

## Volunteer Forces Summary

Malayan Volunteer A Armoured Cars

### **The Volunteer Forces of the Federated and Unfederated States of Malaya and the Straits Settlements: 1940 - 1942**

#### **Summary**

Audrey Holmes McCormick

©

#### **1. THE VOLUNTEER FORCES:**

These comprised multi-racial battalions organised on a military basis. The Volunteers were required to continue with their civilian duties. For most categories of British Europeans, Volunteer training and duty became compulsory within 18 - 41 age groups in July 1940 (via an Ordinance which was altered by the Governor Sir Shenton Thomas, from the original Colonial Office Ordinance CO 820 50/29 of June 1940) See below. Previously there was social pressure to join, and medical expenses offered, but travel from remote places could be a considerable problem.

#### **2. THE LOCAL DEFENCE CORPS:**

This was organised as a Home Guard from October 1940. A full time Commissioner with Deputy Commissioners, were appointed in Malaya in September 1940. The Corps was composed of European British over 41 years of age, also British subjects or citizens under British Protection aged 18-55 years, and was opened to British-linked non-Europeans from 31 March 1941. The Local Defence Corps were also available to support the State Volunteer Forces. Some Corps, e.g. Negri Sembilan, claimed more war action than their Volunteer Forces had. (CO820 67/5. Medal entitlement figures 3,125 LDC total, plus 450 for Singapore).

#### **3. THE PASSIVE DEFENCE SERVICES:**

These covered auxiliary civilian volunteer units such as the Fire Service, First Aid

Posts, Air Raid Wardens, Ambulance Depots, Demolition and Burial Squads, Canteen Work, Switchboard Manning, Air Observer Corps, Coast Watchers and other vital war services. It included a Boy Scouts Civil Defence Organisation. Senior school pupils in Singapore were taught first aid assistance. (Lee Kip Lee). (CO 820 69/7: Far East awards for Civilian Defence workers numbered 21,264 (and were named.) Air Raid Wardens were the majority; Medical Auxiliary Services second; Kuala Lumpur and Ipoh received over 4000 defence medals each. Penang 2,991; Johore 2,369; Seremban 1,734; Taiping 1,258; Kedah 1,143; Malacca 826; Kuantan 824; Kelantan 748; Raub 560.)

#### **4. SOE VOLUNTEERS**

Numbers of Europeans, particularly engineers and planters, trained at STS 101 Special Training School in Singapore (set up initially by Major Jim Gavin) to go behind enemy lines for guerilla work. (RJP Garden) And appear on the General List.

#### **POPULATION ESTIMATE Col. Cole, Malayan Civil Service, 1 December 1940**

**TOTAL EUROPEANS: 30,966 (Not included was the big increase in wives and children arriving from the UK at the start of WWII, e.g. from UK schools.)**

**STRAITS SETTLEMENTS:** Singapore 14,390: Penang 2794: Malacca 588. **FMS:** 11,019. **UFMS:** 2175.

**MALAYS:** 2,250,000

**CHINESE:** 2,350,000

**EURASIANS:** 19,000

**OTHERS:** 60,000 (would include Japanese, Indians, Tamils, Javanese)

#### **THE FEDERATED STATES OF MALAYA comprised:**

Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan, Pahang.

#### **UNFEDERATED STATES:**

Johore, Trengganu, Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan. All these Malay States maintained their Malayan Court circles and forms of Malayan Administration in greater or lesser degree. Proper respect was always accorded Malay Royalty by their British Civil Servants.

## **STRAITS SETTLEMENTS CROWN COLONY:**

Principally Singapore; Malacca; Penang with Province Wellesley (an east-coast mainland strip opposite Penang, which came to contain considerable commercial development, e.g. Butterworth etc.); and the Dindings south of P.W. (also a coastal mainland strip). In varying administrative relationship with the Colony, however, were also Labuan Island; Christmas Island; and the Cocos-Keeling Islands.

## **FMSVF: FEDERATED MALAY STATES VOLUNTEER FORCES**

Mixed Races, given as numbering 4,784, (CO820/50/9) **Or as 5,200 in Post War Volunteer Force Records (CO820/67)**

A "Compulsory Service (Volunteer Force) Ordinance 1940" was passed in June 1940 in Singapore and almost immediately thereafter in FMS and Johore, Kedah and Kelantan, covering ages 19 - 55, in a potentially large sweep of nationalities. An Ordinance immediately following it was for "Volunteer Training", empowering widespread call-up for training purposes.

