



THE BATTLE OF LONG TAN 18 AUGUST 1966

Facts, Figures, Timeline, Maps

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Additional research available at www.battleoflongtan.com

Sources: Official Australian and New Zealand Defence Force After-Action Reports, Official and Private - Commander's Diaries, Unit Logs, Interviews, Transcripts, Government Cables, Intelligence Reports, books; "The Battle of Long Tan" by Lex McAulay, "To Long Tan: The Australian Army and the Vietnam War 1950-1966" by Ian McNeill, Ernie Chamberlain "The Battle of Long Tân: Việt Cộng Casualties – New Material".

Battle of Long Tan – Facts, Figures and Timeline

FACTS AND FIGURES

Date and Location:

- The Battle of Long Tan took place on 18 August 1966, in a rubber plantation called Long Tan in Phuoc Tuy Province South Vietnam, approximately 5km's away from the 1ATF (Australian Task Force) base which was situated at Nui Dat.

Total Casualties from the Battle of Long Tan

Australia

- **18 killed** (Names, ranks and ages listed later in document)
 - 17 from Delta Company (D Coy), 6RAR
 - 11 National Servicemen, Australian Army
 - 6 Regular soldiers, Australian Army
 - One from 3 Troop, 1 APC (Armoured Personnel Carrier) Squadron
 - Died nine days later from wounds sustained in the battle
- **24 wounded** - D Coy

North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and Viet Cong (VC)

- **245+ killed**
 - Officially, 245 bodies were counted on the battlefield by Australian soldiers. However, even though additional bodies and body parts were found over the following days and weeks, the number of 245 remained the officially recorded casualty figure. More Vietnamese bodies were found over a two-week period after the battle, but the official death toll was never adjusted.
 - In October 2018, Ernie Chamberlain authored a Research Note, "The Battle of Long Tan: Viet Cong Casualties" in which he included 190 names/personal details of 275 Main Force Viet Cong Regiment personnel killed at Long Tan. That listing was based on available official Vietnamese death certificates (giấy báo tử) – and analysis of some "tombstone data". In that Note, he cautioned that: "Of course, for a complete and accurate listing of NVA/VC KIA at the Battle of Long Tan, KIA figures would also be needed for elements additional to the 275th VC Regiment" – eg D445 Battalion, and HQ 5th VC Division elements, the HQ Bà Rịa-Long Khánh-Biên Hòa Province Unit, the Võ Thị Sáu Civil Labour Company, the C.12-65 Bình Giã Assault Youth Unit, the "Surgery Element", small reconnaissance elements (ie 5th VC Division, C.982), and possibly a small Z39 artillery element.
 - An important note; a tactic of the North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong was going to extraordinary lengths to remove their dead, wounded and any weapons from the battlefield so no accurate assessment of NVA/VC casualties could be made by the American, South Vietnamese, Australian and other allies.
- **200+ wounded**
 - There is no accurate source for the number of NVA/VC wounded as a result of this battle. However, early in 2018, the "Quartermaster's (QM's) notebook" of the 275th Main Force VC Regiment became available – a document captured in early February 1968 by 2RAR/NZ (ANZAC) during Operation Coburg. The recovered 275 Regiment QM's notebook hints to at least 111 wounded personnel from 275 Regiment alone, but there is no source material for the number of wounded from D445 Battalion and all of the other supporting units.
 - 275 Regiment was rendered practically ineffective in Phuoc Tuy Province after the battle of Long Tan until the Australians and New Zealanders left the province and Vietnam in 1971.
 - 3 wounded NVA/Viet Cong soldiers were captured on the battlefield.

Battle of Long Tan – Facts, Figures and Timeline

Opposing forces on the battlefield at Long Tan

Australia & New Zealand

- 105 soldiers from **D Coy, 6RAR Australian Army**
- A three-man New Zealand Artillery Forward Observation (FO) party from **161 Battery, RNZA (Royal New Zealand Artillery)**

Total **108** soldiers.

Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army

- 1,400-1,500 soldiers from **275 Viet Cong Main Force Regiment and Support Companies**
- 400-500 soldiers from **D445 Viet Cong Mobile Provincial Battalion**
- 200-500 soldiers from other **5th Viet Cong Division Elements**

Approximately **2,000 – 2,500** NVA/VC troops faced off against D Coy, 6RAR. However, it is estimated approximately **1,500 to 2,000** only took direct part in attacking D Coy, 6RAR in the battle.

Detailed breakdown of Australian, New Zealand and American Supporting Units

- **D Company, 6RAR at Long Tan comprised:**
 - 105 Australian regular and national service soldiers
 - A three-man New Zealand artillery Forward Observer (FO) party, **161 Bty, RNZA**
 - Each rifleman only carried 3 x 20 round magazines (one in their weapon and two in their webbing) and another 60 rounds in boxes in their packs
 - Each M60 machine gun team (2 men) carried 6 x 100 7.62 round belts of ammunition and another 6 x 100 7.62 round belts of ammunition in their packs
- **3 Troop, 1APC Squadron at Long Tan comprised:**
 - 10 x M113 APC's (Armoured Personnel Carriers)
 - 22 troopers driving and manning the 3 Troop Carriers
 - Each M113 APC had a .50 calibre heavy machine gun mounted on top
 - Only three of the APC's had armoured turrets in front of the trooper manning the .50 calibre heavy machinegun
- **B Coy, 6RAR comprised:**
 - 32 soldiers
- **A Coy, 6RAR (transported inside the APCs) comprised:**
 - 105 soldiers
- **Four artillery batteries at the Australian Task Force, Nui Dat were used in the battle**
 - 6 x 105mm L5 pack howitzers of 161 Field Battery, Royal New Zealand Army
 - 6 x 105mm L5 pack howitzers of 103 Field Battery, Royal Australian Army
 - 6 x 105mm L5 pack howitzers of 105 Field Battery, Royal Australian Army
 - 6 x M109 Self Propelled 155mm guns of A Battery, 2/35th Howitzer Battalion, US Army

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- **Two Huey UH-1B Iroquois Helicopters from 9 Squadron RAAF (Royal Australian Air Force) were used for the critical ammunition resupply to D Coy**
 - Helicopter A2-1020
 - Flight Lieutenant (Pilot) Frank Riley
 - Flight Lieutenant (Co-pilot) Bob Grandin
 - Leading Aircraftmen (LAC) 'Blue' Collins
 - Leading Aircraftmen (LAC) George Stirling
 - Helicopter A2-1022
 - Flight Lieutenant (Pilot) Cliff Dohle
 - Flight Lieutenant (Co-pilot) Bruce Lane
 - Corporal W.R. Harrington
 - Leading Aircraftmen (LAC) B.B. Hill
- **Seven RAAF Huey UH-1B Iroquois helicopters plus one American Medical Company (Air Ambulance) helicopter were used for the medical evacuation of D Coy's wounded and dead**
 - 12.00 midnight - first Huey chopper lands at improvised landing zone at edge of Long Tan rubber plantation
 - Medical evacuations of D Coy casualties
 - 5 seriously wounded
 - 12 lightly wounded
 - 5 dead
 - 00.34am - all medical helicopter evacuations completed
 - Aircraft and crews from 9 Squadron who flew the medical evacuation flights
 - A2-1019 Shepherd, Middleton
 - A2-1020 Riley, Grandin, Collins, Stirling
 - A2-1021 Macintosh, Sharpley, Taylor
 - A2-1022 Dohle, Lane, Harrington, Hill
 - A2-1023 Hayes, Munday, Buttris, Rowe
 - A2-1024 Hindley, Champion, Williams
 - A2-1025 Scott, Banfield, Roche
- **United States Marine Corps, Marine Attack Squadron 542 (VMA-542)**
 - 3 x F-4 Phantoms provided an airstrike in support of D Coy, 6RAR

