

## CLARET Operations and Confrontation, 1964-1966

by  
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During the period 1963 to 1966, Britain fought an undeclared war against Indonesia in the jungles of Borneo. The war was over Indonesia's political and military effort to destabilize the newly-formed Federation of Malaysia with the purpose of annexing Sarawak, Sabah and Brunei. As expressed by the Indonesian president, Achmed Sukarno, this policy was called *Konfrontasi*, or 'Confrontation.' British and Commonwealth forces fought a highly successful campaign against Indonesian incursions into Borneo (East Malaysia), Malaya (West Malaysia) and Singapore. Although unknown to the public at the time, the British and Commonwealth forces went onto the offensive in Borneo from August 1964 until three months before the formal cessation of hostilities on 11 August 1966.

The offensive took the form of top secret, cross-border operations and raids code-named CLARET, and proved to be an integral factor in the successful conclusion of the military campaign. It would be specious to credit Sukarno's fall from power in March 1966 solely to the military failure of Confrontation. It is equally specious to ascribe this fall only to domestic reasons.<sup>1</sup> Knowledge of CLARET helps to bridge the gap between these two schools of thought. CLARET was a politico-military tool employed in response as much to political situations as it was to military ones. This article will examine in some detail the circumstances which made CLARET a necessity, the political nature and extent of the operations, and its sensitivity to political changes.

### THE ROOTS OF CONFRONTATION

Field Marshall The Lord Bramall, who commanded a British battalion during the campaign, calls Confrontation "the war that shouldn't have happened."<sup>2</sup> His rationale is that since Malays, Borneans and Indonesians have so much in common there was no need for any kind of conflict. Like many others, Bramall places the blame for Confrontation squarely on the shoulders of President Sukarno of Indonesia.<sup>3</sup> Sukarno carried out a policy of confrontation not only against the nascent Federation of Malaysia but with all of the polities he considered to be "Necolims."<sup>4</sup> The progression of his policy resulted in an eventual cessation of much-needed foreign aid from the United States, alignment with the People's Republic of China, withdrawal from the United Nations, runaway inflation, expansive political turmoil in Indonesia and, of course, Confrontation with Malaysia and its allies Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand.

Sukarno's reasons for Confrontation were varied and complex and this article is not directly concerned with them. However, a little background is necessary to understand how and why CLARET came to be. British commit-

ment to Malaysia during Confrontation had its roots in the Malayan Emergency of 1948-1960. In 1957, during the latter stages of the Emergency, the British signed treaties which committed them to the defense of their soon-to-be-independent colonies of Malaya and Singapore. In 1959, the same was done for the protectorate of Brunei. Wishing to assure a racial balance between predominantly Chinese Singapore and the Malays of the surrounding colonies, and to create a stable polity following independence, Britain initiated a drive to federate Singapore with the Malayan states, Brunei, Sabah and Sarawak. The British were further committed to the area through their participation in the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), which it joined in 1954. And in addition to these "compelling moral and political reasons for a British presence," there was also pressure from the United States to maintain deployments east of Suez.<sup>5</sup> Thus, during Confrontation the British government's "strategic gaze was firmly fixed outside Europe and especially east of Suez."<sup>6</sup>

Defense resources allocated east of Suez did not keep pace with the increasingly important commitments to the area. The Sandys Defence White Paper of 1957, which was to lead to Britain's increased reliance on a nuclear deterrent, resulted in the end of national service and the re-birth of a highly professional, but much smaller, regular army. Despite the increased quality of the all-volunteer force, it was stretched to its numerical limits during the mid-1960s, especially by commitments in South Arabia and Borneo. "Of the Army's 60 battalions, more than 24 were committed to overseas operations, and 20 to the Rhine Army."<sup>7</sup> There is little wonder, then, that when the Director of Borneo Operations (DOBOPS) requested troops and helicopters during the first 24 months of the campaign, Whitehall found it difficult to comply. There is some reason to suspect, therefore, that Sukarno believed the British were unable or unwilling (or both) to provide security for the fledgling Federation of Malaysia.

Plans and announcements for the creation of a federation of Malay states with Borneo, Brunei, Singapore and Sabah were made well before Sukarno advanced any opposition to the plan. His interest in disrupting Malaysia only manifested itself after the Indonesian campaign to oust the Dutch from West Irian came to a successful conclusion toward the end of 1962. There was little coincidence between the end of the one campaign and the beginning of the next, both of which were similar in the "Indonesian ambivalence between 'diplomacy and struggle' as the twin poles of policy."<sup>8</sup>

Sukarno claimed that Malaysia was a neo-colonial dupe of Great Britain. Although he was very much an anti-imperialist, there were also elements of megalomania in Sukarno's pursuit of 'Maphilindo,' an acronym referring to a conglomeration of Malaya, the Philippines and Indonesia which would, of course, be ruled from Jakarta and its president for life, Achmed Sukarno. The British-sponsored Federation of Malaysia and a continued British presence because of SEATO and other commitments thus posed a threat to Indonesian hegemony of the area.

Besides his revolutionary tenets and his desire for control of the Malay and Philippine archipelagos, there was also an element of necessity in pursuing an adventurist and confrontational foreign policy which diverted attention from

domestic problems within Indonesia. Ironically, it was Sukarno who created the economic muddle which Indonesia was to become over the next few years, as he associated more closely with the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), cut off Indonesia from US aid and aligned the country on a 'Jakarta-Peking' axis. Sukarno's power was predicated on the need for an external enemy. This eventually became his undoing as Confrontation with Malaysia proved a failure. Unable to produce results abroad, having alienated his anti-communist generals, and with the economy a shambles, Sukarno eventually fell and Confrontation ended soon after.

## THE INITIAL BRITISH RESPONSE TO CONFRONTATION

The Brunei Revolt, which broke out on 8 December 1962 with very little warning to the security forces, was aided and abetted by Indonesia, though its actual involvement probably did not go beyond the provision of training and materiel to the rebels.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, it marked the beginning of a new policy toward the territories to the north of Kalimantan, the Indonesian section of Borneo. Even though the main part of the rebel force was defeated in a few weeks, remnants of the insurgency remained at large for several months before they were finally killed in the jungles around Brunei. During the manhunt which followed the revolt, Indonesia began to intensify its political and military attacks against Malaysian Borneo. The attacks were perpetrated by guerilla bands recruited from Borneo, Malaya and Singapore and leavened with leaders from the Indonesian Army (TNI) and Marine Corps (KKO).

Major General Walter Walker, who was in command of the security forces tasked with the mopping-up of the rebels, believed that Indonesia was poised to play a much larger military role in Borneo. Indeed, even before Yassin Affendi, the military leader of the revolt was killed on 18 May 1963, Indonesia had already begun to step up its efforts to foment further uprisings in Borneo. On 12 April 1963, a party of men attacked the police station near Tebedu in the first division of Sarawak. The security forces initially did not know who was responsible for the raid, although it was known that at least some of the raiders were members of the Clandestine Communist Organization (CCO), an arm of the predominantly Chinese Sarawak Communist Party.

The specter of a repeat of the Malayan Emergency was likely in Walker's mind as he planned his response. As he had been a successful brigade commander in one of the Emergency's last and most effective operations, he was well suited to the task at hand. The pillars of his Borneo strategy, drawn from his earlier experience in Malaya, were to win the 'hearts and minds' of the natives, maintain close liaison with civil and police powers and emphasize intelligence gathering.<sup>10</sup>

Shortly after the raid on Tebedu, evidence came to light indicating that the operation had been conducted by Indonesian soldiers. This obviously changed the nature of the threat to Borneo considerably. Walker believed the Indonesians' strategy to be the active support of dissidents within Sarawak. A report by the recently augmented Special Branch showed the CCO to be bigger

and stronger than originally thought earlier in the year. The CCO insurgents, who were stationed in Kalimantan and called Indonesian Border Terrorists (IBTs) by the security forces, were believed to number about 1,500 at this time. They were supported by an unknown number of Indonesian regulars, mostly concentrated opposite the First and Second Divisions of Sarawak. They even feared at one point that the Sultan of Brunei's bodyguard, the Brunei Regiment, might itself become the vanguard of a new insurgency. Walker's warnings to General Headquarters, Far Eastern Land Forces (FALELF) were now given heed and a few reinforcements were deployed from Singapore and Hong Kong to Borneo.<sup>11</sup>

A crackdown on the CCO was undertaken, and a surprise operation mounted to confiscate all 8,500 licensed guns in Borneo retrieved a full 8,000.<sup>12</sup> No doubt this helped to forestall any planned insurrection, but a significant internal threat remained along with a growing external threat in the form of deep incursions into Borneo from Kalimantan. The task of thwarting the incursions was enormous: there were only five battalions initially available to cover a frontier stretching for more than 1,000 miles — a land mass as large as England and Scotland.

Indonesian raids into Borneo continued to increase over the summer of 1963 while the Prime Minister of Malaya, Tunku Abdhul Rahman, attempted to reach a political agreement with Sukarno and the Philippines' President Macapagal in Manila. At the same time, in August 1963, a large, uniformed force raided deep into the Third Division of Sarawak, near Song, and over a period of days were defeated by ambushes of the 2/6 Gurkha Rifles. Prisoners taken by the Gurkhas revealed that Indonesian regular army officers and non-commissioned officers provided the leadership for the force of IBTs.

