

Bob Buick's Viet Nam Page

This page is a postcard type site with images and comments that takes time to load-up. The images came from many sources, to name a few, Australian War Memorial, Harry Smith, Ron Eglinton, Denis Gibbons and 6RAR Pictorial History of the 1966-7 Viet Nam tour.

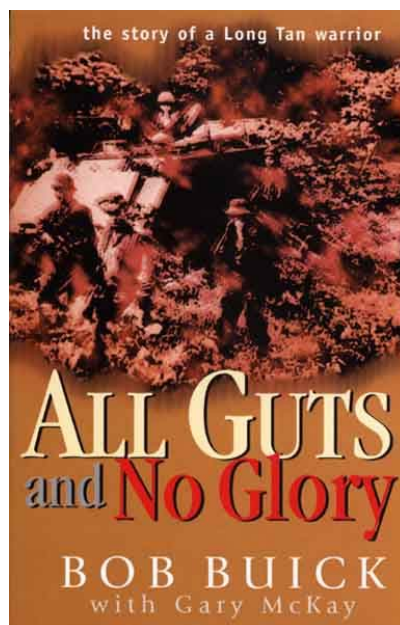
It is worth the wait!

(Updated 17 July 2002)

"All Guts and No Glory" is my Viet Nam story published through Allen & Unwin, Australia. It is available through most book stores and incorporates some of the images displayed on this site. Should you enjoy this page may I suggest you read the book.

ONLINE ORDER direct from publisher

<http://www.allenandunwin.com/shopping/product.asp?ISBN=1865082740>





Infantry Combat Badge

Australian Active Service Medal.. Viet Nam Medal .. Vietnamese

Medal



Looking to the west towards the 1st Australian Task Force base across the rubber plantation near the village Long Tan (left out of frame), South East of Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) where, on the afternoon of 18 August 1966 the "Battle of Long Tan" was fought, between my company, D Company of 6 Battalion Royal Australian Regiment (6RAR), 108 strong and elements of the 5th VC Division, namely, 275 Regiment reinforced by a North Vietnamese Battalion and D445 Provincial Battalion, an estimated total strength of 2,500.

This photograph courtesy Ross Goldspink of 161 Independent Recce Flight (1967)



Australia's most significant battle in Viet Nam was fought in this rubber plantation. It took place in the right lower corner, between the East/West track and the hill (Nui Dat 2) to the right edge. It covered the area just above the clearing indentation near the southern slopes of NUI DAT 2 to where the track disappears. The Australian base can be seen at the top of this photograph about 7 kilometres away in similar but larger rubber plantation.

I went to Vietnam in 1966 with the 6th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment, a Platoon Sergeant with D Company, an Infantry Company.

I have placed links throughout this page to a site that is dedicated to those who served in Viet Nam. This page was created and maintained by Ern Marshall of Mildura, Victoria, Australia.

Amongst his pages there is more information on the "Battle of Long Tan", including sites that questions the Viet Cong's (VC's) intentions on this day, and, what they reported as a successful ambush action.

Information I received (April 1999) reports that VC produced new diaries for all commanders, detailing an ambush was successfully conducted against the Australians including their victory results. Within days of the battle this report was then broadcasted by Hanoi Radio and Radio Peking (Beijing). It was propaganda only believed by the most gullible. One Australian author, a soldier with D Company and present at the battle believed this communist twisted defeat into victory and published a book stating that the company was ambushed. This act has distorted the history and facts and promoted the propaganda initiated by the enemy to save face. The facts are here, supported by documentation, through links, for all to read and determine for themselves what happened on that day when 108 young men went for a walk through a rubber plantation on that day.

[Communist Press Reports](#)

This link ["WHO DID WIN THE VIET NAM CONFLICT?"](#) is included to explode the myths generated by the world press and others who were duped by the communists and socialist propaganda supporting the North Vietnamese invasion against the Republic of South Viet Nam.

