDAU as PASKAU, or Pasukan Khas Udara. Since then, PASKAU has continued to build strength, equipment, and infrastructure. It began to focus on special missions related to air operations, such as recovering downed aircrew, soldiers, or equipment in enemy territory, designating targets for fighter aircraft, force protection, counterterrorism, hostage rescue, and intelligence gathering. All PASKAU troopers either passed their basic commando qualification course conducted in RMAF Jugra in Selangor or at the GGK Special Warfare Training Centre in Malacca. PASKAU ensures its troopers are educated in various advanced trainings and equipped with modern equipment to execute missions effectively. Twelve years after its inception, PASKAU is capable of performing hostage rescue operations in most situations, including counter-hijacking of civil and military aircraft.<sup>264</sup> A colonel leads the PASKAU Regiment in Jugra, Selangor, and commands three functional squadrons: force protection squadron, combat assault squadron and combat search and rescue.<sup>265</sup>

*d. 10 Briged (Para)*

The Army also established an elite airborne unit soon after the Second Emergency ended. In November 1988, Malaysia was unable to respond to a request by the Maldives government for assistance when Tamil mercenaries entered that country. This inability to render timely help prompted Malaysian leaders to form a rapid deployment force. On January 1, 1990, the Army established the 10<sup>th</sup> Brigade as a

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263 “Malaysia navy foils ship hijack attempt, seizes pirates,” *The BBC news*, January 22, 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-12258442>; “Paskal commandos foils hijacked attempt in Gulf of Aden,” *The Star*, January 22, 2011.

264 “Paskau bersedia menangani keganasan,” *Utusan Malaysia*, November 7, 2007.

265 Tentera Udara, *Organisasi: PASKAU*, <http://www.airforce.gov.my/organisasi/paskau/> (accessed October 2, 2012).

strategic brigade and placed it under the command of the 11<sup>th</sup> Strategic Division. A few years later, the Army disbanded the division, but left the 10<sup>th</sup> Brigade intact. Later, a decision was made to transform this brigade within four years into an elite airborne brigade, and assign it under direct command of the army's chief. On October 10, 1994, Mahathir Mohammad, the fourth prime minister of Malaysia, put the paratrooper's maroon beret on Brigadier General Md. Hashim Hussein, the first 10<sup>th</sup> Brigade (Para) commander.<sup>266</sup> Since then, 10<sup>th</sup> Para, which is composed of volunteers who have been selected and vigorously trained for specialized combat operations, has been ready for any rapid deployment to any destination, as tasked. At present, 10 Para comprises three elite infantry battalions: the 8 Royal Ranger Regiment (Para), which is the pioneer unit in this brigade, the 17 Royal Malay Regiment (Para), and the 9 Royal Malay Regiment (Para). To ensure operation at the most effective level, these units are supported by the participation of the 1st Royal Artillery Regiment (Para) with one Squadron Royal Armor Regiment (Para) and ten support units from other the Army branches.

## **2. Royal Malaysian Police (RMP)**

### ***a. 69 Commandos (VAT 69)***

The post-conflict era also saw changes in the roles of the Royal Malaysian Police commandos. The 69 Commandos experienced the same thing that happened to the Malaysia Special Service Unit (MSSU) after the Indonesian Confrontation. Some of the police leadership perceived the 69 Commando as irrelevant and urged it be disbanded. In 1997, the 69 Commando was ordered to combine with the Unit Tindakan Khas (UTK) as a group, and it was named Pasukan Gerakan Khas (PGK). The 69 Commando realigned its core business into antiterrorism, antipiracy, and closing protection roles, and was placed under command and control of the UTK commander in the Bukit Aman police headquarters. This created uproar among some quarters in the 69 Commando, but they followed their orders. Nevertheless, in 2004, inspector general of police Tan Sri Mohd Bakri Omar issued a new directive that although the PGK entity remained, both the 69

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<sup>266</sup> Mohamed Ghazemy Mahmud and Tentera Darat Malaysia, *The Malaysian Army's Battle against Communist Insurgency in Peninsular Malaysia, 1968–1989* (Kuala Lumpur: Army Headquarters, Ministry of Defence, 2001), 6.

and the UTK would be referred to by to their original names. On December 18, 2004, the men of the 69 Commando were given back their “symbol of honor,” the sand-brown beret, in an official ceremony.<sup>267</sup>

Besides that, the 69 Commando continues to progress, adapting to new scenarios. In addition to emphasizing long-range patrols in jungles and rural areas for reconnaissance and surveillance, the 69 Commando has enhanced its counterterrorist team (CTT). It also continues to provide assistance to the Special Branch in countering subversive organizations and potential insurgents, providing paratroopers, divers, assault teams and others special skills during operations and special tasks. They can assist other counterterrorist units in urban settings, hostage situations, and search and rescue, which demand their specialized, niche capabilities.<sup>268</sup>

***b. Unit Tindakan Khas (UTK)***

From inception, the UTK role has remain almost the same, except for modernization of its equipment, tactics, techniques, and procedures. As mentioned earlier, on October 20, 1997, the UTK merged with the 69 Commando to form the PGK, and the UTK commander was given command of that organization. Although amalgamated into one directorate, the UTK and 69 Commando are essentially still two separate entities operating in two distinct environments. The size of the UTK is around 300 personnel and they are consistent in maintaining a strict regime in the selection process for its new members. Normally, only ten percent of volunteers complete the basic training and are absorbed into the unit.<sup>269</sup> The UTK continues to function as it was intended to from the beginning, participating in combating dangerous criminals or terrorists in cases involving hostages or organized crime, especially in urban areas. They also provide personal protection to Malaysian and foreign VIPs who are assessed as high-risk targets, either in country or abroad.<sup>270</sup> In April 1, 2009, the UTK sent an assault team

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<sup>267</sup> Fuad, *69 Komando*.

<sup>268</sup> Polis, *Laporan Tahunan*, 2010.

<sup>269</sup> Syaril A. Kadir, “Gerak Khas–Pasukan ‘serba mahir’ PDRM,” *Utusan Malaysia*, October 4, 2003.

<sup>270</sup> Polis, *Laporan Tahunan*, 2010.

to assist Special Branch agents in recapturing Mas Selamat, a JI militant leader who escaped from Whitley Detention Center, the tightest detention center in Singapore. The operation was successful—Mas Selamat and two other JI followers were captured. This is but one high-profile case accomplished by the UTK.

*c. Unit Gerakan Marin (UNGERIN)*

Unit Gempur Marin (UNGERIN) or the Marine Combat Unit is a Marine police special operation's squad. UNGERIN was formed in March 2006 due to the pressing need to suppress pirate attacks, armed robbery, and illegal smuggling alongside the coastal area of Malaysia, despite various efforts done to overcome those crimes.<sup>271</sup> UNGERIN is believed to have approximately 100 men, divided into 3 detachments assigned to activities such as in Sitiawan, Perak and Lahad Datu, east of Sabah.<sup>272</sup>

*d. Unit Tindak Cepat (UTC)*

The Unit Tindakan Cepat (UTC), or quick action unit, is another Malaysian Police special unit. It was formed in the early 2000s as a quick-response unit for the state police, before any of the PGK commandos arrive at the scene. The formation of the UTC is to enhance the capabilities of the state's criminal investigation division (CID), in facing dangerous criminals and initial hostage situations. UTK instructors train the UTC members in basic urban combat tactics, techniques, and procedures. UTC equipment is identical to the UTK's for the most CQB situations. Since inception, this unit's rapid responses have been effective in capturing many criminals.

*e. The Special Branch (SB)*

The Special Branch exists to this day, and functions under Section 3(3) of the Police Act of 1967, with the purpose of collecting security intelligence on any internal or external threats to the nation. Besides that, the Special Branch provides intelligence and liaison to government agencies and other departments in the RMP. The

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<sup>271</sup> Yulpisman Asli, "PGM terima 6 bot ronda RM50j," *Utusan Malaysia*, Jun 6, 2009; Amir Sharifudin, "Marin Wilayah 3 pengawal perairan Pantai Timur," *Utusan Malaysia*, July 27, 2009.

<sup>272</sup> "Commando unit for marine police," *New Straits Times*, May 05, 2007.