IBTs stepped-up their activity as the date for Malaysia's federation in September approached. On 16 September, Sarawak and Sabah became independent prior to joining the federation but Brunei opted to remain a British protectorate. On 28 September, the Indonesian response to federation was felt in the Third Division of Sarawak at the longhouse in Long Jawi where six men of the 1/2 Gurkha Rifles, three policemen and 21 Border Scouts were stationed. The latter were part of a force of natives recruited, trained, armed and uniformed to act as the 'eyes and ears' of the security forces in the longhouses. This small party fell victim to a raiding party of approximately 200 Indonesians supported by 300 unarmed porters. The Indonesians had been in the longhouse for two days before attacking, a fact which later led to a restructuring of the Border Scouts. The Gurkhas held out by themselves, the rest were taken prisoner or killed. Five of the security forces' men were killed and seven of the Border Scouts, who had been taken prisoner by the Indonesians, were murdered. In a series of ambushes, the rest of 1/2 Gurkha Rifles were able to kill 33 of the raiders and scatter many more in the jungle, where they presumably died of starvation.<sup>13</sup>

This raid had two important results, one of which was that the Indonesian murder of the Border Scouts alienated the natives in the border area and evaporated what little support the Indonesians had enjoyed up to that point. The

other result was that the Border Scouts were taken out of uniform and reorganized to stress an intelligence-gathering role. They carried on with their normal, peacetime occupations, which for many included cross-border barter trade. As such they became an extremely valuable intelligence source for CLARET and complemented well the reconnaissance tasks now being conducted by the 22nd Special Air Service Regiment (22 SAS) in the border areas.

## THE SPECIAL AIR SERVICE IN BORNEO

The SAS proved to be one of the winning elements of the military campaign in Borneo, and was an intrinsic part of later cross-border operations. The SAS had been reactivated during the Malayan Emergency, where its long-range reconnaissance, linguistic, 'hearts and minds' and raiding qualities came into their own. The successful conclusion of a short — albeit arduous — campaign in Oman (1958-59) further proved the efficacy of the SAS's special skills. Because of its experience and training in special operations, signalling, medicine and linguistics, the regiment was admirably suited to its assigned tasks in Borneo. Troopers generally operated in patrols of four men and lived for months at a time in a particular village or longhouse, building a trust with the natives, as well as an 'eyes and ears' capability with the locals and Border Scouts. The result was that information was passed by the natives to the local SAS patrol, who then transmitted it to their squadron headquarters. This arrangement meant that the majority of Indonesian incursions were detected despite the paucity of troops. Armed with this border intelligence, and with the skilful use of a limited number of helicopters, the security forces were able to ambush raiders on their return to Kalimantan.

SAS patrols' familiarity with areas near the border also meant that they were in the best position to conduct cross-border reconnaissances when finally authorized. Their role in CLARET became reconnoitering enemy bases and lines of communication, and then leading raiding or ambush parties to these targets. If contact was made when patrolling, the SAS's standing order was to 'shoot-and-scoot;' that is, to disengage as quickly as possible.

In the early part of the campaign 22 SAS found themselves stretched very thinly indeed. With only one squadron in Borneo initially, and its value proven to Walker's satisfaction, measures were taken to train other units in the SAS role. The Guards Independent Parachute Company, the Gurkha Independent Parachute Company and 'C' Company, 2nd Battalion the Parachute Regiment, were all converted to the SAS role. Eventually SAS squadrons from Australia and New Zealand were also deployed in Borneo.<sup>14</sup>

By 1964, the investment that Walker had made in the 'hearts and minds' strategy began to pay substantial dividends in intelligence. The people were also reassured by the quick and effective response of the security forces to the attack at Long Jawi. Once notified of the incursion, the Gurkhas were able to guess accurately at the likely withdrawal routes of the raiders and ambush them all the way back to the border using various helicopter landing zones (LZs) and 'roping

areas' which had been cut at 1,000 yard intervals along the frontier for that very purpose.

### **THE INDONESIAN INCURSIONS INCREASE**

In December 1963 two more large incursions occurred, one on the western end of Sarawak and the other in Sabah at Kalabakan. Men from the 3rd Battalion, Royal Malaysian Regiment, who had been sent to Borneo (now known as East Malaysia) following federation in September were stationed at Kalabakan. Because of poor security, one of their company positions was successfully assaulted by Indonesians. Although they fought back courageously, they lost heavily in the first burst of fire. The raiding party did not escape, however, and over the next few days more than two-thirds of their number — who turned out to be Indonesian marines (KKO) — were killed or captured by the security forces.<sup>15</sup> Although it was an embarrassing defeat for the Malaysians, the extent of the damage was down-played to keep Malaysian dignity intact; Malaysians now felt fully involved in the military side of Confrontation.<sup>16</sup> Even so, 1963 ended with the Indonesians holding the initiative, as they could still cross the border when and where they pleased.

In January 1964 troops from the Royal Leicestershire Regiment operating in the Fifth Division of Sarawak discovered a recently vacated camp set up for 500 men. Following the tracks from the camp, a section of Leicesters came upon another camp with 60 men still in it. They immediately attacked, killing several of the enemy and putting the rest to flight.<sup>17</sup> Other Indonesian activity of the period included Indonesian P-51 Mustangs and B-25 Mitchells 'buzzing' towns in Sarawak, and a thwarted attack on Kuching, the capital of Sarawak. On the political front, Sukarno announced a 'cease fire' in January, which was followed by a United Nations mission of enquiry to Borneo to see if the people of Sarawak and Sabah had really wanted to join the Federation of Malaysia. The mission concluded that they did, but Sukarno rejected its findings, even though the mission had been at his insistence.

In response to the inimicable findings of the UN mission, the Indonesians increased their military activity and dramatically altered their tactics. Between March and May 1964, Indonesian agents or sympathizers set off 13 explosions in Singapore. On 6 March, men from the 2/10 Gurkha Rifles encountered elements of the 328 Raider Battalion, an Indonesian regular army unit. On the 31st of the same month, the 2/10 Gurkhas fought with a strong force from the 'Black Cobra Battalion,' another regular unit. Both episodes turned into fierce fire-fights, unlike previous encounters with IBTs. In the latter case, SS-11 wire-guided missiles fired from helicopters were used to extricate the Indonesians from caves.<sup>18</sup> The Indonesians were now employing their best regular infantry, marines and paratroops as attacking units, mostly in company size, sometimes larger.<sup>19</sup> For the British forces, the conflict had changed from a platoon commander's war to a company commander's war, as evidenced by increased defenses for forward bases and the size of patrols needed to cover an area.

In May, Sukarno increased the bellicosity of his words when, in a speech on National Resurrection Day, he summoned a nation-wide mobilization of "volunteers to fight Malaysia." In June another attempt to solve the conflict by diplomatic means failed in Tokyo, whereupon Sukarno then vowed to "crush Malaysia" by "cock-crow on the 1st of January 1965."<sup>20</sup> His words were followed by actions which, over the next few months, seriously escalated the conflict, threatened open war, and eventually resulted in a new British strategy to respond to the growing threat.

At about the same time that the Tokyo talks broke down, a large Indonesian force attacked a bivouacked patrol of the 1/6 Gurkha Rifles near Rasau, in the First Division. The Indonesians began "choosing known bases and helicopter LZs as their targets," signalling that they had changed their tactics.<sup>21</sup> In early July intelligence sources indicated that the Indonesians were sending reinforcements to those areas in Kalimantan that fronted the First Division. On the other end of the frontier in the Tawau area of Sabah, a growing number of marine commandos were seen, amphibious landing exercises were reported, and the Indonesians tried to jam the security forces' wireless communications. CCO and Indonesian agents became more active in East and West Malaysia, but external acts of aggression dropped over all during July and early August.<sup>22</sup>

Walker believed that major enemy activity was imminent. He was proven correct when, on 17 August, a combined force of guerrillas and Indonesian marines made a seaborne landing on the Johore coast of Malaya (West Malaysia). Its objective was to link up with Chinese communists and other sympathizers, and begin a revolution. The Indonesians' assessment of the political situation in Malaya proved to be wildly inaccurate, as the local people actually helped the security forces to round up the insurgents. Nonetheless, the action could only be seen as a further escalation of Confrontation. The seaborne landing was followed by an airborne landing on 2 September, which was also successfully thwarted. On 4 September, violent race riots broke out, incited by Indonesian *agent provocateurs*.<sup>23</sup>

## CLARET

Most published sources that mention CLARET are ambiguous about when cross-border operations were first authorized. This is understandable since the most explicit sources are regimental histories which deal almost exclusively with the activity of a particular battalion's tour in Borneo. In *Fighting General*, Tom Pocock indicates that CLARET was not authorized until August 1964, after the first Indonesian incursion into West Malaysia. Pocock tied authorization for CLARET to a visit to Borneo by Fred Mulley, the Deputy Secretary of State for Defence and Army Minister in the summer of 1964. Walker supposedly convinced Mulley of the need for cross-border raids to keep the Indonesians off-balance. Mulley reportedly agreed with Walker, promising to pass on this information to Denis Healey, who had recently become Secretary of State for Defence. Presumably, Healey then raised the matter before the full Cabinet, which gave its assent based on the growing threat indicated by the seaborne landing and the Indonesian buildup opposite the First Division.<sup>24</sup>

However, in works published since *Fighting General*, evidence is given that SAS and Gurkha troops were operating across the border before August 1964, perhaps as early as May or June.<sup>25</sup> In an article published in *Australian Outlook*, David Horner cites a cable sent in April 1964 from the then British Prime Minister, Sir Douglas Alec-Home, to the Australian Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies, informing the latter that "British and Malaysian security forces in Borneo were to be permitted to cross the Indonesian border in hot pursuit for a distance of up to 3,000 yards."<sup>26</sup> No doubt this authorization had been given in light of the presence of Indonesian regular units inside Borneo in March 1964.

