T6625 TOO LATE THE HERO (USA, 1970)
(Other title: Suicide run; Zu spat fur Helden)

Credits: director, Robert Aldrich; writer, Lukas Heller.
Cast: Michael Caine, Cliff Robertson, Ian Bannen, Harry Andrews Ronald Fraser, Denholm Elliott.

Summary: The U.S. is launching a major naval operation in the South Pacific in the spring of 1942, and to ensure the battle plans remain secret, a Japanese radio installation on a New Hebrides island must be captured or destroyed. To accomplish this mission, American Navy Lt. Lawson (Robertson), who is a Japanese linguist, is ordered by his commander (Fonda) to join a squad of British Army misfits in a commando/suicide mission against the facility. The British are to capture the installation so Lawson can transmit false information to the Japanese command and misdirect their fleet. Lawson and the cynical Cockney Pvt. Tosh Hearne (Caine) become increasingly distrustful of the British Capt. Hornsby’s (Elliott) abilities and hang back at the moment of attack. The attack fails and five allied survivors retreat through the jungle pursued by the Japanese led by Maj. Yamaguchi (Takakura). By loudspeaker, Yamaguchi promises clemency if the British surrender. Three do, but Hearne and Lawson again hold back. When Yamaguchi executes one of the British soldiers for mutilating a Japanese casualty in order to steal a ring, Hearne and Lawson attack and kill him and then flee toward the British lines which only Hearne reaches alive. The film is identified as a Vietnam War allegory by several 2001 online reviewers of the DVD release (Cressy, Croce and Zimmer). It depicts disgruntled Western soldiers on the brink of mental and physical exhaustion led by incompetent officers fighting an Asian enemy which the filmmaker has gone to lengths to humanize. The camera work (it was filmed in the Philippines in 1969) gives the film a documentary feel, not unlike Vietnam news footage.

Croce, Fernando F. “Too late the hero (1970)” http://www.cinepassion.org/Reviews/t/TooLateHero.html
Gow, Gordon. [Too late the hero] Films and filming 17/1 (Oct 1970), p. 44.
“Jungle rot” Time 95/23 (Jun 8, 1970), p. 76.
Miller, Eugene L. (see under Arnold, Edwin T.)

“Too late the hero” American Film Institute catalog [GB] (Entry F6.5122)

[Too late the hero] Los Angeles times (May 20, 1970), p. ?


Ward, Elizabeth (see under Silver, Alain)


Zimmer, Mark. “Anchor Bay presents Too late the hero (1970)” Digitally obsessed (Aug 8, 2001)


c2005 J.K.M. Enterprises