Special Branch also takes great interest in trans-national organized crime. Many criminal cases involving human trafficking and fraudulent travel documents have been resolved.<sup>273</sup> After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the Special Branch was closely involved with the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in joint investigations, critical information sharing, and the development of new methods to prevent future terrorist attacks. The FBI acknowledged that the Malaysian Special Branch provided critical assistance that solved the present terrorism puzzle, not only on how the 9/11 hijackers and Al-Qaeda networked, but also on cases involving the Jemmaah Islamiah (JI) and the Abu Sayyaff Group (ASG).<sup>274</sup>

The post-conflict era in Malaysia has seen a drastic change to the Senoi Praaq. The Senoi Praaq officially becomes another Police Field Force battalion, and its members were retrained in policing roles at the Police Field Force School in Ulu Kinta. Senoi Praaq was renamed as the 3rd Battalion General Operation Force (PGA), and the 18<sup>th</sup> Battalion General Operation Force has remained in Bidor, Perak, since 1983.<sup>275</sup>

### **3. Malaysian Maritime-Enforcement Agency Special Tasks and Rescue Team (MMEA STAR)**

On April 25, 2005, the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) organized a nucleus team, which consisted of former PASKAU and PASKAL commandos, to plan its own elite unit to enhance its capabilities in special operations. The responsibility of this unit, the STAR is similar to the Marine Police UNGERIN but with additional emphasis on rescue operations. The STAR team plays the role of first responder on piracy, terrorism, and robbery threats on the seas surrounding Malaysia before arrival of reinforcements from the Royal Malaysian Police and Royal Malaysian Navy Special Forces.<sup>276</sup> After sending its pioneers to train with PASKAU and PASKAL,

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<sup>273</sup> Polis, *Laporan Tahunan*, 2009.

<sup>274</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Thinking Local, Acting Global: FBI opens Office in Malaysia," *FBI*, July 7, 2004.

<sup>275</sup> Jomosama, "Sejarah Penubuhan Senoi Peraaq," entry January 17, 2009, <http://www.jomosama.com/2009/01/sejarah-penubuhan-senoi-peraaq.html>.

<sup>276</sup> Hairulazim Mahmud, "Maritim Malaysia ada komando," *Kosmo*, November 23, 2009.

STAR began conducting its own commando orientation course. STAR continues to send cadres to join the basic PASKAL or PASKAU commando qualification course.

#### **D. LINE OF DEVELOPMENT**

##### **1. Training**

Principally, all military SOF units and the MMEA STAR train new cadres under almost the same approach.<sup>277</sup> Any candidate below thirty years old is eligible to volunteer for selection and assessment, popularly known as the “warm-up” phase. If they pass, they can volunteer to go on to the basic course. The basic commando course is divided into several phases: camp, jungle training, swamp training (which includes 130 kilometer marches), sea training, and escape and evasion.<sup>278</sup> Only those who make it to the end and are recommended by the assessors pass the selection course and receive their coveted beret and commando dagger. In addition to that, as a maritime special forces unit, PASKAL emphasizes water confidence and swimming more than other units do. PASKAL cadres have to complete basic airborne courses, usually in PULPAK in Sungai Udang G GK Camp, Malacca, after which the candidates return to Lumut and continue with the basic ship-diving course in KD Duyong, Lumut.<sup>279</sup> Normally, only a third of the student pass the basic course, and those who pass the grueling training will continue to withstand the advanced first-class training.

For the 69 Commando, once a year, police officers and men from all formations gather at Northern Brigade Camp at Ulu Kinta, the home of the 69 Commando, in the state of Perak, for the commando selection process. All volunteers are required to have passed a medical checkup, shown themselves suitable and fit to work in small groups, passed a 100-meter swimming test and an IQ test. VAT 69 basic commando training is divided into three phases. In the first phase, trainees spend most of their time mastering patrol techniques. In the second phase, trainees learn skills and lessons such as tracking,

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<sup>277</sup> Faridah Shuib, “Komando Maritim sedia hadapi kemungkinan,” *Utusan Malaysia*, May 25, 2011.

<sup>278</sup> “A special kind of toughness,” *The New Straits Times*, <http://www.nst.com.my/life-times/live/showbiz-a-special-kind-of-toughness-1.132867#ixzz2B25eYR00>.

<sup>279</sup> Rosli Mohd Noor, “Penganugerahan Beret kehormat PASKAL,” *Buletin PASKAL*, Bil. 23, Tahun Ke-9, Januari-Jun 2009, 7.



communication, field medicine, and explosives. This also involves making do-it-yourself booby traps and explosive and demolition techniques. The third is the final phase and is focused on special operations, where the trainees are tested in all aspects of the skills and lessons they have learned. At this time, special attention is given to trainees who have the potential to be a patrol leader. All successful commandos will have the chance to master skills and expertise such as guerrilla/jungle warfare, sniper marksmanship, search and rescue, parachuting, CQB, unarmed combat, communications, combat diving, medicine, close protection, and boat handling. VAT 69's decision to adopt the cross-training policy has made all its personnel have more than one skill and expertise.<sup>280</sup>

## **2. Equipment**

All the armed forces' SOF units are equipped with up-to-date weapons systems. Nevertheless, the government of Malaysia's trend of reducing its annual defense budget could affect SOF future requirements. Although SOF units have to face red tape, most of the operational equipment they require is received. For example, in 2010, the Malaysian army received anti-tank and man-portable air-defense systems from Pakistan to equip the GGK. The contract has an overall value of some USD \$21.3 million for a quantity of Baktar Shikan anti-tank missile weapon systems and Anza Mk II shoulder-launched, low-altitude, surface-to-air missile (SAM) systems.<sup>281</sup> In the Ninth Malaysian Plan 2006–2010, the Malaysian government gave the army a special allocation of USD 131.6 million for the purchase of tactical communications equipment for border posts along the Malaysian–Thai border.<sup>282</sup>

Like other special forces units, PASKAL requires kit specifically designed for underwater combat weapons and equipment such as submachine guns and ammunition. PASKAL is expecting to receive a two-man, chariot-type Subsurface Delivery Vehicle subskimmer for use with Scorpene submarines. Besides that, PASKAL is looking for

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<sup>280</sup>SOC, "VAT 69/UTK: History," *SOC.Com Blog*, (entry n.d.) <http://www.specialoperations.com/Foreign/Malaysia/VAT69/History.htm>.

<sup>281</sup> "Royal Malaysian Army special forces to receive SAM systems," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, March 7, 2002.

<sup>282</sup> "Malaysian army to be equipped with tactical comms," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, October 31, 2005.

small, fast-attack craft.<sup>283</sup> In 2010, PASKAL procured new HK416 assault rifles.<sup>284</sup> As the newest of the military SOF units, some observers say that PASKAU has the latest weapons and equipment in their inventory, such as laser designators and secure communications systems. Nevertheless, as the new EC 725 helicopters come into service by 2013, PASKAU is still lacking in rescue equipment, rescue swimsuits, and other items.

The Royal Malaysian Police PGK is armed with a variety of first-class weapons and combat support equipment commonly used for counterterrorism and jungle operations. Almost equal to the military SOF units, the PGK is equipped with a number of specialized vehicles to accomplish its tasks such as armored personnel carriers, mobile patrol vehicles, various assault vehicles for urban and jungle terrain, and a modified rapid intervention vehicle for vehicular assault. The police inventory includes rigid-hulled, inflatable boats (RHIBs), jet skis, and subskimmers for maritime operations. The PGK commandos have the luxury in airborne operations, due to the availability and suitability of the Police Air Wing's platforms for special operations. They also have motorized paragliders if required for airborne insertion. Some of the SOF equipment was sponsored under certain bilateral programs with other governments, especially countries such as the United States of America and Japan.

### **3. People**

All SOF units strongly emphasize quality of personnel. Each unit has its own strict regime of selection and assessment. Even though it is tough, there are soldiers or police personnel who make it through the selection process and pass the basic commando courses. Generally, all SOF units are at full strength, adequately trained, highly motivated, and ever ready to conduct any mission peculiar to its assigned roles. According to Brigadier General Datuk Ahmad Rodi Zakaria, the 7<sup>th</sup> 21 GGK commander, RGKM strength is sufficient. At the same time, it focuses on recruiting only high-quality personnel who possess the right attitude. The RGKM wants people who are professional,

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<sup>283</sup> "Malaysian navy special forces boost equipment purchases," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, December 12, 2006; Piuss ak Tiab, "Kursus UDV" *Buletin PASKAL*, Bil. 25, Ogos 10–Disember 10, 6.