When you visit these pages I feel that you will become engrossed and search for more answers. Please browse through Ernie's pages as it extensively covers Australia's involvement in Viet Nam. Those searching for information, or just interested, will return time and time again Ernie is always posting new articles and updating important information.

To make that link to Ern's pages carry out the following.

First bookmark this site, take a deep breath, breath out slowly, take careful aim, now,

[squeeze this trigger.](#)

This Cross was erected at the 11 Platoon position for the battle by 6RAR on 18 August 1969, the second and last tour of duty by the battalion. The brass plaque at the centre of the cross had been stolen when this picture was taken some years later. Since the cessation of hostilities the brass plaque has been located. This, the original cross, had been taken down and discarded only later to be recovered and is now located in the Vietnamese War Museum at Bien Hoa City..... A duplicated cross now stands with a Vietnamese Memorial at the battle site.

The Cross and battle site have become an unofficial War Memorial for visiting Australians and New Zealanders.

D Company Roll of Honour of those who served with 11 Platoon 1966-67. One did another tour to Vietnam and was KIA.

Rick ALDERSEA, Glenn DRABBLE, Richard CLIFF, Ken GANT, Ernest GRANT, Vic GRICE, Jim HOUSTON, Jack JEWRY, Jack KIRBY DCM, Barry KELLY, Paul LARGE, Col LITHGOW, Ken MATHIESON, Albert McCORMACK, Dennis McCORMACK, Warren MITCHELL, Doug POWTER, Doug SALVERON, Gordon SHARP, Dave THOMAS, Frank TOPP, Max WALES, Colin WHISTON and Jeff DUROUX on his second tour.

[Manning details 18 August 1966](#)

The Long Tan Cross and environs restoration was completed in April 2002 to read how this was achieved please follow this link to

[The Cross](#)

My company, D Company 6RAR, Vietnam 1966-67, recorded the highest casualties inflicted on any Australian Combat Company during Australia's ten year involvement in Vietnam.

D Company's casualties for the 1966-67 tour, 23 KIA (killed in action) and 47 WIA (wounded in action). The operational strength of an Australian Infantry Company being about 120.

Besides Long Tan, the company endured a VC mine incident and many contacts with the enemy. 11 Platoon suffered 1 KIA and 10 WIA during November 1966 from a mine.

Then early in February 1967, D Company suffered 4 KIA and 13 WIA. This was due to 12 rounds of friendly artillery fire impacting the company headquarters and a platoon, caused by a plotting error.

I commenced to write text only and after reading a paragraph or two of text I became disinterested, so I have assembled this post card presentation based on a manuscript I wrote, Now published as "All Guts and No Glory".

I hope you enjoy it Bob Buick (Australia.)

Being a professional soldier in the Australian Army during the period 1959 to 1980 it was exciting and an extremely interesting job. There was a saying in those days and it went something like this. "Join the Army, visit exotic and strange places and when required, kill."

Today, 2001 (updated from 1997), the politically correct zealots do not accept this type of statement or rhetoric. I do not belong to their group and never will accept their bigotry.

Infantry soldiers in a Combat Company have no time, need or want to take photographs of the death and destruction they inflicted and surrounds them on the battlefield. They are happy to be alive after any encounter with the enemy and joked about what happened.

I suppose soldiers from all armies do that, joke about life threatening incidents that left them untouched, as a way of releasing the pressure inside, I know I did. There is no blood and guts in my pages, it will show how we developed our home base, where we lived, and a series of maps sequence of dispositions of groups involved in the "Battle of Long Tan". In general how it was over 30 long years ago at a place called Vietnam.

A place few knew about and a handful experienced. Those that did, will never forget.

The family during May 1966 and about two weeks before flying to Vietnam. This photo was on a table in my tent for the whole tour and I still have it after thirty years

Beverley, Tracey (13 months) and Bob. We were separated for nearly 13 months.