Clarification of the seeming contradiction between Pocock's and Dickens' version on the one hand, and Horner's on the other, comes from Major General R.W.L. McAlister, who tells of one company of the 2/10 Gurkha Rifles which was held as battalion reserve for 'special operations.' "Special operations was the [term] initially used to denote 'cross border' operations (later given the codeword CLARET). Great secrecy surrounded these operations; only the CO and one selected company per battalion were, at this time [c. July 1964], to be fully aware of special operations planning and execution."<sup>27</sup> The 'special operations' men may have been responsible for the relative lull in border incursions in July and August, as the ability to cross the border in 'hot pursuit,' combined with the extremely effective use of helicopters to move blocking forces rapidly made deep penetrations less and less likely to succeed. Indonesian activity before the seaborne landings in Malaya had been mostly confined to "brief night raids or ambushes close to the border, mainly to support their claims that they were responding to requests for assistance from the local population."<sup>28</sup>

CLARET was part of a new strategy designed to stop Indonesian incursions by forcing them onto the defensive. Policy-makers deemed that on no account was the public to know of this change in strategy, and so CLARET was conducted with the utmost secrecy. The nature of the first CLARET operations, which began in August 1964, were not at first recognized by the Indonesians for what they were, but rather were seen, quite possibly, as "extensions of routine ambushing carried out a mile or two farther south" of a very ill-defined border. "It is doubtful whether the Indonesians realized they were seeing the beginning of a new Commonwealth strategy," as their staff structure and communications were relatively poor and unable to construe any coherence to the activity.<sup>29</sup>

Cross-border raids of an offensive nature was the true purpose of CLARET. 'Hot-pursuit' does not fall into that category. Raids on enemy targets inside Kalimantan appear not to have started until after the seaborne landing of 17 August; but the SAS, and perhaps the 'special operations' companies, had already been conducting reconnaissances of possible targets throughout the spring and summer of 1964. When the Indonesian landings in Malaya occurred, the security forces were able to conduct appropriate retaliatory raids almost immediately. Even so, the pace of operations was relatively slow throughout the autumn and winter of 1964-65, as Walker insisted on thorough reconnaissance and planning before he would even consider a raid. Even then the Director of Operations confined CLARET raids to a stringent set of restrictions which he



drew up in order to ensure secrecy and effectiveness. Known as the 'Golden Rules,' they were:

- Every operation will be authorized by DOBOPS.
- Only trained and tested troops will be used.
- Depth of penetration must be limited and the attacks must only be made to thwart offensive action by the enemy.
- No air support will be given to any operation across the border, except in the most extreme of emergencies.
- Every operation must be planned with the aid of a sand table and thoroughly rehearsed for at least two weeks.
- Each operation will be planned and executed with maximum security. Every man taking part must be sworn to secrecy, full cover plans must be made and the operations to be given code-names and never discussed in detail on telephone or radio. Identity discs must be left behind before departure and no traces — such as cartridge cases, paper, ration packs, etc. — must be left in Kalimantan.
- On no account must any soldier taking part be captured by the enemy — alive or dead.<sup>30</sup>

The Golden Rules were faithfully followed. Available sources indicate that operations followed months of reconnoitering, planning and rehearsing every possible detail, including fields of fire for machine-guns, silent plotting for artillery and mortar fire, approach routes, etc. The degree to which all cross-border operations were subject to high-level review and approval was remarkable. "Reconnaissance patrols were to be decided by the brigade commander, who would notify [the division commander], but other cross-border operations were to be determined by the Director of Borneo Operations on the basis of recommendations from [the division commander] and his brigade commanders, on SAS advice, and on intelligence available."<sup>31</sup>

Since no soldiers, alive or dead, were to be left behind, casualties during CLARET operations could pose a real problem. Fortunately for the security forces there were very few. Bodies of any dead or wounded had to be carried back to the border before being evacuated by helicopter. Only one instance of a helicopter 'casevac' (casualty evacuation) from Kalimantan is recorded. There are at least two cases of soldiers being lost across the border, but in neither case is there any indication that the Indonesians ever found the bodies. Walker attributes the success of operations and the minimal number of casualties to his insistence on training.<sup>32</sup>

One of the first CLARET strikes was carried out in August 1964 by the 1/2 Gurkha Rifles, who were stationed in the Fifth Division of Sarawak and western Sabah. Opposite their battalion front, only a few thousand yards into Kalimantan, was an enemy post near Nantakor. After a reconnaissance carried out by the SAS had revealed that the post was held by troops of the 518 Battalion, the Gurkhas began planning and rehearsing for a raid on the unsuspecting enemy. In early September General Walker approved the plan for the operation.

The raid was successfully executed: the Gurkhas pushed the enemy completely out of their camp, which was searched and then burned.<sup>33</sup>

Throughout the autumn of 1964, security forces, consisting mostly of SAS and Gurkhas, began to strike at the enemy in their once inviolate bases near the border. But military and political activity outside Borneo threatened to escalate the conflict. The revelation that the British had drawn up plans to destroy the Indonesian navy and air force following the airborne landing in September and another seaborne landing in October, made all-out war more likely. Due to increasing isolation in the United Nations because of Malaysian complaints about Indonesian aggression, Sukarno moved in November and December toward a closer alignment with Communist China, which only a month earlier had exploded its first nuclear bomb (20 kilotons). The Australians' increasing concern over a possible Indonesian threat to Papua New Guinea led to the dispatch of Australian troops to Borneo and the institution of a form of selective service.<sup>34</sup> In January 1965 Sukarno pulled Indonesia out of the UN and aligned himself with the People's Republic of China.

The British government believed the sea and air strikes would unnecessarily escalate the conflict and so ruled them out. To stop a possible invasion of Borneo, the government instead authorized Walker to increase the depth of CLARET operations to 5,000 yards, eventually increasing it to 10,000 yards as a further response to the Indonesian threat toward the end of the year.<sup>35</sup> By the end of 1964, Indonesia had massed a growing number of its best troops opposite the First Division of Sarawak while the KKO marines in the Tawau area, and on Sebatik Island — through which the international border ran — were increased to a full brigade, virtually trebling the Indonesian strength along the border.<sup>36</sup>

With 12,000 Indonesian troops already in border garrisons, British intelligence predicted that by February of 1965, there would be well over 22,000 soldiers in about 50 regular companies and 20 irregular companies along the border. The build-up was carried out concurrently with a restructuring of the Indonesian command system by General Maraden Panggabean, who regrouped those units ranged against Borneo into the 'Number 4 Combat Command,' with Col. Supargo as its director of operations.<sup>37</sup> Study of enemy activity during this period revealed a "steadily rising graph of border violations north and south of Biawak," which was on the road leading to the capital of Sarawak, Kuching.<sup>38</sup> Company-sized actions were taking place on both sides of the First Division border, which Walker claimed reached the same level of ferocity as the war in Burma against the Japanese.<sup>39</sup> Reports worried Walker that the Indonesians' main parachute force was being held in readiness. With most of the activity taking place opposite the First Division, Walker feared that the Indonesians might be planning a general assault with Kuching as its final objective.<sup>40</sup>

Despite the increasing operational depth of raids, CLARET operations still remained few in number. Walker insisted that only troops who had completed at least one tour could take part, meaning that few, if any, of the recently arrived reinforcements were eligible. The careful and repeated reconnaissance and planning needed also kept the number of operations low. So too did Walker's rationale for CLARET raids: the Director of Operations saw

CLARET only as a deterrent measure, so that when he was given authorization in January 1965 to increase the depth of operations up to 10,000 yards, he allowed raids "not as a pre-emptive offensive nor even with the expectation of causing serious disruption, but as psychological rapier-thrusts to make Supargo think defensively and take his mind off other things [i.e., an offensive into the First Division]."<sup>41</sup>

Walker's CLARET strategy was part of an evolving British counter-insurgency doctrine. According to Tom Mockaitis, this doctrine was an outgrowth of 'imperial policing' between the wars and of the campaigns in Palestine, Malaya, Cyprus and Kenya and was based on three broad principles: "minimum force, civil-military cooperation, and tactical flexibility."<sup>42</sup> Consequently, Walker would sometimes relax the pressure on the Indonesians when he deemed that the enemy casualties were too high.<sup>43</sup>