<sup>284</sup> Jane's, "World navies–Malaysia," *Jane's World Navies*, July 30, 2012.

knowledgeable, and have the appropriate skills to handle the modern and sophisticated equipment the RGKM procures.

About 40 to 50 percent of the soldiers and policemen pass the basic commando course and qualify to join the Malaysian Special Forces. These units do not compromise their training standards. Only the determined and motivated will get through the tough and arduous training to become a special forces trooper. One of the reasons people fail in the selection and assessment phase may be lack of information about the training program and the role of the special forces. Candidates may not have made adequate physical and mental preparation prior to the course. Though it is demanding, Ahmad Rodi is proud to see many young men who are motivated to face the challenges of becoming a commando warrior.<sup>285</sup> However, due to compulsory service retirement, many troopers with COIN experience are transitioning back into civilian life. Valuable experience will leave with them, even though there is a comprehensive program to record and maintain it.

#### **4. Information**

In this post-conflict era, the Malaysian security forces, whether the military or the police, give great emphasis to intelligence. Although the legacies from previous conflicts still remain strong within the organizations, some changes have been made to ensure intelligence operations are relevant and aligned with current and future threats. Even before the 9/11 attack, the Special Branch remained active in monitoring any subversive or potentially terrorist activity. According to the police annual report of 2010, the Special Branch is still the primary organization that collects security intelligence related to “subversive and extremist individuals or organizations.”<sup>286</sup>

The Army, to which the Intelligence Corps belongs, also identifies and describes threats and requirements. While keeping a close relationship with the Police Special Branch, the Army reformed its two famous intelligence units during the Second Emergency. The first reform was to the 91 Rejimen Khas Perisikan Tempur (RKPT)

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285 “Usah langgar sumpah komando,” *Utusan Malaysia*, August 2, 2003.

286 Polis, *Laporan Tahunan*, 2010.

which became the 91 Grup Operasi Perisikan (GOP). This unit is a special combat unit in the Army Intelligence Corps, placed under the operational control of the Director of Defense Intelligence (DDI) to gather combat intelligence and destroy the enemy through special operations. The second is the 92 Anggota Tentera Cawangan Khas (ATCK). The 92 ATCK is responsible for acquiring, processing, and disseminating intelligence information related to security operations within the state for the use of security forces, and it is a link with the Police Special Branch.<sup>287</sup> Other intelligence units are Malaysia's external intelligence organization, controlled by the Department of the Prime Minister, and the 2,000-strong joint service military intelligence corps under the Ministry of Defense.<sup>288</sup>

## 5. Doctrine

After the Second Emergency ended, the Malaysian Army emerged as one of the foremost proponents of COIN in the world. As time passed, however, some observers believed the army's experience in counterinsurgency somewhat irrelevant to the current defense of the Malaysian national interests in the South China Sea. The army as a whole has shown a doctrinal shift towards conventional warfare in the post-conflict era and is reshaping into a more mobile force emphasizing combined arms operations. The air force's close air support and COIN role are slowly disappeared from the RMAF profile.<sup>289</sup> This wind of change is also felt by the Police 69 Commando.

Nonetheless, nonconventional operations have not been neglected, as each infantry battalion and some elements from the GGK still conduct deep-jungle patrols along the Malaysian border in the peninsula, in Sabah and Sarawak. In addition to that, the GGK have been focused on training for asymmetrical threats to prepare for potential terrorist attacks inside Malaysia. The army designated the 11 RGK as the front-line unit for dealing with asymmetrical threats, supported by other commando regiments. The 69

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287 Tentera Darat Malaysia, *91 Gerup Operasi Perisikan*, <http://army.mod.gov.my/krd/index.php/pasukan-kor-risik-diraja/91-gop>; Tentera Darat Malaysia, *92 Anggota Tentera Cawangan Khas*, <http://army.mod.gov.my/krd/index.php/pasukan-kor-risik-diraja/92-atck>.

288 "Malaysian Intelligences Agencies," *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment—Southeast Asia*, October 16, 2012.

289 Jane's, "Malaysia-Air Force," in *Jane's World Air Forces*, November 1, 2012.

Commando and the UTK also sharpen their men continually to equip them in the full spectrum of counterterrorism, and the 10 Brigade Para is always in immediate readiness to assist. Besides this doctrinal shift, Malaysian security forces, especially the army, also conduct training for peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief operations.

## **6. Organization**

The army has the biggest contingent of special units among the Malaysian security forces. The 21 GGK is the headquarters, with operational command to coordinate and integrate the three GGK regiments' activities. Highest in the hierarchy is the GGK commander, a brigadier general. GGK HQ is divided into three departments: administration/logistics, counterterrorism, and operations. Units under the 21 GGK HQ are the 21 Commando and 22 Commando, which consist of about 2,000 men configured for commando operations and forced-entry assaults. Another unit is the 11 RGK, which is small compared to the previous two, but specializes, with other special forces in the art of sabotage, hostage rescue team (HRTs), and counter-revolutionary warfare (CRW). Only those who have served more than eight years in the commando regiments are invited to undergo selection to join 11 RGK. This is the primary counterterrorism unit (Unit Lawan Keganasan, or ULK) under the GGK. Although similar to the Police UTK, the ULK teams have their own high points, because members come from various specialties and experiences before joining the unit.<sup>290</sup> The last is PULPAK, or the Special Warfare Training Center (SWTC), located in Sungai Udang, Malacca. It was established on August 1, 1976, to provide basic commando courses and various specialized courses, generally divided into four categories (parachute, rigger, unconventional warfare, and diving) for all military and paramilitary personnel, in accordance with current needs.

In 2009, PASKAL restructured its organization and received a new headquarters at RMN Naval Base Lumut, Perak. Since then, PASKAL's commander is a navy captain or equivalent to a colonel. He coordinates and commands two operational units, based on their geographical locations, Unit 1 KD Panglima Hitam and Unit 2 KD Sri Semporna. Each operational unit has its own assault team, combat boats cell, and combat

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<sup>290</sup> "ULK cekap tangani keganasan," *Utusan Malaysia*, August 2, 2003.

intelligence cell. Assault teams are divided into four squadrons, which are assigned roles that are more specific and consist of a mixture of specialists. PASKAL strength is believed to be around a thousand personnel, excluding its combat-support elements. The air force's PASKAU's headquarters is located in Jugra, Selangor, and commanded by a colonel. There are three squadrons, based on functions: combat assault, combat rescue, and force protection.<sup>291</sup> Its strength is about 400 to 500 troopers, some of them attached to four helicopter squadrons at various air bases.

There has been no significant change in the Police's Pasukan Gerakan Khas (PGK), except in 1997. The leadership decided to combine the 69 Commando and the UTK. This created some dissatisfaction among the commandos. In 2004, the 69 Commando regained its identity as a separate entity and continued its development. At present, the PGK is believed to have around 2,000 personnel, led by a senior assistant commissioner of police. PGK headquarters is in Bukit Aman, Kuala Lumpur, and is under the Police Internal and Public Security Department. The 69 Commando, since inception, have remained in Ulu Kinta, near Ipoh Perak, within the general operations force camp, and the UTK's base is in the middle of the Kuala Lumpur city center.

The youngest unit of all is the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency Special Task and Rescue Team (MMEA STAR). The MMEA deputy chief of operation, First Admiral Datuk Noor Aziz Yunan, is currently recruiting more STAR members into his department and planning to achieve a total strength of 200 men. STAR is still in early development and awaiting approval from the Civil Service Department to officially establish its organization. Once approved, STAR teams will be based in various MMEA bases around the country.<sup>292</sup>

## **7. Infrastructure**

Since its relocation in the 1970s, the GGK has continuously improved and modernized its facilities in Sungai Udang, Melaka. After three decades, the location was no longer suitable for further development. In June 27, 2005, the GGK officially

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<sup>291</sup> Tentera Udara, *PASKAU*.

