A Japanese Naval officer who subsequently ‘died of wounds’ at Long Berang. The photo also includes the District Officer who helped Warrant Officer Cusack and Corporal Hardy.
Prahus entering the narrow rapids section on the Baram River.

Parts of Sipitang remain unchanged since 1945.
Being the son of a post-war Kelabit soldier, it was particularly hard distinguishing stories from my father's experience as a 11 year old cook for the late Tuan Mayur (Harrisson) and tales from his involvement during the Confrontation and Brunei Rebellion, let alone remembering what was considered folklore from the 1940s. Unlike the much-acclaimed British SAS, to this day, Z Special Force remains a mystery to most people. Being a wild man of the Borneo kind, who in my younger days dreamt of being a counter-revolutionary hero, I am fortunate to have laid my hands on some books and articles on Z Force which I enjoyed reading tremendously. My story is based upon facts heard and passed from generation to generation. Included too, are my personal views and reflection, which should not be generalised otherwise. In mid 1996, I had a letter from an anonymous Australian, stating his intention to retrace the Semut operations undertaken by Z Special Force during WWII (the Japanese War, as commonly referred to by locals). How he got my name and address, remains a mystery and until then, my only living memory of Z Special Force was the Maori Hakka. We were told that the dance was introduced by members of the 'Tentera Payung from Australia.' (tentera - army; payung - parachute). Until the late 1980s at Bario Secondary School, the Kelabit version of the heart stomping dance was usually used as the farewell dance by the graduating classes. As it happened, I did not take him seriously until this individual replied to my rather unfriendly fax by indicating his rank and regiment. Subsequently after several months of correspondence, I finally met Major Jim Truscott and Major Bruce O’Connor in Miri, Sarawak. Over a great amount of amber fluid in a pub (owned by a young Kelabit) Jim managed to convince me to write an article on what it is like to be from Bario, a descendant of guerrillas, trained by Z Special Force to fight the Gipuns or Japs. Being born two decades after WWII, I have no hard facts or knowledge of what happened and who were the war heroes.

For decades, our parents and grandparents related stories of a great war against some clip-eyed, short and stubby looking but ferocious invaders, whose banzai-banzai war cries were not fearsome enough for the hardened headhunters. Amidst all these tales, they also claimed to be helped by tall, white and blue-eyed creatures, dropped from big, flying, shiny objects that sounded like a thousand rolling gongs. These fascinating stories were told numerous times to listening children, sitting spell bound by the warmth of fires in longhouses. Alien names like Tuan Sunday (Sergeant Sanderson) Tuan Mayur (Major Harrisson) and Tuan Kata (Major Carter) were household names. Despite discovering (much later in life) that Major Harrisson was the leader of the group that parachuted into Bario; on the battlefront, the name Tuan Sunday stood above all and as far as I was concerned, he was a legend and a brave heart. While Jim Truscott and his research team were dehydrating and languishing in the Borneo jungle, I did a little historical research to satisfy my curiosity on Z Force operations against the Japs in Borneo. Man, this Tuan Sunday was omnipresent. He was in Bario, Kuba’an, Limbang, Bakelalan, Long Akah, Belaga and everywhere. However, much to my amusement the name Sanderson is non-existent amongst the Kelabits as compared to the countless Toms and Carters. It could be that, there isn't a Kelabit or Lun Bawang capable of living up to his image or may be nobody wants to be called Sunday.

Reading the book, the Z Special Force authored by LtCol G.B. Courtney, gave me greater insight of the various operations undertaken in Borneo during the Japanese invasion. I wondered what prompted these brave young men to volunteer for the unknown, fighting a war for and together with unknown people. As bewildering as it was, I was also very fascinated with how the locals readily and happily accepted them. The sound of 'modern fighting weapons' during a time when parangs (local golocks) blowpipes and poison darts were accepted as the ultimate protective weapons, should have scared the wits out of them but it did not. From the book, the gory details of enemy heads rolling after a slaughter were vicious and nightmarish, and it kept me wondering for days if their enemies' commanders knew what they were up against.

153 He was born in Bario and he now lives in Miri.
Even more baffling was their delayed action in accepting to surrender (especially in the interior) in the face of defeat. As a common lay man, you cannot help wondering if their attitude was justified. From the surface research I have done by talking to former guerrillas and reading books, it had been a very successful and conclusive operation as far as Z Special Force is concerned. With typical Borneo native humility, short of self-glorifying, these hardened guerrillas would praise heaps on members of Z Force. On reflection, by and large the key to the success of the various operatives, was a combination of open mindedness on the part of the locals to learn and the untiring efforts of the Z Force members to promote patriotism in the mind of the natives and instil discipline amongst the guerrillas. To the natives and the Lun Bawangs especially, this attitude of openness had a far-reaching effect, which has been the corner stone of their society since.

At the turn of the century, a young missionary Hudson Southwell brought Christianity into the interior of Borneo. From Melbourne, the late Southwell, affectionately known as Tuan Sapu (which literally means to sweep) was only 19 years old when he first set foot in the wilderness of the Bakelalan and Kelabit Highlands. He was joined by Alan Belcher, another Australian. The courage of the youths to enter a land of headhunting and drunkenness was enough to convince people that there must be some truth behind their proclamations. The desire and willingness to accept these teachings coupled eventually with the inevitable 'modernisation' influence partly by Z Force members, the British and other foreign communities in the next decade helped propel the two communities into what they are now. We are indeed very grateful to the Australians for playing a major role in the socio-economic well being of the Kelabits and Lun Bawangs. While others may see this as exaggeration and overstatement, the truth is both communities did unshackle themselves from the grasp of headhunting, slavery and drunkenness.

In July 1994, I led a 20-man expedition to locate the wreckage of a plane, which was thought to be one of the missing Liberator aircraft. We failed to locate the wreckage in the vicinity of Batu Lawi, referred to as Mount 200 by Liberator pilots. After the ten-day expedition I was proud of the fact that we did it. Several Australian expatriates working in Sarawak were on the expedition with me. The expedition code-named ELF-200 (Expedition Liberator Flight 200 was a dedication to the memory of the Liberator crews and members of Z Special Force who fought so bravely for the natives of Borneo. I was informed in June 1996 and later confirmed by Major Truscott that the Liberator crashed off Kota Kinabalu.
The shop/house at Merapok fo the late Kapitan China, Liaw Tua Gong. His widow, Liam Aik is in the centre of the picture, and right of former Warrant Officer Col McPherson. The young man on her right is the grandson of Ah Toh, one of Cpl Roland Griffiths-Marsh men killed in action near Mesapol in June 1945.