As the winter monsoons approached, Gurkha battalions remained very much on the offensive against the Indonesians. The 2/2 Gurkha Rifles in particular enjoyed a series of successes against the Indonesians opposite them in the Second Division, although there was only one major assault on an enemy camp, in October. That action had been a 'fire assault' with machine-guns on the enemy camp near Jambu. The original idea for the raid had been turned down by Walker on "political grounds," but the battalion commander, Lt. Col. Neill, persisted and was eventually given the green light.<sup>44</sup> Many of the security forces' actions were fairly small in this period, however, as most cross-border activity seems to have been confined to reconnaissance patrols.<sup>45</sup>

At the beginning of 1965, Sukarno moved closer to Communist China and the threat to the First Division increased. To blunt this, several carefully planned and rehearsed major CLARET operations were ordered. In January, the 2/10 Gurkha Rifles near the north end of the First Division carried out a close reconnaissance of the enemy post at Sadjingan, a village of less than 100 Dyak tribesmen which lay 5,000 yards west of Biawak. The British Intelligence NCO in Biawak, with information from his Border Scout interpreter, traders and paid agents, found that 50 men of the TNI's 428 Raider Battalion were stationed in the village. Fortunately, the soldiers lived in a separate hut from the Dyaks and so presented an easy target for an assault and supporting ambushes. The successful raid eventually resulted in a temporary cessation of Indonesian use of the Koemba River as a resupply route.<sup>46</sup>

In early 1964, an Indonesian force built a military base at Long Medan opposite the Fifth Division, and sealed up an old trade route for buffalo and salt. This action disconcerted natives on both sides of the border, but they were powerless to prevent it. The locals appealed to the commander of 'C' Company, 1/2 Gurkha Rifles, to help them. Capt. Jackman, OC 'C' Company, wanted to assist: enemy troops from Long Medan had fired rockets and mortars toward his base in October and he wanted to hit them back. He pinpointed the enemy position at Long Medan through various reconnaissances and other intelligence. Jackman then asked the Battalion CO for permission to launch an attack against Long Medan. "Soon I was visited by the Brigade Commander, Brig. Gen. Harry Tuzo . . . then by [Walker] and finally by the C-in-C himself," related Jackman.

"Each commander asked for more information about the enemy, which meant each visit heralded a trip across the border to have another look at the camp." One reconnaissance in January 1965 even involved taking a movie film of the objective. A careful plan was drawn up and by the end of January the attacking force of 148 Gurkhas crossed the border. One part of the force assaulted the actual camp while the other elements ambushed likely routes of reinforcement and provided supporting fire for the assault team. Later intelligence confirmed that 50% of the Indonesian garrison had been killed in the action and the area abandoned by the survivors. The villagers were extremely grateful, as they could at last return to their buffalo and salt trade. And, "although the Indonesians continued to operate along that strip of the border until the end of Confrontation, not once did they set foot over it again, nor did they re-occupy Long Medan."<sup>47</sup>

Despite such successes, the Indonesians opposite the First Division were not deterred by CLARET. They were taking losses, however, and some of their lines of communication were becoming insecure, especially river-borne traffic. That Borneo had become a major theater of operations was demonstrated by the visit of the Chief of the Defence Staff, Lord Mountbatten, and the Government's Chief Scientific Adviser, Sir Solly Zuckerman, in February. The visit had two major results, the first being a change in "attitudes to the Borneo campaign . . . in London. At last it was no longer an embarrassing military sideshow but a . . . conflict of the utmost importance."<sup>48</sup> The British believed the 'Jakarta-Peking' axis could prove to be a major threat, especially as events were heating up in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

The second result was a new priority in supplying equipment to the forces in Borneo. Whereas Walker had been deprived of much of what he needed before the visit — he had been accused of over-stating the threat — he now got more (but not all) of what he needed.<sup>49</sup> In particular, weapons such as the US 'Claymore' anti-personnel mine, the M-79 grenade launcher, seismic intruder device and Armalite carbine (AR-15) were added to the firepower of the security forces in Borneo. Better rations and the introduction of lightweight rain gear from Australia also improved the soldier's lot, so that when the tempo of Confrontation increased in mid-1965, the security forces were much better equipped to carry out offensive operations.<sup>50</sup> These were fortunate and timely changes as the long-awaited enemy offensive into the First Division was about to begin.

## THE INTENSIVE PHASE

On 12 March 1965 Major General George Lea took over from Walker as Director of Borneo Operations. Lea inherited a "miniature army, navy and air force complete in all its arms and appendages from the infantry soldiers on the frontier to organizations for pay, welfare and public relations in the rear;" in all, a force numbering some 20,000 men.<sup>51</sup> The force had grown considerably since 1964 in response to the Indonesian build-up, and the arrival of several more British and Malaysian battalions during the six month period prior to Lea's arrival necessitated a slight change in the command structure of the security forces. Where there had been only a few battalions stretched over the frontier

divided into three brigades, the all-important First Division of Sarawak was now given its own brigade when reinforcements arrived and the troops were less thinly spread (see Order of Battle).

Lea, like Walker, expected the Indonesians to mount a major operation of some sort, else they would not have amassed a strong force of their best troops opposite the First Division. He needed time to take stock of the situation and to consider what should be done with CLARET. "In the meantime [the enemy] was not being hit at all, which would surely encourage him to further aggression."<sup>52</sup> Lea ordered a slight increase in the tempo of CLARET activity by allowing the SAS to take offensive action during the last two days of their reconnaissance patrols — but only against targets which "offered a realistic chance of success."<sup>53</sup> It became apparent six weeks after Lea became DOBOPS that CLARET was not a completely effective deterrent.

Towards the end of March 1965, the 1st Battalion, the Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders handed over their sector of the southern part of the First Division to the 2nd Battalion the Parachute Regiment. The Argylls had had a busy tour as there had been numerous and fairly large Indonesian incursions, often of company size. Within days of the changeover, 2 Para was meeting the enemy all over its battalion area and discovered Indonesian activity throughout March and April indicating that the Indonesians were planning an attack on the 'B' Company position at Plaman Mapu.<sup>54</sup>

It was evident to the operations staff of the 17th Gurkha Division headquartered on Labuan Island that something major was planned. Their intelligence had shown that an Indonesian engineer battalion was operating near the frontier and was improving routes up to the border, and that amongst the many Indonesian units opposite the First Division, there was a battalion of Indonesian paratroopers (RPKAD) near the southern end of the division.

At 0505 hours on a "very dark, wet, rainy night," two companies of Indonesian paratroopers, with a third company in reserve, attacked the 'B' Company base at Plaman Mapu. Unlike previous attacks, this one avoided the longhouse and went straight for the company base which was lightly held by a weak platoon of "cooks and bottle-washers."<sup>55</sup> The RPKAD had some initial success in hitting a mortar and machine-gun, but the British paratroopers quickly recovered and fought off their attackers, inflicting heavy casualties.<sup>56</sup>

The enemy had attempted to overrun a company base, and by so doing had signalled that they had decided to raise the stakes in Confrontation. The Indonesians were still full of fight after Plaman Mapu and their activity remained at a high level throughout May, with 2 Para fighting off a major incursion against Mongkus late in the month. The tactical situation was intolerable to Lea and he felt that the Indonesians should be forced to stay well away from the border. But how?

The ideal target was undoubtedly an enemy force before it struck, but since such forces were assembled in the rear areas and spent the minimum time near the border [the security forces would] be lucky to get timely enough warning. Additional

targets must be selected, the most promising being routine enemy movements on tracks or rivers whenever Intelligence indicated and topography suited, so Lea's policy became the art of the possible.<sup>57</sup>

If Lea needed another indication that the Indonesians had escalated Confrontation, he got it on 26 June when a combined force of TNI and IBT troops managed to penetrate into the heart of the First Division and attack several civilian targets near the 18th Milestone Police Station on the main track through the area. Besides killing several policemen, the raiders deliberately killed men, women and children from loyal ethnic Chinese families in the area, apparently in an attempt to terrorize and intimidate them into helping the CCO. In reaction to the raid on the police station, Lea ordered many of the ethnic Chinese in the area to be rounded-up and resettled in order to protect them and cut off CCO sympathizers from the CCO and IBTs.<sup>58</sup>

Lea's response to Indonesian actions was to authorize an "intensified series of CLARET strikes to make absolutely clear to the Indonesians that their proper place was behind their own frontier."<sup>59</sup> When the 2/10 Gurkha Rifles arrived at Bau in July 1965 for their third tour, they were "ordered to step up the offensive action and seek entirely to eliminate the current threat to Sarawak by dominating the area up to 5,000 yards over the border, to the extent that the enemy's forward bases became untenable, and to follow this up by further forcing the Indonesians to retreat to the 10,000 yard line from where meaningful incursions simply could not be mounted."<sup>60</sup> The 2/10 Gurkhas' first major operations were not to begin until August, as there was to be no skimping on reconnaissance, planning or training. Failure was unacceptable for the same reasons it had been when CLARET first began almost a year earlier<sup>61</sup>: the British did not want it known that they were operating in Kalimantan. Heavy losses for either side would be hard to keep secret for long.

The 2/10 Gurkha Rifles began their effort to create a 10,000 yard cordon sanitaire in August with Operation SUPER SHELL, a multi-company operation involving two assaults simultaneously. While one part of the force overran an Indonesian camp with an infantry assault, the other part of the force conducted a fire assault against the first camp's support base further down river. The result was that the Indonesians ceased to use the Koemba River as a supply route, and were forced instead to cut an overland track. This too was discovered by the Gurkhas, but an ambush was not at first authorized because of the numerous successes being scored by security forces up and down the border of the First Division.