<sup>292</sup> Hairulazim, *Maritim*.

occupied its latest facility, Camp Iskandar. Located in Mersing, on the east coast of Johor, this camp is considered one of the most sophisticated in Southeast Asia. It is a self-contained camp with various amenities for the commandos' operational and training requirements, and for their families. The camp is located close to the South China Sea, surrounded by jungles, swamp, and rivers suitable for various kinds of GGK training.<sup>293</sup>

The navy also developed new forward bases for the PASKAL, in various locations strategic to timely and effective action. Based on factors such as operational, administrative, and logistical requirements, the PASKAL built a forward base in Semporna, on the east coast of Sabah, in early 2000.<sup>294</sup> PASKAL also reorganized its headquarters in Lumut, Perak, to coordinate two of its operational units, KD Panglima Hitam, in Lumut, Perak, and KD Sri Semporna, in Sabah.<sup>295</sup> Air Force PASKAU also developed its own infrastructure in Jugra, Selangor, and became the home of the blue beret. This comprehensively designed complex consists of various facilities for PASKAU operational, basic, and advanced training. The Police have also continuously upgraded their infrastructure for the same purposes as other SOF units. On October 25, 2007, the U.S. Joint Interagency Task Force–West (JIATF-W) funded an RM 2 million state-of-the-art “shooting house” for the 69 Commando in Ulu Kinta.<sup>296</sup>

## 8. Logistics

What remains permanent in the post-conflict period is the Malaysian geography—terrain, vegetation, and weather. Most of the terrain in Malaysia is extremely difficult and poses many operational problems. SOF units require a highly maneuverable, light, high-mobility vehicle that provides range and mobility without compromising firepower in jungle and rural operations. While most SOF equipment is modern and sophisticated, unfortunately, most of it is also fragile and susceptible to many problems under

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293 Hasnurul Mohamed, “Kem Iskandar–Prasarana moden warga komando,” *Utusan Malaysia*, July 13, 2005.

294 Tentera Laut DiRaja Malaysia, *Pentauliahan KD Sri Semporna*, July 18, 2012, <http://www.navy.mil.my/kdsrisemporna/index.php/pentauliahan-kd-sri-semporna>.

295 AMMD, “Sejarah penubuhan KD Panglima Hitam.”

296 “VAT 69 gets RM2m shoot house,” *The Star*, October 26, 2007.

Malaysia's harsh conditions. The experience and wisdom of the men of the Malaysian SOF helps ameliorate the burden presents in performing actual operations under combat conditions. Another matter that needs immediate intervention is the controversial procurement process for GGK equipment. Recently, for example, the King of Johor complained to the Ministry of Defense regarding acquisition problems with GGK's rapid intervention vehicle (RIV).<sup>297</sup>

Air transportation remains an issue for two reasons. First, the SOF still relies on the conventional air force for its lifts, so the availability of transportation assets for operations depends on their prerogative. Second, because SOF unit operations must be small and stealthy, many assets are not really suitable or economical for use in some applications, to their size and capabilities. Furthermore, the air force is showing more interest in conventional and mobile operations, in parallel with the army. This means that ground support, such as light and short takeoff and landing and COIN capabilities, is slowly becoming extinct in the RMAF profile.<sup>298</sup>

## **9. Leadership**

A few years after the Emergency ended, the Malaysian Armed Forces recommended the first GGK officer to become the 10<sup>th</sup> Malaysian chief of armed forces. General Tan Sri Borhan bin Ahmad took the job in early 1994 to 1995. General Borhan can be considered the father of the GGK, as he was responsible for expanding the unit, and made various forward-looking plans for its development. However, he was the only GGK commando that reached that level of command. The GGK should groom more officers to rise to the highest levels of the army, especially in this era, where unconventional warfare has become a favored approach to overcoming the enemy.

Two other GGK leaders worth mentioning are Lieutenant General Dato' Seri Zaini Mohamad Said, who retired as the Malaysian Army field commander in 2001, and Deputy Superintendent of Police Abdul Razak Mohd Yusoff. Both national heroes were

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<sup>297</sup> Ida Lim, "Probe Ministry of Defence's procurement deals, says Puah," *The Malaysian Insider*, September 12, 2012.

<sup>298</sup> Jane's, "Malaysia-Air Force," in *Jane's World Air Forces*, November 1, 2012.



recipients of Malaysia's highest gallantry award, the Seri Pahlawan Gagah Perkasa (SP) medal. They were involved in many operations, but Operation 304/Subuh in July 2000 was of special note. This operation suppressed the Al-Ma'unah, a sectarian group known for their audacious raid on a Malaysian Army Reserve camp, in which they seized numerous weapons. The raiders subsequently encamped at Bukit Jenalik, Sauk, in Perak.<sup>299</sup> Abdul Razak, as well as Zaini, negotiated with the group leader to surrender. Each handled the crisis differently. Zaini showed his aggressiveness, while Abdul Razak used his knowledge of Islam and theology to persuade Mohd Amin, the Al-Ma'unah leader.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

After the end of the Second Emergency, Malaysia became peaceful and concentrated on industrialization, continuing its economic growth and diversifying its economy to become multi-sector—and this requires external resources. Malaysia must now secure its national interests in order to enjoy this wonderful development. Economic growth comes with challenges. The Malaysian security scenario has changed. There are no current counterinsurgency operations, and the Malaysian Armed Forces have shifted towards conventional doctrine and prepared their capabilities to align with that decision. Although a conventional force is the objective, all the armed services, including the Police, continue to develop SOF capabilities. All units are expanding and the majority has either built or is upgrading various facilities to accommodate present operational, training, administrative, logistics, and other requirements so that they will remain relevant and effective to accomplish any task. Most capabilities are well maintained. However, logistics still needs to be improved, especially regarding equipment procurement and air transportation.

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<sup>299</sup> "Pengalaman Rundingan Tanpa Pertumpahan Darah Berharga Bagi Abdul Razak," *Bernama.com*, January 8, 2008, [http://www.bernama.com/bm/news\\_lite.php?id=306651](http://www.bernama.com/bm/news_lite.php?id=306651).; "Malaysian gunmen surrender," *The BBC News*, July 6, 2000.

## **F. AN ANALYSIS OF THE LINE OF DEVELOPMENT ACROSS TIME, FROM WWII–PRESENT**

For all SOF units in Malaysia from World War II to the present, a brief analysis of their line of development is illustrated in Table 2. The traffic light colors help categorize and highlight matters according to quality: green is good, yellow is satisfactory, and red indicates problems.

One can see that all SOF units emphasize training and selection, which is important for all SOF units that conduct special missions. During World War II, volunteers were trained to conduct guerrilla war and sabotage. However, once deployed, they were ordered to gather intelligence, rather than carry out sabotage against Japanese forces. Many Force 136 operatives gave feedback that they were not trained for their missions. At present, although some primary training of Malaysian SOF units has improved significantly, their essence is still similar to that provided for the pioneers of the previous era.

Problems with equipment suitability under harsh weather and tropical jungle environments still present a dilemma. Aside from suitability issues, all SOF units are well equipped with modern and sophisticated weapon systems and other equipment that helps them conduct missions more effectively and improve lethality in most combat scenarios. The shift of the Malaysian defense policy towards a conventional force did not affect SOF equipment, since it could be utilized in many ways and purposes. Since 9/11, SOF units specializing in counterterrorism have received more weapons and equipment for that mission.

Across time, one of the factors that made the SOF units excel in their roles was their people. The same ‘SOF truth’ applied to the SOF units in Malaysia -- that humans are more important than hardware, and quality is better than quantity. All SOF operators showed an understanding performance in each conflict. Although those units faced with many difficulties and bureaucracies with various parties, units managed to gather many dedicated and reliable men to serve in the units. Nonetheless, at present, many experienced operators are leaving their units due to compulsory retirement ages, and this

could be avoided. SOF units, with their new generation of operators, are working hard to mitigate this issue.

Based on excellent experience during both Emergencies, Malaysian intelligence agencies remain relevant and resilient with the changing threats' scenario. Police Special Branch still remains active as one of the principal sources of information for the security forces and government. Others intelligence units work hand-in-hand to provide better situational awareness to policymakers and others.

During WWII, Force 136 was organized to prepare for Operation Zipper. While gathering intelligence, they were ordered to conduct guerrilla war, sabotage, and espionage missions against the Japanese forces. The essence of Force 136 doctrine continued during the Emergency—that is, small groups operating in the deep jungles—however, their enemy was no longer a regular force, but MRLA guerrillas. Both antagonists used the same approach to outperform each other. The SOF units showed their superiority and continued to pressure and restrict the enemy's freedom of movement, in addition to winning the people's hearts and minds. At present, although the army has shifted doctrinally towards a conventional force, SOF units have adjusted to the changes well, since SOF is relevant in any scenario. They have increased joint and combined operations and exercises in order to evaluate their tactics, techniques, and procedures.