We never talked about what could have happened in Vietnam. For us, coming home early meant a few serious wounds and possible maiming. Subjects never discussed by anyone that I knew at the



This was the only accommodation available to all male recruits until the late 1960's. The Nissen Hut, a water tank lying down. The First Recruit Training Battalion is located at Kapooka, near Wagga Wagga central New South Wales.

This photo courtesy of Ron Eglinton showing the 1st National Service intake at Kapooka July 1965. Some of those recruits in this image served with me in Viet Nam. Sadly some were killed or wounded.



Study this map of South East Asia, prior to :
 Thailand was then Siam, Indo China, a Fre
 Colony, consisted of what is now Laos, Cam
 and Vietnam. After WW2 the French reoccupi
 colony. The Viet Minh under the leadership
 Chi Minh commenced the 1st Indo China Wa
 defeated the French in 1954. Vietnam was
 divided into North and South Vietnam unde
 agreement signed at Geneva. North and Sout
 to reunite but the 2nd Indo China started dur
 late 1950's. This conflict continued until 197
 the signing of a "Peace Accord" in Paris. Al
 forces withdrew, South Viet Nam's army v
 downsized, the North Vietnamese Army had
 to Cambodia and Laos and again invaded the
 in 1975 defeating the South in April that y

1962 Australia sent Military Advisors to join th
 Americans in training the South Vietnam Forc
 The Viet Cong, ex Viet Minh, had control of m
 the countryside and the South Vietnam Gover
 had little control of the majority of the popula



The three Platoon Commanders in D Coy, 6RAR were R Geoff Kendall (10 PI), Gordon Sharp (11 PI) and David Sabben (12 PI). Jack Kirby seen between Kendall and Sharp. They, like eighty percent of the company, had been in uniform for only a year.

The Company Sergeant Major, Jack Kirby, awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for his actions at the Battle of Long Tan, was killed from friendly fire in February 1967 with 3 others and 13 Wounded.

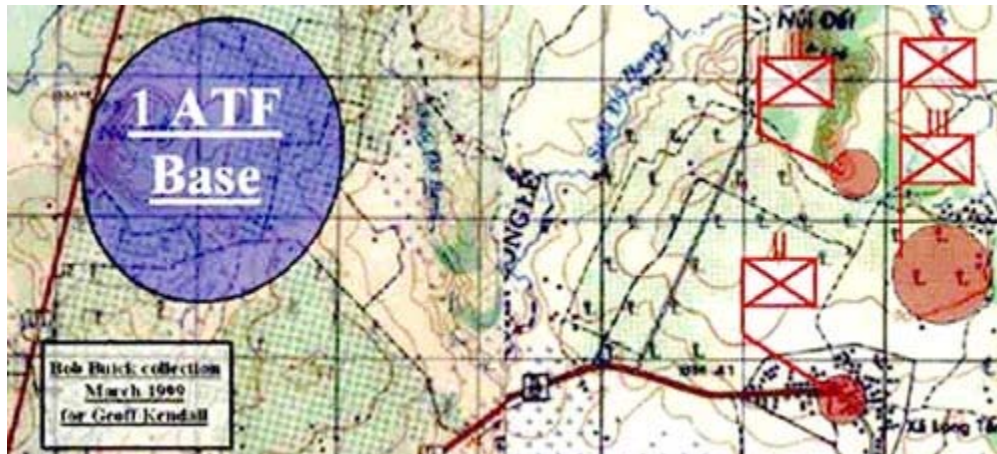
August to October is the monsoon season in South Vietnam, because everything was always wet, muddy and mildewed, it was not the place to go for a holiday.

The roads and living conditions slowly improved during "The Wet". After the monsoon everyone's accommodation improved.