Detailed breakdown of North Vietnamese Army, Viet Cong and Supporting Elements

- **275 Viet Cong Main Force Regiment and Support Companies**
 - 1,400-1,500 soldiers
 - HQ 275 Regiment
 - 1st Battalion
 - 2nd Battalion
 - 3rd Battalion – originally the D605 NVA Battalion (of the Bắc Sơn Regiment). It infiltrated into South Vietnam in late 1965 and was incorporated into the 275th Main Force VC Regiment in April 1966
 - C16 mortars

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- C17 RCLs
 - C18 Anti-Aircraft
 - C19 Engineers
 - C20 Signals
 - C21 Recon/Sapper
 - C22 Transport
 - C23 Medical
 - C24 Convalescent Company
- **D445 Viet Cong Mobile Provincial Battalion**
 - 400-500 soldiers
- **5th Viet Cong Division Elements**
 - HQ 5th VC Division Element
 - C.982 Reconnaissance Element
 - Surgery Element
 - Z39 artillery element
- **HQ Bà Rịa-Long Khánh-Biên Hòa Province Unit**
- **Võ Thị Sáu Civil Labour Company (Viet Cong Long Đất District)**
- **C.12-65 Bình Giã Assault Youth Unit (Viet Cong Châu Đức District)**

Detailed Facts

- The patrols, initially by B Coy and then by D Coy 6RAR, were in response to a mortaring of the 1ATF (Australian Task Force) base at 2.43am on the morning of 17th August
 - 82 VC and NVA mortar and recoilless rocket rounds impacted the base
 - 24 Australians were wounded, two seriously
 - Seven vehicles were lightly damaged
 - 21 tents were damaged
- The patrol by D Coy on 18th August 1966 was codenamed **Operation Vendetta**
- The ANZAC's in the Long Tan plantation were outnumbered 20 to 1
- The majority of the battle was fought in a blinding monsoon, thunderstorm
- The entire battle took place over an area no bigger than two football fields
- The rubber plantation at Long Tan was approximately 5km's from the artillery at Nui Dat
- The battle lasted three and a half hours with the last contacts occurring around 7.10pm to 7.15pm on 18 August 1966

Battle of Long Tan – Facts, Figures and Timeline

- At the end of the battle at 7.15pm on 18 August, 15 Australians were missing.
- At the end of the battle the ANZAC force had no idea of the significant VC and NVA force they had faced, or the significant casualties they inflicted upon them.
- As the wounded and dead were evacuated by Huey choppers, D Coy, B Coy, A Coy and the APC troopers worried about the missing 15 Australians. They worried the dead might be mutilated and any wounded Australians would be captured, tortured and possibly killed. It was a very long night.
- On the morning of 19 August 1966, A, B and the survivors of D Company's 6RAR were reinforced by B Company 5RAR, flown in by Huey choppers. Additional APC's also arrived from Nui Dat. Led by D Coy, this force cautiously assaulted back into the Long Tan rubber plantation to recover the missing Australians and destroy any remaining VC and NVA forces.
- This ANZAC force recovered 13 dead Australians, two wounded Australians, two wounded NVA and one wounded VC soldier, with an unusually high number of VC and NVA weapons and ammunition.

Artillery:

- The New Zealand, Australian and American artillery at Nui Dat fired almost non-stop for five hours in support of the battle
- Each of the four artillery batteries contained six artillery guns
- The New Zealand, and the two Australian artillery batteries were firing 6-8 rounds per minute per gun for three and a half hours, two rounds per minute above the 'intense' rate
- Regimental Fire Missions (all eighteen Australian, six New Zealand and six U.S. Army artillery guns firing at once) had not been fired since the Korean war and will probably never be fired again
- Lightning twice hit the artillery positions; one exploding a 44 gallon toilet barrel and the other striking electrical infrastructure knocking out the crucial Tannoy speakers used for communicating fire missions around the artillery gun pits, knocking a switchboard radio operator across the floor
- Two artillery gunners passed out from the volume of cordite fumes from the artillery guns as the fumes would not disperse due to the monsoonal weather conditions
- Artillery fire was eventually being brought in "Danger Close" to within 50 metres of the Australian positions

Weapons and ammunition:

- Approximately 400,000+ rounds of ammunition were fired by both sides
- The artillery at Nui Dat fired in excess of 3,500 rounds –
 - Officially some 3,500 rounds of artillery were fired from the 24 Australian, New Zealand and U.S. artillery guns in support of Delta Company, 6RAR, but in reality the figure was higher as the artillery batteries had been stockpiling additional ammunition just for this type of scenario
 - In fact, so much artillery was fired, an urgent ammunition resupply of 1,000 rounds of artillery was requested. This ammunition could not be trucked in from the 1st Australian Logistics base at Vung Tau due to the high risk of enemy ambushes. So the ammunition was brought in by U.S. Chinook helicopters right over the top of the artillery positions using the headlights from jeeps to light up a makeshift drop zone
- More than 20 rounds of enemy mortar rounds were dropped on or near D Coy during the battle
- The Australians captured an extraordinary amount of VC and NVA weapons on the battlefield –

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Weapons recovered on the Long Tan battlefield:

33	AK47 rifles
7	RPD LMG's
5	SKS rifles
4	RPG-2 rocket launchers
2	57mm recoilless rifles (RR or RCL)
2	M1 carbines
1	PPSh M1941 submachinegun
1	SGM heavy machinegun, on wheels
1	M1 'Garand' rifle
1	Thompson submachinegun
1	Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR light machinegun)

- More than 10,500 rounds of ammunition for the rifles and machineguns
- 300 hand grenades
- 40 mortar bombs for 60mm mortar
- 22 rounds for 57mm RCL's
- 28 rockets for the RPG-2's
- Ammunition and magazines were found for an old German MG34 machinegun, though no weapon was located.

These figures are highly unusual as the VC and NVA always went to great lengths to remove their weapons and dead from the battlefield. The unusually high number of weapons left behind is further evidence of the casualties inflicted on the enemy.

Prisoners:

Three wounded NVA/VC were taken prisoner on the battlefield during the morning of 19 August 1966.

- One Viet Cong soldier from D445 Viet Cong Provincial Mobile Battalion
- Two North Vietnamese Army soldiers from 3rd Battalion, 275 Main Force VC Regiment

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Australians killed in Battle of Long Tan:

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS USED IN LIST

1 APC Sqn = 1st Armoured Personnel Carrier Squadron

2Lt = 2nd Lieutenant (Army rank)

6RAR = 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment

Civ: = Civilian occupation

Commem: = Commemorated at

Cpl = Corporal (Army rank)

KIA = Killed in action

L/Cpl = Lance Corporal (Army rank)

Pte = Private (Army rank)

WIA = Wounded in action

Pte Aldersea, Richard A.

Unit: 6RAR; Age: 20; Regular Army enlistee

Born: Perth, WA

Civ: Lube attendant; Married

KIA – Chest wounds

Commem: Karrakatta Cemetery, WA

Cpl Clements, Peter E

Unit: 1 APC Sqn; Age: 21; Regular Army enlistee

Born: Cunderdin, WA

Single

WIA – died at hospital

Commem: Moora Cemetery, WA

Pte Drabble, Glenn A

Unit: 6RAR; Age: 21; National Serviceman

Born: Brisbane, Queensland.

