



# BROADSIDE

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## Editorial



### **The Royal Australian Navy's Involvement in the Far East Strategic Reserve – 1955 – 1971**

*by Les Bailey (ex-CPOMTP)*

*President,*

*FESR War Memorial Foundation*

Until now, one particular theatre of Australian and New Zealand active service lies almost forgotten in Australian Defence Annals – that of our service in the Commonwealth Far East Strategic Reserve 1955 – 1971.

The Australian Government, under Prime Minister Menzies in 1955 committed Australian Forces to the British Far Eastern Strategic Reserve in response to a request from the British Government for assistance in protecting Malaya against insurgency of Communist Terrorists.

The period embraced two particularly hostile periods, the Malayan Emergency 1955-60, and the Borneo Indonesian Confrontation 1962-66, with a number of other military disturbances scattered through the 16-years. Nearly 30,000 service personnel from the RAN, RNZN, RAAF, RNZAF and the Australian & New Zealand Armies discharged active service in the FESR, many with multiple tours of duty.

It is surprising how little is known by the general public about the role of the men and ships that served during the Malayan Emergency, and the Indonesian Confrontation attached to the Far East Strategic Reserve.

## Events Calendar

*(see [Calendar](#) for full details)*



**NOTE:** Due to COVID-19, it is advisable to check with the coordinators to confirm whether the event you were planning to attend is still going ahead. We will endeavour to keep the Diary updated as news comes to hand.

**At present the Shrine of Remembrance is closed, but ceremonies are still being conducted and they are live streamed on the Shrine's [Facebook page](#).**

**30 Apr** – Recruit school graduation

**07 May** – HMAS Castlemaine service

**08 May** – Victory in Europe service

**09 May** – Battle of Coral Sea service

**19 May** – Soundwaves concert TBC

**28 May** – Recruit School graduation

**31 May** – Victorian Aboriginal Remembrance service

**13 Jun** – 'N' Class destroyers service

**16 Jun** – Soundwaves concert TBC

**25 Jun** – Recruit School graduation

**30 Jun** – HMAS Waterhen commemorative service

**04 Jul** – Reserve Forces day

## Latest Videos, Podcasts and News Headlines

*The full articles of the news items listed below can be found on our website:*

<https://navyvic.net/news/news.html>



In July of 1955 two Royal Australian Warships HMAS Arunta and HMAS Warramunga took up stations in Malayan waters, being the first RAN units to be officially allotted to the British Commonwealth Far East Strategic Reserve. HMAS Quiberon followed shortly after.

Thousands of Australian Naval Personnel served throughout the Far Eastern Strategic Reserve which ran unbroken from 1955 until 1971.

Perhaps the terms "Emergency" and "Reserve" creates some confusion as to their purpose. Maybe if they had been labelled the Malayan War and Far East Strategic Force, people would have had a better understanding of the conflict (war) and accepted its legitimate place within Australia's military history.

Those ships were HMA Ships Anzac, Arunta, Curlew, Derwent, Duchess, Gull, Hawk, Ibis, Melbourne, Parramatta, Quadrant, Queenborough, Quiberon, Quickmatch, Snipe, Stuart, Supply, Swan, Sydney, Teal, Vampire, Vendetta, Voyager, Warramunga and Yarra.

RAN activities included bombardment of enemy positions, wide range patrolling, air operations, interception of seaborne insurgents and covert intelligence operations. These operations remained largely unknown to the Australian Public.

Service with the Far East Strategic Reserve could at time be arduous, life at sea in the tropics was occasionally dangerous and seldom pleasant in mess decks with no air conditioning. Many of these ships were built in England and not designed for service in tropical waters.

The Australian Navy's role during its time within the FESR, was wide ranging. Warships carried out patrols along the Malayan and Borneo coastlines (renamed Malaysia, after Independence), supported Commonwealth forces with Naval Gunfire bombardments of the enemy positions, intercepted raids by seaborne insurgents, and undertook covert intelligence operations with some personnel seconded to the Malaysian Navy to help the fledgling country's fight against the insurgency and confrontation.