During the early hours of 17 August 1966, some six weeks after the Australian occupied an area to establish their operational base the VC mortared and shell the base. Subsequent to this action 6RAR was tasked to locate the firing positions that was successfully completed by Bravo Company late in the afternoon of the 17th. Delta Company on the 18th was tasked to relieve Bravo and search further to the east for the enemy that was expected to have left the area. This assumption was proved to be incorrect resulting in a savage and bitter battle at close range between 105 Australian and 3 New Zealanders, our Artillery Observation Party, and some 2,500 Regular full time soldiers of the 5th VC Regiment. This force consisting of 275 Regt, D440 and D445 Provincial Battalions, and an unidentified North Vietnamese Army battalion. The story of this battle is described below.

The following maps show the positions of opposing forces during the 3 hour battle.



This map indicates the area occupied by the Australian at 1st Australian Task Force (1ATF) base and about 5 to 6 kilometres to the East, the 5th VC Division consisting of 275 Regt, D440 Battalion, D445 Battalion and an unknown North Vietnamese battalion.

This map, and the others to follow, is divided into squares with 1000 metre boundaries, or about two thirds of a mile. The whole battle was fought within the lower half of one of these squares. This square being the second from the right and second from the top, in the plantation between the hill in the north and track aligned NW/SE. It was all very concentrated and intense for the 3 hours. By comparing the maps you will be able to understand what happened that day.

A map showing the positions of various units at two different times. At 1540 hours, D/6RAR is on the left, VC Bn is in the center, HQ 5 VC Div and 275 VC Regt are to the right, and D445 is at the bottom. At 1542 hours, a yellow starburst indicates a location. Grid lines for 48, 49, 50 and 6E, 6F are visible.	<p>This image shows the location of D/6RAR just prior to the battle. The VC units were in the area until that time.</p> <p>11 Platoon advancing East and was attacked from the North and East by two VC company groups numbering a total of 160. The platoon had 6 dead and 6 wounded and only 20 warriors left.</p> <p>The yellow bursts indicate times of intense fire. In all cases adjust from the initial location.</p>
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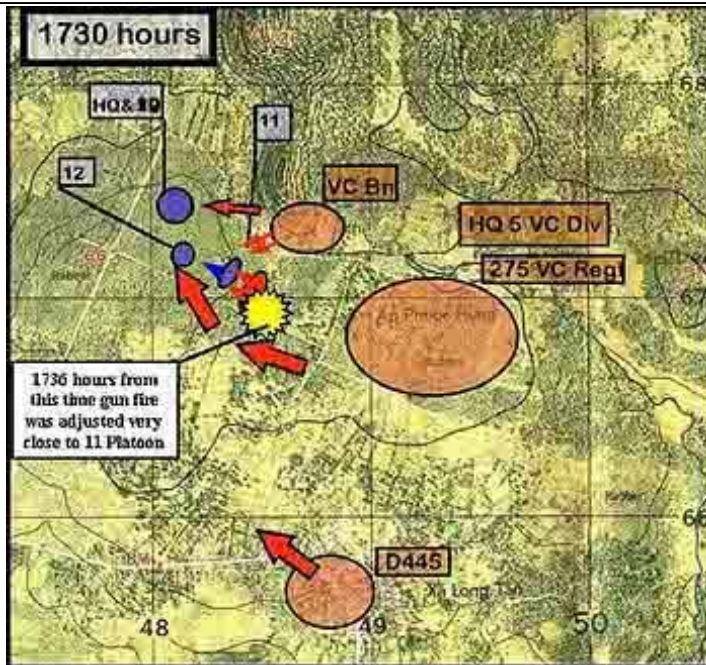
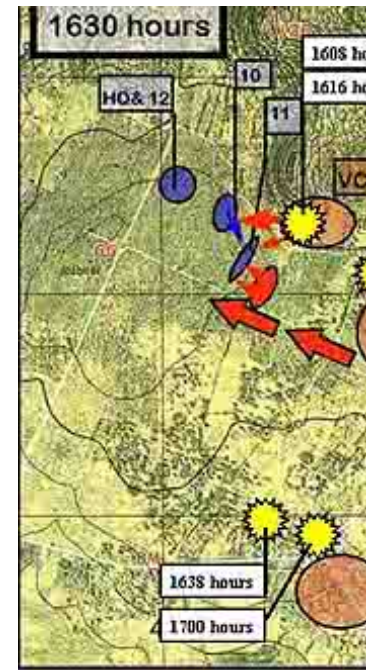
1 Hour into the battle and 11 Platoon was being attacked from the North and East by two VC company groups numbering a total of 160. The platoon had 6 dead and 6 wounded and only 20 warriors left.

capable of fighting.