Lea wanted to maintain pressure on the Indonesians, but it was to be a steady pressure. The ambush of the track was eventually authorized by West Brigade's commander, Brigadier Cheyne, in late September. The ambush, conducted shortly after its authorization, was code-named Operation HIGH HURDLE. This too was a success as the enemy abandoned another of his base areas and fell back to a river line some distance back, "thus surrendering 10,000 yards of border jungle to Gurkha patrols."<sup>62</sup>

Other battalions on CLARET operations scored similar successes. The 1/2 Royal Green Jackets (King's Royal Rifle Corps), commanded by Lt. Col. E. D. Bramall, conducted two major raids in August. Early in the month, 'A' and 'C' Companies attacked a large enemy camp at Kepala Pasang. "This particular group of enemy never again showed any offensive inclination at all . . . from then on concentrat[ing] exclusively on their own defence, later abandoning the camp."<sup>63</sup> Another 'C' Company attack, this time on an enemy camp in Mankau, had virtually the same effect as the previous attack. The camp was not destroyed but the enemy suffered many casualties and pressure on it was stepped up by ambushing the lines of communication with its battalion and flank companies. "Intelligence soon revealed that Mankau, the main enemy camp on [1/2 Royal Green Jackets'] front, had also turned on the defensive."<sup>64</sup>

The 2/2 Gurkha Rifles, whose previous tour had seen many CLARET successes, was also quite active in this period. They launched a two-company ambush of a river, which was used extensively by the Indonesians, killing 27 of the enemy in just the one operation.<sup>65</sup> "In the meantime, no track or river was safe from the risk of such casualties."<sup>66</sup> It was clear that such river ambushes, small though they may have been, hurt much more than the loss may have indicated. "The main Indonesian supply line [i.e., rivers] suddenly became insecure and in need of urgent, widespread and unwelcome troop redeployment to guard it," admitted one Indonesian officer. The overall result of this series of intensified CLARET operations was that "Mongkus was the enemy's last major incursion into the First Division in 1965."<sup>67</sup> In July and August alone, West Brigade had killed nearly 300 of the enemy, almost all during CLARET operations.<sup>68</sup> Indeed, CLARET was succeeding so well that

... at least one Indonesian local commander sent a runner across the border to his opposite number informing him that he was withdrawing some fifteen kilometres back: 'We got a message saying, "I will not disturb you. I've withdrawn back to this village. I'm carrying out no more offensive operations against you. Please leave me alone."<sup>69</sup>

Meanwhile, in Indonesia, the domestic situation was rapidly deteriorating. Sukarno's vow to crush Malaysia by the beginning of 1965 had not come to pass and his wooing of the Communist Party of Indonesia, the PKI, was increasing along with his closer ties to the People's Republic of China. Confrontation was not succeeding as had the campaign against the Dutch in West Irian. Despite the cost of the war and a growing sterling crisis in London, the British continued to persevere in their defense of Malaysia, much to Sukarno's surprise. In response to Indonesia's pursuit of Confrontation and closer ties with Communist China, the United States cut off much-needed financial aid, which by the end of the summer was causing unprecedented inflation and the country teetered on economic collapse.<sup>70</sup> A failed coup attempt by the PKI on 30 September set off a series of events which eventually culminated in the end of Confrontation. In the weeks that followed the coup attempt, chaos reigned as the Indonesian Army, mostly headed by anti-communists, tried to regain control. With more pressing problems at home, the army

chiefs shifted their attention from the campaign in Borneo and began their bloody efforts to eradicate the PKI.

Political and diplomatic signals from Indonesia at this time were confused and British evaluation took a long time. Lea decided to call a temporary halt to CLARET and assumed a wait-and-see attitude with regard to developments in Jakarta. This respite, known to the SAS as a 'be kind to Indos' period, was terminated in November, when the Indonesians sent an incursion force into the Katibas Basin of the Third Division. "Whether that conformed to General Suharto's policy or stemmed rather from local enthusiasm, General Lea took no chances and let slip the dogs of war."<sup>71</sup> On the Kalimantan side of the border, the British and Gurkha troops fought several fierce actions, the SAS even launching an unprecedented, full-squadron attack.<sup>72</sup> The 2/2 Gurkha Rifles conducted four operations, two of which were multi-company ambushes of enemy river and land lines of communications.<sup>73</sup> The 2/10 Gurkha Rifles, not to be outdone, carried out two major operations, both against troops of the 'J' Battalion of the Diponogoro Division. Operation TIME KEEPER was an attack on an enemy garrison located on top of Gunong Tepoi, a strongly defended complex sited for mutual support with other garrisons and covered by artillery and mortar support. In this deployment the 2/10 Gurkha Rifles were able to carry the position, hold it against enemy counter-attacks with the help of 5.5 inch and 105mm artillery-fire, then withdraw in good order 4,000 yards to the border.<sup>74</sup>

The First Division remained the main area of operations for both the British and the Indonesians but there was still activity toward the eastern end of the frontier. In the area where Sarawak and Sabah join, the 1/2 Gurkha Rifles had a busy time while they tried to dominate the enemy's side of the border. Throughout the second half of 1965 and into January 1966, the battalion continued to prevail over the enemy in the valley between Long Bawan and Long Medan following the raid on the latter target. In a series of minor actions, the Gurkhas each time out-manuevered the Indonesians. Although each operation only gained limited tactical success, the combination of these raids produced a strategic pressure which forced the Indonesians to withdraw from all of their forward positions — some 17 camps or posts — mainly because of the risk of ambushes or direct hits from the one 105mm gun supporting the 1/2 Gurkha Rifles. "By the end of 1965, the Indonesians had withdrawn some 10,000 yards, and the Gurkhas followed them up, maintaining contact and observation. During this period every rifleman in 'C' Company spent at least half of his time actually living in Kalimantan."<sup>75</sup>

### **ON-AGAIN, OFF-AGAIN**

By the end of November, at least 120 Indonesians had been killed by troops of West Brigade during the renewed CLARET operations, while the security forces had lost only one killed. Lea wanted as little killing as possible given the political situation in Indonesia, where, beginning in December, wholesale slaughter of communists and others was carried out by the Indonesian army. So, although he was unsure if he was making the right decision, Lea



ordered another 'be kind to Indos' break.<sup>76</sup> Even though December was relatively uneventful in terms of activity by Indonesian regulars, some IBT activity did occur. Lea "drew a clear distinction between [the regulars and the communist IBTs]"<sup>77</sup> noting that the IBTs would never give up, even when Confrontation ended, because life for the communists in Indonesia had become decidedly unhealthy. The Indonesian army, on the other hand, had no such problem and presumably would give up when ordered.<sup>78</sup> But the Indonesians once again changed their tactics.

January 1966 was another quiet month as no major raids crossed the border in either direction. But the SAS and similar units continued to patrol in Kalimantan to "check that the enemy was as quiescent as he seemed."<sup>79</sup> Towards the end of the month, British intelligence warned of an imminent attack from Sentas, across the border from Tebedu. "Brigadier Cheyne was for once able to order a pre-emptive strike in the manner originally envisioned for all CLARET operations."<sup>80</sup> An attack was mounted but was only partially successful, as the expected incursion was made the following month from an enemy camp further down river.

The force comprised approximately 70 men, mostly RPKAD, the rest, about 20, being Chinese IBTs. It was remarkable that the raiders penetrated as far as they did given that the security forces had managed for the most part to establish their cordon sanitaire of 10,000 yards. Involvement by the CCO was the key to their success since they had local contacts who knew the area well. The raiders almost reached Serian before being discovered and then were gradually eliminated over a period of several weeks.<sup>81</sup>

In response to the enemy's action, Lea again ordered offensive raids to be carried out. In the Bau and Serian areas of the First Division, the 1/10 Gurkha Rifles had the task of moving back across the border. During January, cross-border action in the area by 42 Commando, Royal Marines, and its attached company of 2/10 Gurkha Rifles, was restricted for political reasons. When the 1st Battalion became fully operational on 8 February, it sent two companies across the border for ten days of reconnaissances-in-strength to see if the Indonesians had used the lull to creep forward again and discovered that they had. Along the Koemba river, the enemy were once again moving men and supplies to their camps in and around Silaus as they had done before 2/2 Gurkha Rifles had made the river insecure. With some months' respite, due to the political constraints placed on CLARET, as well as the change-over of battalions, once again diesel-engined craft, landing craft and longboats plied the Koemba.<sup>82</sup>

The 1/10 Gurkha Rifles received authorization to ambush the Koemba following the Indonesian incursion of 16 February. Toward the end of that month, they laid a two-company ambush along the river and its approaches and their patience was rewarded by the substantial target of a diesel-engined craft. The ambush was kept in place for the rest of the day and they hit two more boats which were on their way to find out what the firing was about. In this one action the Gurkhas accounted for at least 37 killed before they withdrew to their side of the border. Although artillery sound-ranging devices and further patrols

revealed that another stretch of the Koemba was still being used for troop and materiel movement, political developments "now precluded further ambushing."<sup>83</sup> Indeed, elements of the battalion had just completed an extremely close reconnaissance of the enemy base at Kindau which indicated that a new regular division had arrived in the area. The whole battalion was in Kalimantan on 25 March and four of its five companies were in the process of surrounding the base when they received word to break off the assault. All they were allowed to do before retreating to the border was to launch a fire assault by supporting artillery.<sup>84</sup>