Malaysian SOF units are better organized than in the previous era. Most of the units are positioned according to perceived threats and geographical locations. Although they remain small in size, all units are at optimum strength in order to focus on various niche capabilities and current roles and requirements. After 9/11, the Malaysian SOF also strengthened their counterterrorism special task forces for any eventuality. Besides being well organized, Malaysian SOF units are also well funded, which allows them to upgrade their infrastructure to facilitate their roles, operations, and training requirements.

Periods/ Line of Development	WWII 1941–45	Malayan Emergency 1948–60	Indonesian Confrontation (1963–66)	Malaysian Insurgency (1968–1990)	Post Conflicts (1990-present)
Training	Trg based on SOE opr, guerrilla war, sabotage, but industrial tgts less relevant, trg didn't prepare for intel opr	Jungle war, deep penetrn, small patrols, comms & first aids. Intel. trg for SBs emphasized	Recurrent trg at Jungle Warfare Ctr & emphasized on acclimatization	Tougher & longer guerrillas war, deep penetration, small patrols TTP	Improved. Focused UW, CIW/CW & CT. All spectrums, parallel with the Defense Policy & strategy
Equipment	WWII, not suitable for jungle opr, heavy, inadequate	Some fm WWII, heavy & unsuitable for deep jungle opr	Improved but rifles & mortar too heavy. Heavy fires loc. at Border Forts	Slowly equip with better wpns& equip, need to suit with jungle opr.	Although well & better equipped, need to suit wt M'sia harsh environment
People	Europeans & Malaysians, majority is Chinese (CPM & China nationalist)	Bureaucracy; hard to get manpwr, SB recruits more linguist, mixed races, Abor. & Iban	Experienced & disciplined soldiers, Senoi Praaq trained local scouts (BBS)	Many men volunteers, high spirits & morale, patriots, easy to recruits	COIN experienced men are leaving; new generations, need to work extra & harder
Information	Lack of info, own intel, same MO, susceptible to en. detection	Intel 'CAD' by SB, MIO suited military requirement, Joint Intel Center was established	Supported by SB, but hard to postn SB far & remote areas	SB experienced, organized, professional, well trained	SB well experienced, organized, professional, better Intel
Doctrine	Intel, SOE opr, Prep. for Op ZIPPER vs Regular Jap. Forces	'Ferretting' the enemy, deep jungle opr, real "hearts & minds" opr.	Deep jungle penetration, X-border intel & raids, highest OPSEC	Jt opr, intel fm SB better, SOF search & destroy + intel msns	Joint + Combined ops, SOF as strategic force in all spectrum of conflicts
Organization	Strat/Opr lvl disagreed, frictions. Tact- Small, joint wt MPAJA	Friction with top level, high bureaucracy, Small & swift at tact. level	Swift & less bureaucracy, but trained other infantry units tend to be SOF	All SOF units organized accordingly; small but adequate	Organized according to geo. & threats req. Heavy on CT after 9/11
Infrastructure	HQ & Trg all temporary. Ops–jungle bases co-located with MPAJA	HQ & Trg–temporary. Jungle Forts–heart of actvs, heart & mind	Border Forts–bigger & more fire pwr. Less heart & mind msn fm these forts.	Temporary infras– for MSSU until the 80s. Police 69er utilized jungle as trg infra.	Mostly new & modern infra, suited to SOF opr & trg requirements.
Logistic	Far fm HQ. Log op inefficient; relied on limited subs & acft limited endurance	Difficult. Rely on limited acft & heli, utilized traditional transports.	Supported by RM amphib. ships, heli & acft fm RN & RAF, posn at forts.	RMAF new heli/FW STOL acft, limited no. but sufficient wt opr	Lesser COIN & Heli/FW STOL caps. Complex procurement procs.
Leadership	Strong & educated, determined. But some ldrs at top lvl didn't understand SOF	Unorthodox, strong & dedicated, experienced	Experienced, understand SOF operations, limit and risk	Tendency ldrs didn't understand SOF capability; want to disband, later were OK	Need more SOF officers in higher posn; to educate policy makers, politician & Mil. ldrs.

Table 2. LoD across time from WWII to Present

From Table 2, it is evident that logistical support, although satisfactory during the Confrontation and in the Second Emergency, remains a serious issue, especially for SOF leaders, regarding maritime or air transport. Experience from previous conflicts showed that these modes of transportations are vital to the success of operations, especially to SOF units that operate away from their bases, such as in deep jungles. Dedicated helicopters and light STOL (short takeoff and landing) aircraft capabilities will enhance SOF capabilities. Another issue that should be improved is the procurement and acquisition process, which is complex and can be manipulated by pressure groups such as private companies and others. SOF units should be given better ways to equip themselves in order to be more efficient and lethal without compromising safety and mission success.

Last in this brief analysis of line of development is the leadership. One can see the importance of leaders to guide the organization and to carry out its missions successfully. Their experience in special operations could help other leaders and policymakers make decisions or policy in the future. The SOF needs to train and prepare its officers, from the beginning of their tour in SOF units, to climb to the highest hierarchies in the military so that they can advise others regarding SOF capabilities, limitations, and risks. To do that, SOF units must ensure all its men are well-educated, unorthodox thinkers who excel in all respects.

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## **VII. MALAYSIAN SOF AND ITS FUTURE**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter focuses on the Malaysian SOF in general—its future development and requirements. Besides fighting internal threats, as in both Emergencies, the SOF mission could be one of the options for Malaysia in dealing with external threats such as the Indonesian Confrontation in Borneo. Malaysian security may be uncertain in the future. What will come is still unknown, but Malaysia cannot just face the present day, as far more complex scenarios may arise. This chapter briefly highlights Malaysia's foreign and defense policy and assesses SOF unit strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in the light of future requirements and roles aligned with those policies.

### **B. MALAYSIAN FOREIGN AND DEFENSE POLICY**

#### **1. Malaysian Foreign Policy**

From Malaysia's independence in 1957 until today, the vision of Malaysia's foreign policy remains consistent: to safeguard Malaysia's national interests and contribute towards a just and equitable community of nations, as summarized in Figure 19. This is achieved through upholding Malaysia's sovereignty and promoting peace, fostering friendly relations with foreign countries, and protecting national interests in the regional and international arena. Malaysia will continue to consolidate its relationships with other countries and international organizations at all levels. Malaysian foreign policy's fundamental principles refer to sovereign equality and mutual respect for territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in other's internal affairs, peaceful dispute settlement, mutual benefit in relationships, and peaceful coexistence. Two other issues are of great concern to Malaysia for world peace: Terrorism, which continues to threaten the lives and property of innocent victims, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, which raises the prospect of nuclear, chemical, and biological warfare. The so-called "constructive intervention" policy advocated by some, involving loud criticism, adversarial posturing, and grandstanding, only brings more harm than good to the promotion of neighborly relations, according to the Malaysian

perspective. Nonetheless, Malaysia does make exceptions to the policy of non-interference in certain situations, such as genocide and atrocities. Such situations call for both humanitarianism and pragmatism by Malaysia, while recognizing the central role of the United Nations in resolving these problems.<sup>300</sup>

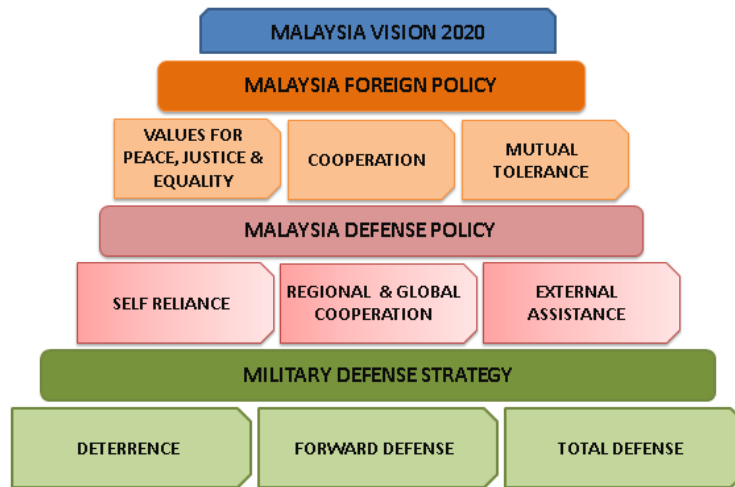


Figure 19. Malaysia’s policies supporting Vision 2020.<sup>301</sup>

## 2. The Malaysian Defense Policy (MDP)

After the Second Emergency, Malaysia’s defense policy, approved in 1986, was reviewed several times. In 2010, the Malaysian Security Council (NSC) approved the latest Malaysian defense policy (Dasar Pertahanan Negara). The objective of this policy is to protect and defend Malaysia’s national interests, in which sovereignty, territorial integrity, and economic wellbeing are at the core. Malaysia rejects the use of the threat of force to resolve international disputes, and practices peaceful solutions. The 2010 national defense policy emphasizes defensive practices, in which the principle of defense diplomacy through bilateral and multilateral diplomacy. This is the central strategy, along with regional and global cooperation and full support of the efforts of the United Nations

