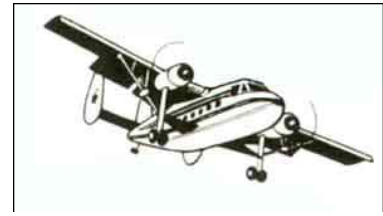


TWIN PIONEER



- Twin Pioneers and the Queen's Own Highlanders strike hard and fast.

TWIN PIONEERS OF 209 SQUADRON IN SERIOUS ACTION.

This story comes from a wide variety of references and while there are some inconsistencies, all sources are agreed that the Queen's Own Highlanders, five Twin Pioneers, a lone Beverley (of 34 Squadron) and their crews did a great job at the beginning of a period in history that became known as Konfrontasi

Most people have heard of Britain's involvement in military conflicts in the latter half of last century, such as the Falklands War and the Gulf War. What the younger generation does not realise is that soldiers, sailors, and airmen from Britain and the Commonwealth have been fighting small wars to defend Britain's shrinking empire since the end of World War Two.

From the insect-ridden jungles of Malaya to the frozen hills of Korea, in the back streets of Aden and Cyprus, from the African bush of Kenya to the rain-soaked hills of the Falkland Islands, young National Servicemen and regular British soldiers have been defending the British Empire, Commonwealth and allies for the last 60 years.

The theatres of these forgotten wars, disruptions, rebellions, emergencies or whatever you call them were to be found right across the surface of the globe, as the Empire red of World maps reduced to two or three pinpricks. It was the time of the end of an Empire. British influence, and that of other

European colonial powers, reduced as nationalism, political dogmatists, and religious sects exercised new found power and allies. It is a surprise to some to learn just how often the Twin Pioneer was on duty and involved at the sharp end when a multi-tasking weapon was required.

The Twin Pioneer was involved in the following theatres Malaya, Kenya, Borneo, Aden, Radfan, Oman, Dhofar, the first Gulf War, and The Cameroons. a significant contribution for an unsung warbird. It is still unclear what clandestine operations were undertaken in Laos and Vientiane.

One of these actions took place in the early 1960s in the Sultanate of Brunei and was known as The Confrontation. Of Konfrontasi, depending which side you were on!

The Federation of Malaysia proposed by The Malayan Federation Prime Minister Abdul Rahman was to compose of Malaya, Singapore, and the northern Borneo colonies of Sarawak, Sabah and Brunei. These bordered Indonesian Borneo (Kalimantan), the president of which was Sukarno, who dreamed of bringing the British colonies along with Malaya and Singapore into a Greater Indonesia by force if necessary. The only person who opposed the Malaysian idea, apart from Sukarno, was the Sultan of Brunei who hesitated.

It was in Brunei that Sukarno saw his chance and the TNKU (North Kalimantan National Army) rose in revolt on 8th December 1962. The Sultan requested British help and British and Gurkha troops, with support from Australia and New Zealand, were sent from their bases in Singapore by air and sea. It was a lightning fast response due in no small measure to the capabilities of the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy.

What follows is the story of the action carried out by soldiers of the Queen's Own Highlanders to rescue oil workers captured by the rebels in the oil town of Seria.

After the abortive attempt by 'C' Company of the Gurkha Rifles to relieve Seria by road, it was decided that the only alternative was to make an assault from the air.

A reconnaissance flight was made over the oilfields, which reported that rebel flags were flying at various parts of the Shell complex and the whole six-mile stretch of coast appeared to be firmly under their control. However, it was considered that there might be a rough grass strip, west of the oilfield, capable of taking aircraft. It had also been noted with surprise that the runway of the small Shell airfield at Anduki, to the east, and the buildings that were obviously occupied by the TNKU did not appear to have been obstructed or damaged in any way.

A small air armada was assembled at Brunei airfield, sufficient to lift 100 men of the Queen's Own Highlanders. On December 10th, the Highlanders launched two simultaneous attacks, one west of Seria to relieve the main police station at Panaga, the other to recapture Anduki airfield to the east. Twin Pioneers were used to land the assault party on long, rough grass to the west of the town: these planes survived their bumpy landings to enable the soldiers to deploy and capture, without loss, the police station which was nearly two miles away. Meanwhile at Anduki, a giant Beverley of 34 Squadron, landed with the soldiers standing by the doors ready to leap out when it touched down. As it did so the pilot opened the throttle and the lumbering aircraft soared away although under fire from the airfield buildings. The Highlanders fought a sharp action for the control tower following which the airfield was quickly captured.

Some serious rehearsal for Seria. Wing Cdr Graves personally accompanied the five Twin Pioneer aircraft of 209 Squadron in the leading aircraft. This group consisted of sixty men under the command of Major Cameron. The landing zone was, as forecast - rough, grassy, and very soft. The sky was darkening quickly with the approach of a tropical storm as the leading pilot came in over some high trees from the north and finally pulled up ten yards short of a ditch and facing a .Major Road Ahead. sign. Graves at once ordered the other aircraft to land from the south. Even this route was difficult, as it involved brushing the top foliage of a badly placed tree with the port wing. However, thanks to the skill and tenacity of the pilots the first three aircraft landed within fifteen minutes. The last two aircraft were caught by the heavy rainstorm but eventually made the touchdown. By this time the grass was a mess of churned up mud, and the last aircraft became temporarily bogged down but managed to take off again. The whole landing operation had taken twenty-five minutes. As soon as each group had de-planed, it moved east for about two miles along the road towards Panaga Police Station. One platoon quickly established a road block about three-quarters of a mile farther east along the Jalan Tengah - a main road running through the town to Anduki airfield on the other side. The other platoon was ordered to establish a roadblock in the area of the Telecommunications Centre on the Jalan Utara -parallel to and north of the Jalan Tengah. Second Lieutenant MacKenzie moved his platoon forward and was within sight of the Telecommunications Centre when they were fired upon from a window to the right of the entrance. Corporal Shepherd brought his Bren gun into action, while Lance Corporal Walkinshaw's section doubled forward to engage the rebels from a ditch in front of the building. The heaviest fire was coming from windows on either side of the door. There was a wire enclosure around the building and MacKenzie decided to get in from the rear. Joined by Lance Corporal Ward, he started to climb the wire. Immediately two rebels in the rear building came out with their hands up. One was ordered to double round and open the gate, which he did. Shooting broke out again from the building. Ordering covering fire, MacKenzie doubled forward to a window. With the recklessness of youth, he rashly attempted to locate the rebels by looking through the window. A shot fired from the back of the room grazed his ear. The action was over by 1500 hours with the hostages being rescued unharmed. The element of surprise was a major factor but the courage of those on the ground and in the air has to be admired.

On the December 16th, the British Far Eastern Command issued a statement saying that all major centres in Brunei had been cleared of the rebels. On 19th December, Major-General Walter Walker, who had established a considerable reputation as an expert in jungle warfare during the Malayan Emergency, was appointed Commander British Forces Borneo Territories. There was never a declaration of war between Britain and Indonesia and the rules of engagement were surprisingly complex but in 1966 .Confrontation. was over.

