THE NEW ZEALAND GALANTRY STAR (N.Z.G.S.)

Geoffrey Michael FARADAY
Major, Royal New Zealand Armoured Corps (Rtd.)

Date of action: 17 – 24 April 2014
Date of award: 3 December 2015

Citation

On 17 April 2014, an armed mob of civilian demonstrators gathered in Bor township, with the intention of moving on to the United Nations Mission in Southern Sudan (UNMISS) base to protest against the UN presence. Major Geoffrey Faraday voluntarily led a group of Military Liaison Officers to establish a mobile observation post and in doing so was able to issue a warning that the mob was approaching a camp occupied by thousands of displaced persons. The mob breached the camp perimeter and began to attack the occupants with rifles and machetes.

Major Faraday arrived at the camp as the attack began and began coordinating the soldiers defending the camp, and at one stage he attempted to personally intervene while under threat by an armed attacker. Without regard for his safety, he reported on the situation to UNMISS Headquarters and was able to guide the quick reaction force to counter the penetration of the camp perimeter. The attack left 53 civilians dead and afterwards Major Faraday was one of the few people who went out into the camp to search for those in need of medical attention.

Following the attack on the camp at Bor, Major Faraday was deployed on a convoy of four barges with civilian crew and a protection force of UN peacekeepers on board, tasked with taking essential food and fuel supplies along the White Nile River to the UN Camp in the town of Malakal.

On the morning of 24 April 2014 the convoy came under heavy attack from a company of the South Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA), occupying prepared positions on the west bank of the river. During the attack the fuel barge carrying Major Faraday sustained damage to one of its engines and became detached from the rest of the convoy, drifting towards the enemy on the river bank. It drifted to a stop 200 metres from the SPLA position, where intensified fire from small arms and rocket-propelled grenades struck the barge. The SPLA then tried to close in on the barge, but were repelled by the UN soldiers on board, four of whom were wounded during the fight. Major Faraday took control of the situation, though he had no command authority over the UN soldiers or the civilian barge crews. For four hours from the start of the attack until mid-afternoon, the convoy was kept under constant fire. Throughout this period, Major Faraday provided leadership to all on board the barges, moving under fire between firing positions encouraging the soldiers to fight back, and ensuring the four casualties were being attended to. He exposed himself to enemy fire on a number of occasions to maintain his situational awareness and provide regular reports to the UN Force Headquarters on the state of the battle and to request fire support and assistance.

Realising that assistance would not be available, he made the decision to abandon the two fuel barges, transfer the personnel, casualties and stores to the two ration barges and withdraw the convoy out of danger, which he managed to achieve by nightfall, finding a safe harbour site with an anti-SPLA unit. After the fire-fight and withdrawal, Major Faraday reported to the UN Headquarters that the two fuel barges were probably adrift on the Nile, resulting in the barges being salvaged and recovered to Malakal.

Major Faraday's outstanding gallantry and leadership resulted in a successful conclusion to the battle with the rebel forces and prevented loss of life among the convoy's 72 civilian and military personnel, and also enabled the UN's northern base in South Sudan to remain operational.