



## **Submission No. 6**

### **Review of Defence Annual Report 2004-2005**

**Organisation:** Captain John Partridge

**Address:**

## **Submissions from Captain John Partridge**

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

Response to pages FADT1 to FADT28 of the Defence Subcommittee Hearing of Friday, 16 June 2006, and Submission No.4 to the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Defence Subcommittee, tendered by Warrant Officer Class 2 Edward Wright.

My name is John Partridge. I have served in the Australian Regular Army for over 22 years, enlisting in the ARA on 10 January 1984. I am a Captain, serving in Headquarters 7th Brigade. Between January 2004 and December 2005 I was posted to 161 Reconnaissance Squadron, Darwin, as the Technical Support Troop (TST) Commander.

This response relates to pages FADT1 to FADT28 of the Defence Subcommittee Hearing of Friday, 16 June 2006, and Submission No.4 to the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Defence Subcommittee, tendered by Warrant Officer Class 2 Edward Wright. I provide these submissions to present further background to the issues raised by Mr Nancarrow in his responses before the Subcommittee on 16 June 2006, to clarify some issues raised by Mr Nancarrow in his responses and to address inaccuracies contained in the submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Defence Subcommittee, tendered by WO2 Edward Wright.

In late January/early February of 2004, soon after posting into 161 Recce Sqn, I was required to review the authorisation of the aircraft tradesman employed at the squadron. This is normal and is done on an annual basis. As a result of this review I withdrew authorisation from CFN John Cochrane to work unsupervised on aircraft, due to his history as detailed in his Platoon Commander's Notebook and the assessment of his supervisors.

CFN Cochrane's performance as a tradesman was reviewed on a regular basis throughout 2004 by myself in consultation with his supervisors, including WO2 Dunn, SGT Green, SGT Clee, CPL Mitchell and CPL Glendenning, who was the Unit Training Coordinator and responsible for the upkeep of NAC Journals at 161 Recce Sqn. On the basis of reports from his supervisors it was decided to continue with full supervision of CFN Cochrane due to poor trade skills. During 2004 and 2005 CFN Cochrane was not authorised to work unsupervised on aircraft or sign as a tradesman for work he had completed under supervision.

As per FADT2, in October of 2004 Mr Ian Nancarrow approached me with allegations that CFN Cochrane had been forging Mr Nancarrow's signature in his

NAC Journal. These had been relayed to him via WO2 Dunn and CFN Phillips, who raised the initial concerns. I informed the then Officer Commanding (OC) 161 Recce Sqn of the allegations and conducted interviews with Mr Nancarrow, CFN Cochrane, CFN Carey, CFN Smits, CFN Philips and other personnel to establish the truth of these allegations. Statements were obtained from Mr Nancarrow, CFN Phillips and possibly one other member.

Due to other activities occurring within the squadron at the time I did not complete this investigation until January 2005. In mid January 2005 I informed the new OC of the allegations and sought legal advice from a Defence lawyer on any possible charge arising from the evidence I had gathered. This included a statement from CFN Phillips to the effect that he had seen CFN Cochrane signing in the supervisor column of his NAC Journal and when asked what he was doing CFN Cochrane replying to the effect that Mr Nancarrow 'was signing my NAC Journal'. Mr Nancarrow also provided a statement detailing signatures in various parts of the NAC Journal that he considered were not his.

I was advised that I had enough evidence to proceed with a charge of Falsifying a Service Document. In conjunction with the ASM 161 Recce Sqn the charge was prepared and I subsequently preferred a charge of Falsifying a Service Document against CFN Cochrane.

Subsequent to the charge being preferred CFN Cochrane spoke with WO2 Edward Wright, the Squadron Sergeant Major (SSM) and admitted that he had indeed forged Mr Nancarrow's signature. CFN Cochrane then proceeded to make a series of allegations against Mr Nancarrow and other TST members. I have not been briefed on all the allegations made by CFN Cochrane, but as far as I am aware they included:

- Mr Nancarrow was 'spying' for the Vietnamese government.
- Mr Nancarrow was running a 'mail-order bride' service for Vietnamese women.
- Mr Nancarrow had been harassing CFN Cochrane in the workplace.
- Mr Nancarrow had arranged/paid money to a Vietnamese woman to marry CFN Barry.
- Mr Nancarrow had directed tradesman to forge his signature in NAC Journals.
- CFN Marshall had forged Mr Nancarrow's signature in R2 documentation during an aircraft service.
- The trip to Vietnam Conducted in 2004 by members of 161 Recce Sqn was a 'drinking and whoring' session rather than its advertised purpose of visiting the former Australian base at Nui Dat where 161 Recce Flt was based during the Vietnam War.

I am unsure as to whether all these allegations were made by CFN Cochrane at once, or piecemeal.

In the wash-up from these allegations it appeared that the focus had changed from an investigation into potential forgery by a military member to an investigation into the character of a civilian contractor employed at 161 Recce Sqn. In all of this, CFN Cochrane, who admitted to WO2 Wright he had forged signatures, has still not been

charged, and has since been identified for retraining and employment on Black Hawk Aircraft.