All that is left of Kampung Malaman. Col McPherson.
As in all guerrilla wars, Semut employed informants in the coastal areas and local supporters throughout the entirety of their area of operations. At the most basic level, operatives relied upon loyal natives for their very survival. Auxiliary personnel and guerrillas sometimes obtained some of the food, monkeys, pigs, chickens and ferns. Along the Limbang River, Sergeant Fred Sanderson stated that 'There were no auxiliary personnel who provided food. No food was collected for Semut parties. Families at each settlement provided a meal as we went or passed through.' On the other extreme, Lieutenant Rowan Waddy remembers that the Ibans in his area (Smut IV) would not eat the polished Australian rice as it was not as good as theirs. Warrant Officer Col McPherson describes how he was reliant on 'rice sent up from Belawit by coolie train (accompanied by an armed escort) which could take up to two weeks to arrive, depending on the state of the many rivers to be crossed enroute. The coolies were usually a mix of youth and age, male and female from the same kampung. Sometimes the coolies would refuse to enter Taggal country thus necessitating another coolie train being organised enroute by (Corporal) Johnny Onslow, our rear link at Long Miao.'

In some areas, local leaders like Sualang (former NEI Army corporal) who operated in Dutch Borneo, became a force unto themselves and rose to guerrilla leader status. To an extent all existing, native leaders like Temengong Koh (Smut III) and Penghulu Blaja (Smut IV), Penghulu Lawai (Smut I), Penghulu Tama Wen Agin (Smut I & II) became involved in tactical decisions or other plans. Lieutenant Rowan Waddy (Smut IV) states that Penghulu Blaja was not involved in tactical discussions, but his advice was requested and usually followed when moving about nearby areas. Warrant Officer Col McPherson usually involved Penghulu Labau bin Ansilok in (his) planning to the extent that I considered prudent. He wished to play an active role, and as Paramount Taggal Chief in the area, he had considerable influence and authority over the other local headman.

'Smut I agents penetrated to Brunei, Trusan, Lawas, Sipitang, Tenom, Keningau and Beaufort. An efficient fifth column operated over a wide coastal area. In addition to sending a daily report of enemy movements, information regarding air targets was provided enabling the RAAF to attack these with conspicuous success. The Japanese local food supply was cut off and numerous natives were induced to abandon the Japanese service, working instead for Smut I.' Men like Yassin who supported Warrant Officer Col McPherson and Corporal Roland Griffiths-Marsh (Smut I), and Jugah who was a major influence along the Rajang River (Smut III), played an important role in both supplying information as well as maintaining the confidence of the local natives. Warrant Officer McPherson describes how initially Mohd Yassin Bin Haji Hashim 'At great personal risk decided to send a trusted messenger with a message written in English and addressed to the Officer in charge, no destination address. Successive Kampung Headman then arranged to guide the messenger to the next Kampung on the way into the Ulu Padas until he reached Eburu. We were surprised to discover that it contained valuable intelligence on certain Japanese dispositions and movements of senior officers, certain dispositions on the coast, aircraft numbers and types dispersed in the jungle around the Keningau airfield, and so on. He continued to provide assistance in many ways' through his official position as Native Chief Grade I of Sipitang.

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156 Ibid.
158 For a comprehensive biography of Tun Jugah see, Tun Jugah of Sarawak, Colonialism and Iban Response, by Vinson H. Sutlive Jr., Sarawak Literary Society, 1992. He is also writing a biography of Koh.
It is important to understand that in many instances the war of 1943-45 was insignificant for many tribes compared with the Kayan/Iban war of 1863. This affected the degree to which different tribes co-operated openly with Semut. It also clouds how history records their participation. On the one hand, 'Jugah, impressed with the apparently irresistible strength of the Japanese army and ever quick to recognise the new locus of power, co-operated with the Japanese and accepted an appointment as sanji. Though his title was recognised by Iban and other local people as a status assigned by the occupying forces, its meaning was unclear.' On the other hand, ‘Contrary to allegations that Jugah was a collaborator with the Japanese, all who knew him agree that he did what he had to in order to protect himself and the people of the Upper Rejang, but he did no more than was necessary to get along with the Japanese..... Jugah joined the Commonwealth forces when they invaded the Upper Rejang. At the end of World War II, following investigations of alleged collaborators, both Jugah and Koh were exonerated and more, were honoured by the British in 1947 for their roles in the liberation of the Rejang.'

Corporal Griffiths-Marsh was 'receiving (verbal) as well as the odd note from several ex BNB policemen employed by the Japs at Sapong. Later when they had spirited their kin in the jungle, they absconded from the Japs. This and other local intelligence plus badges of rank, diaries and papers obtained from dead Japs were immediately sent back inland (later to Lawas) to Harrisson. I had no feed back what so ever re movement of Japs in my area or moving towards or from my area. Later when I visited Lawas, I found a jumble of Jap badges of rank, papers, two or three leather Jap officers satchels etc. Some of the stuff was what I had sent him in the past. I was shocked, as I had taken for granted that intelligence would have immediately shot back to Div HQ at Labuan. I was shocked by the nonchalant handling of information and intelligence by Harrisson.' Warrant McPherson adds that 'One of the ex-BNB policeman referred to by Corporal Griffiths-Marsh was a retired Inspector named Dualis. He was living in Kemabong at the time and was well-known to (Sergeant) Hayes and myself. He managed to evacuate a number of women and children from Kemabong at a time when they feared that the Japanese were going to kill every one in Kemabong. I arranged with Prenghulu of Malaman to provide safe accommodation for these people. As far as I know, there were no lives lost in the process. Although no longer young, Dualis was an impressive character and always carried his Police ceremonial sword when with us, but never fought as one of our guerrillas.' Such is life for the double lives led by underground and auxiliary personnel involved in guerrilla warfare.

