

Title: *Deadly Secrets - the Singapore Raids 1942-45*

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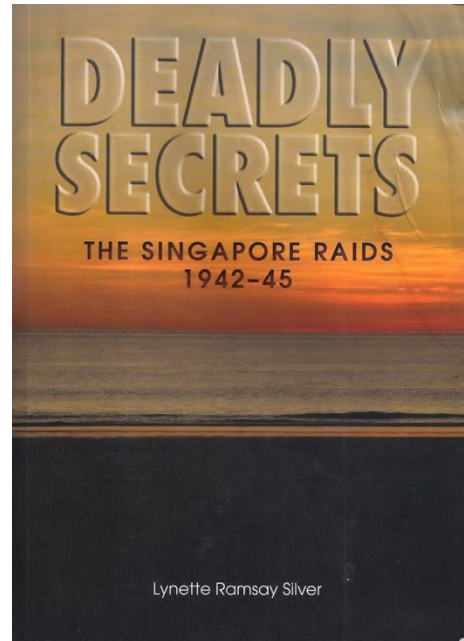
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Review: John Gumbley



This is the story of the incredibly daring Operation Jaywick and Operation Rimau raids in which missions were undertaken behind enemy lines in World War II. Lynette Silver, a military historian, describes in considerable detail how covert operations were planned and executed. In turn Silver provides a sobering account of the fine men who volunteered for such hazardous special operations and for which so many died.

The story is told with the benefit of not only accounts provided by interviews with SOE personnel including a secret service agent but also private papers provided by family of the servicemen. Importantly the release of files kept secret for 30 years is acknowledged as these provide key information for which previous accounts about these operations did not have benefit.

Sadly the post-war assessment of many of these operations found them to be politically, rather than militarily, motivated and that much death, misery and suffering was caused to both civilian populations and the servicemen themselves. The lack of recognition for these acts of bravery was seriously left wanting.

Interestingly, the New Zealand and Australian commandos of the elite special unit ZSU (Borneo operations) faced similar dangers and acts of bravery. Many of whom also died without their families ever knowing what they did, due to their being sworn to secrecy, and only this year ZSU personnel are finally receiving recognition (NZ Herald, June 18, 2016; Review, Daring Deeds that History Forgot).

The book starts with an account of when war came to Singapore, the exodus and escape of civilians and servicemen some of whom became key figures in the Jaywick and later Rimau raids. Using a boat named *Krait* a small group of men attacked enemy shipping in Singapore Harbour -an action that had tragic repercussions on the people of Singapore as the Japanese attempted to find out who conducted the raid. 37,000 Tons of (cargo) shipping was sunk. A year later members of the same team embarked on a second more ambitious raid -Operation Rimau. This mission was partly successful but there were no survivors.

The blackened folboats used in the Jaywick raid were 5 metre long, 2-man craft weighing 315 kilograms (loaded with limpet mines). The book describes how each folboat crew went about their tension-filled missions and how after the raids they had to battle storms, often with damaged craft and cover 45km plus distances at night to (submarine or boat) pick-up appointments. Many pick-ups never materialised with fatal consequences.

The book discusses the many fabrications, fallacies and fakes that have emerged over the years about these two missions. Perhaps too harshly Silver points out the errors of previous accounts although she

does acknowledge the benefit the author had in the release of 30-year secret files. There is an occasional distraction in referring to the weakness' and poor judgement of senior army commanders, including Prime Minister Menzies. There were however serious inefficiencies in the management of special operations to the extent that *The Oxford Companion to Australian Military History* frankly states: *it cannot be said that SOA (Special Operations Australia) missions achieved anything of significance.*

This is a well-researched, fascinating but often harrowing account of two missions by truly brave men. The book is well illustrated with maps, sketches and images including detailed references, chapter notes and bibliography.