

## **STATEMENT BY COLIN GEORGE BROCK**

My name is Colin Brock and live in Townsville, Qld. I wish to make a submission to the senate Inquiry about my involvement in the Malaria drug Trials administered by the Australian Defence Force.

I enlisted in the Australian Regular Army on 01 August 1990. After recruit training I was sent to the School of Infantry then allocated to the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (1RAR). In 1993 I deployed with the battalion to Somalia on Operation Solace. Again in 2000-2001, I deployed with the Battalion on Operation Tanager to East Timor. I posted out of the Battalion the end of 2001. I did numerous postings after 1RAR with a further trip to East Timor, an exchange with the British Army and a further deployment on Operation Slipper, Afghanistan until my discharge on 02 August 2010. I discharged as a Warrant Officer Class Two.

### **The drug trial**

At the beginning of the year 2000, 1RAR was warned out for deployment to East Timor. The year consisted of very intensive lead up training, exercises, country briefs etc. I was a Section Commander in Mortar Platoon, Support Company. My section consisted of myself, a Lance Corporal and seven privates. We were a very good and tight section, these men were senior soldiers of the battalion with having spent time in the rifle companies and conducting courses to get into Support Company. We were conducting and passing the training that was before us to an excellent standard. Little did we know at the time that most of our lives were about to change, and not for the better?

The specific date I am not sure of but a Battalion Parade was held on the main parade ground of 1RAR. I think it was sometime in September 2000. We were formed up in Companies, The Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel John Calagari, briefed the battalion on a new malaria drug or drugs that we all were to take to prevent malaria. We were told this is a trial to benefit the Defence Force. I now know the drugs to be mefloquine and tafenoquine. Lieutenant Colonel John Calagari then informed the battalion, THIS DRUG IS VOLUNTARY BUT IF YOU DO NOT CONSENT TO TAKE THIS DRUG, YOU WILL NOT DEPLOY TO EAST TIMOR. I can categorically state 100% that he did say this. There was numerous talk about it after the parade. No one in the battalion was going to say, no, we won't take it as everyone wanted to deploy. If we knew the consequences of these drugs, I and a lot of others would have told them to find someone else.

### **The 100 Club**

Sometime after the parade, one hundred persons were selected at random and put in a group called "the 100 club". My 9 man section was part of this group. The person I remember was LT Col Brennan and identical twins who were lieutenants who I cannot remember their names. Before the loading phase of the drug commenced we conducted medical tests, numerous blood tests, ECG's, breathing tests, x-rays on the backs of our eyes which consisted of an iv drip being inserted into a vein ( our skin turned bright yellow and our eyes went black ), also numerous other tests. When we came back from 7 months in

East Timor us 100 conducted the exact same tests as we had completed earlier to see if there was any changes. These final tests were the last time I ever saw anyone from the Australian Army Malaria Institute. We were told there would be follow up tests. 6 months, 12 months but these never eventuated. I suppose they got their data from us guinea pigs.

Whilst in East Timor the medics and some of the Malaria Institute conducted blood tests etc on us. We were not told what drug we were on.

Sometime in, maybe 2005, I received a letter from the Institute saying I was on mefloquine, and also saying that if you have problems with your eyes to see a specialist. Apparently one of the side effects was carbon deposits on the back of our eyes. I thought this very strange as we had taken this drug some 5 years before. Then a couple of weeks later I received another letter saying, we are sorry but actually you were on tafenoquine. I was not having much faith in the malaria Institute. What this did enforce to me though was that they knew where I was posted so if there were any side effects from the drug, surely they would get myself and others in for further testing.

### **The following years**

In my later years in Defence I knew there was something not right with me. I thought it may have been some form of PTSD as I had completed numerous deployments to some of the worst countries on earth, but it was something else. My hearing was failing, ringing in my ears, I was having dizzy spells. Vertigo issues which I still have to do this day, bouts of depression, anxiety, anger issues, but as a lot of people in Defence you just put up with it. I actually loved being deployed and nothing really fazed me.

I discharged in 2010 and commenced working in the civilian industry. After a couple of different jobs I commenced working in the fire protection industry which I did until I had a mental breakdown early 2016. I knew this was coming as I had feelings of anger, hatred etc toward fellow colleagues. Some days I had to leave as I would have actually killed someone with no regret at all. The anxiety and anger was uncontrollable. This was not the life I wanted to live. I was admitted to a psychiatric hospital in 2016. While in admission I left work for the safety of myself and other work colleagues.