In late March 1966, secret 'peace feelers' were sent to Kuala Lumpur. Even though incursions by IBTs continued throughout the peace negotiations, Lea did not feel the need to authorize new CLARET raids. Reconnaissance activity in Kalimantan to give the security forces warning of possible attacks continued, to be sure,<sup>85</sup> but the secret war between the Commonwealth and Indonesian regulars now drew to a close. Confrontation continued, but more in the form in which it began: incursions by IBTs with a leavening of Indonesian regulars, who were then hunted down and eliminated. A face-to-face meeting between Indonesian officers representing General Suharto and members of the Malaysian government occurred on 25 May 1966, and three days later all cross-border activity by the security forces ended. CLARET came to a close three months before a formal cessation of Confrontation was ratified on 11 August.<sup>86</sup>

### **CLARET: AN APPRAISAL**

In the limited and politicized wars fought since 1945, even tactical decisions could have a strategic or political effect. The Borneo campaign was a good example of the "need for close and continuous control of military operations in the light of . . . political implications."<sup>87</sup> The decision to authorize cross-border raids was made at the highest levels of the British government, which was subsequently able to turn CLARET off and on like a faucet, depending on the political situation.<sup>88</sup> There seems to have been a direct correlation between Indonesian politico-military action and the intensity of CLARET activity, the best example of which was the 10th Gurkha Rifles' CLARET raid of March 1966. In response to secret peace-feelers, the battalion-sized raid was halted in mid-operation.

The British and Malaysians wished to avoid any unnecessary escalation of Confrontation for a number of reasons. Because Britain, Malaysia and Australia were able to demonstrate to the rest of the world that Indonesia was clearly the aggressor in Confrontation, Indonesia's virtual isolation was assured. It is doubtful, however, whether this feat of diplomacy could have been achieved if cross-border raids had been made public, regardless of Malaysia's right to protect herself in such a manner. There was also the possibility that should operations become a matter of public scrutiny, then their very success could have hampered de-escalation of the conflict, since Indonesian prestige would have been on the line. As events transpired, Indonesia was able to disengage more easily because the illusion was maintained that they had not suffered militarily.

But how exactly did CLARET contribute to the ending of Confrontation? It may have increased the division between Sukarno and the army officers who played such a key role in his overthrow. Sukarno possibly never knew about British activity in Kalimantan (i.e., CLARET), or that by August 1965 his soldiers were no longer operating in East Malaysia.<sup>89</sup> The heads of the army would not have been keen to expose their military failings to Sukarno. The fact that CLARET operations were almost always successful in tactical terms, that they were in nearly every case completely deniable by the security forces, and that virtually fool-proof covers were invented for every operation, all perpetuated the myth that the war was still being fought on the Malaysian side of the border. The Indonesian army generals were not willing to disturb this fabrication as it made them out to be more successful than they really were. There is reason to believe, therefore, that lack of success by the Indonesian army was viewed as 'foot-dragging' by its political opponents, especially the PKI, which in turn may have expanded the rift between Sukarno and Suharto and forced the latter to act in the aftermath of the attempted coup.<sup>90</sup>

Secrecy was one of the keys to CLARET's successful contribution to ending Confrontation. The ability to keep CLARET a secret may have been a situation unique to Borneo. The frontier was in most cases accessible only by helicopter or small boat and the military was able to maintain a strict control over the use of these forms of transportation near operational areas. Walker, and then Lea, did not allow combatant troops any closer to 'civilization' than company or battalion bases, almost all of which were near the border. And as many of the combatants spoke the little-known language of Gurkhali, any one attempting journalistic or other investigative work about the border area had to rely on the security forces for both information and transportation. Security remained excellent all-around. At FARELF headquarters in Singapore, 'need-to-know' was so strictly adhered to that men working next to each other for months might never know what the other was working on.<sup>91</sup> It was due primarily to these factors that secrecy was maintained.

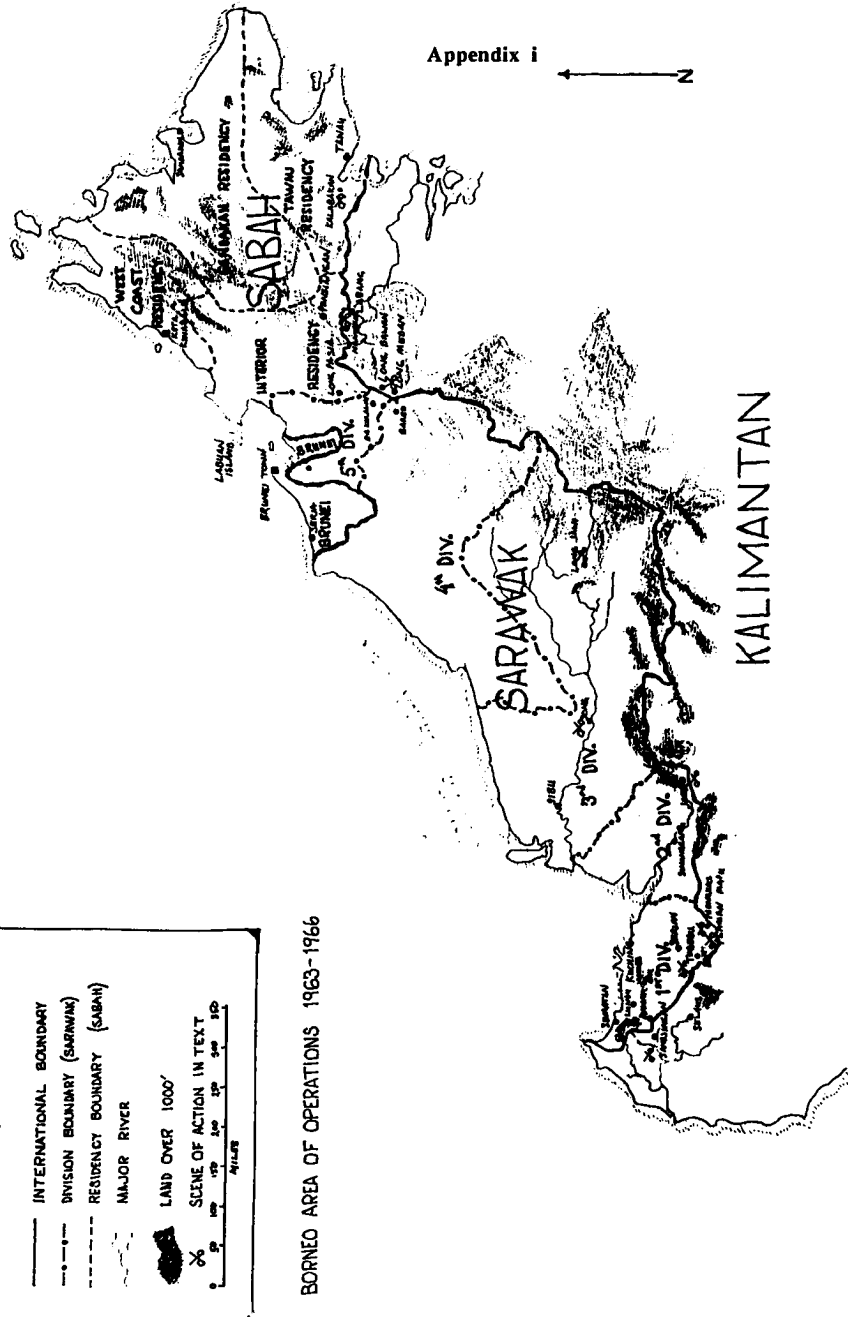
As a military tool, CLARET seems to have been most effective between June and November 1965 when Lea ordered the intensive series of strikes following the attack on Plaman Mapu and the raid on the 18th Milestone Police Station. This phase was unlike the previous 11 months of CLARET, when Walker used operations as 'rapier-thrusts.' CLARET was most successful when the enemy was forced, by a concerted military effort, to defend himself and to pull back 10,000 yards or more from the border, whence viable raids simply could not be launched. It is noteworthy that every time pressure was eased the Indonesians went back on to the offensive, as occurred in October 1965 when Lea imposed his 'be kind to Indos' break.