Unfortunately, this period is overshadowed at either end in terms of public perception by the conflicts in Korea and Vietnam, both of which were either just finished, or starting.

## VIDEOS.....

- *Navy's only VC recipient commemorated in Tasmania*
- *HMA Ships Sheean and Armidale arrive in Devonport, Tasmania*
- *HMA Ships Anzac and Sirius take part in Exercise La Perouse*
- *Support Centre in Melbourne dedicated to Veterans*
- *Operation COVID-19 Assist - 12-months of ADF support*
- *Tight fit as Adelaide sails under the Sydney Harbour bridge*
- *Navy welcomes HMAS Supply into service*
- *Operation NSW Flood Assist - Navy & Air Force aid Macksville clean-up*
- *Navy delivers new patrol boat for Papua New Guinea*

## PODCAST.....

- *Hypersonic weapons, technology innovation, and US politics and foreign policy*
- *Australia's WPS action plan, intelligence careers and Covid-19 in the Indo-Pacific*

## NEWS.....

*The largest fleet of Royal Navy warships to deploy internationally since the 1982 Falklands War is heading to the Indo-Pacific region next month as the British government seeks to raise its presence in the Far East.*

*The Type 094 nuclear ballistic missile submarine "Changzheng-18", the Type 055 destroyer "Dalian", and the Type 075 Amphibious Assault Ship "Hainan" went into service on April 23, 2021.*

*Navy personnel have marked Anzac Day in Latrobe, Tasmania to honour Navy's first Victoria Cross recipient, Ordinary Seaman Edward "Teddy" Sheean. More than 600 people joined Teddy's relatives and crew from Navy Headquarters Tasmania, HMAS Sheean and HMAS Armidale at a service and march.*

During the years 1955-1971, RAN casualties including two killed in action off the coast of Malaya in 1957 and seven RAN sailors died on Operational Service because of illness, accident and aircraft crashes.

The Malayan Government subsequently awarded RAN personnel the Malayan Defence Medal Pingat Jasa.

It is perhaps prudent to point out here that it took until 2000 for the Australian Government to recognise the service of 18,000 personnel in 26 ships of the RAN in the Malayan Emergency and Borneo Indonesian Confrontation, and even now there are still on-going issues.

The Australian War Memorial records the following numbers of Australian Defence Force killed whilst serving in their respective theatres:

- Malayan Emergency 38 (27 Army; 9 RAAF; 2 RAN)
- Borneo Indonesian Confrontation 16 (15 Army; 1 RAAF)

The numbers injured from, or disabled by, active service in both theatres is known to be considerable and sadly, many have since died from their medical illnesses acquired during the discharge of their service for this country all those years ago.

While full Repatriation Benefits were awarded to Army and Airforce personnel for their service, it was only after a protracted fight led by the Honourable Bruce Scott, Minister for Veterans Affairs, Vice Admiral Sir Richard Peek and Admiral Mike Hudson former Chief of Navy then President of the Naval Association and Noel Payne OAM that forced the Government to Commission the Mohr Review.

Whilst this military service may be recognised amongst the battle honours of RAN warships, Army Regiments and RAAF Squadron, recognition on memorials established across our nation, and in fact in the AWM, is minimal. We, the veterans of the FESR believe we deserve recognition equitable to our brothers in the many post WW2 conflicts with a standalone Memorial to our service and the fallen.