<sup>300</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia, “Malaysia’s Foreign Policy,” <http://www.kln.gov.my/web/guest/overview2>

<sup>301</sup> Office of the Prime Minister of Malaysia, “The way forward–Vision 2020,” <http://www.pmo.gov.my/?menu=page&page=1904> (under Policies and Plans).



and the international community towards the maintenance of peace and universal security (see Figure 19). Major factors that have influenced Malaysia's defense policy are national security, national interest, regional development, overlapping claims, piracy/armed robbery, illegal immigrants, the Anglo Military Defense Agreement (AMDA) and the Five-Power Defense Arrangement (FPDA). MDP's principles are self-reliance, total defense, defense diplomacy, bilateral and multilateral relations, counterterrorism, and supporting the United Nations.<sup>302</sup>

## **C. ANALYSIS OF MALAYSIAN SOF AND ITS FUTURE REQUIREMENTS**

### **1. Strength and Threats**

To support both policies, the Malaysian Armed Forces since the 90s began to shift towards a conventional force and emphasized combined arms operations. The advantage of SOF units is their suitability throughout the spectrum of conflict. Malaysian SOF units are small and limited, but they are well prepared groups that can deliver a bigger impact for Malaysia, in terms of conflict management and even humanitarian assistance, than the larger forces. This is due to the nature of these units, composed of select men, highly trained and skilled as soldiers. The small size of the Malaysian SOF units does not mean they are not a deterrent factor. The Malaysian Armed Forces, especially the GGK, are respected by other nations, especially during UN missions and other multinational missions, among them Bosnia and Somalia. They represent Malaysia to the world. In relation to Malaysia's foreign policy, a mission that is more favored by the Malaysian leadership is peacekeeping and humanitarian tasks, which are likely to be the type of mission in the future because the SOF offers cheaper and more useful options.

Malaysian SOF focus on improving each individual soldier's potential capability.<sup>303</sup> To enhance unit capabilities, various exercises such as Ex-Pahlawan, a joint CT exercise involving various Special Forces from the three services of MAF, are

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<sup>302</sup> Kementerian Pertahanan, *Dasar Pertahanan Negara* (Kuala Lumpur: Percetakan Haji Jantan, 2010).

<sup>303</sup> Sahbullah Darwi, "Komando tonggak Tentera Darat," *Utusan Malaysia*, March 18, 2003.

held.<sup>304</sup> Exercise Pasir Pandera, for example, is organized in preparation for any abduction of Malaysians or others in eastern Sabah, which is famous for tourism. This exercise raises the SOF readiness level for facing any eventuality and builds up civilians' confidence that they can carry out their daily activities safely. From time to time, the Malaysian SOF are involved in bilateral exercises with other countries' SOF — for example, the GGK and Komando Pasukan Khusus Indonesia (Kopassus).<sup>305</sup> One of the objectives is to increase understanding and cooperation between Malaysia and Indonesia in SOF counterterrorism missions. Both countries also test their standard operating procedures in combined joint task force-counterterrorist (CJTF-CT) exercises on handling terrorist threats and managing the impact of a terrorist act, to test the interoperability, operations, and the psychology of both countries' CT units. The Malaysian SOF has shown expertise and swiftness in anti-piracy operations, not only within Malaysian waters, but extending further into the areas most prone to pirate attacks, such as the Gulf of Aden, Somalia. A Malaysian support ship and its joint maritime anti-piracy task forces foiled a hijacking attempt by Somali pirates. Malaysian special forces commandos captured several of them, and were unhurt in the shootout.

One of the potential threats foreseen in this study to the Malaysian SOF as an organization is that of logistics and equipment development. Although Malaysian SOF units are mostly equipped with modern and sophisticated equipment, SOF commanders should pay attention to the manipulation of their acquisition and procurement. SOF commanders must maintain strong stands, based on their professionalism, knowledge and expertise in special operations, on the weapons systems or equipment that their units require. They must find ways in dealing with pressure from certain quarters among contractors and politicians.

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<sup>304</sup> "ATM laksanakan eksekusi lawan keganasan," *Utusan Malaysia*, June 21, 2007.

<sup>305</sup> "Kerjasama antara Gerak Khas dan Kopassus perlu ditingkatkan –Azmi," *Utusan Malaysia*, August 14, 2004); "Latihan tentera bersama ASEAN atasi keganasan," *Utusan Malaysia*, September 16, 2003.

## 2. Weakness and Opportunity

One of the goals of Malaysian SOF units is retaining its expert and experienced members. According to the 8<sup>th</sup> 21 GGK commander, Brigadier General Datuk Ahmad Rozi Zakaria, in an interview with the media, SOF units are in dire need of capable second echelon personnel to replace existing commandos (who possess invaluable skills and honed experience in jungle warfare and COIN) once they reach the mandatory age limit. This issue will affect readiness in the future if not addressed soon. Zakaria also said that the GGK, like the Police PGK, is having trouble recruiting capable men to be groomed into elite soldiers capable of accomplishing any given task or assignment. It is easy to recruit any soldier into the GGK training program, but to find those with strong willpower and mental resilience is a challenge, as their numbers are scarce. With this problem in mind, and in recognition of SOF members' services, a sum of RM107 million has been provided for salary adjustments for the Police, while the remuneration scheme and facilities for the PGK and Malaysian Armed Forces were reviewed in 2005. To attract and retain PGK personnel and ATM commandos, the government agreed to increase, as of 1 January 2005, the monthly incentive payments from RM375 to RM600 for service between one to ten years, RM750 for eleven to fifteen years, and RM900 for sixteen years and up.<sup>306</sup> What is still lacking is the chance for SOF officers to climb the hierarchy. Only a few SOF officers have reached the top, or come near. It is vital that they be represented within the upper echelons to ensure better awareness and accurate understanding about special operations, especially among high-level decision makers, politicians, and conventional force commanders.

The Malaysian Armed Forces is continuously improving facilities, infrastructure, and capabilities for its commando units so as to be prepared for new threats posed by terrorist, militants, and pirates, according to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak. While no longer facing communist terrorism, Malaysia is faced with a new breed of terrorist that is difficult to identify in the world, which is fast becoming borderless in

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<sup>306</sup> "2005 Budget Speech," *Utusan online*, September 10, 2004, [http://www.utusan.com.my/utusan/info.asp?pg=special/speech\\_2005budget.htm#ixzz2AkmbzUvS](http://www.utusan.com.my/utusan/info.asp?pg=special/speech_2005budget.htm#ixzz2AkmbzUvS).

many ways.<sup>307</sup> Najib told the media that the GGK would be restructured into more effective and sharper battle units to face these low-intensity threats, as they cannot be dealt with as in conventional warfare. The GGK is specially prepared for any act of terrorism, such as the use of militant force in kidnapping, piracy, and the hijacking of strategic assets, buildings, or locations. Najib asserted that the use of conventional military methods was unsuitable to dealing with such a situation, and the more effective way was to deploy a smaller and leaner unit like the well-trained and highly capable GGK. As a result, Najib recommends that the GGK be equipped with more and better weaponry, training, and members. By ensuring these actions, the GGK will turn into an effective unit to deal with specific threats by small groups of hijackers or terrorists. This will occur in stages, as the recruitment of more commandos cannot be simply made to materialize—the GGK must pick individuals who really have the character to become a commando.<sup>308</sup> In reference to this reality, King Ibrahim, the sultan of Johor and a colonel commandant of the GGK, advises GGK leadership to develop its strengths, including combat capabilities, and equip themselves with modern tools to continue to be a respected, elite unit. Modernization must be supported by effective logistical support and high quality human resources management.<sup>309</sup>

In relation to SOF unit manpower, selection and training, in 2008, the army's GGK training techniques came under fire in parliament when a member exposed GGK's shocking training treatment, alleging that the regiment was undertaking humiliating training techniques to train its commandos.<sup>310</sup> This kind of issue could lead to negative perceptions in some quarters of Malaysia. Nevertheless, the majority still believe that tough training must be the norm if one wants to become a special forces member, because of the roles and responsibilities undertaken by special units. Leadership, either from the ruling party or the opposition, should be educated about SOF selection, assessment,

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<sup>307</sup> "Commandos in dire need of capable second echelon personnel," *Utusan Malaysia*, April 2, 2004.