10 Platoon, 150 metres to the Northwest trying to help 11 Platoon, encountered a VC company moving to encircle 11 Platoon. Supporting artillery fire (the yellow circles) was too far away to give effective fire support to 11 Pl.

The battle stalemated, the VC had no idea what size force they had encountered. A crucial time for both sides, 11 Pl defending their ground to the death and the VC continually dying to take it. All assaults were repulsed by machine gun and rifle fire.

A fierce monsoon storm developed over the battlefield during this time. It seemed as if Armageddon has arrived with lightning, thunder and rain so dense that visibility was reduced to less than 100 metres.



During the second hour the VC Platoon in strength, assaulting East in company groups, estimated original enemy group on the small arms fire support to the was receiving accurate small

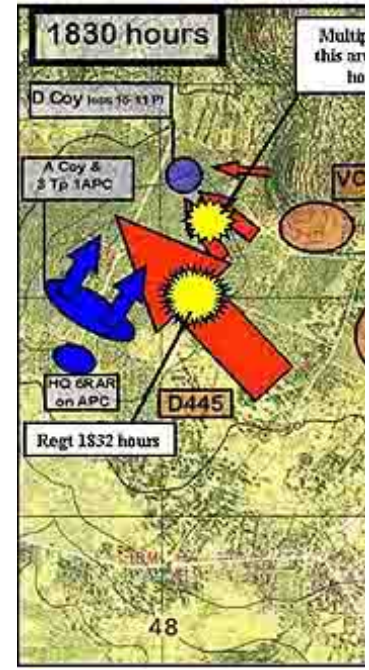
10 Platoon, with about six cases the main company position south

West of 11 Platoon, 12 Platoon (20,) had moved to within 200m. They too were attacked by the 11 Platoon from the south.

The artillery fire was adjusted to the front (East) and right (South). The initial 12 rounds of 105mm hitting attacking VC stopped them completely.

After nearly three hours, 13 members of 11 Platoon made it back to 12 Platoon, 15 dead remained on the battlefield, but two were found alive the next morning. 12 Platoon, with some of 11 Platoon (the platoon was split at the withdrawal) then withdrew to the company defensive position. The company had formed a tight perimeter about 80 metres across to defend itself against attack. With little ammunition left Australian helicopters dropped an ammunition resupply just in time. There was only about a 1,000 rounds of small arms ammunition in the company, a few rounds per man before the resupply.