Cpl J.B. Onslow and Sgt C.E. Lungren with the five Tagal porters who had carried the parties remaining gear from Eburu. With the exception of the older man, they were all lads of about 15/16 years old.

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General Baba at Labuan, being met by other senior Japanese officers who had already surrendered. Baba was hung for war crimes on 7 August 1947.
The Japanese garrisons in Borneo were part of the XXXVII Army (under Lieutenant General Masao Baba) and they were believed to include the 56th Independent Mixed Brigade in north Borneo, the 71st Independent Mixed Brigade in south Borneo probably with its headquarters at Kuching, and perhaps the 25th Independent Regiment at Jesselton. When Operation Semut commenced, there were indications that the northeast tip of the island was being evacuated and a general westward movement of troops was in progress. The total strength of the Japanese army forces in Borneo was believed to be 31,000. Detailed information about the enemy's deployment was at first scanty. Finally by late May the Intelligence staffs placed about 650 Japanese on Labuan, 1,550 on the Brunei peninsula and about Seria and Miri, 6,600 round Jesselton. The main fighting units in the area to be attacked were believed to be the above-mentioned 56th Independent Mixed Brigade of six battalions, 366th to 371st, and a seventh independent battalion. Of the battalions the 367th was believed to be at Brunei, the 368th about Beaufort, and the others moving south from Jesselton. Sergeant Fred Sanderson believed that there were about 2000 Japanese in the Limbang area.

It is now clear that the Headquarters of the 37th Japanese Army sorely underestimated Semut's operations until it was too late. To an extent the reason they were incorrectly appreciated was that they were ignorant of Semut activities. Security among inland tribes was so tight that the Japanese only received vague reports of the presence of white men. For example, according to Lieutenant Rowan Waddy, the Japanese were ignorant of Semut IV's activities mainly due to the loyalty of their Dyaks, especially Ibans, although he understood that Japanese records stated that they thought there was a brigade of Australian troops in inland Sarawak. Lieutenant Waddy argues that this was a legacy of British rule under Rajah Brooke as no British were beheaded by Dyaks after the Japanese invaded, compared to what occurred in Dutch Borneo. To an extent, psychological operations were used to deceive the Japanese as to the strength of Semut. Sergeant Fred Sanderson of Semut I told the natives to tell the Japs on 8 June that 1000 Australian paratroops were on their way down (the Limbang) river. The effect is unknown, but the Japanese at Limbang (town) left for Beaufort. Major Toby Carter also said 'we achieved considerable success by bluff and deliberate dissemination of false rumours as to our strength.' Sergeant Sheppard said that he never relied on the native's assessment of Japanese numbers and often wondered if the Japanese felt the same way. Sergeant Pippen agrees and says that 'One thing I did learn after five months of direct contact with Dyaks they have a tendency to exaggerate; e.g. a large force of "Nippon coming up river", 50 plus, when it arrived it consisted of 10 or 12 in one prahu.'

Warrant Officer McPherson describes "Another factor which may have confused Japanese Intelligence staff was the fact that their anti-Allies propaganda was mainly directed against the Americans so that many natives who knew nothing of Australia took us to be Americans. This was demonstrated quite clearly when on reaching the coast at Brunei Bay for the first time, I was informed that the Americans had landed just up the coast at Weston a few days beforehand. On investigating this report I was agreeably surprised to discover that the "Americans" were in fact Australian soldiers belonging to 9 Aust Div.'

It is not difficult to understand why the people of Borneo rejected the Japanese. Robert Goh writes that 'In 1945, I was a young boy around 11/12 years old during that time. I saw the events/activities of WW2 from 1941 to 1945 during the Japanese barbarian rule in Sarawak/British North Borneo & Brunei. That time I was a student in

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165 The Final Campaigns, Gavin Long, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, p. 456.
166 Silent Feet, p. 69.
the Japanese language school, I was forced by the Japs to study and attend their school during their barbarian rule in Borneo here. My late stepfather (Bigar Deboi) was an active native guerrilla during the 1945 era. He has died almost 26 years ago. In Kuching and other large towns, the Japanese had organised a local militia known as the Kyod Ohei, but none of the Semut operatives, when interviewed in 1996, advised of their existence. They may have had little or no presence in the interior.

While the Japanese are yet to write their perspective of events, Sergeant Frank Wigzell (Semut I) wrote that 'From interrogations of Japanese local commanders and the senior Intelligence Officer of the 37th Army HQ, it was evident that, local commanders' intelligence of Semut activities was fairly good, little was ever passed back to 37 Army HQ, with the result that little concerted effort was made to neutralise Semut activities and no proper appreciation of the effect of growth of native resistance was made until it was too late. The knowledge possessed by 37th Army HQ of Semut activities is summarised as below.

**Semut I.** In May 45, it was known that a small party of white men had been inserted by parachute into Central Borneo. It was surmised that their role was to gain knowledge of Japanese dispositions prior to Australian invasion. No action, however, was taken against them as it was considered that they could do little harm. Thereafter, no further information on the expansion of Semut I was received.

**Semut II & III.** In June 45, it became known that there were parties of white men in the Baram and Rejang areas arming the natives. It was thought that they were part of the AIF from Labuan.

**Semut IV.** No knowledge of this party in their operational area, Mukah, Bintulu, Similjau (Sarawak).172

If this assessment is accurate, then quite clearly the Japanese miscalculated the threat that Semut presented. The statistics for Semut I alone are significant:

- Japanese killed - 1001
- Japanese taken prisoner - 35
- Japanese auxiliaries killed - 32
- Japanese coolie prisoners - 201

Corporal Roland Griffiths-Marsh said that 'Another reason was the initial distribution of Japs in penny packets all over the place without radio, thus it was a long time to realise that something odd was going on. In short, the time was right for guerrilla warfare.' Sergeant Fred Sanderson stated that 'General Haragushi, Governor of Limbang with about 2000 personnel knew about us (his small party). They had intended to send up a force to hunt us down about the month of May. Rumour had it that we were unimportant at that stage and that they were not worried. The interior natives, Kelabits, Muruts, Tabons, kept the secret well, while we were arming the inhabitants as we progressed.' Warrant Officer Jack Tredrea, Semut I, says that 'According to unsubstantiated reports we were thought to be crashed aircrews by some Jap commands. Other information suggests that the Japs were never given any information about our existence. With such an assortment of tribes and villages it seems unlikely the Japs were unaware of us.' Either way, from the Japanese perspective, the heavy hand of their administration ultimately turned against them, providing the basis for successful guerrilla warfare.

