

Operation Capital, Phases I and II

13 October — 30 November 1968

It was several months since friendly forces had operated in the northern part of the Thua Tich.

This was the traditional home of Rear Services Group 84, the unit responsible for maintaining 274 VC Regiment in the field. It was also known as an important staging area for troops moving between the Hat Dich, west of Route Two, and the May Tao area in the east of Phuoc Tuy Province.

Special Air Service patrols and agents continually reported evidence that Group 84 had extensive cultivations and caches in the area. There were also elements of 274 Regiment. It was likely these elements would be small caretaker parties and groups guarding camps, caches and cultivation areas. The enemy was expected to be aggressive.

Operation Capital was a two-phased two-battalion-sized reconnaissance in force in the area.

AO Downer covered the centre part of the Thua Tich and AO Curtin the northern part.

4RAR/NZ(Anzac)Bn deployed on the morning of October 13, flying to a landing zone near a deserted hamlet named Ap Xa Bang. Two assault helicopter companies carried out the lift of the task force — 9 Squadron RAAF carrying 1RAR, and the US assault helicopter company known as the Emus, which included some Royal Australian Navy pilots, carrying 4RAR/NZ(Anzac)Bn.

C Company secured Trentham, which had been used during Operation Hawkesbury, for the fly-in of battalion headquarters. The company then moved off to its own AO.

W Company and 104 Field Battery established FSPB Flinders on the eastern edge of the Don Dien de Courtenay rubber plantation.

V, C and D Companies started patrolling in their AOs, moving east. On October 26 the companies were redeployed to the eastern edge of AO Downer, which included

the Song Rai River. There were several small contacts, but on October 30 Phase 1 finished with the fly-back to Nui Dat of the battalion.

It was assumed the VC would note the exodus of the battalion and consider it safe to move in the area again. However, Flinders was kept in operation and after three days in Nui Dat the battalion flew back into the same area, hoping to catch the enemy by surprise.

D Company went to the fire support base, Phase 1 having been W Company's last operation with the battalion. V and C companies moved to their respective AOs.

The aim was to ambush all likely tracks and to continue to try to find Group 84's assets and destroy them.

Malaria had reduced the strength of the battalion considerably.

Ambushes were successful in most cases and caches and camps were found regularly and destroyed.

The VC demonstrated once again that they would continue to use tracks after they had been ambushed on them.

On November 26 V Company, whose ranks were seriously depleted by malaria, moved to the fire support base and D Company moved to an area south-east of Flinders.

C Company had its second tangle with planes of the US Air Force when a bomb from a combat skyspot, which was supposed to have been cancelled, was dropped on its company perimeter. Men were thrown into the air, but miraculously nobody was injured.

The operation had resulted in many caches and camps being found and destroyed. Twenty-six VC had been killed and one taken prisoner.

Excluding three days in Nui Dat between Phases I and II, the battalion had been on operations continuously for 48 days.

RESULTS — Own troops: Two killed, nine wounded.
Enemy: 26 killed, six wounded,
one captured.

OPERATION CAPITAL

Locations shown are as at 13 Oct 68

Redeployment to Nui Dat 30 Oct 68

13 30 Oct 68



OPERATION CAPITAL 2

10 Curtin 3 30 Nov 68

Locations shown are as at 3 Nov 68
Redeployment to Nui Dat 30 Nov 68