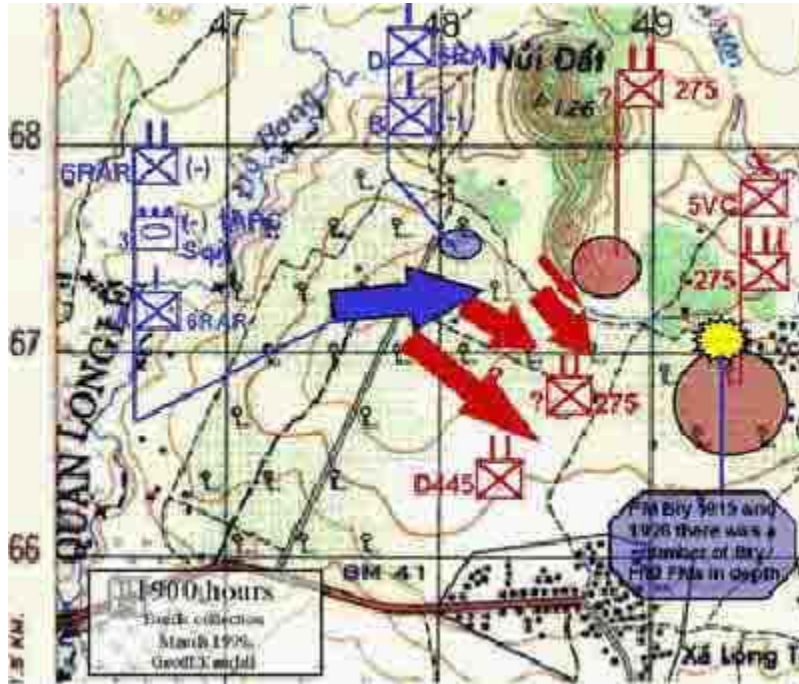
The VC attacked the company position at least 3 times from the Southeast in battalion strength, 300 to 400 soldiers. The artillery fire, a total of 18 x 105mm guns, was now concentrated on the attacking VC. About a tonne of high explosive shells hit the VC every minute or so.



The battle was nearing the end.

Three Troop, 1APC Squadron, with Alpha Company 6RAR on board, passing through artillery fire with the crews firing their machine guns, assaulted D445 VC Battalion which was flanking the beleaguered Delta Company from the Southwest. The final assault of the battle was by 3 Troop and Alpha Company as they turned to the East . The enemy force moved Eastwards as total darkness enveloped the battlefield .

Bravo Company, 6RAR, numbering only 40, returning to base had been stopped when the battle started. This is the group that Delta Company had relieved also arrived reinforcing Delta.



Like in a movie, in the nick of time and with guns blazing the cavalry arrived, the enemy broke contact and melted away in the dark going back to the East.

The battle was over.

6RAR at midnight moved to the edge of the plantation to the West. Helicopters arrived at about 0100 hours and with no landing lights came in to pick up the dead and wounded. 11 Platoon had 15 warriors missing, left on the battle field.

The following morning we assaulted the battle area expecting another all in fire fight with the enemy but the VC had fled leaving 245 to be buried and 3 wounded, who became prisoners.

We recovered the 13 dead and 2 wounded Aussies and all their equipment. The VC did not touch the Australian dead and removed one back pack. That pack was recovered when a VC was killed by B Company 6RAR some 3 months later.

This battle was the biggest and longest daylight action the Australians had in Vietnam.

106 Battery of the Royal Australian Artillery was not in Vietnam for Long Tan, but, like those Aussie and Kiwi gunners that did supported D Company at Long Tan, they supported other Infantry Warriors .



Open 2/35 US Artillery site

Total Australian casualties for the "Battle of Long Tan".

18 killed in action and 24 wounded in action.



This medal, the South Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Gold Star, was to be awarded to me by the Vietnamese government after Long Tan. I still have not received it nor has the Australian government acknowledged the fact that due its incompetence and bungling twenty one other Australians have been refused permission to wear the Vietnamese decoration intended for them.

A page is being developed detailing the sequences of events and correspondence to with replies from the government and departments seeking approval.

[Link to "Trying for a fair deal"](#)



Jim Richmond of 11 Platoon was seriously wounded from the initial enemy fire at about 1540 hours on the 18th. This image shows him receiving treatment for his chest wounds on the morning of the battle. Attending Jim, are "Jordie" Richard Bandsman stretcher bearer facing the camera and Bob Buick, Jim's Platoon Sergeant.

The other wounded and left on the battle field Barry "Custard" Meller. Shot through the mouth, he was talking to his sergeant, was hit again in the chest during the withdrawal and was only missed when the enemy was a 'head count' back at the comparative position.

The battlefield was a charnel house with hundreds of dead strewn everywhere. The rubber trees had been shattered from the artillery and streamers of latex from trunks where bullets and shrapnel had slashed the bark.