**But** on 2nd July 1940, the Governor Sir Shenton, responsible to Secretary of State for the Colonies, (and who had been ordered to maintain high output earnings for the dollar-short UK), used his powers to proclaim that the Compulsory Ordinance would apply **only** to every male **British** subject and **British protected** person. He reduced the age range to 18 - 41.

**In practice, only Europeans were called up.**

**Main Public Record Office Files: W03652**

**CO820/67 figures) - Postwar Volunteer Records (Figures given in Bold).**

Official Volunteer Inclusions stopped being noted from 1/1/42.

Additions and returning personnel thereafter, were not officially recorded except by the Volunteers.

This makes the postwar defence medal allocations recorded by Volunteer HQs, (awarded posthumously too of course) the better figures to use, with the intimate personal knowledge existing among the units concerned.

The remarkable quality of records maintained by Volunteer Major David Nelson in Changi Prison camp, indicate high levels of concern for these matters, where future pay etc was involved. So the figures from **Volunteer Service Awards** are given in **bold** where available. (Source: **Postwar Vol. Force, Public Record Office C0820/67**). Some of their figures do differ significantly to the several 1941 records stemming from Malaya Command, but it is suggested they may be the most accurate.

Some corrections/additions have been made by the author from individuals with sound/specialist personal knowledge.

**TOTAL BRITISH VOLUNTEERS MALAYAN STATES (EXC. JOHORE): 2,430** (Extracted by Malaya Command for Australian Govt. 5/12/41)

**TOTAL INCLUDING ASIANS: 7,395** (Vol. Force Records Office C0820/67)

Local Defence Forces NOT included in this figure (Given above at **3,124**)

Volunteers/civilians commissioned into Regular Forces not necessarily included.

#### **FEDERATED MALAY STATES VOLUNTEER FORCE UNITS**

**FMSVF HQ: 11 Offs, 137 ORs. Become Line of Command troops under Brig. R. Moir DSO MC (Argyll & "38; Sutherland Highlanders).**

**FMSVF 1st (Perak) Bn (865) Colours: silver and gold.**

**"Special Platoons" are noted as called out on 12 September 1941.**

**Call up date for all other units: 1 December 1941. BORDER PATROL 1st**

**Perak.:** Raised by E.O. Shebbeare, Chief Game Warden of Malaya, with 4 others commissioned into FMSVF, intended to train others in jungle craft, to patrol, and spy.

Herbert Deane "Pat" Noone, govt. ethnologist, protector of Sakais; with brother

Richard (temporary at Perak Public Health Dept. he was formally under G2(I) -

intelligence - 3rd Indian Corps, mapping), with own Temiar aborigines and Malays.

Other Europeans with jungle experience, in January 1941 were given sections of Siam

Frontier to watch. Richard's patrol operated from Kroh. Pat from Grik area with

elephants. Others included W.F. Baldock ex E.African Forestry Service, found crucified

on a makeshift cross, December 1941 by his cousin Major J.P.A. Wildey and 20 of

Wildey's "Chinese troops". (Correspondence).

**SPECIAL PLATOON 1st Perak. (50)**

Mobilised 1 October 1941:

C.O. Major Colin Marshall, (Forestry Officer, Pahang)

2 i/c Lt. E.A. Barron (Sg. Talam Rubber Estate)

4 Sections Malay NCOs and ORs recruited ex Pahang, patrolling from Kroh east to Kelantan, later moved to Taiping. Disbanded late December 1941.

**FMSVF 2nd (Selangor) Bn (778)Bn.** Colours: red and yellow

**FMSVF 3rd (Negri Sembilan) Bn (755)** Colours: black and yellow

**FMSVF 4th (Pahang) Bn (657) FMSVF Light Battery (4 howitzers) (112)**

**FMSVF Armoured Car Coy**, Marman Harringtons and Lanchesters. It expanded to form a Regiment on 24 December 1941, of 2 Squadrons. Uniform: Green berets with red "X" (Ken Archer, W.T. Dunne, J.L. Kennedy, D.H. Telfer; F.J. Woodward. Records, interviews, letters.)

**FMSVF Signal Bn (280)**

**FMSVF Observer Corps FMSVF Field Survey Coy 20** Offs. Government surveyors. 188 ORs all races. Only 12 desertions. Founder Col. W.F.N. Bridges DSO, Surveyor General FMS & SS. (OC's History, Mjr. I.C. Booth.)

**FMSVF Artillery Survey Group** detached 2 Offs 35 Ors from above for Singapore.

**FMSVF No. 3 Field Ambulances** (variously numbered as 8-12 ambulances, certainly many re-allocated.) (78)

**45th Reserve Motor Transport Coy (339)**

**FMSVF Railway Operating and Maintenance Coy.** Formed in "early 1941 with HQ Alor Star, and a Kelantan State section: (220)" (source Malayan Magazine Sept 1952, J.O. Sanders CMG, FMS Railways.)