Civ: Blinds installer; Single

KIA – Gunshot wound to head

Commem: Garden of Remembrance, Queensland

Buried at: Pinnaroo Cemetery, Queensland

Pte Gant, Kenneth H

Unit: 6RAR; Age: 21; National Serviceman

Born: Brisbane, Queensland

Civ: Butcher; Single

KIA – Gunshot wounds

Commem: Garden of Remembrance, Queensland

Buried at: Mt Gravatt Cemetery, Queensland

Pte Grant, Ernest F

Unit: 6RAR; Age: 20; Regular Army enlistee

Born: Thurgoona, NSW

Civ: Farm hand; Single

KIA – Gunshot wounds

Commem: Albury Cemetery, NSW

Pte Grice, Victor R

Unit: 6RAR; Age: 21; National Serviceman

Born: Ballarat, Victoria

Civ: Storeman; Single

KIA

Commem: Garden of Remembrance, Queensland

Buried at: Pinnaroo Lawn Cemetery, Queensland

Pte Houston, James M

Unit: 6RAR; Age: 22; Regular Army enlistee

Born: Wallsend, NSW

Civ: Station hand; Married

KIA – Gunshot wounds

Commem: Garden of Remembrance, Queensland

Buried at: Mt Thompson Crematorium, Queensland

L/Cpl Jewry, Jack

Unit: 6RAR; Age: 21; National Serviceman

Born: St Mary's NSW

Civ: Apprentice electrician; Married

KIA – Gunshot wounds

Commem: Garden of Remembrance, NSW

Buried at: Pine Grove Memorial Park, NSW

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Pte Large, Paul A	Unit: 6RAR; Age: 21; National Serviceman Born: Wellington, NSW Civ: Manager; Single KIA – Gunshot wounds Commem: Garden of Remembrance, NSW Buried at: Coolah Cemetery, NSW
Pte McCormack, A F	Unit: 6RAR; Age: 21; National Serviceman Born: Launceston, Tasmania Civ: Clerk; Single WIA – Died at hospital
Pte McCormack, Dennis J	Unit: 6RAR; Age: 21; National Serviceman Born: Adelaide, SA Civ: Labourer; Single KIA – Gunshot wounds Commem: Garden of Remembrance, Queensland Buried at: Pinnaroo Cemetery, Queensland
Pte Mitchell, Warren D	Unit: 6RAR; Age: 21; National Serviceman Born: Dalby, Queensland Civ: Clerk; Single KIA – Gunshot wounds Commem: Garden of Remembrance, Queensland Buried at: Mt Gravatt Cemetery, Queensland
Pte Salveron, Douglas J	Unit: 6RAR; Age: 20; National Serviceman Born: Brisbane, Queensland Civ: Student; Single KIA – Gunshot wounds Commem: Garden of Remembrance, Queensland Buried at: Mt Gravatt Cemetery, Queensland
2Lt Sharp, Gordon C	Unit: 6RAR; Age: 21; National Serviceman Born: Tamworth, NSW Civ: Television cameraman; Single KIA – Gunshot wounds Commem: Garden of Remembrance, NSW Buried at: Tamworth Memorial Park, NSW
Pte Thomas, David J	Unit: 6RAR; Age: 21; Regular Army enlistee Born: Bendigo, Victoria Civ: Skilled labourer; Single KIA – Chest wounds Commem: Kangaroo Flat Cemetery, Victoria
Pte Topp, Francis B	Unit: 6RAR; Age: 19; Regular Army enlistee Born: Toowoomba, Queensland Single KIA Commem: Helidon Cemetery, Queensland
Pte Wales, Maxwell R	Unit: 6RAR; Age: 22; Regular Army enlistee Born: Goondiwindi, Queensland Single KIA Commem: Moree Cemetery, NSW
Pte Whiston, Colin J	Unit: 6RAR; Age: 21; National Serviceman Born: Sydney, NSW Civ: Postman; Single KIA – Gunshot wounds Commem: Garden of Remembrance, Victoria Buried at: Crib Point Cemetery, Victoria

TIMELINE

5 Nov 1964

Australian Government Cabinet decided to introduce a compulsory selective National Service scheme. In announcing this decision to Parliament, Prime Minister Robert Menzies referred to 'aggressive Communism' developments in Asia, such as 'recent Indonesian policies and actions' and a 'deterioration in our strategic position', as being influential in the decision being reached (see Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives, 25th Parliament, 1st Session, pp. 2517–2724). The Government had concluded that Australia had inadequate Defence manpower and aimed to increase the strength of the Army to 33,000 by the end of 1966 by introducing national service.

24 Nov 1964

The National Service Act 1964, passed on 24 November, required 20-year-old males, if selected, to serve in the Army for a period of twenty-four months of continuous service (reduced to eighteen months in 1971), followed by three years in the Reserve. The Defence Act was amended in May 1965 to provide that conscripts could be obliged to serve overseas, and in March 1966, Prime Minister Holt announced that National Servicemen would be sent to Vietnam to fight in units of the Australian Regular Army.