171 Interview with Professor Reece, Murdoch University, Nov 97.
Observations & Assessment

Why did Australia get involved in Borneo at all? Peter Stanley, the Senior Historian at the Australian War Memorial, explains that 'Why Australia's main military contribution to the war against Japan in the war's final phase occurred in a minor theatre so far from 'the Empire' entails exploring the relationships between the United States and Australia, their governments and senior officers, in the context of the last year of the Pacific war. It also involves challenging some fundamental assumptions of Australian military historiography. 'The conventional Australian view of the Borneo campaigns exemplifies a characteristic parochialism, but Australian troops were committed to operations proposed by the theatre commander, endorsed by the Australian government and accepted, although with some reservations - by Australian commanders. They were mounted against objectives identified a year before, in accordance with the theatre commander's mission and in an archipelago adjoining Australia. They were intended to support landings in Java which did not occur because MacArthur was directed to prepare for the invasion of Japan, because the US Joint Chiefs imposed the Brunei Bay landings, and because the war ended in August 1945 rather than continuing into 1946. Only in hindsight then, can the Borneo operations be regarded as futile or unjustifiable: in the context of the strategic realities of the Pacific war and the wartime alliance, they are better regarded as justifiable.'

'The Oboe plan was a justifiable expression of Allied strategy in the South-west Pacific Area. But the Java operations did not proceed, and Borneo was destined to become a stepping stone to nowhere.' At the Manila conference in April, General Morshead had learnt that Oboe One (Tarakan), Oboe Six (north Borneo) and Oboe Two (Balikpapan) were to be carried out in that order. By that stage Semut had already been committed in the field. The official history concludes that 'The operations of the A.I.B. as a whole undoubtedly justified the expenditure of blood and effort, but that is not to say that each of its components justified itself or that every type of project it undertook was wise. Practically all the effective work done by the A.I.B. seems to have been achieved by two sorts of parties: Intelligence groups stationed in areas where they could gather information of direct interest to the commanders, and guerrilla groups operating under the only conditions which justify the initiation of guerrilla warfare, namely, that it be among a friendly population and in rugged or otherwise difficult country. A glowing example of the first type of activity was provided by the coastwatchers; the second was seen at its best in Bougainville, New Britain and the mainland of Australian New Guinea, in the Philippines, and in the mountains of Borneo.'

In retrospect while WWII is colloquially referred to as the Japanese War in Borneo, the Oboe operations and in turn the Semut operations were simply sideshows compared with the main effort against Japan. Within Borneo itself, Semut did nothing to support the Oboe landings at Tarakan and Balikpapan and little to support the landing at Labuan. However, outwardly Semut can justly claim its major impact in terms of the political stability of the British colonial possessions in the immediate post war period. From this strategic perspective, guerrilla warfare was secondary to civil affairs. From the tactical perspective, the exact opposite is also true. Within Semut, Harrisson explains that 'By the beginning of July 1945 many Japanese were on the move deliberately towards the interior. These were naturally our concern. More than that, it would clearly be an inexplicable thing if we let these Japanese do widespread damage inland or destroy the lives of these, our so loyal supporters and allies. Thus, from this time on until the end of the war, Semut ceased to be engaged in intelligence and sabotage, and increasingly in administration. Instead, we devoted the greater part of all effort directly to killing Japanese. This battle was to rage

179 Ibid, pps. 24 to 25.
180 The Final Campaigns, Gavin Long, Australian War Memorial, Canberra. p.457.
and roam for hundreds of jungle and mountain miles, and continue until long after the war was over.' Lieutenant Snowy Middleton agrees and said that 'even after the invasion the harassing action of Semut II was very effective in keeping the Japanese occupied.'

Borneo represented both triumph as well as tragedy for the 500 Australian lives that were lost. At the time it was fully justifiable. An interesting quirk of fate is that it was all a waste of time for the Japanese as well. The oil wells at Mīr and Brunei had been fired by the workers as the Japanese invaded, and despite their best efforts they were never able to get them into production by the time of their surrender. Despite the Japanese not being able to obtain oil from Sarawak, in the words of Sergeant Sanderson, 'in my humble opinion the Semut campaign was not a success. We were not tested in a pitch battle with the Japanese. It was a guerrilla tactical operation, viz hit and run. The Japanese were on the run and we were following them up and shooting. We were never tested in a face to face shooting action. Our Semut guerrillas could not stand up to a battle. The natives would have panicked and bolted or else exposed themselves and got killed if you let them.'

It is not possible to fairly compare the four Semut parties, but by way of contrast command and control was very much a reflection of each party leader's personality. A large factor was Majors Harrison's, Carter's and Sochon's pre-war contacts and experience in the area as much as their own egocentric and political differences in personal style. In terms of man management and leadership there is much to question of Major Harrison. Geography played its part. Semut I consisted of a plethora of small rivers; Semut II, three large rivers; Semut III, one very long river, while Semut IV operated along the coast. Consequently RAAF's 200 Flight was critical to inserting and resupplying Semut I, II and III as were the Snakeboats, SRD's own local craft, for Semut IV. It is however possible to fairly compare Semut with other guerrilla operations in Malaya conducted by Group B of Force 136 from Ceylon. Their primary functions were similar in as much as they were designed to support the British landings, Operation Zipper, to secure Kuala Lumpur in September 1945. As it turned out the Japanese surrendered one week beforehand, and the landings were unopposed. Consequently it is only possible to speculate on the effect that 5000 armed and trained guerrillas led by British officers could have contributed. By VJ-Day Force 136 had infiltrated 371 personnel including 120 British Officers to Malaya: between 2,800 and 3,500 guerrillas had been armed, and no less than 50 W/T sets were operating. The personnel infiltrated included 56 British other ranks, 9 Canadian Chinese, 70 Asiatics and, 134 Ghurkha officers and other ranks. After VJ-Day the total of armed guerrillas had risen to 6,500. There is no doubt that they were more than capable of preventing premature action by the Japanese as they dominated the countryside. They were poised to cut the Japanese lines of communication in a far more significant way to Semut, although like Semut their influence was never strong in the towns. On the other hand because of their tenuous political influence over the Malay People's Anti-Japanese Army, the subsequent Malayan Emergency was a predictable event. In this regard, Semut's demobilisation was far more successful.

