

Series: AWM95
Australian Army commanders' diaries

Miscellaneous units

Item number: 17/4/2

Item: Australian Observer Unit

Narrative

Appendix

[1-30 Nov 1952]

SECRET

WAR DIARY

Unit .AUST OBSERVER UNIT.

Month and year NOV 52.

Commanding officer

Place	Date	Summary of events and information	References to appendices
SINGAPORE	1 Nov 52.	Capt J.I.WILLIAMSON assumed command of No 1 Det 101 Wireless Regiment and also duties of Aust Adm Officer for Aust Observer Unit.	
	2-3-4-5 Nov 52.	Nil.	
	6 Nov 52.	Capt CATTANACH left for HONG KONG on liaison visit to 367 Communications Unit RAF. Travel by RAF courier.	
	7-8-9-10-11 Nov 52. 12 Nov 52.	Nil. Capt CATTANACH arrived ex HONG KONG by RAF courier.	
	13 Nov 52.	3/355 Maj I.D.CAMERON RAE disembarked SINGAPORE ex SS "CHARON" for tour of duty with CE's Branch GHQ FARELF. Duration of inspection tour of duty approx 6 months.	
	14 Nov 52.	Lt Col S.J.HILL R Aust Sigs arrived TENGAH airfield SINGAPORE by RAAF Lincoln. Col HILL is CO 101 Wireless Regiment and came up for an inspection tour of Det stationed in SINGAPORE. Met by CO GHQ Signal Regiment Lt Col G.DUPTON and Capt WILLIAMSON.	
	15-16 Nov 52.	Nil.	
	17 Nov 52.	Visit to CSO's Branch FARELF and meeting Government Communications Officer.	

SECRET

WAR DIARY

Unit AUST OBSERVER UNIT.

Month and year NOV 52.

Commanding officer

Place	Date	Summary of events and information	References to appendices
SINGAPORE	18 Nov 52.	<p>5/95 Capt D. WHITE RAASC embarked SS "CHARON" for West Australia after several weeks attachment with RASC for instruction on airdropping, parachuting, etc, under jungle conditions. Five "on loan" personnel embarked "CHARON".</p> <p>Col S.J.HILL visited CHIA KENG No 2 Wireless Station where majority of Attached Aust personnel work.</p>	<p>Movement Order 290 Q Mov. Appx 'A'.</p>
	19 Nov 52.	<p>Inspection visit to Army Wireless Chain Transmitting Site.</p>	
	20 Nov 52.	<p>Latest issue MBI's arrived stating, inter alia, all Units on War Service are to keep War Diaries. No blank pro formas held either in Unit or in FARELF. Required forms will be run off and used pending receipt of some from AUST.</p>	<p>MBI 173/52.</p>
	21 Nov 52.	<p>Increase in Location Allowance for OR's of Aust Forces serving in MALAYA to 14/4 a day. Paybooks of all personnel on Singapore Island entered up.</p>	
	22 Nov 52.	<p>Lt Col S.J.HILL departed by RAAF Lincoln from TENGAH airfield at 0625GH for Aust. His visit was of great benefit to Unit as it enabled him to see the conditions under which Det works and allowed also the problems of the Det to be presented at first hand.</p>	
	23 Nov 52.	<p>Nil.</p>	

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SECRETWAR DIARYUnit AUST OBSERVER UNIT.Month and year NOV 52.

Commanding officer

Place	Date	Summary of events and information	References to appendices
SINGAPORE	24 Nov 52.	2/40013 Maj M. DARBYSHIRE and 1/8010 Capt C.J.CATTANACH embarked on SS "MERKUR" for return to Aust after their tours of duty in Malaya and Singapore respectively.	
	25-26-27-28 Nov 52.	Nil.	
	29 Nov 52.	5/7509 Capt B.S.O'DOWD R Aust Inf deplaned CHANGI Singapore for duties with FTG vice Maj M.DARBYSHIRE.	
	30 Nov 52.	2/1049 Sgt TURNER R. deplaned CHANGI airfield Singapore for 12 months tour of duty with No 1 Det 101 Wireless Regiment.	
		Attached is an outline of the functions of the Australian Observer Unit and the problems facing the compilation of its War Diary.	Appx 'B'.
		Strength state as at 30 Nov 52 attached.	Appx 'C'.

RETURN OF "ON LOAN" PERSONNEL - SS "CHARON".

1. The following embarked on SS CHARON on 18 Nov 52 for return to AUST after their tours of duty.

6/4518 WO11 HURST M. ex 1 Station Wksps TALPING.
3/4518 Sgt SPARROW M.W. ex 1 Station Wksps TALPING.
3/1336 Sgt SAUNDERS B.C. ex GHQ Sig Regt.
2/2235 L/Cpl HARDY M. ex GHQ Sig Regt.
1/704 Sgt TARR E.C. ex FARELF Training Centre.


2. All will be disembarked FREMANTLE WA.

3. Authority for their return was Q Mov 160601/Q Mov of 8 Nov 52 issued under GHQ FARELF CRFE/14277/MP2/F dated 3 Nov 52.

4. Personnel were staged at GHQ Signal Regiment prior to embarkation as the documentation, etc, of these personnel could be carried out easier from one central Unit.

WAR DIARY - AUST OBSERVER UNIT.

