

Operations in South Vietnam

1 June 1968—1 May 1969

Introduction

4th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment, arrived in South Vietnam on 1 June 1968 where it linked up with V and W companies, both of the 1st Battalion, Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment, to become 4th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment/New Zealand (Anzac) Battalion.

It commenced operations in June.

During its year-long tour in South Vietnam the battalion completed 11 operations of battalion size and five operations of company size or less.

It also maintained a company group at all times on the horseshoe feature four miles south-east of Nui Dat.

The scope of operations was widely varied to include offensive reconnaissances in force, defensive operations (mainly in the Long Binh-Bien Hoa area), destruction of enemy assets and pacification and food-denial operations. In addition, various detachments of the unit were employed on road escort protection and training operations.

Units supporting the battalion

4RAR/NZ(Anzac)Bn was supported by many other units during its tour and it is only right to pay tribute to these, whether their support was operational or administrative. There will be many whose aid was invaluable who have been omitted. To these people the men of the 4th say a special thank you.

104 Field Battery—Royal Australian Artillery

Our direct support battery and deeply involved in every battalion operation, 104 Field Battery provided splendidly accurate and sustained support throughout the tour. The battery became such a close-knit part of the Anzac battalion team the artillerymen were invited to contribute as full members in the production of this book. The offer was willingly accepted and a section in another part of the book deals with the battery's tour in South Vietnam.

A Squadron, 3rd Cavalry Regiment—Royal Australian Armoured Corps

Close cooperation was enjoyed with the men of A Squadron and their M113 armoured personnel carriers. They took an active part in many of the battalion's operations. They invariably showed a most aggressive spirit and

a willingness to share in any activity, particularly those which offered a chance of contacting the enemy.

9 Squadron—Royal Australian Air Force

The aircrew of 9 Squadron and their Iroquois helicopters played a big part in almost every operation mounted by the unit. They performed tasks covering every aspect of warfare from helicopter assault landings to garbage removal. Their willing cooperation won much admiration in the unit. Particular tribute is paid to their bravery in handling many hazardous Dustoff operations, which ensured many of our seriously wounded were given the best possible chance of recovery.

1st Field Squadron—Royal Australian Engineers

Our engineer support was provided mainly from our affiliated troop, 1st Troop, and they shared many exciting and memorable times with us.

B and C squadrons, 1st Armoured Regiment— Royal Australian Armoured Corps

We were always delighted to see the Centurion tanks of C Squadron, and later B Squadron, of the 1st Armoured Regiment. Though not designed for the terrain or climate of South Vietnam, they were manoeuvred into seemingly impossible places by their crews who were always anxious to get into the thick of things.

161 Independent Reconnaissance Flight— Australian Army Air Corps

The Sioux helicopters and Cessna aircraft of 161 Independent Reconnaissance Flight were a very important and active part of the team. Their helpful assistance was sought continuously and never found wanting.

US aviation

We made a lot of use of American air power. Light fire teams helped many a platoon and company out of a dangerous situation. Their quick reaction and ability to put fire right where we wanted it was appreciated by all.

Firefly was something of which we did not see a lot. However, the team of three Iroquois helicopters, one equipped with searchlights and the other two with rockets and mini-guns, sought out many a VC who had thought it safe to move at night.

The second W Company, in particular, was grateful to watch the fiery trails from Spooky's mini-guns hosing the company perimeter as the VC put in a night attack.

Hundreds of soldiers are alive today as tangible evidence of the speed, courage and efficiency of the US Dustoff helicopter crews.

The big CH47 Chinook helicopters brought a new dimension to planning battalion moves.

Air strikes into an area before we arrived on the scene were a great booster of morale, and B52 strikes, while not in direct support of us, were dropped on targets sufficiently close to us for us to realise their awesome power.

Operations with Vietnamese forces

On a number of occasions elements of the battalion assisted or cooperated with local Regional Force, Popular Force or ARVN troops. The only complete operation involved the second W Company, 1st Company, 2/48th ARVN Battalion and 586 RF Company, operating in the Long Green in January 1969.

The battalion also maintained a mobile advisory training team (MAT) at Dat Do and another at the 18th ARVN Division training school between Nui Dat and Hoa Long.

Types of operations

The majority of operations carried out by the battalion were reconnaissances in force. However, the battalion carried out several defensive operations in Bien Hoa and Phuoc Tuy provinces. Company operations, lasting up to seven days, were conducted within Phuoc Tuy Province. Most of these were reconnaissances in force or involved searching for caches as a result of information from intelligence. Land-clearing was also carried out by the battalion, the first W Company and B Company being involved in this in the area between the Nui Thai Vais and Nui Dinh.

KEY TO MAP SYMBOLS



Movement by Iroquois helicopter.



Tank movement.



Foot movement.



Movement by Chinook helicopter.



Truck movement.



APC movement.

Operation Redwing

10 June 1968

This was the battalion's first shake-down operation and took the form of an airmobile move to the Binh Ba rubber plantation and a one-day reconnaissance in force.

The mission was to search the area of the Binh Ba rubber estate, check the identity of workers in the area, and investigate the Suoi Lup stream for signs of occupation of the area by C41 Chau Duc Company.

The battalion, less V Company which was on the Horse-shoe, deployed by helicopter early in the morning and commenced sweeping north. D Company moved on the left flank to the Suoi Lup, B Company through the centre and

W Company on the right. C Company protected battalion headquarters and carried out close-in patrolling.

The operation was not completed until close to darkness because of the heavy undergrowth encountered by D Company.

The battalion flew back to Nui Dat, extracting from two pick-up zones, the last lift taking place in total darkness.

Though contact with the enemy was not made, the operation was successful in that it proved that the battalion's airmobile procedures, after long hours of planning and practice, worked well.

Remember....?

Checking passes in the rubber.

Night extractions by helicopter and the relief felt when all were accounted for.

For the first and last time, smoke screens on the pick-up zone.

RESULTS — Own troops: Nil.
Enemy: Nil.