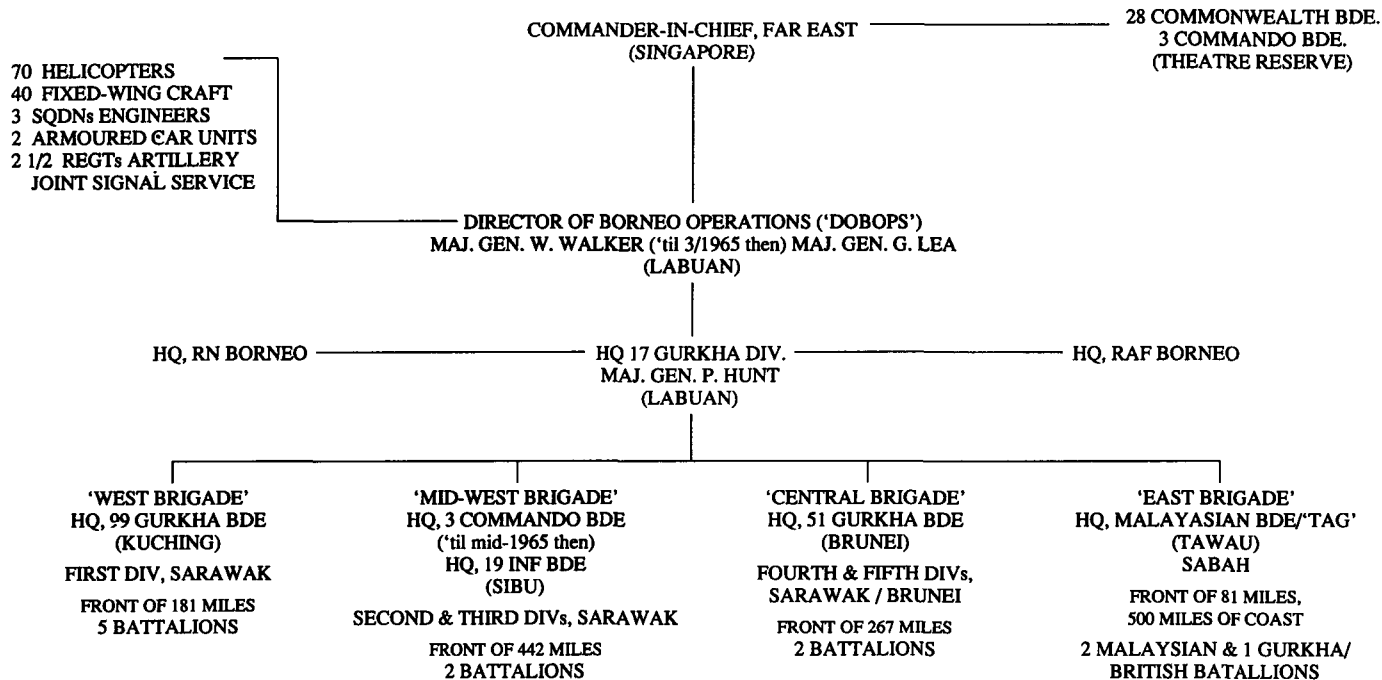
Many of the campaign's chroniclers have had a tendency to compare Confrontation with the war in Vietnam,<sup>92</sup> which is understandable for contemporary commentators but rather specious for more recent analysts. Although there are some striking similarities between the two wars — a long, hard-to-defend frontier and an internal and external threat, for example — there are some

very important differences. For the most part the natives of Borneo wished to be part of the federation, as was demonstrated by the UN mission of early 1964; indeed, the majority of the security forces' successes would not have been possible without the willing assistance of the border tribes. This was not the case in South Vietnam where the majority of the rural population felt, at best, indifferent to the government, and at worst, openly hostile. The government of South Vietnam was unable and unwilling to provide its rural population with real protection from the Viet Cong. Fumbling efforts at 'hearts and minds' only made matters worse and the war continued to escalate. The leadership of the US-trained South Vietnamese forces was extremely poor and opportunities to destroy the Viet Cong were missed. The British-led security forces in Borneo, on the other hand, had excellent leadership and superb soldiery. They were able to stop the external threat, while the police and Special Branch handled the internal threat. The Americans and South Vietnamese did not seriously attack the internal threat until the late 1960s,<sup>93</sup> by which time the war had moved into a more conventional phase.

Politically, the secrecy of CLARET allowed the Indonesians a face-saving way of backing down once military aggression proved fruitless. Militarily, CLARET was able to stop the Indonesians. Both tactically and strategically, CLARET is an excellent example of 'war as a continuation of policy by other means.' It was successful because of strict control by policy-makers and because the operations were conducted by highly-trained, physically fit, well-led, and motivated troops. The Borneo campaign was, according to Denis Healey, a "textbook demonstration of how to apply economy of force, under political guidance for political ends."<sup>94</sup>

Appendix i





R.M. S.B.S.; GUARDS IND. PARA. COY.; 22 SAS; AUSTRALIAN SAS; NEW ZEALAND SAS; GURKHA IND. PARA. COY.;  
PARA. REGT. SAS SQDN.; BORDER & CROSS-BORDER SCOUTS

## KALIMANTAN

### Endnotes

1. J.A.C. Mackie, in *Konfrontasi: The Indonesia-Malaysia Dispute 1963-1966* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), follows the latter line of argument, and claims that from 1964 until the end of Confrontation, there was a "military stalemate." (pp. 2-10, 212) This is clearly not the case, as CLARET made a significant change in the military sphere. Mackie must have been unaware of the cross-border activity because he writes that Kalimantan was inviolate to British-led security forces. It would seem, then, that he never read Tom Pocock's *Fighting General: The Public and Private Campaigns of General Sir Walter Walker* (London: Collins, 1973), which is a major source on CLARET and was published a year before Mackie's work.
2. Interview with Field Marshal The Lord Bramall, GCB, OBE, MC, who was the commander of the 1/2 Royal Green Jackets (King's Royal Rifle Corps) in Borneo, 1965. The interview was conducted by the author on 19 July 1989. Lord Bramall was, until recently, Colonel Commandant of the 2nd KEO Goorkha Rifles (The Sirmoor Rifles), a regiment which played a large part in Confrontation. He is also military adviser to the Sultan of Brunei and thus is well qualified to speak about the campaign.
3. Mackie, p. 10.
4. An acronym used by Sukarno which referred to 'neo-colonial, colonial and imperialist powers.'
5. Philip Darby, *British Defence Policy East of Suez 1947 to 1969* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 153, 222; c.f., Michael Dockrill, *British Defence Since 1945* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 127.
6. Darby, p. 215.
7. David Charters and Maurice Tugwell, eds., *Armies in Low-Intensity Conflict: A Comparative Analysis* (Toronto: Brassey's Defence Publishers, 1989), p. 184.
8. Mackie, p. 101.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 120-21. The revolt was also known as "Azahari's Revolt," after the name of its leader.
10. Lt. Gen. Sir Walter Walker, "How Borneo was won: the untold story of an Asian Victory," *The Round Table*, (January 1969), p. 11.
11. Pocock, pp. 154-55.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 155.
13. *Ibid.*, pp 173-74; Harold James and Denis Sheil-Small, *A Pride of Gurkhas: 2nd King Edward VII's Own Goorkhas (The Sirmoor Rifles) 1948-1971* (London: Leo Cooper, 1975), pp. 149-60.
14. Information on the history and background of the SAS can be found in: W.D. Baker, *'Dare to Win: the Story of the New Zealand Special Air Service* (Nashville: Battery Press, 1987); Tony Geraghty, *Inside the SAS* (Toronto: Methuen, 1980); David Horner, *Phantoms of the Jungle: A History of the Australian Special Air Service* (Nashville: Battery Press, 1989); John Strawson, *A History of the SAS Regiment* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1984); and, Julian Thompson, *Ready for Anything: Airborne Forces 1940-1990* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1990).
15. Harold James and Denis Sheil-Small, *The Undeclared War: The Story of the Indonesian Confrontation 1962-1966* (Singapore: Asia Pacific Press, 1971), pp. 97-99.
16. Pocock, p. 179.
17. James and Sheil-Small, *The Undeclared War*, pp. 102-103; Pocock, pp. 179-80.
18. See James and Sheil-Small, *The Undeclared War*, pp. 107-14. The missiles were mounted only as an emergency contingency. The 'aiming mechanism' consisted of cross-hairs drawn with grease pencil on the perspex of the helicopter! Discussion with Major General Julian Thompson, CB, OBE, May 1989. I am indebted to Gen. Thompson for his advice and assistance in researching this article.