1. The Australian Observer Unit LE IV/108/1 was first promulgated in MBI's 23 Feb 1951. Amendments were issued from time to time and in MBI's of 6 Jun 52 LE IV/108/2 was issued superseding the original LE. Since then there has been one further amendment published.
2. The Unit however, has never functioned as a normal unit. It was formed to overcome difficulties that would otherwise arise in obtaining certain benefits and re-establishment rights resulting from service in MALAYA. It's organisation is completely elastic and grows and contracts with the arrival and departure of personnel. It has no Commanding Officer, no Administrative or Q personnel, no transport of its own; in fact none of the normal things a unit is expected to have.
3. The Unit is made up of representatives of several Corps. Each representative, whether "on loan" or attached has been sent to MALAYA for a specific task. Despite the fact that all the Unit's personnel work under the British Army there is still a deal of liaison and administration to be carried out on matters peculiar to Australian conditions of service, e.g. pay, leave, etc.. It was therefore essential that someone undertook to be responsible for these matters. Maj G. SADLER performed these duties until he returned to AUSTRALIA; then Capt CATTANACH took over. It is convenient that the OC of No 1 Det of 101 Wireless Regiment do these duties as he has the majority of Aust personnel under his direct command in any case. On Capt CATTANACH's return the duties were taken on by Capt WILLIAMSON.
4. However, when it comes to compiling a War Diary for the Australian Observer Unit, several difficulties arise immediately. The first one is that although one officer deals with administrative matters as required, he has no access to information as to the operational role of those whom he does not actually command. An analysis of the present situation may clarify this point. One officer on strength of the Unit is stationed in HONG KONG. Two other officers work at GHQ FARELF, one in Int the other with the Engineers. Another officer and three NCO's, all Infantry, instruct at the FARELF Training Centre, KOTA TINGGI, JOHORE. Three RAEME personnel are employed in No 2 Station Workshops KLUANG in MALAYA. Another RAEME NCO is employed at HQ 63 GHURKA Inf Bde. The remainder of the Unit, one Officer and sixteen OR, work at CHIA KENG on the island of Singapore. It is seen therefore that the obtaining of day to day knowledge of the operational workings of these personnel is practically impossible.
5. The next point on which difficulty arises is one of security. Although the contents of a War Diary are classified as SECRET, the operations of Capt WILLIAMSON and Det cannot be published even at this security classification. Immediately therefore the publication of day to day working of more than half the members of the Australian Observer Unit is not practicable without severe restrictions.
6. The normal items which are usually included in a War Diary such as Operation Orders, Changes in location, patrol reports, changes in communications etc, never occur. It is therefore possible to include only items such as arrivals and departures of personnel, changes in postings, amendments to the LE, any relevant matters on pay etc, visits by Officers to Singapore or Malaya and points of a general liaison nature.
7. Any comments or suggestions that may be made concerning the above are awaited by this Unit.


.....Capt.
Aust Observer Unit.

STRENGTH STATE AUST OBSERVER UNIT - 30 NOV 52.

1. The parade state of the Australian Observer Unit is :-

(a) Officers.

2/130 Maj H.R.FUHRMAN - On loan G Int Branch GHQ FARELF.
3/355 Maj I.D.CAMERON - GHQ FARELF.
1/112 Capt J.I.WILLIAMSON - Att GHQ Signal Regiment.
5/7509 Capt B.S.O'DOWD - On loan F.T.C.
2/40036 Capt J.M.Da Costa - RAF HONG KONG.

Total - 5.

(b) OR.

3/953 WO11 HICKS M.J. - R Aust Inf on loan F.T.C.
1/505 Sgt GRAHAM D.W. - " " " " " "
3/2725 Sgt BURGESS A.W.C. - " " " " " "
2/3152 L/Cpl WEST K. - R Aust Sigs on loan GHQ Signal Regt.
3/901 Signm STRAUGHEN M. - " " " " " " "
3/1789 WO11 McLACHERN R.E. - RAEME on loan No 2 Stn Wksps KLUANG.
3/2828 Cfn ZIEBELL I.D. - " " " " " " "
2/3948 Cfn POLGLAZE J.W.J. - " " " " " " "
3/2369 Sgt CAHILL A.D. - RAEME on loan HQ 63 GHURKA Inf Bde.

Total on loan - 9.

2/1049 Sgt TURNER R. - Att GHQ Sig Regt.
2/4713 Cpl ALLWRIGHT R. - " " " "
2/1895 Cpl HOOKER J.D.D. - " " " "
1/9790 Cpl MITCHELL W.H. - " " " "
2/1210 Cpl TURNER R.C. - " " " "
6/122 Cpl WEBB J.G. - " " " "
1/703 Cpl HUGHES W.E. - " " " "
3/10008 Cpl QUICKMIRE P.W. - " " " "
2/4366 Signm ANSTEE M.G. - " " " "
3/10678 Signm BUCKTON T. - " " " "
1/715 Signm CASEY W.E. - " " " "
3/2276 Signm DARKER W.H. - " " " "
3/3366 Signm FINCHER H.W.R. - " " " "
3/2735 Signm HARRIS R.G. - " " " "
3/3147 Signm JORDAN C.C.H. - " " " "
5/645 Signm KILLICK A.S. - " " " "
2/10270 Signm PARSONS E.W. - " " " "

Total Att. - 17.

Total All Ranks. - 5 Offrs. 26OR.