

Dutch Involvement in Special Operations

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This history details all Netherlands East Indies, Dutch, NEFIS, and NICA references in “*The Official History of the Operations and Administration of Special Operations - Australia (SOA), also known as the Inter-Allied Services Department (ISD) and Services Reconnaissance Department (SRD), Volume 2 - Operations - Copy no 1*” held in the National Archives of Australia. See link below.

<https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=235327>

The resulting history is one of changing responsibility: an early mixed Australian–Dutch–Indonesian NEI Section, later NEFIS partnership, and NICA’s operational-administrative role in liberated or threatened Netherlands Indies areas.

1. The NEI Section, June 1942–July 1943

The document treats the NEI Section of ISD as its first operations phase. Its purpose was to prepare for an anticipated Allied advance into the NEI from the south. Thirteen parties were inserted or planned for the Aroe Islands, Ceram, Celebes and Java: four succeeded, seven were captured, one failed, and one did not leave Australia. Personnel were Australian, Dutch and Indonesian.

Its principal activity was clandestine intelligence penetration of Japanese-held territory:

- **Java: Mackerel** and **Tiger I–VI** used Dutch submarines extensively. **Tiger** parties were predominantly NEI/Indonesian, sought intelligence, local networks, contact with remnants of the NEI Army, and in **Tiger III** a Dutch women’s secret organisation. Nearly all were captured, lost, or judged compromised.
- **Ceram/Ambon: Flounder** was wholly NEI-service personnel, led by a Royal Netherlands Navy officer and trained at ZES, Cairns. It landed successfully but disappeared; later Dutch-party reporting supported the conclusion that members had been captured and killed.
- **Aroe Islands: Walnut I** used the route through Dutch New Guinea; **Walnut II** was inserted by a Dutch flying boat to a location with an NEI Administrative Service officer maintaining Australian contact; **Walnut III** included an NEI soldier and Indonesian crew. All later parties appear to have been lost or captured.
- The NEI Section transferred to AIB Section C on 1 December 1942, taking most of its files from SRD. The history explicitly cautions that its subsequent account was reconstructed from fragmentary SRD records and the later *History of NEFIS III*, which sometimes conflict.

Dutch forces also formed part of the Australian–Dutch Sparrow Force in Portuguese Timor. Their early guerrilla role included reconnaissance, sabotage, intelligence, preparation for counter-offensive action and delaying Japanese forces; Dutch Timor itself was overrun and inaccessible for the war’s duration.

2. Transition to NEFIS

NEFIS ultimately inherited the NEI-operation responsibility from AIB Section C. Its later involvement was not merely archival: it was a field partner with SRD.

The clearest example is **Salmon** (April–July 1945), a joint SRD–NEFIS plan to establish a staged small-craft line of communications from Dutch-held Nila toward Java, enabling intelligence penetration before a projected invasion. NEFIS was assigned five of eight bases and had established one at Damar and partly stocked another at Goenoengapi before suspension; SRD had not yet inserted its own parties when the war ended.

Elsewhere, NEFIS supplied personnel and intelligence support:

- Its party **Apple** attempted a reconnaissance south of Tarakan in January 1945 but was quickly compromised and withdrawn.
- A NEFIS member joined **Platypus XII** in Borneo in July 1945.
- In the Celebes–Moluccas division of responsibility, NEFIS held the north-east Celebes/Manado sector.
- NEFIS interpreters appeared in joint Group B parties; SRD also forwarded captured papers to NEFIS.

3. NICA: civil administration joined to intelligence and guerrilla work

The source defines NICA as the **Netherlands Indies Civil Administration**. Its role was both political-administrative and operational.

At Morotai and in the Moluccas, NICA had already begun guerrilla work on small islands. SRD's 1945 Group B plan therefore aimed to assist NICA while SRD controlled the intelligence-oriented Celebes operations. NICA was represented in those operations; in the Moluccas, the formal command arrangement was NICA under the task-force commander, but the document says SRD personnel planned and commanded the individual projects because NICA's small intelligence section could not have run them alone.

This produced a practical partnership across:

- **Giraffe/Crane/Magpie:** intelligence collection, native interrogation, safeguarding NICA officers, forward-base planning, and training Sangirese personnel for eventual transfer through NICA to NEFIS for SRD operations.
- **Opossum, Swallow and Swift:** SRD supplied resources, reconnaissance and protection to enable NICA's extraction of the Sultan of Ternate, armed local resistance and island intelligence work. **Opossum** was led by a NEFIS officer with NICA intelligence representation.
- **Finch I–IV:** NICA initiated or co-led missions around Halmahera, Ternate, Gebe and Kofiau; SRD's stated role was to secure intelligence and prevent NICA guerrilla activity from endangering future NEI operations.

After the surrender, NICA's civil role became especially visible. In the Lesser Sundas, SRD investigated civil affairs independently of NICA, then helped establish conditions for NICA

occupation: assessing whether populations were pro-Dutch/non-nationalist, landing Dutch garrisons and NICA detachments, and assessing local sentiment before later NICA occupation.

4. Wider Dutch/NEI operational setting

The later Borneo operations were mostly SRD-led, but took place in Dutch Borneo or involved Netherlands Indies personnel. **Whiting**, planned by the NEI Section, attempted to establish an intelligence party in Dutch New Guinea and was destroyed after its leader was killed and surviving members captured. **Platypus** operations in Dutch Borneo included NEI personnel and generated post-war contacts “on behalf of the Dutch Government.” **Semut** restored temporary civil order across northern Dutch Borneo and detained collaborators principally on the Dutch side.

The document therefore does not present Dutch/NEI actors as merely local auxiliaries. They provided personnel, submarines and aircraft; maintained intelligence and administrative links; inherited and continued the NEI operational function through NEFIS; and, through NICA, combined guerrilla intelligence with the re-establishment of Netherlands Indies civil authority. It also records the severe cost: the early NEI Section’s field parties had a very high rate of capture, disappearance, or presumed execution.