By the strict doctrinal principles and phases of guerrilla warfare, Semut was very much a classic Special Operation. It had outside sponsorship, it was politically supported and it enjoyed widespread internal civilian support. The tribal groups were an ideal intelligence system for ready exploitation. It had the political support of all of the indigenous leaders and it complied in the main with the laws of armed conflict at the time. In this respect it showed that 'a minor country may be able to achieve national objectives through Special Operations even when it lacks the resources for more conventional methods.'

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182 World Within, A Borneo Story, Tom Harrisson, pps. 269 to 270.
Labuan ‘SRD’ Signals Station.

Box of Japanese skulls after the War.
Sergeant Jack Tredrea and Corporal Igor Sterelny at Malinau, September 1945.
Corporal Ross Bradbury and Corporal Brian Walpole from Semut III, 1944.
There are two ways of travelling. One is to cover a long distance in a short time, taking in the general outline of mountain and valley and the most obvious characteristics of the people. The other is to stop, go deeper, strike root to some extent, and try to imbibe from the soil the invisible spiritual sap which nourishes the inhabitants of the place. Whatever the mode of travel in Borneo, even the most ardent adventurer must be prepared to seek local assistance for like Spencer Chapman 'I was now to learn that navigation in thick mountainous jungle is the most difficult in the world.'

**Travel Information**

There are numerous books about travel through Borneo, although most areas traversed by Semut are still off the beaten track and you have to rely on a spirit of adventure to see you through. Travel in many areas is potentially hazardous from misadventure. For any official visit into Sarawak's interior it is necessary to get permission from the State Secretary's office and its National Security Division in Kuching. The Malaysian Government is sensitive to public criticism of its management of the interior and any official visit must follow procedures. For tourist visits to the interior, it is still necessary to get permits for parts of Sarawak and these can be simply obtained from the Resident's Office in Miri, Limbang and Lawas for the areas under their local control.

**Health**

In two months of travel, we lived with the local people and in the main ate exactly what they did. We drank from mountain streams. I never sterilised my water, and I never became sick. I may have been lucky, but jungle living is really very clean if you don't have to lie in the mud as soldiers are forced to do to survive. None the less, trekkers are advised to take reasonable precautions with water and food. It is also important to be as fit as possible and ensure that you have a degree of prior jungle experience. Borneo is not the place to learn through hard experience.

**Equipment to Take**

It is an imperative to travel as light as possible. Get wet and stay wet - you will get to enjoy it in the end. Drybags are essential to keep money and other critical items dry. A fuel stove is handy for those miserable nights in the rain. Take 'Bushman's' repellent; believe me, it is the only measure, which comes close to winning the war against the leech, unless you are tempted to wear nylon stockings.

**Suggested Itineraries**

In 1997 it was still possible to follow many of the routes used by the Semut operatives and their guerrillas, although logging and internal air travel has changed the face of Borneo forever. In most instances the originals trails have fallen into disuse. This is particularly so in East Kalimantan where kampungs have been relocated to form larger communities. In the more remote border areas where some the Penan still live a semi-nomadic existence, it is possible to travel trails as they were in WWII. The following routes are recommended.

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Semut III. Sibu to Kanowit, to Kapit, to Belaga via Rajang River, to Tubau. Belaga to Long Nawang (Indonesia) via the Balui River. Belaga to Long Nibong (Tinjar River) via the Dulit Range (a real adventure).

Semut IV. Muka to Bintulu.

How to Do It.

Borneo is not the place to rush about - it is a large country. During the two months of Exercise Semut Retrace, with one exception (Bario) we never stayed more than one night in one kampung. There was so much ground to cover, and we didn't end up completing our journey as it was. If logging and forest fires do not totally remove the landscape, one-day Borneo will become a trekkers haven like the Himalayas. You cannot travel around Borneo without total reliance on the people. They would not expect you to do otherwise. This is not to say that you should not pay your way. On the contrary you must observe their customs, and in return you will be handsomely rewarded. As members of the Australian Defence Force, as soon as we asked to speak to the old people about the Japanese War, we were welcomed into their houses with genuine interest. Even the younger generation has not heard the complete stories of their fathers. Their history is very much an oral one, and the young people were equally keen to listen. For this reason it is important to be able to speak as much Indon-Malay as possible. The old people speak quickly in their tribal language and the younger people will translate into either English or Indon-Malay or a little of each. The following points of contact may help future battlefield trekkers:

Semut I. Sampson Bala-Palaba, the son of Bala-Palaba (Harisson's cookboy) lives in Miri and works for shell. He often works as a trekking guide and has extensive contacts throughout the area. Bala-Palaba lives in Pa Umor near Bario. San Sigar, a schoolteacher lives in Ba Kelalan. John Tarawe runs a trekking lodge in Bario and is writing a book about Kelabit traditions and culture. The Ketua of Long Bawan. The Kebupatan of Tanjung Selor, Mr R. A. Bessing, a friend of Bruce Ruxton.


Semut III. Leonard Linggi Jugah (Tun Jugahs' son) and Kenneth Kanyan Koh (Temmenggong Koh's son) are both prominent men in Kuching. Koh's wife, Louise, is the daughter of Penghulu Blaja (Semut IV). The Penghulu of Belaga, Temmenggong Talek Lisut. Temmenggong Jinggut Anak Aitam (former guerrilla) and Sing Chinjoo (Sali) in Kapit.

Semut IV. Mrs Harriet Brodie in Muka is the wife of Mr Jack Brodie who became a local member of the party. Roslyn Manggie at Kanowit is the granddaughter of Penghulu Blaja and the daughter of John Little Manggie. Eddie Blaja, the son of Penghulu Blaja in Sibu.

