



Submission No. 4

Review of Defence Annual Report 2004-2005

Organisation: **Warrant Officer Class 2 Edward Wright**

Address:

Submissions from Warrant Officer Class 2 Edward Wright

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Defence Subcommittee

Response to pages FADT 1 to FADT 28 of the Defence Subcommittee Hearing of Friday, 16 June 2006.

My name is Edward Wright. I am 54 years of age and have served 36 years in the Australian Army (Enlistment into the Commonwealth Military Force in July 1970 for 3 months, Regular Army in September 1970 for 21 years, General Reserves for 8 years, Full Time Service between January 2000 and January 2003 and enlistment back into Regular Army in January 2003). I am a Warrant Officer Class 2 and posted in to 161 Reconnaissance Squadron as the Squadron Sergeant Major (SSM) in January 2005.

I attached the following scanned document:

Enclosure: One three page article from the Sydney Morning Herald (SMH) website dated 06 March 2006 and entitled "Army accused of betrayal" by a SMH Defence Writer, Cynthia Banham.

This response relates to pages FADT 1 through FADT 28, namely the evidence and assertions of Mr Ian Nancarrow. Mr Nancarrow mentioned my name twelve times during his answers to various inquiries from the Defence Subcommittee. I provide these submissions as a result of the numerous inaccuracies, untruths and exaggerations contained in Mr Nancarrow's responses before the Subcommittee on 16 June 2006.

Whilst I appreciate the Subcommittee's primary concern is that of Australian Defence Force (ADF) aircraft safety and maintenance I am compelled to comment on certain unsupported allegations (albeit matters extraneous to the Subcommittee's primary concern) of Mr Nancarrow which have adversely impacted upon my reputation.

Between June and December 2004 I was deployed on United Nations peace keeping

service to East Timor. I was posted in to 161 Reconnaissance Squadron in January 2005. At that time 161 Reconnaissance Squadron was located at RAAF Base Darwin. (It has since moved to join the 1st Brigade at Robertson Barracks.)

As the SSM of 161 Reconnaissance Squadron, I had two categories of Sergeant Major working below me. One category was the personnel that dealt with the aircraft and the other was the personnel who dealt with weapons and vehicles. On the aircraft side there was the Artificer Sergeant Major (ASM who at the material time was WO2 Lorroway) and below him the Hanger Artificer Sergeant Major (Hangar ASM who was then Staff Sergeant now Warrant Officer Class 2 Dunn). On the weapons and vehicles side there was the Ground Artificer Sergeant Major (Ground ASM who was WO2 Stone). CFN Barry (FADT5 to FADT8) reported to WO2 Stone.

Craftsman (CFN) Phillips was referred to at the bottom of FADT 1. CFN Phillips first approached the Artificer Sergeant Major (WO2 Lorroway) and the Engineering Officer (CAPT Partridge) in September 2004. CFN Phillips complained of forged signatures in a National Aerospace Competency (NAC) journal. The NAC journal relates to the Craftsman's individual technical progress and has no bearing on the safety or airworthiness of the aircraft. The Engineering Officer, CAPT Partridge, and the ASM, WO2 Lorroway, investigated and spoke to Mr Nancarrow in late October 2004 and established there was sufficient evidence to support a charge under the Defence Force Discipline Act (DFDA). They raised a PD105 which is the document used for the charge. It was not until October 2004 that CFN Phillips approached Mr Nancarrow. This was the first time that members of the Army had raised and discussed the issue with Mr Nancarrow according to the records of conversation conducted by the Engineering Officer and the ASM with Mr Nancarrow.

I arrived at 161 Reconnaissance Squadron on Monday 31 January 2005. It was during that week I first became aware of the charge against CFN Cochrane. Charges are presented on a PD105 form. The PD105 and evidence to support the charge against CFN Cochrane were on my desk. I called CFN Cochrane into my office to ascertain whether he understood the nature of the charge against him. CFN Cochrane told me that the charge was a witch-hunt against him.

