

COMMENDATION FOR GALLANTRY

Australian Army

Mr (then Corporal) Stephen Geoffrey BLOOMFIELD, QLD

For acts of gallantry in action as a Special Air Service Regiment medical assistant left alone for three days in enemy territory to tend to a severely wounded fellow soldier who had been gored by an elephant in Kalimantan during the Indonesian-Malaysian Confrontation in June 1965.

In 1965 Mr Stephen Bloomfield, then a Corporal, was deployed with the 1st Special Air Service (SAS) Squadron to Borneo as part of the Commonwealth Military Forces during confrontation between Indonesia and Malaysia. He was the medical assistant in a four-man SAS patrol conducting reconnaissance operations along the border between Borneo and Indonesia. The patrol followed the border for a week before crossing into the Indonesian territory of Northern Kalimantan where they then followed a river for two days.

On the afternoon of 2 June 1965, as they were crossing a ridge line, the patrol was charged by a wild elephant. The patrol signaller was gored in the abdomen by the attacking elephant and thrown into the air despite the elephant being fired at by the patrol. Corporal Bloomfield, who had received only rudimentary medical training, immediately began applying basic medical aid with the limited resources available. The patrol attempted to communicate with headquarters to seek assistance but the radio, which was being carried by the patrol signaller, had been damaged and the patrol was unsure if their transmissions were being heard.

At first light they attempted to move towards the border, but the severity of the patrol signaller's injuries were such that the Patrol Commander decided that he and his Second-in-Command would cross the border to seek help and that Lance Corporal Bloomfield was to stay and care for the injured man. The Patrol Commander informed him that if no rescue party had arrived within three days that he was to take matters into 'his own hands'.

He and the severely wounded soldier were in hostile territory with the enemy possibly aware of their presence, due to the gunfire at the attacking wild elephant. With no signal training, a damaged radio, and a lack of understanding of morse code, he tried to use the radio but with no success. Unbeknownst to him, one of his attempts had been received and a rescue attempt had begun.

By the next day, the severely wounded soldier's condition had deteriorated and he was crying out in agony, potentially attracting the enemy. By the third day they had run out of rations and medical supplies and Corporal Bloomfield believed his colleague would perish. He then made the heart wrenching decision to leave the man and attempt to get assistance. He made the injured soldier as comfortable as possible and bravely struck out through enemy territory to seek help.

He succeeded in crossing the border and, two days later, was guiding a patrol of Gurkhas back to the injured soldier when he received word that another rescue patrol had located the injured soldier, who had not survived. Several weeks later he led another patrol back to the incident site to recover equipment he had hidden, including the damaged radio and code books.

Corporal Bloomfield's actions in tending to, and protecting, a seriously wounded fellow soldier, alone in the jungle, in enemy territory for almost three days at the end of a protracted and debilitating patrol were gallant and worthy of recognition. He demonstrated fearlessness and extreme devotion to duty in the face of high risk and extreme threat, and his courage and gallantry set the standard for future SAS troopers and the Australian Defence Force.

CONSPICUOUS SERVICE MEDAL (CSM)

Royal Australian Air Force

Mr (then Warrant Officer) Peter Ian JOHNSON, QLD

For outstanding achievement as a helicopter crewman at Number 5 Squadron, Royal Australian Air Force.

Mr (then Warrant Officer) Peter Johnson has taken part in a variety of flying tasks, during which he has shown complete devotion to duty and a disregard for his own safety when others have been in need of assistance. His commitment to those he leads has brought immense credit upon Number 5 Squadron and the Royal Australian Air Force.