Costs

Inland travel (porters, 4WD and longboat hire) is not overly expensive by international trekking standards, particularly for small, flexible groups. Air travel is inexpensive, but you need to be flexible due to weather. River travel or vehicle hire can be costly if you are not able to travel on locally used routes or at the times that locals are
travelling. Be prepared to negotiate on time and cost and you will be able to travel at reasonable prices. It is not hard to find a boat or a car, just ask. Food and accommodation is very cheap if you are prepared to eat and live as the locals do. In many instances there is no choice.

**Charts and Maps**

The Operational Navigation Chart (ONC), Sheet L-11, Edition 7-GSGS, 1:1 000 contains all areas traversed by the four Semite parties. The Joint Operations Graphic (JOG) charts 1:250 000, are also publicly available and useful for land and river navigation. Smaller scale 1:50 000 military style maps are held by the Malaysia Government but require special approval before they can be released. It is unknown what better scale maps are held by the Indonesian Government. Surviving operatives holds numerous original maps. Some have been donated to the Australian War Memorial, the Special Air Service Regiment Historical Collection in Perth and the 1st Commando Regiment Special Warfare Detachment at Swan Island in Victoria. Unless you have very good charts or maps, they are generally useless for navigation. You must simply obtain local advice, use guides and use common sense. If you leave tracks, then you must resort to compass and accurate pacing. Some terrain is horrendous. Global Positioning Systems (GPS) are generally a waste of time as the jungle canopy makes it impossible to acquire the horizon in order to obtain a fix. Even if you are successful, you need to ensure that the datum of your GPS coincides with some quaint datum like the Rectified Skewed Orthomorphic and Indian yards used on the maps and charts of Borneo. Good luck.

An operative parachuting into Long Akah.
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World Within, A Borneo Story, Tom Harrisson, Cresset Press, London, 1959


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Tun Jugah Anak Barieng and Temenggong Ogong Lawai Jau, Paramount Chief of the Baram.

Semut II.
These names were collected during Exercise Semut Retrace in Borneo 11 Dec 96 to 17 Feb 97. The list records only 360 out of some 2000 possible guerrillas, and it is sadly incomplete.

Kampung Pundut (near Limbang)
Pun Umung (Balan Deng)

Kampung Pahlawan (near Limbang)
Sambas Bin Murah Deceased

Kampung Tanah Merah (near Kuala Medamit)
Tuai Rumah Kaya

Kampung Long Napir
Bala Biruh Deceased
Taibilong Deceased
Tamah Ukab @ Marah Uga Deceased
Taie Bilung (Headman) Deceased
Taie Lulun Deceased
Dawat Uri (amah Urud) Deceased
Ulih Ratu (Pun Ulo) Deceased
Marak Uga (Tama Ukab) Deceased
Surut Abai Deceased
Balang Ribuh Eaten by Japanese
Aul Aran Deceased
Pun Palima Deceased
Pengiran Sala Aduk (Tama Lsiu) Deceased
Taih Ribuh Deceased
Pun Dira Deceased
Pun Tegiu Deceased
Balang Imet (Pun Acho) Deceased
Pun Raneb Deceased
Pun Nakap Deceased
Lujok Deceased
Pun Gala Deceased
Paren Ngetih Deceased
Agan Balai Deceased
Miri Pulu
Akun Pengiran @ Tamah Sian
Tamin Pulu Ribuh
Riwed Asi Murang
Tamah Lawai
Ngareng Balang
Malung Uri
Gevani Liaan (Balang Matan)
Gelaku (Tama Gala)
Jau (Tama Laing)
Mili Ulun
Bala Ulun
Panai Nayan
Pun Lupung

Kampung Long Tergan (upstream from Long Napir)
Ketua Awang

Kampung Long Sebayong (upstream from long Tergan)
Tai Bilong

Kampung Long Raya (upstream from long Sebayong)
Alla Busang
Nyok Wee

Kampung Lawas
Datuk Racha Umong

Kampung Long Tuma (near Lawas)
Isaac Udan Rangat
Lawrence Pagog Agong

Kampung Gaya Baru (near Lawas)
Bee Kapong

Kampung Merapok
Ah Haw

Kampung Trusan
Thomas Khoo

Kampung Melaman
Yamal  Shot by Japanese
Chang  Shot by Japanese
Kapung  Shot by Japanese
Penghulu Muluk  Deceased

Kampung Beluni
Labo Siluk  Deceased

Kampung Melligan
Tiang B. Baling
Balang Laya
Marancan Ansapole  Deceased
BatangDeceased
Langkap Angilit  Deceased
Ugang  Deceased
Bali  Deceased
Balang Basi  Deceased
Sualang
Ating Tanong  Deceased
Rining Agong  Deceased

Kampung Muaya (near Sipitang)
Lamsau Laungan

Kampung Long Miau
Bangau Belapang  Deceased
Pengiran Belapang
Baru Belapang  Deceased

Kampung Long Pa Sia
Agong Balang

Kampung Long Nawi (near Ba Kelalan)
Rining Balang (Kalat)

Kampung Ba Kelalan
Penghulu Padan Paren  Deceased
Meru Asai  Deceased
Labo Lalung  Deceased
Berauk Parir  Deceased
Sigar Labung
Pengiran Sia  Deceased
Padan Kapuy  Deceased
Asai Ngilo  Deceased
Mutang Singa  Deceased
Baru Rugu  Deceased
Bayau Rupan  Deceased
Libat Agug  Deceased
Singa Bangau  Deceased
Seminar Padan  Shot by Japanese
Upai  Shot by Japanese
Asing Pudun  Deceased
Pengiran Singa  Deceased
Sigar Pugu  Deceased
Tadem Asing  Deceased
Sigar Bari
Selutau Tawi
Rining Kalat  Deceased
Labo Saki  Deceased
Mutang Peru  Deceased
Augkag Padan
Ukab Peru  Deceased
Dawat Sigar
Palung Kaya
Peru Ngilo
Balang Lalung
Selutan Tawi (Buduk Bui, Ba Kelalan)
Balang Sigar (Long Rusu)
Tua Labung (Long Kumap)
Padan Labo (Long Kumap)
Bagau saru (Long Muda)
Bangau Gugkang (Long Muda)
Basar Bin Paru (Long Tanid, Long Semado)
Pengiran Assai (Trusan, Lawas)
Abai Tuie (Lawas)
Hj. Masri b.Hj. Saim (Lawas)
Awangku Osman Bin Pgn.J. (Lawas)
Sitam Bin Japar (Lawas)
Sultan Libang (Lawas)