By way of background information, CFN Cochrane is married to Nguyen Thi Thuy Trang, a Vietnamese national by birth. CFN Cochrane's wife is a niece of the wife of

Mr Nancarrow. CFN Cochrane had expressed to Mr Nancarrow that he did not wish to be involved in the growing of mangoes and cucumbers and did not wish to purchase a property and have that property registered under his wife's name. CFN Cochrane did not wish to be under any control of Mr Nancarrow and his wife. I asked CFN Cochrane whether he forged the signature of Mr Nancarrow. He indicated that he had forged Mr Nancarrow's signature because "Nakkers" (as Mr Nancarrow was known) had told the craftsmen to do so. Mr Nancarrow had told the craftsmen, including CFN Cochrane, to sign off with his name because he was too busy to sign off himself. My questions to Mr Nancarrow in January 2005 were the second occasion when Mr Nancarrow had been questioned about the forgeries in NAC journals.

I was at first skeptical of what CFN Cochrane had told me so I decided to bring in other NAC journals and discuss the journals with other craftsmen. I spoke to four craftsmen about the authorising signatures in their NAC journals. Each of them supported what CFN Cochrane had initially told me.

In January 2005 and in the presence of the Engineering Officer, CAPT Partridge, and the Artificer Sergeant Major, WO2 Lorroway, I questioned Mr Nancarrow. Before I started my questions I placed the NAC journals of five of the craftsmen on a desk in my office and copied several of the signatures onto a white marker board. I then asked Mr Nancarrow to attend my office and asked him if the signatures reproduced on the board and those in the NAC journals were his signatures. He said they were his signatures and added that he had made them easy for the craftsmen to copy. I told him that the signatures in the NAC journals were not the same as the one which Mr Nancarrow had recorded in the master signature register. Mr Nancarrow explained that it could take as long as three weeks for him to sign off in the NAC journals if he had to sign each and every one of them.

Shortly after Mr Nancarrow admitted to directing craftsmen to imitate his signature he left the room to speak to his union representatives. On return to my office he declared that he neither wished to confirm or deny that the signatures were his nor that he had directed anyone to copy them.

At the bottom of FADT 2 Mr Nancarrow announced to the Sub Committee that he had never been spoken to by the Army. This is not true. Even the Acting Chair on FADT 11 stated to Mr Nancarrow that it was not really fair to say that the Army had never

spoken to him about the forged signatures.

At FADT 2 Mr Nancarrow claimed CFN Cochrane was 'blanket signing' his signature in his own journal. A Record of Conversation (ROC) between X and Y indicated that X noticed CFN Cochrane had made an entry in his NAC journal as opposed to 'blanket signing'.

Mr Nancarrow has portrayed the sequence of events as if nothing became of the investigation into the forgeries and that he instead had become the subject of investigation. (Later at FADT 4, Mr Snowden asked Mr Nancarrow whether there was any attempt by the Army to investigate the forgeries. Mr Nancarrow replied "Not as far as I know. I have never been spoken to - I do not know what the Army did behind my back. No-one from the Army, DSO (this should be DSA), Federal Police, civilian police, or anyone else has ever spoken to me about forging - no-one.")

This is a distorted and inaccurate account of actual events. Once I had spoken to those craftsmen suspected of having copied Mr Nancarrow's signature and after the conversation with Mr Nancarrow himself I referred the matter to the Military Police. The Military Police indicated to me that they would send the NAC journals out for analysis by a handwriting expert. I do not know the extent of the investigation after it left my hands. There were two other investigations which were raised by 1st Aviation Regiment and 16 Brigade. The Military Police raised an investigation into potential DFDA offences and found anomalies and passed the forgery claims onto the Provost Marshall for further investigation by the Federal Police as by now Mr Nancarrow was no longer employed by the Department of Defence.