**FMSVF Independent Coy.** This Unit comprised Malays with several Volunteer Officers. See on. (Not to be confused with a newly formed regular force: "The 1st Independent Infantry Coy" )

**FMSVF Sultan Idris Coy.** (Appears to have been a school/college unit, given 81 members with 4 Officers, but not known to have had a war function?)

**FMSVF Volunteer Supply Depot** (24)

## **FMSVF Ad Hoc Units:**

**FMSVF Perak Flotilla, believed to have operated briefly watching for river infiltration.** (It was replaced on the Perak River by The **1st Independent Coy.**, (C.O. Major S.P. Fearon, 14th Punjab Regt) drawn from tough Regular Force individuals (bachelors only) trained in Singapore at **Special Training School 101** for guerilla work. Two sections British Europeans, two Indian inc. officers.

With its **Perak River Section** under Capt. Proctor of Lancashire Regt. were three Mg. trained **Volunteers**, with a fourth as Liaison Officer. Correctly: 1st Independent Infantry Coy.)

**MVAF; MALAYAN VOLUNTEER AIRFORCE** formed in 1936. Highly operational in civilian machines based on KL, and in RAF Cadet training. **100**. See on. **MRNVR; MALAYAN ROYAL NAVY VOLUNTEER RESERVE:** Highly operational in Malayan waters. **433**.

## **POLICE FORCES**

**Gazetted as Defence Forces in February 1941.** This was to provide its members with protection under a military classification. It also meant "They could engage in military operations against armed forces". One 150 strong mobile column formed in Kuala Lumpur, proceeded north - although inadequately equipped for war as on-looking Argylls reported. There were other individual and valiant actions by police officers throughout the Peninsula.

## **UFMSVF: UNFEDERATED MALAY STATES VOLUNTEER FORCES:**

**THE KEDAH VOLUNTEERS (589 571)** Kedah had its own unit of the Armoured Car Coy. Prior to war Unfederated States usually had a car stationed in each state. Kedah's Marman Harrington Armoured Cars were disbanded on 18 December 1941 and joined

the body of FMSVF Cars.

### **THE KELANTAN VOLUNTEERS (124 136)**

**DALCO:** a small independent unit of Volunteer Officers raised by senior police officer, John Dalley and others. It very briefly operated in Johore, intended for guide and other duties. (Est. 20: Derek MacKay "Eastern Customs") (**Not** to be confused with Dalley's "**DALFORCE**" operating later in Singapore with Chinese volunteers. See on)

### **The following three forces came under Australian Imperial Force 22nd Brigade control (General Gordon Bennet)**

**THE JOHORE VOLUNTEER ENGINEERS (JVE) 258** (Vol. Force Record Office postwar **C0820/67**)

Principally European planters. The only one of Johore forces to fight in both Johore and Singapore. So named to avoid confusion with the existing "JVF" raised by the Sultan of Johore. JVE was organised from SSVF Volunteer HQ with training etc. But fell under Australian command. Re-allocated itself to the Argylls in Singapore briefly.

### **JOHORE STATE VOLUNTEERS: (Native Independent Forces)**

**JVF, HRH the Sultan of Johore's own "Johore Volunteer Force" 1552** (C0820/67)

Largely the Sultan's own Civil Service.

**JMF, Johore Military Force. Regulars of HRH the Sultan of Johore. 1,316** (C0820/67)

Both forces almost entirely Asian/Indian, originally developed into a Regiment by HRH The Sultan of Johore in 1937, starting from 20 Punjabis as a saluting battery in 1885 with a Coy. of 60 Johore Malays. The **JMF** were the Sultan's own regulars, but were only then returning to European-led training. The Sultan allotted them for British Government use, (**financial arrangements for this were made**) hence the JMF came under the Australians i/c southern Malaya's defences, commanded by Major General Gordon Bennet. He was offered the further use of the **JMF** in Singapore but declined due to the already "over crowded" conditions there.

### **THE STRAITS SETTLEMENTS VOLUNTEER FORCES (4191)**

**SSVF HQ (8)** A number which greatly increased as individuals testified, as FMSVF senior officers became available. Early disbandment of their units in Johore permitted all those Asians still remaining with the FMSVF to return home to families in occupied Malaya, (numbers who remained however, were later murdered by their captors.).