Kampung Pa Lungan (near Bario)
Udan Tuna (Ex Headman)
Tamu Usun
Uyau Palad @ Marin Piun
Tama Galang
Agan Raja @ Galih Balang

Kampung Pa Umor (near Bario)
Tama Pasang (Headman)
Tama Malai
Balang Imat (Ex Headman)
Tama Akup
Tama Bulan

Kampung Bario Asal
Agan Abai 2 Ngelawan Rasa
Balang Radu
Mikat Balang
Ulit Mitu
Mikat Bala
Tama Saging (Headman)
Tayun Balang @ Paran Matu
Bala Tuuh @ Amat Ibuh
David Lian @ Maran Tala
Maran Roito
Perait Mangong (Tama Nirim)
Tama Saging (Agan Ulun)
Lian Ipang
Paran Matu
Tama Engan

Kampung Ulung Palang (Ex Pa Main, near Bario)
Penghulu Ngimat Ayu
Taguy Ribuh (Headman)
Taguy Arun
Dara Balang @ Bala Tuuh (Headman)
Buda Mru
Nily Ayu
Maya Ulun
Tama Nirim

Kampung Arur Dalam (Ex Kubaan, near Bario)
Ngalawan Raja (Headman)
Nalin Raja
Raja Mitu
Naul Raja
Nakap Ulun
Balang Lugun (Headman)

Kampung Long Bawan
Paru Tilo (Brian Baru)
Melud Palung (Brian Baru)
Bina Agung (Wai Laya)
Udan Dawar
Paulus Hasut
Melut Palung
Yakub Ribun
Penghulu Lasong Piri Deceased
Sengir Mere Deceased
Parir Sere Deceased
Yustim Tebary (Long Berang)
Yudan Sibal
Surang Iteb (Long Midang)
Rupan
Yakub Ribun (Pak Kidaing)
Surang Iteb (Pak Nado, now known as Long Midang)

Kampung Pa Ridang (near Long Bawan)
Tadem Deceased
Rabun (Long Nuat) Deceased

Kampung Pa Rupai (near Long Bawan)
Yudan Tele

Kampung Long Midang (near Long Bawan)
Liang Besar (Desa Liang Tuer)
Baruk Lalung Deceased
Pudun Radung
Rining Ngilo Deceased
Raut Ukab Deceased
Peru Raut Deceased
Rukung Gali Deceased
Tabai Rio Deceased
Tuwik Sial
Liang Besar

Kampung Buduk Tumuh (near Long Bawan)
Sigar Lalun Deceased
Baruk Paad
Piuk Liang
Tagung Peru
Peru Pudun
Lungung Belawan

Kampung Long Api (north of Long Bawan)
Padam Liang
Daud Lalung
Lalung Apug
Murang Surat
Piuk Sere
Sigar Surat
Puding Talang
Padan Lasung
Padam Lasung
Padan Liang
Bareh Liang
Tigur Liang
Dukung Bareh
Daud Lalung
Tabad Darung
Luab Darung
Peru Siak
Labo Siak
Rasak Lalung
Meru Lalung
Kelasi Meru
Palung Supak
Seneng Supak
Ruguk Lalung
Rupan Piuk

Kampung Belawit
Roban Ating

Kampung Lembudut
Tangut Udan
Samuel Ubung

Kampung Long Layo (south of Long Bawan)
Riang

Kampung Pa Omong (previously Long Nuat, east of Long Bawan)
Basar Pengiran
Penghulu Radang Riling
Padan Pengiran
Tyko Udan
Muang Ukab
Uuking Sulais
Pingiran Agong

Deceased
Deceased
Deceased
Deceased
Deceased
Deceased
Deceased
Deceased
Deceased
Deceased
Deceased
Deceased
Deceased
Deceased
Deceased
Deceased (Lumbis)
Deceased (Lumbis)
Yakon Deceased (Lumbis)

Kampung Wai Agong (east of long Bawan)
Padan Sibal
Mutang Pengiran Deceased

Kampung Malinau (near Tarakan)
Sakai Pengeran (Desa Kuala Lapang)
Pangeram Lagam Lalung (Desa Pelita Kamakam)
Tuy Kriss Deceased
Arlalt
Kapung Bellu Deceased
Forret Lalung Deceased
Labo Sinau Deceased
Lasung Dawat Deceased
Seradu Lalong (Pelita Icauay) Deceased
Yaram Dawat (Lumbis) Deceased
Yaco Balang
Pangeran Dawat Deceased
Damus Ukung (Lombak Manis)
Yahya Laban (Long Levanit)
Lalung Aco (Mentarang Baru)
Kafung Bellu

Kampung Mensalong (near Tarakan)
Yaran Dawat
Kuasak Udan

Kampung Long Labang
Aluk (Desa Panas)
Dumuso (Desa Ngawol)
Yajuk (Desa Ngawol)
Nasi (Desa Ngawol)
Kinayo (Desa Layas)
Yangkai (Desa Layas)
Ilow (Desa Bulu Laun)
Sadaman (Desa Bulu Laun)
Imot (Desa Bulu Laun)
Yampodong (Desa Sumantipal)
Yajol (Desa Sumantipal)
Batintil (Desa Sumantipal)

Kampung Lumbis
Udan
Yambirau (Desa Tau) Deceased
Yudan Sokon Deceased
Ipun Sokon Deceased
Yumik Sokon Deceased
Yandulon Longo Deceased
Yaling Deceased
YangulusDeceased
GanjauDeceased
YandomDeceased
Yambirau
Panggil Udan
Muli YundokDeceased
PunanDeceased
YandinDeceased
LangutDeceased
YampahaDeceased
ItaranDeceased
YukungDeceased
SaparonDeceased
KawaDeceased
YamambaDeceased
YubauDeceased
LasitinDeceased
BungkalaniDeceased
YahatangDeceased
SumakoiDeceased
YapuiDeceased
Bungkalan IIDeceased
Berumba