The Review of Service Entitlements of Anomalies in Respect of South East Asia Service 1955-1975 by the late Major General, The Honourable Robert Mohr, Judge Advocate of the Australian Army

*HMAS Anzac has held a Dawn Service in the South China Sea to commemorate Anzac Day. The ship, currently on a regional deployment in South East Asia, paused to allow ship's company to mark the landing of Australian and New Zealand troops on the Gallipoli peninsula on 25 April 1915.*

*ON Anzac Day, the final resting place of a previously missing First World War soldier has been identified in France. Minister for Defence Personnel and Minister for Veterans' Affairs Darren Chester today announced that the final resting place of Private Leslie Styles, 40th Battalion, Australian Imperial Force had been confirmed.*

*The Indonesian Navy has declared submarine KRI Nanggala 402 has sunk, with all hands lost. Debris located. Condolences to the families of the 53 men lost. Debris believed to be from the missing Indonesian navy submarine has been found, Indonesian Navy Chief of Staff Yudo Margono told a news conference Saturday.*

*Indonesia has accepted Australia's offer to assist in the search for missing submarine, KRI Nanggala (402). HMA Ships Ballarat and Sirius, both presently at sea on separate regional deployments, are making best speed for the search area.*

*Although the Royal Australian Navy Bridging Train (RANBT) only existed for two years, the unit performed crucial work for the Navy and Army. The Navy engineers, or sappers as they are known in the Army, operated in World War I, working in Gallipoli and the Suez Canal.*

*Navy's Maritime Geospatial Warfare Unit (MGWU) on April 8 tested its newest deployable meteorological equipment in a field adjacent to HMAS Penguin in Sydney.*

*The death of any Australian Defence*

and Justice of the Supreme Court of South Australia, in his findings in 2000, overturned the Governments view and found in favour of RAN Veterans and said of the men of the FESR, "These were by and large honourable people. They believed that they had performed Honourable Service to their Country at some personal inconvenience and danger and felt a deep resentment. That therefore their service had not received the consideration it merited"

To this end, veterans of the FESR Navy Association Inc., National Malay Borneo Veterans Association Inc., and the Royal Australian Air Force Association Inc. entered a collaboration to form this Foundation and establish an appropriate Memorial in the National Capital.



**DONATE TODAY** to help us build a national memorial to the service & sacrifice of Australians who served in the FESR during the largely forgotten conflicts Malayan Emergency 1955-1960 and Indonesian Confrontation 1962-1966

<https://fesrmemorial.org.au/donate.html>

Sixty plus years on, the FESR story is etched indelibly in the hearts and minds of the veterans who served. As fresh-faced young sailors they discharged tours of duty in equatorial conditions on warships more suited to operations in the North Atlantic, in fact, some of the ships did serve in that theatre of war during World War 2.

Regardless of branch and campaign, service in the Australian Defence Force should always be tempered with pride and respect. Sadly, many of those who participated in the Malayan Emergency, particularly in the Royal Australian Navy, have weathered their fair share of disappointment. It took over fifty frustrating years to reopen previously closed doors and gain due recognition. Yet despite success, the Malayan Emergency and Indonesian Confrontation are still overlooked at certain memorial functions and associated services. Is it simply a case of misunderstanding, or does

*Force member or veteran is one death too many and a tragedy that is deeply felt by all Australians. Tragically, and heartbreakingly, this includes death by suicide. Recognising this, the Government will take the step of recommending to the Governor-General the establishment of a Royal Commission into Defence and Veterans Suicide, following a period of consultation on draft Terms of Reference, with the relevant community and state and territory governments.*

*Inside the Russian Navy's Project 21631 Buyan-M Class Corvette "Uglich"*

*Remembering Eric Grove: historian and teacher who inspired a generation of naval strategists*

*The tireless work of United States Navy (USN) officer Commander Robert Eilers in supporting the tactical development for Hobart- and Hunter-class ships has been recognised by the Royal Australian Navy.*

*Russian submarine designer Rubin Design Bureau revealed it has developed a submersible patrol ship combining the features of a submarine and a surface patrol vessel.*

*Nuclear submarines could lead to nuclear power for Australia*

*Beards have had a long association with sailors and in recent years there has been a growth in all things beard-related.*

*Many bands have formed in a lounge room or garage, but it's rare for a band to emerge from the belly of a Navy frigate.*

*Today the Government announces that Australia will finalise the drawdown of our contribution to the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan.*

*The Philippines has sent additional ships*

the term 'emergency' continue to plague general comprehension? And if so, how does one address this recurrent imbalance.