Official disbandment of remaining FMSVF in their Line of Command role followed,

prior to their heading for Singapore Island under FMSVF officers. This disbandment left senior FMSVF officers and Volunteers available to continue to operate as FMSVF units (e.g machine gunners), whilst officially labelled 'Depot Troops'. Argument continues if they were thus "officially disbanded" or not. Members have declared both ways and a group who went to help Dalforce, saying they were idle, were threatened with court martial. (J.Dalley)

**1st &"38; 2nd SSVF Battalions, Singapore. 1003 1250 (C0820/67)**

**3rd SSVF (Penang &"38; Province Wellesley) 824 916**

**4th SSVF (Malacca Volunteers) 675**

(Mixed race infantry bns. 2nd SSVF contained many Chinese Volunteers. See on.)

**THE SINGAPORE ROYAL ARTILLERY (VOLUNTEERS)** Nonsense figures given in Adjutant General War Office record WO365/23 1941: e.g. 4 Offs, 68 ORs. Evident incomprehension. Figures also given for the non-existent "Searchlight Battery". In fact **SRA(V)** comprised: 3 Gun and beach searchlight sections, 2 guns per section, 25 men per section; HQ group 10. (Tom Evans SRA(V) . 129 men. (JAS Brown, Vol. Rolls)

**SSVF ARMoured CAR COMPANY.** (39 ) (Disbanded 16.12.41 due to age of Cars. Personnel transferred to **SSVF CARRIER PLATOON (Bren carriers)**).

**SSVF BOMB DISPOSAL SECTION ROYAL ENGINEER (VOLUNTEERS) (28)**

**SSVF No. 2 VOLUNTEER FIELD AMBULANCE (127)**

**SINGAPORE SIGNAL COY (88)**

**SSVF VOLUNTEER INTELLIGENCE PLATOON (23)**

**SSVF SASC VOLUNTEERS (13)** Singapore Aircraft Spotters Coy., a unit the Governor Sir Shelton promoted, in which case it was part of the Observer Corps, below.

**SINGAPORE VOLUNTEER CORPS DEPOT (2)** A number that surely increased.



## **SSVF SINGAPORE VOLUNTEER PAY SECTION (28)**

**OBSERVER CORPS.** From an Ordinance amended on 19 September 1941 the Governor was empowered to constitute a unit containing wholly or partly women. On 28 October 1941 Regulations were passed allowing formation of this Corps subject to control of the RAF "to assist in observing and reporting the movements of all aircraft". (Maxwell: The Civil Defence of Malaya). There was provision for insignia and training etc., but while the Passive Defence Air Observer Corps in Malaya flourished, there was little useful result due to the lack of ability to follow-up in communications, artillery and air support. This Corps barely got started in Singapore. But both did have a female presence. Singapore's Civil Defence had Air Spotters on Roofs, which many older people joined. This permitted offices to continue working while the spotters watched the direction the enemy bombers were taking.

**47 CHINESE RESERVE MT COY** (No Details beyond a reference to it as "Perak Chinese MT". Possibly FMSVF?)

**MALAYAN ROYAL NAVY VOLUNTEER RESERVE** Operated in Malayan and Straits Settlements waters, with a flotilla of local shipping vessels, some engaged in mine laying and mine-sweeping, utilising adapted civilian vessels of the Straits Steamship Co., and other commercial European and Chinese trading vessels; also launches, with RN, RNVR and MRNVR officers and crews. (Volunteers mixed races: Malaya **433**: Singapore **150** officers, **500** ratings)

## **SSVAF - MALAYAN VOLUNTEER AIR FORCE**

MVAF absorbed the SSVAF in 1940. Formed a self-contained unit. Singapore provided main RAF Cadet training. (Malaya: **100**. Singapore **250**). **VOLUNTEER MEMBERS**

### **SPECIAL OPERATIONS EXECUTIVE (SOE)**

Volunteers with relevant experience (eg engineers, tin miners); also police, Chinese guerillas, some regular forces, trained in Special Training School 101 (STS101), Singapore, set up by Major Jim L. Gavin, (later Major General) to undertake guerilla warfare and form "Stay Behind" parties for sabotage; liaison work behind the lines.