Between 1965 and December 1972 over 800,000 men registered for National Service. Some 63,735 were conscripted and over 19,000 served in Vietnam. Although registration was compulsory a process of selection by ballot determined who would be called up. Two ballots were conducted each year. The ballots selected several dates in the selected period and all males with corresponding birthdays were called up for national service. The ballot was conducted using a lottery barrel and marbles representing birthdays. The barrel and marbles are held in the National Office, Canberra, in series MP1357/63.

May 1965

The Defence Act [Australia] was amended in May 1965 to provide that National Servicemen could be obliged to serve overseas, a provision that had been applied only once before—during World War II. In March 1966, the Government announced that National Servicemen would be sent to Vietnam to fight in units of the Australian Regular Army and for secondment to American forces.

Under the National Service Scheme, twenty-year-old men were required to register with the Department of Labour and National Service (DLNS), they were then subject to a ballot which, if their birth date was drawn, meant the possibility of two years of continuous full-time service in the regular army, followed by three years' part-time service in the Army Reserve. As part of their duty, national servicemen on full-time duty were liable for 'special overseas service' including combat duties in Vietnam.

The registration process involved filling in a form at a local national service registration office. There were two registration periods each year, each lasting a fortnight and widely publicized. The first, in January, was for men who turned twenty in the first half of the year. The second, in July, was for men turning twenty in the second half. Failure to register was an offence. Those who did not register without reasonable explanation were automatically balloted in and considered for call-up. They were also liable to be fined.

29 April 1965

The Prime Minister announces the dispatch of an infantry battalion to South Vietnam, with an armoured personnel carrier (APC) troop, a signals troop and a logistic support company.

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24 May 1965

Advance party from 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (1RAR), departs for South Vietnam, for service with the US 173rd Airborne Division.

6 Jun 1965

6 RAR was raised in Brisbane at the Enoggera Barracks on 6 June 1965 under the command of Lieutenant Colonel C.M. Townsend. The Battalion was formed by dividing 2 RAR (Pentropic) into two Tropical Establishment (TE) Battalions.

The Battalion initially comprised a nucleus command structure of Officers and NCO, two rifle companies and some specialists.

8 June 1965

HMAS Sydney arrives at Vung Tau, South Vietnam, carrying the bulk of the Australian force.

30 June 1965

First national service intake begins recruit training.

17 August 1965

Australian Government approves increase of Australian forces to a battalion group, supported by an artillery, additional APCs, engineers, army helicopters, light aircraft and more logistic support.

Sep 1965

6RAR was brought up to full strength when a large draft of soldiers from the first National Service intake marched-in in September 1965.

September 1965

A Morgan Gallup Poll finds 56% of those polled were in favour of continuing the war in Vietnam.

22 October 1965

A demonstration against the war in Sydney results in 65 arrests.

13 November 1965

WO2 Kevin "Dasher" Wheatley refuses to leave his mate, WO2 Bob Swanston, and is killed. His actions earned him Australia's highest honour, the Victoria Cross.

26 January 1966

Harold Holt succeeds Menzies as Prime Minister.

6 March 1966

Holt announces the Australian commitment in South Vietnam will be Increased to a 4350-man task force, and will include conscripts.

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The 1st Australian Task Force (1ATF) will include two infantry battalions, a Special Air Service squadron, combat and support logistic units and eight RAAF Iroquois helicopters (9 SQN).

The Task Force will be supported by 1 Australian Logistic Support Group (1 ALSG) to be established at Vung Tau. For the first time, national servicemen will be sent to South Vietnam.

24 May 1966

5 RAR deploys by helicopter from 1ATF concentration area at Vung Tau to secure the Task Force area at Nui Dat. Private Errol Noack becomes the first national serviceman and member of 1ATF to die from enemy action.

6 Jun 1966

6RAR arrive at Vung Tau, Vietnam in time for the first birthday of their formation. They spend the next 5 days acclimatising in the sand hills of the Australian Logistics base at Vung Tau culminating in a battalion sized exercise on the last day.