I am not sure, when, or where but I read something about the drug trial I was involved with and some of the symptoms associated with these drugs. I could not believe how my symptoms matched. I researched myself and looked through my medical files but not much was there. I was also aware of a number of ex-soldiers who were suffering from PTSD etc from Timor on my tour. This was strange as on our tour of Timor not much actually happened. It was intense and harrowing at times but not like other high risk deployments. In the meantime I submitted claims with DVA which accepted PTSD, major depression, irritable bowel syndrome etc. I don't believe these conditions.

I came across a Facebook group started by fellow veterans, namely Stuart McCarthy, who was also suffering. This was a God send for me. I was not alone and was not the only one with these symptoms. I sent away for my malaria file to the institute which verified I was given Tafenoquine for approximately 7 months. As I was in the 100 club all the test results

before and after the drug are there. I can supply these results as there is some interesting reading in there. As I stated earlier I was never followed up for further testing.

### **The forum and IGADF inquiry**

In I think March 2016 a forum was held at the Townsville RSL in which I attended with a number of people who are severely affected by these drugs. A number of dignitaries attended with key speakers and a subject matter expert. Defence was represented by Air Vice Marshall Tracy Smart, Commander Joint Health. I have no words for Tracy Smart, all she did was deny any wrongdoing by Defence, saying the drugs were conducted morally and ethically, there is nothing wrong with us etc etc. She had no answers for us, just denial. One of my close friends, Chris Styles had an open argument with her at the forum which is captured on visual and audio. Chris committed suicide less than 2 months later. Tracy Smart is a Defence toe the line person. She is fully aware of what these drugs have done to hundreds, if not thousands of people, but does what defence tells her. For us in the group the forum was the start of a long road.

In May 2016 I was contacted by Brigadier Andrew Dunn as part of the IGADF enquiry into allegations of unethical and unlawful use by Defence of the anti-malarial drugs. This was a phone interview which lasted around ninety minutes. I answered truthfully to all the questions asked of me. I have a clear recollection of these events and one in particular. I was asked what Lt Col John Calagari said on the parade ground as to the drug being voluntary. I answered, John Calagari said this drug trial is voluntary, but if you do not consent to the trial you will NOT deploy to East Timor. I am 100% correct that I heard this and have not misinterpreted his words. I was asked if I had anything against him at the time or since, No was my answer.

I received the findings of my part in the inquiry a while later. The report suggests that I lied to the inquiry, finding that Calagari had never said those words. I was gobsmacked. Here was an officer I respected, trusted and looked up to as I had worked for him again in later years, He categorically denied it. Here was a man that knows what he said but lied to an inquiry and is willing to let his former soldiers who took part in the inquiry be now branded as liars on a public forum. I can say with the utmost certainty that he has lied to cover himself. There are hundreds of people who heard him give that order on the parade ground that day. I also believe he got a number of his close work colleagues to lie for him. What would I have to gain by saying this if it is not true? Nothing whatsoever. The man is a liar and he need to swear under oath and so do his mates who have also lied for him. I and hundreds of others have no respect left for this so called leader. I actually don't know how he can show his face in public, I would be ashamed too.

### **The future**

Everyone affected by these drugs want answers. My section in East Timor consisted of 9 fit men, 6 out of the 9 are now experiencing all of the symptoms and are unable to work, thats a 75% ratio. Why was the defence used as guinea pigs? Why were we forced to take these drugs? What do we have to do to get help, more suicides? Blood is already on the hands of the Malaria Institute, Defence and the leaders of the so called trials. I personally have been

to 2 funerals as a direct result of these horrendous drugs and I bet if no help is given, they won't be the last ones. The fraud and corruption involved in these trials is huge, the lying, the deceit is incomprehensible. People and organisations need to be held accountable for the damage they have done to hundreds if not thousands of officers and soldiers.

I am willing to testify in person or any way you wish. I wish to thank you for listening and providing this senate Inquiry for us affected to finally have our say. I hope you will listen and help as no one in Defence ever has, Thank You

**COLIN BROCK**