We believe our service warrants national recognition of those who served with distinction during the 16-year operational commitment made by our country in the defence of Malaya and protection of her regional interests. The history of Australian Defence Force service within in the FESR theatre is a tapestry of well-documented political battles for recognition for medals, and other benefits which have taken over 50 years to resolve with some ongoing here in 2021. We believe over 20,000 Australian Defence Force personnel who served in the FESR, their widows and families deserve this pinnacle of recognition.

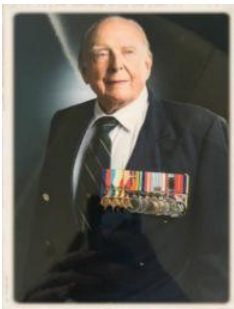
**Footnote:** *British Commonwealth casualties were 1,961 from the Malayan Emergency and 425 from the Borneo Indonesian Confrontation.*

Yours Aye!  
NVN Team.

## April Navy Hero Captain John Philip Stevenson AM RAN



John Philip Stevenson was born in Melbourne on 24 August 1921, the son of Rear Admiral John Bryan Stevenson, RAN, and Olive Brooke Stevenson (née Bailey). He entered the Royal Australian Navy (RAN), in 1934, as a 13-year old Cadet Midshipman and underwent training at the RAN College at HMAS



Cerberus.

Later in his career, in October 1968, he assumed command of HMAS Melbourne (II) which was undergoing a major refit at Garden Island.

Melbourne commenced work-ups in February 1969 and sailed from Sydney for Southeast Asia on 5 May 1969 with 805, 816 and 817 Squadrons embarked. In the early hours of 3 June 1969 in the South China Sea, during the SEATO Exercise SEA SPIRIT, the American destroyer USS Frank E Evans cut across Melbourne's bow and was cut in two in an incident all too similar to that of Voyager (II) five years earlier. The forward section of Evans sank with the loss of 74 lives and Melbourne sustained extensive damage to her bow section.

A joint USN/RAN Board of Inquiry into the tragedy held Captain Stevenson partly responsible stating that, as Commanding Officer of Melbourne, he could have done more to prevent the collision from occurring; however, a subsequent

*on Tuesday to its maritime territory that is subject to China's expansive claims in the South China Sea, officials announced on Tuesday.*

*Taiwan has launched the first of a new class of multimission amphibious ships that can carry troops and equipment to its offshore and South China Sea islands. The vessels can also conduct surface warfare missions with anti-ship missiles.*

*With a university degree in Antarctic science, Leading Seaman Tanya Maksimovic knew exactly what do when confronted by an elephant seal taking a nap on the road to Davis Station in Antarctica.*

*HMAS Sydney conducted a passage exercise with USS John Finn in the waters off the coast of Southern California in early April. Sydney has deployed to San Diego to conduct combat system sea qualifications trials on its Aegis weapons system with the US Navy.*

*The Royal Australian Navy's operational support capability has received a significant boost with the introduction of HMAS Supply into service.*

*A U.S. carrier strike group and amphibious ready group are in the South China Sea as tensions increase between Manila and Beijing over a Chinese maritime militia incursion into the Philippines' exclusive economic zone, the Navy announced on Friday.*

*A U.S. guided-missile destroyer transited the Taiwan Strait on Wednesday, days after the Chinese Navy announced a carrier strike group was operating near the island. USS John McCain (DDG-56) made the transit two days after the People's Liberation Army Navy announced carrier Liaoning and its escorts would exercise near the island in the South China Sea.*

RAN court-martial cleared him of any responsibility.