<sup>308</sup> "ATM's Commando unit to be revamped," *Utusan Malaysia*, August 29, 2000.

<sup>309</sup> PR Tentera Darat, "Hari Ulang tahun Gerup Gerak Khas ke-46," *Portal Rasmi Tentera Darat Malaysia*, (entry October 3, 2011) <http://army.mod.gov.my/index.php/maklumat/1703121407/181-hari-ulang-tahun-gerup-gerak-khas-ke-46>.

<sup>310</sup> "Commandos under fires for abusing trainees," Myalternatives news video blog (entry May 16, 2008), <http://my-alternative-news-video.blogspot.com/2008/05/commandos-under-fire-for-abusing.html>.

training regimes, roles, and capabilities. This familiarization could prevent wrong perceptions of the SOF units and make them better understood. Military leadership, especially within the SOF community, must educate politicians, foreign policy decision makers, and others.

Malaysian SOF units, while expert in jungle warfare, need to explore techniques, tactics, and procedures for fighting in other environments, for example, in urban or built-up areas, where most of today's conflicts occur and may be expected to occur in the future. Although thick jungles still cover most of Malaysia, built-up areas have been increasingly significant in conflicts. Furthermore, urban or built-up areas are likely environments for Malaysian SOF missions abroad. Operations in littoral or riverine areas that align with the military defense strategy should also be trained for, especially since most nations in the Far East, including Malaysia, have maritime borders. In sum, Malaysian SOF must extend its expertise to a variety of environments that are relevant to regional and global deployment.

There is also an opportunity to improve SOF logistics, especially concerning transportation. SOF units must be delivered forward, close to the area of operations. This imperative came up during the Malayan Emergency and the Indonesian Confrontation, where Malaysian and British troops were deployed from the Peninsula to Sarawak and Sabah. This lesson has been important to the Malaysian Armed Forces and SOF commanders need not repeat it. For regional and global special operations, the Malaysian Armed Forces should consider acquiring amphibious force support ships, small STOL aircraft, and more helicopters capable of close air support, medical evacuation, insertion, and extraction. However, with Malaysia's trend towards reducing its defense budget every year, those systems, although necessary to the armed forces in general and SOF in particular, might simply remain on the "wish list."<sup>311</sup>

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<sup>311</sup> Bunn Nagara, "Need to spend on defense," *The Sunday Star*, March 6, 2011.

#### D. MALAYSIAN SOF AS ONE FOREIGN POLICY OPTION

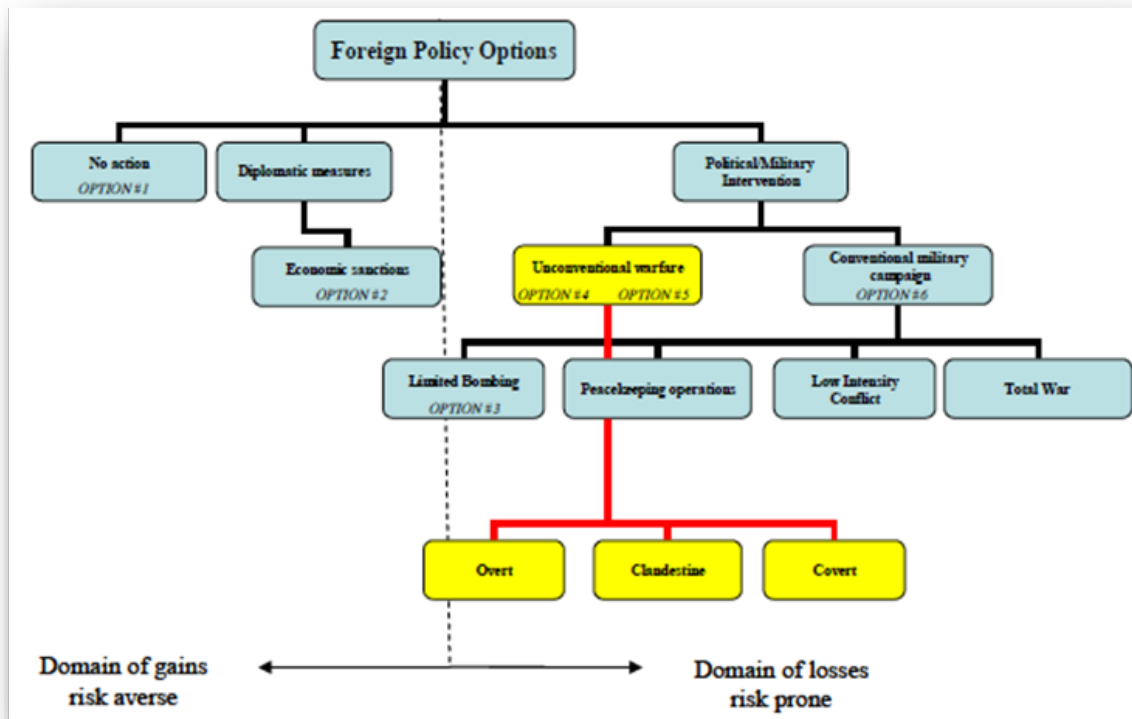


Figure 20. Unconventional warfare is one of the choices in foreign policy.<sup>312</sup>

As James Kiras, an academic and expert in defense policy says, SOF remains the “force of choice” against irregular threats such as terrorist, insurgents, and armed groups within a state.<sup>313</sup> But what if the threats to Malaysia’s national interest were in Africa or the Middle East, or perhaps involved safeguarding the entrance to the Straits of Malacca. Due to Malaysia’s foreign policy, which emphasizes peaceful diplomacy and nonintervention, the use of SOF abroad is rare and almost impossible. So the question arises whether Malaysian policymakers know about and understand another option in their pocket—the SOF’s unconventional option—to support Malaysia’s stand. The Straits

<sup>312</sup> Abigail T. Linnington, “Unconventional Warfare as a strategic foreign policy tool: The Clinton administration in Iraq and Afghanistan,” (master’s thesis, Tufts University, 2004).

<sup>313</sup> James D. Kiras, “The Role of Special Operations Forces: Past, Present and Future,” *Pointer, Journal of the Singapore Armed Forces*, Vol. 37. No. 2, October 25, 2011, 80–95.

of Malacca is one example of an unconventional option in a simulated scenario in which Malaysian policymakers could utilize SOF capabilities. Malaysia is concerned with the security of the Straits of Malacca, which is among its primary national interests. The stability of country *X* is important for Malaysia and ASEAN in various ways. For Malaysia, *X*'s instability could create tensions and insecurity at the entry to the Straits of Malacca, such as an increase in armed robbery or piracy within the vicinity of this small and chokepoint of the world. Furthermore, thousands of *X*'s refugees migrating into Malaysian would create a crisis in Malaysia. According to the Human Rights Watch Organization's assessment, country *X*'s internal security, economy, and society remain unstable, although some lights for democracy have begun to shine. Thousands of people from *R* ethnicity died in *X*'s ethnic civil war, and interethnic conflict has escalated. Country *X*'s security forces continue to use forced labor and commit extrajudicial killings, sexual violence, and indiscriminate attacks on civilians, among other abuses. After an analysis using various theories such as prospect theory,<sup>314</sup> one of the options for foreign policy is to use unconventional warfare, using Malaysian SOF capabilities as illustrated in Figure 20, whether covertly, clandestinely, or even, at one stage, overtly, to shift *X*'s internal policy so that peace and security will be restored in *X*. Acting upon this option requires that Malaysian policymakers and premier leadership have a deeper understanding of unconventional warfare and SOF. Policymakers and SOF commanders should consider Christopher Lamb's article during his tenure as the director of policy planning, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operation/Low Conflict, Intensity Conflict, in 1995.

