

Minister for Veterans' Affairs, the Hon Alan Griffin, MP.
Media release VA116 26 November 2008

VETERANS TO RETURN TO BRUNEI TO MARK LAST ACTION OF WWII

Six veterans of the campaign that ended the Japanese occupation of Brunei will return for the dedication of the Brunei-Australia Memorial the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin, announced today.

"It will be an emotional journey for the veterans, most of whom have never returned to Brunei," Mr Griffin said.

The successful operations on Brunei and British North Borneo were the largest amphibious assaults undertaken by Australians during the Second World War. The landings were among the most complex operations carried out by Australians in the war against Japan, involving land, sea and air forces. The Borneo campaign was Australia's last in the war which ended in August 1945.

"On Sunday 10 June 1945 members of the experienced Australian 9th Division came ashore at Brunei Bay and the island of Labuan, as part of Operation OBOE 6," he said.

"The operation was a combined effort of land, air and sea involving around 20,000 Australians from each branch of the armed forces. The new memorial will honour them, especially the 114 Australians who were killed and the 221 who were wounded.

"During the operation the Royal Australian Air Force bombed airfields and other military targets while Royal Australian Navy minesweepers cleared mines from the approach channels.

"Australian forces landing at Labuan faced a determined Japanese force in a tangle of jungle and swamp known as 'the pocket', where the Japanese made their last stand. More than 380 Japanese troops died on Labuan.

"The operations around Brunei Bay continued with waves of Australians landing and advancing to Brunei town and further afield in North Borneo ending the Japanese occupation."

The memorial will be dedicated on Saturday 13 December at the site of the Allied landings at Muara Beach, Pantai Muara, Brunei Darussalam. The six veterans travelling to Brunei will represent all Australians who served and died during the Operation OBOE 6 landings at the dedication ceremony. They will also visit wartime locations in Malaysia and Singapore and lay wreaths and poppies at the Labuan War Cemetery, where the 114 Australians who died in the operation are buried.

For more information on the dedication ceremony and Operation OBOE 6 visit www.dva.gov.au/media/mainme.htm or phone 02 6289 6152.

Editor's note: a list of veteran representatives follows.

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The VVCS - Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service can be contacted 24 hours a day, seven days a week on 1800 011 046.

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Name Unit State

Mr William (Bill) Corey

2/43rd Infantry Battalion, Australian Army

Rostrevor, SA

Mr Stephen (Steve) Gooch

HMAS Kanimbla,

Royal Australian Navy

Arana Hills, Qld

Mr Ronald (Ron) Hatch

2/12th Commando Squadron, Australian Army

Lesmurdie, WA

Mr Rex Kawelmacher

2/17th Infantry Battalion, Australian Army

Shellharbour, NSW

Mr Rex Smith

25 Air Stores Park,

Royal Australian Air Force

West Ulverstone, Tas

Mr Gordon Verney

1st Australian Beach Group, Royal Australian Navy

Burleigh Waters, Qld

NOTE: Biographies of the veterans are available on request.

Supplied by Henry Buba, 17/11/2008