

Operation Stafford

17 April — 1 May 1969

4RAR/NZ(Anzac)Bn carried out its last operation in the area in which its tour started — in and around the Binh Ba rubber plantation.

AO Barossa was north of Nui Dat, bounded on the west by the Hat Dich and on the east by a line parallel with Route Two.

It was the traditional operating area of C41 Chau Duc Company and it was hoped the battalion would trap the company in a pincer movement. It was also thought the headquarters of 274 VC Regiment had moved into the area following operations by other elements of the task force.

In addition, it was reasonable to assume the battalion could contact the local Binh Ba and Duc Thanh guerrilla units.

The battalion's aim was to conduct a reconnaissance in force in the area and to destroy any enemy located, especially C41 Company and 274 VC Regiment.

A preliminary operation by armoured and engineer elements on the morning of April 16 started the securing and building of FSPB Virginia.

D Company flew from AO Marulan to the southern part of its AO. Drama entered the operation when an Iroquois crashed when the pilot was blinded by dust on the landing zone.

C and V companies flew into an area on Route Two between their respective AOs, and W Company and battalion headquarters flew into Virginia.

D Company was soon in contact with VC in bunkers. It was thought it could be the headquarters of 274 VC Regiment. The company pulled back and the camp was bombarded by artillery and airstrikes. When the company entered the camp there was little of significance left. D Company suffered five casualties in the contact. Its only

consolation was that if the camp had held the headquarters of the enemy unit, the Vietnamese had had to move in a great hurry.

C and V companies had a series of minor contacts, V Company locating several enemy caches. The area was familiar to it from Operation Hawkesbury.

Civilians in the area caused many problems and the rules of engagement had to be adhered to strictly. Several were apprehended and handed over to district authorities at Duc Than, where a number proved to be VC collaborators.

Information from 11th Armoured Cavalry Regiment, north of the task force's tactical area of responsibility, led to the redeployment of V Company to the north. An ambush on the night of April 27 killed three VC and on the morning of April 28 the company captured a PW who proved to be the executive officer (operations officer) of 274 VC Regiment. It was a high note on which to conclude the tour.

C Company deployed by APC to the south-east of the Binh Ba rubber on the same morning and was joined by V Company on April 29 for the final stage of operations against C41 Company.

W Company moved to the northern edge of the rubber on the same day to complete the cordon and D Company swept toward the stops. However, light enemy opposition only was met.

On the night of April 30 D and W companies were concentrated on Binh Ba I and C and V companies on Binh Ba II airfields.

On 1 May 1969 the battalion flew out from the two pick-up zones it had used to commence operations in South Vietnam.

RESULTS — Own troops: Five wounded.
Enemy: 17 killed, one wounded,
one captured.

OPERATION STAFFORD

AO Barossa

17 Apr - 1 May 68

Locations shown are as at 17 Apr 68

Redeployment to Wal Dai 1 May 68

W Coy redeployed 18 Apr 68