19. Pocock, p. 181.
20. Mackie, p. 154.
21. James and Sheil-Small, *Price*, p. 167.
22. Pocock, pp. 193-94.
23. Up until the time of the attempted communist coup in Jakarta on 30 September 1965, the Indonesians attempted numerous other landings in Malaya and Singapore. In 1964: 29 October, 14 November, 1, 9, 23, 24, 26/27, 28 December; in 1965: 8, 9 January, 12, 22, 24/25 February, 10, 17, 25 March, 30 May, 26 June. Lt. Col. J.P. Craw, "Indonesian Incursions into West Malaysia and Singapore between August 1964 and 30 September 1965," *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, (1966).
24. Pocock, pp. 99, 194-96. This version is borne out to a degree by Peter Dickens in *SAS: The Jungle Frontier, 22 Special Air Service Regiment in the Borneo Campaign 1963-1966* (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1983), as he gives Healey the credit for the decision (p. 119). Official records on CLARET are closed in Britain until at least 1995, although some related official documents appear to be available in Australia. Denis Healey's new autobiography, *The Time of My Life* (New York W.W. Norton, 1990) adds nothing new to the existing record.
25. Geraghty, p. 54; James and Sheil-Small, *Pride*, p. 163; Maj. Gen. R.W.L. McAlister, *Bugle and Kukri: The Story of the 10th Princess Mary's Own Gurkha Rifles, Volume 2*, (Regimental Trust of the 10th Gurkha Rifles, 1984), p. 398; Charles Messenger, *The Steadfast Gurkha: Historical Record of 6th Queen Elizabeth's Own Gurkha Rifles, Volume 3, 1948-1982* (London: Leo Cooper, 1985), p. 71. It was already acknowledged by Pocock that the SAS had been operating across the border in a reconnaissance role much earlier. Pocock, p. 196.
26. David Horner, "The Australian Army and Indonesia's Confrontation with Malaysia," *Australian Outlook* (April 1989), p. 65. This information disproves James' and Sheil-Small's contention that cross-border operations were authorized to a depth of up to 10,000 meters from the middle of 1964 (*Pride*, p. 168); this was not allowed until months later.
27. McAlister, p. 398; c.f. James and Sheil-Small, *Pride*, where the authors mention that Walker at "first . . . allowed counter-bombardment, next he authorized the formation of killer squads for special 'pursuit' tasks," p. 168.
28. Horner, "The Australian Army," p. 64.
29. Pocock, p. 197.
30. First mentioned in Pocock, p. 197, and reproduced elsewhere, including in E.D. Smith's *Counter-Insurgency Campaigns: 1, Malaya and Borneo* (London: Ian Allan, 1985), p. 73; during the period of intensive operations, some rules were relaxed somewhat.
31. Horner, *Phantoms*, p. 99.
32. See Horner, *Phantoms*, pp. 159-61, where two Australian SAS troopers were presumed drowned in a river crossing in Kalimantan. Horner also mentions the 42 Cdo., Royal Marines attack on Sadjingan (p. 157), where two men were killed and only one body recovered; this was confirmed by Yeoman Warder Pearce, interview of 30 June 1989.
33. James and Sheil-Small, *Pride*, pp. 170-75.
34. Horner, "The Australian Army," pp. 66-67; *Phantoms*, p. 75. Selective service in Australia was not instituted for the then nascent war in Vietnam, but because of the Indonesian threat.
35. Horner, "The Australian Army," p. 67; Dickens, pp. 135-36.
36. Walker, p. 17; Pocock, p. 199; estimates went as high as 30,000 men. Mackie, p. 215. According to McAlister, the Diponogoro Division was among the elite units deployed by the Indonesians (p. 406).
37. Pocock, pp. 199-200.
38. McAlister, pp. 400-404.



39. Walker, p. 17.
40. Dickens, p. 135.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 136; Horner, "The Australian Army," p. 67. In a cable of 15 January 1965, to the acting Australian Prime Minister, John McEwan, Prime Minister Harold Wilson stated that permission had been given to extend operations up to 10,000 yards inside Kalimantan.
42. Thomas R. Mockaitis, "The Origins of British Counterinsurgency," *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 1, no. 3 (1990) (Draft), p. 4.
43. Pocock, p. 206. The casualties for the Borneo campaign were relatively light considering that it went on for almost four years. Indonesian casualties caused by CLARET operations were substantial, but it was rare that a raid would succeed in destroying a unit larger than a platoon. This was not the case for Indonesian units which managed to penetrate Malaysia, where usually they were completely eliminated. By forestalling incursions, CLARET saved Indonesian as well as Commonwealth lives. Dickens, p. 229; Smith, p. 101. Commonwealth casualties: *killed*: 114 security forces, 36 civilians; *wounded*: 181 security forces, 53 civilians; *captured*: 4 civilians. Indonesian casualties: *killed*: 590; *wounded*: 22; *captured*: 771. Indonesian casualties are those admitted by the Indonesians, or in the case of the wounded, those confirmed by the security forces. It is believed that Indonesian casualties were actually much higher, as victims of CLARET raids could not always be counted. See Smith, p. 101.
44. James and Sheil-Small, *Pride*, pp. 176-78.
45. McAlister, p. 408. In early 1965 "DOBOPS . . . authorized cross-border recce by all companies of suitably experienced batalions."
46. *Ibid.*, pp. 408-11.
47. James and Sheil-Small, *Pride*, pp. 179-86.
48. Pocock, p. 211.
49. *Ibid.*, pp. 153ff. Such criticism of Walker's supposed hysteria was particularly strong during the first year of the campaign. The passage of time proved him correct.
50. Walker, p. 15; Jack Weller, "British Weapons and Tactics in Malaysia," *Military Review*, (November 1966), pp. 22-3; Pocock, pp. 210-11.
51. Pocock, p. 212.
52. Dickens, p. 157.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 157. It is perhaps wrong to give the impression that there was only minimal offensive activity in the first half of 1965. For instance, during its first tour in Borneo, the 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment between February and July conducted 30 CLARET operations, 12 being reconnaissance patrols, the rest being ambushes or fighting patrols, but no raids. Horner, "The Australian Army," p. 71
54. Anon., "Jungle Patrol: 2 PARA in Borneo," *Pegasus*, no. 2 (1965), pp. 32-33; James and Sheil-Small, *The Undeclared War*, pp. 156-58; Gregory Blaxland, *The Regiments Depart: A History of the British Army, 1945-1970* (London: William Kimber, 1971), pp. 402-403.
55. Anon., "Jungle Patrol," p. 34; Dickens, p. 160; c.f., Thompson, pp. 300-304. Thompson gives the time of the first assault as 0445hrs.
56. As many as 300 RPKAD soldiers were casualties — half the battalion. Thompson, p. 304.
57. Dickens, p. 161.
58. This was known as Operation HAMMER. See Giles Mills, *The Annals of the King's Royal Rifle Corps. Volume VII 1943-1965* (Winchester: Celer et Audax Club, 1979), p. 301, and James and Sheil-Small, *Pride*, p. 197.
59. Dickens, p. 194.
60. McAlister, p. 416.
61. Dickens, p. 194.

62. McAlister. pp. 419-24.
63. Mills, pp. 306-7.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 307.
65. James and Sheil-Small, *Pride*, pp. 198-99.
66. Dickens, p. 196.
67. *Ibid.*, pp. 180, 196-98.
68. Horner, "The Australian Army," p. 71.
69. Charles Allen, *The Savage Wars of Peace*, (London: Michael Joseph, 1990), p. 115.
70. Mackie, pp. 4, 193, 220, 223.
71. Dickens, p. 212.
72. *Ibid.*, p. 212.
73. Major C J D Bullock, "2/2 GR Cross Border Operations November 1965," *British Army Review*, (April 1978); James and Sheil-Small, *Pride*, pp. 206-208.
74. It was during this attack that the only Victoria Cross of the campaign was won by L/Cpl. Rambahadur Limbu. McAlister, pp. 425-9, and James and Sheil-Small, *The Undeclared War*, pp. 177-80.
75. James and Sheil-Small, *Pride*, pp. 210-11.
76. Dickens, pp. 214-15.
77. *Ibid.*, p. 217.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 217
79. *Ibid.*, p. 217.
80. *Ibid.*, p. 218.
81. The incursion began on 16 February. The raiders were hunted down by men of the Argylls, the 2/7 and 1/10 GR. The rounding-up of the raiders was known as Operation MIXED-BAG. The best account of MIXED-BAG can be found in Lt. Col. P E Collins' "The Front was Everywhere," *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, (May 1967).
82. McAlister, pp. 223, 226-27.
83. *Ibid.*, pp. 226-28.
84. *Ibid.*, pp. 231-37; c.f., Blaxland, p. 408. This was probably due to Suharto finally deposing Sukarno in March 1966. The reconnaissance got as close as 10 yards. Another reconnaissance of the same time by Sgt. Peter Pearce of 42 Cdo got even closer. While carrying out a reconnaissance for a raid on Sadjingan in 1966, Pearce was able to get as close to enemy soldiers as 5 yards away without being seen. At one time, while lying up beyond the enemy camp, Pearce and his party were sitting behind a bush when a group of Indonesians stopped on the other side of the bush. One of the Indonesians urinated on the bush that separated the two enemies! Fortunately, the Indonesians did not spot Pearce's group, as their weapons were to one side while they were eating. Interview with Yeoman Warder Pearce, 30 June 1989.
85. Dickens, p. 227; Horner, "The Australian Army," p. 72. Horner mentions the activity of an Australian SAS unit which was operating across the border at this time, but with orders to avoid contact.
86. Horner, "The Australian Army," p. 72; for a good account of the confused negotiations by the Indonesians during this period, see Dr. Michael Leifer's "Indonesia and Malaysia: the changing face of confrontation," *The World Today*, (1966).
87. Healey, p. 287.
88. This was clearly demonstrated by the 2/10 Gurkha Rifle's battalion operation of late March 1966 being stopped during its execution. McAlister simply states the Battalion received orders to desist (p. 237), whereas Blaxland states the order came from Whitehall (p. 408).

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89. Interview with Maj. Gen. Sir Jeremy Moore, 19 May 1989.
90. Mackie, p. 214.
91. Maj. Gen. Julian Thompson, in conversation, June 1989, and in letter to the author, 20 August 1989. Thompson was part of the Army operations cell of FARELF during the campaign; c.f., Allen, particularly Chapter 6.
92. Smith, p. 101; Lt. Col. J.P. Cross, *Jungle Warfare: Experiences and Encounters* (London: Arms & Armour Press, 1989), pp. 176-78, where he quotes Walker, James and Sheil-Small, *The Undeclared War*, p. 192.
93. This includes the much maligned and misunderstood PHOENIX counter-intelligence program.
94. Healey, p. 289.