At FADT 3 Mr Nancarrow referred to an incident where I saw him talking with a "fellow" (who was in fact a craftsman with 161 Reconnaissance Squadron). That particular CFN had, during business hours, gone to discuss hotels in Ho Chi Minh City with Mr Nancarrow. Had an inquiry into Mr Nancarrow's conduct not been afoot, that craftsman's discussion of hotels with Mr Nancarrow would not be of any import to me. I gathered the craftsmen of the unit and told them that I could not tell them who they could mix with out side of business hours but during work hours they were not to associate with Mr Nancarrow because he was a person of interest to the Department of Defence and the subject of an ongoing inquiry.

Earlier this year, the Regimental ASM came to Darwin from Oakey. He looked at all of the NAC journals held at 161 Reconnaissance Squadron and also subsequently traveled to Townsville to review the NAC journals of 162 Reconnaissance Squadron. He established that there were no issues adversely impacting upon aircraft safety.

At FADT 7, Mr Nancarrow made the allegation that I had accused Nancarrow of giving money to CFN Barry and that Nancarrow had "pushed a woman towards" CFN Barry. I never made any such comment and have no idea what occurred in Vietnam.

At FADT 9, Mr Nancarrow spoke of two people who he knew had forged his signature in their NAC journals and the "one that Ed Wright said he found." I found three craftsmen, not one, forging Mr Nancarrow's signature. Two of those three are no longer in the Army. As previously stated, each of those three craftsmen indicated they signed off using Mr Nancarrow's signature because they had been directed by Mr Nancarrow himself to write Nancarrow's signature in their NAC journals for convenience..

Also at FADT 3 Mr Nancarrow discussed the allegations against him of "[s]pying, running sex tours, mail order brides, dobbing in." He also claimed the whole squadron was called in and told that Mr Nancarrow had been keeping notes on anybody doing fraudulent tax claims and that he had reported the whole unit in to the tax department. These are exaggerations. There were at least ten (perhaps as many as fifteen) soldiers working on Mr Nancarrow's mango farm. They received their pay in cash. None of those soldiers reported the income derived from their outside work through their chain of command as is required in the ADF by Defence Instruction (General) PERS 25 -2 *Employment and voluntary activities of Australian Defence Force members in off-duty hours*. The DSA investigation had revealed the fact that soldiers of 161 Reconnaissance Squadron were working on Mr Nancarrow's farm, that they were paid cash in hand for their work and that the soldiers should be advised to declare their extra source of income as the Australian Taxation Office knew the names of those working at the Nancarrow farm.

Page 2 of the enclosure included the following: "He (Nancarrow) was stood down from his job with the defence contractor Helitech, and eventually resigned last May, after an article about him appeared in *The Bulletin*."

The SMH article (enclosure) appeared three days after the Subcommittee hearing of Friday 03 March 2006. The article included comments from the Deputy Chief of Army (DCA) MAJGEN Gordon, a Defence spokesman, an anonymous soldier from 161 Reconnaissance Squadron, Mr Sean Wood and Mr Nancarrow. I make no comment in relation to the veracity of Enclosure 3 with the exception of commentary on Mr Nancarrow's two statements to the Subcommittee on 16 Jun 06. The first statement appeared at the middle of FADT 4 that "Cochrane had put harassment charges against me (Nancarrow) and they (presumably the Army) stood me down because they reckoned I was harassing Cochrane." The second statement appeared at the bottom of FADT 26: "Yes, in 2005 Cochrane raised harassment claims against me and I was stood down."

I wish to place on the record the context in which Mr Nancarrow's employment with Helitech came to an end. CFN Cochrane had placed a harassment claim in against Mr Nancarrow because Nancarrow, amongst other things, was raising Cochrane's personal financial matters in the workplace. Helitech gave Mr Nancarrow two weeks to respond to various allegations of inappropriate behaviour. Mr Nancarrow did not respond and instead issued his own resignation from the employment of Helitech.