## **DALFORCE**

**An ad hoc unit initiated with Chinese help by same senior police officer as DALCO, comprising Chinese with Volunteer European and Chinese officers who confronted**

**Japanese landings on Singapore. Many moved into Malayan jungle as guerillas. Later, numbers became "CTs" - "Communist Terrorists". Dalforce figures vary wildly 1000-10,000: Originator's post-war figure: 1500-2000 (IWM papers) (Lt.Col J.D. Dalley: described as Director, Intelligence Bureau Malayan Security Police, i.e. Special Branch.) With organisational assistance from many Volunteer Officers, and the new Chinese Mobilization Council of both Nationalists and Communists. 5 Coys raised, whose political allegiances required them to be separated.**

**VOLUNTEERS COMMISSIONED OR ATTACHED INTO REGULAR BATTALIONS. Some 100 plus multi-lingual Volunteers joined the strengths of Regular units throughout the Peninsula and in Singapore. They took on duty as regular officers or liaison officers. (Strengths of attached Volunteers ascertained from individual regimental checks, author and JAS Brown).**

**Civilian Engineers/Signals** also went into battle situations, attached as required, or forming civilian units with their own men, sent to assist regular forces in demolition work etc

NB: Volunteers returning to units from overseas leave must have numbered around 200. Passages were hard to obtain. At least 100 were known to be on board the SS Aquitania, and were transferred to smaller ships to arrive in Singapore on 28 Jan 1942. One FMSVF Armoured Car Commander worked his passage in order to return quickly - from "leave" his family say: from "retiral" his colleagues said.

#### **VOLUNTEER FORCES ELSEWHERE:**

**E.g. Hong Kong, Burma, Shanghai, and in very small numbers elsewhere in the British Far East including Borneo (an armed police force), Sarawak (where a Sergeant of the Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders conducted local training); on Labuan island however, all that remained were 4 rifles Christmas Island had a detachment (41) undoubtedly based on the staff of the British phosphate company there. (A detachment of a regular force of Sikh gunners of the Hong Kong & Singapore Artillery was also present there but mutinied on arrival of the Japanese). On the Cocos-Keeling Islands brave men kept the Cable & Wireless station operating on Pulo Tikus (Direction Island) throughout the war, after a bombing raid led the Japanese to believe it destroyed. The appearance of destruction was maintained, and the Japanese never landed to check. Food supply ships which ran the gauntlet from Ceylon (Sri Lanka) to Cocos throughout wa rtime, were never caught. (R. MacLean OBE. MCS)**

The MALAY REGIMENT was not a Volunteer Force, but comprised two regular battalions (one of which was new and under strength) of Malays with European and Malay regular officers and NCOs, which also utilised Volunteer Officers. It was well praised for the fighting stand it made on Singapore. (WO 365 23: 989, Depot 361).

## **AWARDS/DEATHS**

**Campaign Awards to Volunteer Forces: MBE-4; OBE-5; DSO-3; MC-2; DSC--2 DCM-1; BEM-3; MM-3; MID-77;** covers all races Volunteer Forces to end of 1946. (Paul Riches, medal collector, award lists Malayan Campaign)

**Lt.General Percival** submitted a list of 50 Volunteers however, in a Campaign notably ungenerous in forces awards. (Malaya in History, Feby 1959)

**96 Volunteers died in the Campaign. 395 died as POWs (CO820/57/20)**  
**(It is unlikely the fates of those below are contained in these figures)**

## **"Sook Ching"**

**Unknown numbers of Chinese 2nd SSVF and their families, also Dalforce members and/or their families, were murdered after the fall of Singapore.**

**They were collected and shot on beaches or into trenches (despite at least one attempted intervention from a British Colonel in Changi area), and for over a week a Singapore tug boat carried out groups including women and children, tied together, dumped into the sea and shot. Volunteers still on B. Mati island buried bodies as they came in on the tide. Two young Chinese found still alive, survived at Changi: at least one was hidden in Roberts Hospital, then Changi POW camp. The Chinese population had been held several days in areas of outdoors Singapore, where informers pointed out victims to the Japanese. Those known as Straits Chinese, second or more generation English speaking (and intended by the British to train for the Colony's future) were killed. (Lee Kip Lee: correspondence, "Amber Sands". 2/Lt. C.T. Thornton FMSVF correspondence; IWM diaries; Other.)**

## **HISTORY**

**The first Volunteer Rifles enrolled in Singapore in 1854; in Selangor in 1902; and first non-Europeans 1915.**

**After WWII, volunteering returned after a delay, in smaller numbers, triggered by the Communist Emergency period from 1948. They principally trained local forces and in Malaya Volunteers became Territorial Army from 1958. (Malaya in History, Feby 1959, Vol V).**

**The new format of Singapore Volunteer Corps, trained National Servicemen with**

"great esprit de corps", and helped to raise the Singapore Military Forces. (Mjr. L.A "Guy"Rayner; Denzil Taylor SVC; Obit. Brig Tommy Haddon 1993.)

---

[Contacts & Membership](#) | [Newsletters](#)  
| [Enquiries](#)

© Malayan Volunteers Group 2019

**MVG's [Facebook](#) page is now fully operational - check it out.**

Website designed by [Luke Lawson](#)