Kampung Saliliran (near Pensiangan)
Malaiuing Bin Languan
Anggau Bin BinungkulDeceased
Sumasai Bin LanguanDeceased
Malinau Bin BalikokDeceased
Ahatang Bin AmunpulDeceased
Inilik Bin SailonDeceased
Tumpalit Bin SulivahDeceased
Angkai Bin Languan
Lumai Bin BumbulingDeceased
Ansinuy Bin Siluir
Liyau Bin Uran

Kampung Silungai (near Pensiangan)
Siangkul Bin Biagan
Anangau Bin Anamangat
Tulamus Bin Mungkiou
Kilat Deceased
KapungDeceased
Adan (Mensalong)
Antiol (Long Labang)
AjolDeceased
Bagngi
Angasak
Lantif

Deceased
Kampung Long San (near Long Akah)
Muing Juman Ajang
Lajau Paran
Tama Asung Lujat
Maping Batang Paran
Oyau Nian Lajau
Karing
Mujang
Niong Paran
Lian Paran
Tingang Nan
Tamagung Laniai Jau
Saba Irang

Kampung Long Miri
Usat Nian
Jok Nian
Ding Anyi
Akem Lah Emang
Anyi Nian
Ding Lah
Tingang Ding
Tingang Nian
Ding Emang
Avit Jok
Mering Nian
Barah Emang
Batang Dayung
Akem Ajeng Wan
Aban Emang Ngau
Aban Laing Jau
Akem Anyi Ngau
Akem Ngau Mering
Tingang Jok
Aban Mering Jok
Laing Anyi
Bui Anyi Abing
Lawai Wan
Jau Emang
Bui Jok Wan
Lake Eng Jau
Lake Jok Uyo
Lake Anyi Jok

Kampung Kapit
Linggi Jugah
Koh Anak Jubang
Jinggut Anak Aitam
Tedong
Keywords: Kampung Kanowit, Blaja, Kuching, Datuk Stephen Wan Ullok Telang, Bandar Seri Begawan, Haji Mohd. Tahir Bin Hj. Umar

Names provided by former operative and ex-WO1 Col McPherson in November 1997

Guerrillas involved in operations in the Sungai Padas sector of southwest British North Borneo.

* Indicates names which may have appeared earlier.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name by Which Known</th>
<th>Kampung</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achang</td>
<td>Sindumin</td>
<td>KIA Sindumin</td>
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<td>Akim</td>
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<tr>
<td>Andulan</td>
<td>Logon</td>
<td>Taggal</td>
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<td>Angas</td>
<td>Mendulong</td>
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<td>AnsiningLogon</td>
<td>Logon</td>
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<td>Awang Chee</td>
<td>Kuala Belait</td>
<td>Ex Terusan sector</td>
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<td>Babit</td>
<td>Malaman</td>
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<td>Bakit</td>
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<td>Baling</td>
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<td>Impau</td>
<td>Logon</td>
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<td>Jamal</td>
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<td>Brunei</td>
<td>Ex Terusan sector</td>
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<td>Joya</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jita Singh*</td>
<td>Lawas</td>
<td>Ex Indian Army</td>
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<td>Sindumin</td>
<td>KIA Sindumin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kasa</td>
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<tr>
<td>Koh (Thomas)*</td>
<td>Lawas</td>
<td>Ex Terusan sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kusoi*</td>
<td>Menado?</td>
<td>Sgt Netherlands East Indies Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labau Bin Ansilok</td>
<td>Eburu</td>
<td>Penghulu</td>
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<td>Labang</td>
<td>Eburu</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Lais</td>
<td>Logon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Langkap</td>
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<td>Logon</td>
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</table>

WO1 McPherson wrote that the men from Eburu, Logon, Sundip, Maligan, Bole Mendulong, Mengalong and Malaman would have been Taggals. Despite adverse opinions expressed by Tom Harrisson and certain other members of Semut I who had never served with Taggals, these tribal leaders and their people were loyal, generous and in the main, very brave men and women without whose help Semut I operatives in the Padas sector could never have survived, let alone succeeded in their mission.
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Guerrillas stationed at Pa Berayong on the Sungai Terusan Terusan on 01 June 1945

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name by Which Known</th>
<th>Kampung</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Belassin</td>
<td>Pa Berayong</td>
<td>Native Clerk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muli Anak Japar</td>
<td>Lawas</td>
<td>Sarawak Constabulary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yusup Besar</td>
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<td>Yusup Kecil</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dawat</td>
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<td>Grawat</td>
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<td>Murut</td>
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<td>Kyah</td>
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<td>Berantuk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agong Singah</td>
<td>Tang-I-Tong</td>
<td>Murut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achang</td>
<td>Not known</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sia Sinau</td>
<td>Not known</td>
<td>Murut Guru</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agong Libat</td>
<td>Tang-I-Tong</td>
<td>Murut</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Guerrillas involved in the seizure of Lawas on 10 June 1945. (Cpl Allen Wheelhouse described these men as “A good, courageous lot, fond of heads, ect. Saraw the best”.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name by Which Known</th>
<th>Kampung</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tuan Bigar Debois</td>
<td>Lawas</td>
<td>Native Officer</td>
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<td>Saraw Kurus</td>
<td>Tan-I-Long</td>
<td>Murut</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agong Singah</td>
<td>Tan-I-Long</td>
<td>Murut</td>
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<tr>
<td>Usin Sulan</td>
<td>Not known</td>
<td>Murut</td>
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<td>Muli Anak Japar</td>
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<td>Sarawak Constabulary</td>
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<td>Sibal Chang</td>
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<td>Murut</td>
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<td>Amut Buntak</td>
<td>Banting</td>
<td>Malay</td>
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<td>Name by Which Known</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seng Kow</td>
<td>Brunei</td>
<td>Murut Policeman</td>
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<td>Chi</td>
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<td>Murat</td>
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<td>Ibrahim</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pengiran Damit</td>
<td>Lawas</td>
<td>Malay Policeman</td>
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