At the top of FADT 5, Mr Nancarrow stated to the Subcommittee "Ian Barry went AWOL (absent without leave) over this (I am unsure as to what exactly "this" meant) because he was getting harassed because he stood up for me."

CFN Barry faced several disciplinary charges under the DFDA. CFN Barry was the only unit armourer. Those charges related to allegations of CFN Barry breaching the confidentiality agreement which he had signed with the DSA, failure to comply with an order from the Officer Commanding, the then MAJ (now LTCOL) Fenwick, not to discuss the nature of DFDA related investigations with persons unrelated to the investigation and revealing to Mr Nancarrow what personal firearms CFN Carey stored in the unit armoury. Whilst CFN Barry may well have "stood up for" Mr Nancarrow that was not the reason why CFN Barry faced disciplinary action.

CFN Barry made a complaint to the Inspector General ADF (IGADF) that he was being harassed by members (including myself) of the unit. Investigation into CFN Barry's complaints commenced in January 2006. One of the complaints related to denial of leave to travel to Vietnam. CFN Barry explained he was planning on marrying a Vietnamese national. When asked by me the name of CFN Barry's future wife, CFN

Barry was unable to provide her name until the following day. I indicated to CFN Barry that it was a matter of common courtesy (not an obligation) to advise the OC, now LTCOL Fenwick, of his intention to marry. CFN Barry sought legal advice of a Reserve Legal Officer in relation to his self-initiated discharge.

CFN Barry was a good soldier. Prior to the unit deploying on an exercise, I told him that his leave might be denied because of his role as the sole armourer in the unit. After Mr Nancarrow's constructive dismissal from Helitech, it appeared to me that CFN Barry sought a course of self-destruction. The change in his dress and bearing and attitude was noticeable. CFN Barry was informed to submit his discharge application in approximately May 2005. It was not submitted until July 2005 just days before he went AWOL. From July 2005 CFN Barry went AWOL for approximately 9 months and traveled abroad to Thailand, Bali and Vietnam and possibly other countries.

Warrant Officer Class 2 Edward Wright

11 Aug 06

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Army accused of betrayal

By Cynthia Banham Defence Reporter
March 6, 2006

THE army has been accused of victimising whistleblowers who have tried to expose trainee aviation maintenance workers for forging logbooks.

Federal police are investigating the forgery allegations. And Australian Defence Force top brass have admitted in a parliamentary hearing that they were aware of the claims of forgeries in the 161 Reconnaissance squadron in Darwin, and of the harassment allegations.

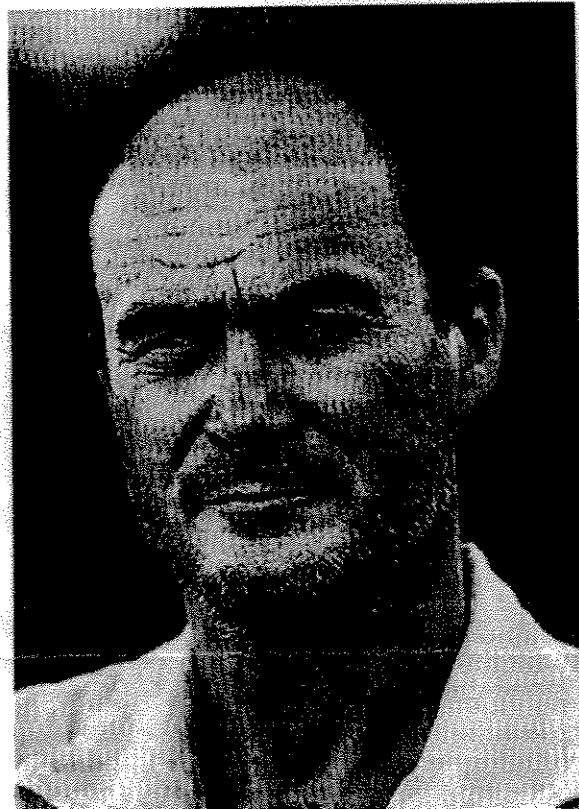
But the deputy chief of the army, Major-General Ian Gordon, said no charges had been laid because the supervisor whose signature was allegedly forged had refused to talk to investigators.