Given the sensitive political nature of covert paramilitary operations, the elaborate legal and oversight requirements that they entail and, most importantly, the additional specialized trade craft that they require, SOF would have to significantly expand their portfolio of capabilities in order to successfully execute such responsibilities.<sup>315</sup>

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<sup>314</sup> Barbara Farnham, *Avoiding Losses/taking risks; Prospect Theory and International Conflicts* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).

<sup>315</sup> Christopher Lamb, "Perspectives on emerging SOF roles and missions," *Special Warfare*, July 1995.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

Malaysia's SOF are not yet fully optimized for extending Malaysian foreign policy regionally or globally, except under the United Nation's flag in peacekeeping operations. Malaysian leaders and policymakers should consider SOF capabilities and limitations as a tool for advancing Malaysia's foreign policy and preventing threats and challenges to the national interest. This all depends on how much the Malaysian government comprehends its strategic situation and views its options.



## VIII. CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

From 1941 until 1990, Malaysia and Malaya were involved in four violent conflicts. During WWII, British Special Operations Executives (SOE) organized, trained, and equipped Europeans and Malayan volunteers to form a guerrilla group called Force 136 (Malaya) to fight against the Japanese Imperial Army, operating deep in the inhospitable jungles in preparation for the British reoccupation mission, Operation Zipper. Force 136 had to operate under many difficulties that were not experienced by the SOE in Europe, besides being far from its base in Ceylon (Sri Lanka). Although Force 136 conducted many daring operations, they did not produce a significant change in the war. When the war ended unexpectedly, Force 136 and MPAJA guerrillas paraded victoriously before the Malaysians, celebrating the Japanese surrender.

Britain's "most trusted friends," the Communist Party of Malaya, took advantage of the unsettled situation in Malaya after WWII and continued to oppress the Malayan people and the British. In mid-1948, the Malayan Emergency began (1948–1960). The British administration organized special units, such as the Ferret Forces and Malayan Scouts (SAS), to fight the MRLA unconventionally. They reorganized the Malayan intelligence organization, the Police Special Branch, and trained and equipped the aborigines and Iban to act as paramilitary forces (e.g., the Senoi Praaq and Sarawak Rangers). When Malaya gained its independence in August 1957, the CPM's political objective was retarded, and they agreed to cease fire.

Malaysia was created in September 1963, uniting with Singapore, Sarawak, and Sabah. This unification was unacceptable to Indonesia, and they declared a Confrontation against the Malaysian government. The Indonesian Confrontation (1963–1966) was countered by the Malaysians, British, and Commonwealth forces, especially in North Borneo. This precipitated Operation Claret, a "most secret" SAS (plus other SOF) cross-border operation designed to penetrate deep in Kalimantan areas, looking for the Indonesian army and its proxy. The Confrontation was terminated when the situation in Jakarta changed in favor of Malaysia.

Later, in 1968, the CPM and its army, the MRLA, resurfaced from their strategic withdrawal, with a new spirit, new weapons, and Vietcong tactics. A second armed struggle ensued. The government declared the Malaysian Second Emergency (1968–1989). With its legacy of British SOF units, the government continued to confide in SOF capabilities and commissioned a few other units, such as the Malaysian Special Service Unit (MSSU) and Police Commando Very Able Troopers (VAT) 69 to fight the communist terrorists until they surrendered on December 2, 1989. Previous experience in WW II and the Malayan Emergency helped the Malaysian Armed Forces in general, and SOF in particular, in the Indonesian Confrontation and the Second Emergency. There are many lessons gained by the SOF that remain relevant in present situations and threats and should be studied, especially by Malaysian SOF communities. Table 2 presents this timeline in brief.

This thesis highlights the development and capabilities of selected Malaysian SOF units in the post-conflict era (1990–present) and follows with a brief analysis of future requirements. The Defense Lines of Development (TEPID OIL + L) analysis, although brief, indicates various strong points, especially those involving people, leadership, organization, and training. Malaysian SOF units have improved their infrastructure and become better organized. They are better informed through professional intelligence and information operations units. Nevertheless, there are several factors that could be further improved, such as current doctrine, which concentrates on inward rather than outward defense, and towards regional or global defense, as laid out in defense and foreign policies. Another factor is equipment capabilities and acquisition procedures: the bureaucracy should be streamlined to improve equipment and efficiency. It is highly desirable that the SOF become involved in equipment and system research and development, so that that equipment provided is really suited to SOF roles and operating environments in Malaysia, and not just what may be available on-the-shelf. In the matter of logistics, the main problem was inadequate transportation for special units, which is especially critical if Malaysian SOF units are to operate regionally and globally in securing the national interest. Special vehicles, whether land, maritime, or air, should be dedicated to the SOF units.

Although Malaysian defense policy has shifted towards conventional forces, the SOF continue to train in jungle warfare, concentrating on men and equipment for unconventional warfare, COIN, CT, and other specialties. The GGK continuously realigns with army reformations because the SOF will remain suitable in a spectrum of conflicts. Though Malaysia's foreign policy relies, in its fundamental principles, on soft diplomacy, Malaysian policymakers and politicians should also consider unconventional options as well. With small enhancement, present SOF capabilities can conduct various unconventional warfare operations in support of Malaysian foreign and defense policies, deploying forward for deterrence and forward defense. In defending the Malaysian homeland, SOF units must be absolutely ready to support the total defense concept, together with the Royal Malaysian Police units. The police units were still relevant to maintain Malaysia internal security and public order and to support the armed forces when necessary.

This thesis covers only a small slice of Malaysian military and security studies. Knowledge regarding special operations forces in Malaysia should be pursued further, so that a better understanding of SOF strategic utility among policymakers, politicians and the armed forces may be achieved. Because the Malaysian Armed Forces are small, with a limited budget, SOF is one key option in strengthening Malaysia's defense and securing its national interests. At the same time, Malaysia should learn from others' mistakes in the employment of SOF units. It is recommended that further research be conducted on the uses and advantages of the Malaysian SOF, for the edification of policymakers, politicians, and military leaders.

YEARS	ENEMY	SOF UNITS	OBSERVATIONS
1941–1945 WWII	Japanese Forces, and their Secret Police & conventional forces	Force 136 (Malaya)	SOF forward deployed; stay-behind parties /guerrillas; all need thorough and early preparation & development–supported by decision makers, leaders and people, knowing the risks/options
1948–1960 Malaya Emergency (August 31, 1957–Malaya Independent)	CPM/MRLA & Min Yuen. Mao Tse-tung guerrilla tactics, weapons, ammo & equipment gathered in WWII	Ferret Forces, Special Branch, Malayan Scouts, Senoi Praaq, Sarawak Rangers	Homeland defense for the Malaysians/British; UW & SOF established against guerrillas in jungles & rural areas
1962–1966 Indonesia Confrontation (Singapore breakaway–1965)	PARAKU Guerrillas trained and equipped by TNI, TNI Infantry, paratroopers & Commandos	British SAS, SB, Senoi Praaq, small elements of Sarawak Rangers	Forward deployment for the Malaysians & others. Homeland defense against external threats/proxy. SOF/UW & secret cross border ops–logistics, legal issues & decision makers need to understand options/risks
1968–1989 Malaysia Second Emergency (May 13, 1969 Incidents)	CPM/MRLA/Min Yuen. NKPC guerrillas (in Sarawak). Mao Tse-tung & Viet Cong guerrillas, equipment from First Emergency & bought from Vietnam/Cambodia	MSSU (later GGK), VAT 69, SB, KPT/ATCK, Senoi Praaq, Sarawak Rangers PASKAL & HANDAU	Homeland defense, SOF/UW established against guerrillas/terrorists in jungles, rural & urban areas
1990-present Post-conflicts Peace and industrialization (2001, 9/11 GWOT)	Transnational Issues, Immigrants, serious crimes, terrorism, piracy etc Complex and unknown enemy, besides other states	GGK, PASKAL, PASKAU, GOP, ATCK, 10 Para VAT 69, UTK, SB, UTC, UNGERIN, STAR	Homeland defense, regional/global security under UN& others Doctrinal change to conventional SOF maintain UW + CT

Table 3. Special operations forces in Malaysia (1941–Present).

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