The integrity of the initial Board of Inquiry has since been questioned, particularly as it was presided over by Rear Admiral Jerome King, USN, the officer in overall tactical command of Evans at the time of the collision. Stevenson's defence council, Gordon Samuels, QC, later Governor of New South Wales, said that he had "never seen a prosecution case so bereft of any possible proof of guilt."

You can read more of Captain Stevenson's amazing career in the Heroes section of our website, which also includes TV and Radio interviews:

<https://navyvic.net/heroes/stevenson.html>



If you know of any of our Navy family that has crossed the bar, please don't hesitate to [contact us](#). We will list their names in perpetuity on our special [Memorial Wall](#) on the website. If possible list their Rank, Name, Number, the date of their passing and their age.

- † M. Bond, R105420, 24 April 2021. Aged 70.
- † LWRWTR M.L. McGrath, W86483, 24 April 2021. Aged 72.
- † LCDR M. Russell, 23 April 2021.
- † CPOUC L.A. Foxon, R94204, 15 April 2021. Aged 72.
- † CPOMTH T.C. Sard, R59073, 10 April 2021. Aged 82.
- † CPOME J.G. Murphy, R53542, 06 April 2021. Aged 85.
- † WOMTP3 J.W. Hinson, R64104, 04 April 2021. Aged 73.
- † MTP R.G. Jaffray, R63984, 04 April 2021. Aged 75.
- † NA1 A.G. Lisle, R45606, 03 April 2021. Aged 87.
- † ERA R.W. Bowman, R45334, 02 April 2021. Aged 90.
- † CPOSV M.F. Hart, R94031, 01 April 2021. Aged 73.
- † LCDR A.F.S. Wyatt, O50116, 31 March 2021. Aged 85.
- † CPOMECH E.P. Callanan, R50513, 31 March 2021. Aged 83.
- † ETS1 R.R. Galloway, R105499, 30 March 2021. Aged 69.
- † ME A.V. O'Brien, R58792, 30 March 2021. Aged 78.
- † CEA D.W. Thompson, R/34866, 27 March 2021. Aged 95.
- † LSMUSN K.M. Rushworth, R64590, 27 March 2021. Aged 72.
- † LWRWTR J.R. Hudson, R85591, 20 March 2021. Aged 75.
- † CY R.A. Robinson, R50191, 20 March 2021. Aged 84.

## Lest We Forget



SNOVIC signing HRH Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, Condolence book at Government House, Victoria, on behalf of Navy members in Victoria.

*From the first response with aircraft flying from HMAS Albatross to personnel on the ground in the NSW mid-north coast, Navy has been involved in rescue, recovery and clean up efforts during Operation NSW Flood Assist.*

*HMA Ships Anzac and Sirius made an immediate impact with their international counterparts in the French-led Exercise La Perouse in the Bay of Bengal. The two Australian ships were joined for the three days of navy-to-navy training exercises from April 5-7, by vessels from France, India, Japan and the US.*

*HMAS Sirius has completed one of its biggest ever Replenishment at Sea (RAS) with the 100,000-ton Nimitz-class aircraft carrier, USS Theodore Roosevelt and two other ships in a Carrier Strike Group on March 31. To add to the accomplishment, Sirius simultaneously replenished the USS Bunker Hill, using its port and starboard refuelling rigs to support the dual-RAS operations.*

*HMAS Melville has returned to her home port of Cairns after a six-week deployment completing survey work in poorly surveyed waters of the Bass Strait. The voyage to the Bass Strait was the first time in 14 years Melville has travelled so far south.*

*The Russian Navy Northern Fleet's newest frigate Admiral Kasatonov completed accomplishing the tasks of its first long-distance deployment in the Mediterranean Sea and entered the Atlantic Ocean.*

*FlyBy – A periodical of the Fleet Air Arm Association of Australia. [April issue.....](#)*

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