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Brigadier Keith Stringfellow, RFD, ED

On 6 February 2015, Brigadier Keith Stringfellow, RFD, ED, Patron of both the Australian Commando Association, New South Wales, and the Australian Intelligence Corps Association, of which he had been president from 1973 to 1992, passed away.

His career in the Australian Military Forces had begun with his enlistment in 1940 in the 30th Battalion. In 1942, he was selected for service with the 2/5th Australian Independent Company (commando) and was later transferred to the 2/7th Australian Cavalry (Commando) Regiment with whom he served in New Guinea.

In 1943, he was returned to Australia after contracting malaria. During this time he married Phyllis, a union that was to last 72 years, and he completed an intelligence course which he topped. He was then posted back to his Regiment at Atherton as Intelligence Officer. Soon after, he was transferred to the secretive SRD (Services Reconnaissance Department – sometimes erroneously called Z Special Unit²), an Allied special forces unit formed to conduct reconnaissance and sabotage behind Japanese lines in the archipelago to Australia's north. The activities of SRD were so secret that only the highest-ranked members of the military were aware of its existence. Stringfellow, now a captain, was posted as

officer-in-charge of the secretive Fraser Island training facility where operatives were sent for further selection and training. If suitable, they went directly from Fraser Island on operations. During his time with SRD, Stringfellow participated in five operations: Crane1, Raven, and Finch 2, 3 and 4.

Following the war, Stringfellow served in the Citizen Military Forces, in the Australian Intelligence Corps beginning in 1948 as an intelligence officer and rising to become GSO1 (Intelligence) Headquarters Eastern Command in 1963. He was subsequently Deputy Commander of 3rd Battalion, Royal New South Wales Regiment (Battle Group) in 1964, and Commanding Officer of the Regiment's 4th Battalion in 1965, before he was promoted to brigadier and became Commander 8th Task Force at Adamstown from 1965 to 1968 and Commander 2nd Training Group from 1970 to 1971. He retired from the Army in 1977. Phyllis predeceased him in December 2014.

Brigadier Stringfellow was an outstanding soldier in both war and peace. He was an excellent leader, wise, courteous and a friend to many – a true soldier and gentleman who will be sadly missed.

Kevin Mahony³ and Peter Court⁴



¹Maitland, Major General Gordon L. (2002). *The Battle History of the Royal New South Wales Regiment* Volume II, 1939–1945 (Kangaroo Press: Sydney), pp. 231-232.

²'Z Special Unit', also a secretive department, paid the soldiers seconded to SRD. There never was a Z Force.

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⁴Australian Intelligence Corps Association