The 105mm Artillery Field Gun used by the Australian and New Zealand Batteries was designed by the Italians for mountain warfare. It was never designed to fire high rates of fire for over three hours. It fired a 15 kilogram High Explosive shell about 9 kilometres. At Long Tan, the 6 to 7 kilometres range was the ideal range for this type of gun.

Capable of high accurate and sustained fire at that range, each gun firing a round every 10 to 15 seconds. For over 3 hours, 18 of these guns supported D Company. It requires dedication and skilled gun crews to attain such a high standard of gun fire in battle support.

After this battle these guns were replaced by the American 105mm field gun.





There was not a great quantity of enemy weapons recovered after the battle. During the night, 6RAR withdrew for casualty evacuation, then returned to the area. Their mission was to recover as many weapons as possible along with as many dead and wounded as could be handled.

Artillery fire continued all night onto the battle but with care. Those missing 11 Platoon could have been alive. Gunfire was used on enemy withdrawal tracks, especially the 155 guns from Bty A, 2/35 Battalion, US Army

Three Viet Cong were captured, 2 from the provincial D445 VC Battalion the other a 17 years North Vietnamese. D445 battalion was targeted by 1ATF as the main enemy. After Long Tan and over the next couple of years the battalion was reduced to less than a company strength of 80 and very restricted in its operations.

If we never knew much about the enemy and his plans, the captured soldiers knew less. One stated that his battalion was ordered to march to the sound of the firing, and that they did not know who they were fighting or how many. Neither side knew what the other did during this battle.

We have told our story but this has been rejected by the Vietnamese military history writers. They maintain there was over a battalion of Australians in the rubber plantation, there was not, we were only a company with a strength of 108. Our enemy have blended and concocted a tale to suit their political aims.



Jack Kirby (awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal, DCM) and Harry Smith (awarded the Military Cross, MC) for their actions at the battle about test fire the captured wheeled Soviet Machine Gun. Jack was killed when 12 rounds of 105mm mortar fire hit fell on D Company February 1967

Called "a slick" this type of helicopter was the taxi to the Infantry Soldier. Carrying 7 Australian's with all their combat equipment to any part of the province in 20 minutes.

"Gunships" had rockets and machine guns side mounted. Purpose built gunships, the Cobra, arrived in Vietnam in 1967 after 6RAR came home.



Some of the 11 platoon survivors play with w Peter Ainslie, Ron Yow Yeh and Ron Eglinton g instruction to Geoff Holmes on how it should done. Or, is he indicating the depth of water

This drain, to divert the monsoon run off, was developed to a trench about metre and a half and could be utilized as a communication or fig trench if the base was attacked

D Company Digger lines completed and comfortable by about February 1967.

After 7 months of building the defences, patrolling and conducting many operations, the home comforts were also completed.

Sleeping 4 to a tent, furniture was made from boxes and other equipment scrounged. Aussie don't steal, they acquire or scrounge. In Vietnam there was a lot of both.





By February 1967 D Company had erected barbed wire defences about 100 to 150 metres deep. The image shows Harry Smith looking at the area on the company's right flank, adjacent to the Task Force Support Units.

Our enemy, the sons and daughters of the Viet Minh, the Viet Cong, National Liberation Front, North Vietnamese Army were the servants, the armed element, of the North Vietnamese political war machine in Vietnam. Having lost just about every battle against the American, Australian, Korean, Thai and South Vietnamese troops, they had lost the war in the early 1970's and signed an agreement in 1973, a cease fire.

However the North won for one reason only. The political element of North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front did not withdraw from South Viet Nam, Cambodia or Laos where they trained to again invade South Viet Nam in 1975. During this time the Republic of South Viet Nam had downsized its military, two years had passed since the signing of the cease fire in 1973 and all the Free World Forces supporting the Republic of South Viet Nam had withdrawn.

The war had been won in 1973!