That supervisor - Ian Nancarrow, a civilian maintenance worker - has been interrogated by ASIO and the Defence Security Authority and subject to vicious slurs since he first raised concerns about the forgeries by junior soldiers working on the Bell Jet Ranger 206B-1 Kiowa helicopters.

The *Herald* has learned that a number of soldiers who stood up for Mr Nancarrow have also been intimidated. One is seeking a discharge from the army out of anger over the way Mr Nancarrow was treated, while others fear their careers will be destroyed. They say soldiers forged logbooks in an attempt to obtain trade qualifications more quickly. Mr Nancarrow says defence investigators have never questioned him about the forgeries.

In response to the *Herald's* questions, a Defence spokesman said investigators "did not question Mr Nancarrow concerning the forgery of the documents as the matter was referred to the Australian Federal Police".

The *Herald* has also been told that after the initial allegations were raised, a wider investigation was carried out by the 16th Aviation Brigade into forgeries - and it identified between 12 and 15 cases of soldiers falsifying entries in their personal logbooks. But the senior hierarchy decided to take no action, prompting allegations by the soldiers that Defence is trying to cover up the problem to avoid embarrassing the army.



Ian Nancarrow ... slurs.
Photo: Glenn Campbell

Asked about this investigation by the *Herald*, a Defence spokesman said this matter had also been referred to the federal police, so he was "unable to provide further comment".

The revelations follow evidence of a dangerous culture of maintenance shortcuts in naval aviation, uncovered by an inquiry into the Sea King helicopter crash that killed nine personnel.

The Defence spokesman said the logbooks were "individual soldiers' work books and are not part of aircraft maintenance documentation". But one soldier, who requested anonymity, told the *Herald* he believed what had been uncovered in the 161 squadron, and more widely across army aviation, was a serious problem that "undermines the whole integrity of the maintenance system".

"If these guys are prepared to falsify signatures on legal documents for personal gain, when they are working on live aircraft, will they do the same thing - sign up to say they did something they didn't actually do so maintenance gets missed?"

Mr Nancarrow learned of the forgeries after a soldier asked why he was signing off on work by a trainee whose skills were considered inadequate. Trainees need a certain number of signatures from supervisors to get their skills certifications so they can perform maintenance work unsupervised.

Mr Nancarrow, who spent time in the army from 1987 to 1990, found his signature had been repeatedly forged, and reported this to senior officers. At least two other junior soldiers were eventually implicated. Shortly after, Mr Nancarrow found himself - not the forgeries - under investigation.

He has been accused of spying for the Vietnamese Government, of conducting a mail-order bride service from Vietnam, and of being involved in tax fraud - all of which he denies. He was interrogated by ASIO, with Defence Security Authority officers present, and later by the authority. But it would not tell him what he was being investigated for unless he first signed a secrecy document. Mr Nancarrow refused.

He was stood down from his job with the defence contractor Helitech, and eventually resigned last May, after an article about him appeared in *The Bulletin*. Mr Nancarrow, 39 - who has a Vietnamese wife and two young children - says two of the trainee soldiers involved have now been posted, or shortly will be, to new bases where they will work on Black Hawk helicopters.

At the parliamentary inquiry on Friday, General Gordon told the Northern Territory Labor MP Warren Snowdon: "Yes, a number of those soldiers have been posted to other army units." He said the postings were not linked to the forgery claims.

Mr Nancarrow's treatment led to a co-worker, Sean Wood, who was formerly in the air force, also resigning from Helitech in disgust. "He was treated as a leper by the army guys," Mr Wood said.

One soldier who spoke up for Mr Nancarrow said he could have "done nothing, shut my mouth, left him to get slaughtered, but that's not the sort of person I am. If that's what the Australian Army is, I don't want to be part of it."

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