On FADT3 Mr Nancarrow states that 'they pulled in the whole squadron into the unit and they told them that in my time I had been keeping notes on anybody doing fraudulent tax claims and that I had doxed the whole unit into the tax department.' This is not correct. I was informed by a member of squadron headquarters, the SSM or 2IC I think, that Mr Nancarrow had kept records of those members who worked on his farm for cash and had declared this to the Tax Office. I was asked to pass this on to the TST and did so.

On FADT4 Mr Nancarrow relates an interview with the OC 161 Recce Sqn. My recollection is that this happened as stated by Mr Nancarrow. Certainly, after Mr Nancarrow had departed, the OC stated to me that 'Mr Nancarrow would be out of the TST by the end of the week' or words to that effect.

On FADT7 Mr Nancarrow mentions concern for his safety after telling his employers the name of a military member, CFN Carey, he believed was forging his signature. I asked Mr Nancarrow to write a statement detailing the forging of his signature by other TST members, in particular CFN Carey. He refused, citing the fact that CFN Carey had weapons in the unit Armoury and CFN Carey's being sent back to Australia from East Timor for a weapon related incident as the basis of his very real concerns for his family's and his own wellbeing. I spoke to other senior TST members and confirmed that CFN Carey had been returned from Timor for such an incident. I am not aware of the full details of this incident, but am led to believe that it involved threats of violence against another soldier. This conversation and Mr Nancarrow's concerns were briefed to the OC 161 Recce Sqn.

The following points address Submission No.4 to the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Defence Subcommittee, tendered by Warrant Officer Class 2 Edward Wright.

On page 2 of his submission WO2 Ed Wright claims that Staff Sergeant Dunn worked in 161 Recce Sqn at the same time as him. This is incorrect. WO2 Dunn was posted from 161 Recce Sqn in Dec 2004. WO2 Wright marched into 161 Recce Sqn in January 2005. WO2 Dunn, to the best of my knowledge, has only met WO2 Wright on one occasion, for about 5 minutes in November 2004 when WO2 Wright visited the Squadron. At this stage WO2 Dunn was already a Warrant Officer, having been promoted in January 2004.

On page 2 of the submission WO2 Wright states that CFN Barry reported to WO2 Stone, Ground ASM of Technical Support Squadron (TSS), who was attached for duty to Logistic Support Squadron (LSS). This is partially correct. CFN Barry was under the technical control of WO2 Stone, but was part of 161 Recce Sqn and as such was administratively under the control of the ASM 161 Recce Sqn and myself.

On page 2 of the submission WO2 Wright states that CFN Phillips approached myself and the ASM 161 Recce Sqn in September 2004 about forgery allegations. He may have approached WO2 Dunn about such in September, but, as shown by the records of conversation, myself and the ASM were approached in October 2005.

On page 2 of the submission WO2 Wright states that myself and the ASM established that there was sufficient evidence to charge CFN Cochrane in October 2004. In mid January 2007 I informed the new OC of the allegations and sought legal advice from a Defence lawyer on any possible charge arising from the evidence I had gathered. Defence legal indicated that the evidence I had was sufficient for a charge, that the NAC Journal was in fact a Service Document and that as CFN Cochrane stood to gain a civilian qualification from the completion of the Journal, a charge of Falsifying a Service Document was appropriate. The charge was subsequently preferred.

The statement on page 3 of WO2 Wright's submission that 'He said they were his signatures and added that he had made them easy for the craftsman to copy' is misleading. This occurred during an interview with WO2 Wright, Mr Nancarrow, the ASM and myself. This is a misrepresentation of the context of the conversation. Mr Nancarrow merely observed, after looking at his signature, that it would indeed be reasonably easy for someone to forge the signature. After looking at the signature I agree, and indeed WO2 Wright observed the same thing.

On page 3 of his submission WO2 Wright Claims that in the same interview Mr Nancarrow admitted to directing craftsman to forge his signature. This is false, Mr Nancarrow said no such thing.

On page 5 of WO2 Wrights submission, he talks about three additional Craftsman forging signatures because they had been directed to. The three are CFN Styen, CFN Turner and CFN Carey. The honesty and reliability of each of these CFN is suspect at best, as can be attested by their former hierarchy and the Platoon Commanders Notebooks. CFN Styen has since discharged from the Army and CFN Turner was discharged on psychological grounds.

On page 6 of his submission WO2 Wright states that CFN Barry revealed to Mr Nancarrow what personal weapons CFN Carey had in the unit armoury. As far as I am aware CFN Barry never admitted to giving Mr Nancarrow this information. Mr Nancarrow has always maintained that this is incorrect and that he got the information off the 'G Drive' on the Defence Restricted Network. This is indeed a plausible explanation. The information was available on the 'G Drive' at this time, and Mr Nancarrow was cleared to Restricted and had a DRN account. Indeed, until at least May 2006 Mr Nancarrow had an email address on the DRN, despite not having worked for Defence for nearly 12 months, and having had his security clearance revoked at around the same time.

To the best of my knowledge, the information that is contained within this submission is true and correct.

CAPT John Partridge  
1 Nov 06