Our enemy, the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese Army lived in the bush, tunnels and caves.

Constantly threatened from ground and air at the time he had no real place to call home. Yet, with all constraints he survived and finally defeated the South Vietnamese Forces in 1975.

A Viet Cong Mortar Crew training. These crews were expert in handling and firing the mortar. This a 82mm Chicom mortar had a longer range than the US 81mm mortar.

In Vietnam the Communist Bloc weapons of comparable calibre had a longer range. Mortar crews inflicted many casualties in the Free World Forces when firing in support of attacks or bombarding camps and installations.



D Company in camp, at home for Christmas. I platoon or group within the company was req to perform. This is the headquarters strutting stuff.

Where they got the sheila (girl) is left to the imagination.

They looked familiar, the signallers and medi drag. "Priscilla Queen of the Desert" in the jur Vietnam.

The soldiers mess, kitchen and club (boozer), this image was taken about March 1967, 8 months after arriving at Nui Dat. It was the dry season and these facilities had little use due to operational requirements. In the bush looking for the VC.



Officers and Sergeants in the Australian Arm



separated amenities to the soldiers. This is club with a farewell party on the last day in co Harry Smith the Company Commander with Australian Red Cross girls Jean DeBelle and Winsome Ayliffe.

Called "Dough Nut Dollies" by the American thought more of them than that.

HMAS SYDNEY, fondly called "The Vung Tau Ferry" photographed here north bound to Viet Nam taking on fuel and supplies from a Fleet Tanker . Australia's three services served in Vietnam. The Navy with Warships, Pilots to US Army Helicopter Assault Companies and Mine Clearance Divers to US Navy Seal Teams. The Air Force with Bombers, Caribou Transport Planes and Huey Helicopters that were in direct support to 1ATF.

Some 60,000 Aussie's went to Vietnam and that included civilian medical and aid teams.



That then is my story in picture magazine form. I trust that I have shown in general what it was like. Operational and battle images really give a true image on what conflict is all about. This can only be passed by voice and text, most movies cannot really portray the true image, but, some or close.



[The Emblem of The United States Presidential Unit Citation \(PUC\) \(Army\)](#)

This is quoted from documentation in relation to the significance to

The Presidential Unit Citation for Valor.

"It is awarded to a Unit that has displayed the Courage, Steadfastness and Action that is

required by an individual to be awarded the Distinguished Service Cross (US), second only to the Medal of Honor. Each member of the unit wear the emblem all the time when wearing medals. Those posted to the unit after the date for which the award is made wears the emblem while a member of that unit."

3RAR was awarded the same PUC for that units participation in the "The Kapyong Battle" Korea. D Company 6RAR the "Battle of Long Tan" Vietnam.

Did the National Liberation Front, The Viet Cong, intend to Attack the Australian Base at Nui Dat?

["Was The Battle of Long Tan an Accident?"](#)

For those interested in the personal story of an officer who served in The Royal Australian Regiment and was the company commander of C Company 6RAR during 1965-7 please follow this link for the details about [We Band of Brothers](#), a biography by Brian McFarlane.

Since the Viet Nam war there has been an explosion of fake veterans in Australia and the USA. Because of these impostors dedicated groups now search and verify the bona fide of reported military wannabes.

Special internet sites, like the two below, present wannabes stories illustrating what these impostors claim. It is truly amazing how some portray their false military persona, freely telling of their exploits as members of Special Forces and units that have been involved with historical battles, like Long Tan.

Please visit the Australian and USA sites through the links below but clicking on the image.



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[Aussie Battlers Military WebRing](#)
This site is owned by

[Bob Buick](#)

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Lest We Forget
Vietnam Veterans' Mortality Listing



The "Lest Forget Banner" is the link to a site that contains the names of those who served in Viet Nam and known to have attended their final parade since Australia's withdrawal from South Viet Nam. Should you know of a warrior missing from this list please forward the details via the link on the site.