12 Jun 1966

9 Squadron, RAAF arrive in Vung Tau via Saigon (Iroquois choppers). The pilots move into an old French Villa on the foreshore. They fly their first mission the next day.

14 Jun 1966

Due to increasing intelligence that the enemy might be moving into the Nui Dat area – location for the Australian task force (ATF) base - 6RAR are quickly moved by Chinook choppers from Vung Tau to Nui Dat ahead of schedule. The afternoon at Nui Dat was spent digging shell scrapes and clearing the immediate area. That night D Coy maintained 100% stand-to. It rained all night.

For the duration of a tour of duty the Platoon routines at Nui Dat were more or less organised on a 3-day rotation:

- Day 1 – all day patrol following an overnight ambush 2 to 5 km's from the base and returning late afternoon the next day.
- Day 2 – Platoons spent time in the forward defensive lines (FDL's) building up defensive works by hand without proper equipment, doing battalion duties such as kitchen or other development works and defending the perimeter of Nui Dat. A listening post was also manned about 1km from the FDL's. Every late afternoon would be spent bailing water out of the weapons pits and trenches as like clock-work, the heavens opened up with a monsoonal downpour.
- Day 3 – once again the platoons would go out again on a day/night patrol and engage in setting up ambushes.

These numbing routines with little, if any enemy contact created an endless tension within each soldier - hours on patrol, or sitting waiting in an ambush all the while under threat of enemy contact. The stress of the heat and dust, mud, the endless rain, the boredom of routine and the never ending threat of an unseen enemy bore heavily on everyone's shoulders.

21 Jun to 5 July 1966

6RAR's first operation, Enoggera. D Coy's job was to complete the destruction of a village. They were to destroy or remove any caches of food and other supplies and then destroy the tunnels and hides which honeycombed the area.

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24 Jun 1966

At noon 12 Platoon stopped for lunch and the platoon assumed all round harbour defence so they could brew up. They had only just posted sentries and lit up their hexamine stoves when there was a yelp from one of the diggers - Pte Paul Large. Such a breaking of strict code of silence quickly brought everyone to their firing positions, sending brews flying and throwing dirt on burning stoves. It turned out that Paul had been bitten by a scorpion – not the small translucent brown ones but one of the bigger, highly venomous solid black ones. In minutes Paul was in a bad way. He was sweating profusely and his eyes were losing focus. The medic gave him some pills but within 15 minutes his temperature was well up and so 2Lt Sabben determined he had to be sent out. Sabben radioed that he had a medical casualty and requested a Dustoff flight (medivac chopper). It took another 10-15 minutes to clear it in as there was artillery being fired in the area. The Dustoff landed in a swirl of dust and leaves in a nearby clearing and Paul was on his way to hospital. As he was being carried to the chopper Large said, 'Hurrah for the Flying Doctor!'

24 July

6RAR's next operation was Hobart. This was a search and destroy operation in reaction to intelligence indicating a large enemy force nearby. However, after 3 days of searching nothing of significance was found. This operation, previous and future ones began to build an attitude of cry wolf amongst the diggers about any so called 'intelligence' reports.

29 Jul

First reports come in from Australian adviser Capt Mike Wells¹ that a VC battalion was seen in dense jungle within Line Alpha (a line encircling the ATF base out to 5km – all civilian populations were removed within this radius of the Australian base. Anyone in it could be more easily identified as enemy.).

In the afternoon two heavily armed Chinook choppers were ordered out to strafe the enemy position. So intense was the ground fire on the choppers that they reported they were receiving more than they were giving. An immediate airstrike was called on the position. Further reports came in indicating that 3,000 VC had arrived in Phuoc Tuy to attack allied forces. Jackson despatches Cap Robert Keep (ATF Intelligence officer) to HQ II FFV in Saigon with intelligence indicating a large enemy force was near Nui Dat. Keep relayed Jackson's request for reinforcements. The American's almost laughed them out of court based upon the resources they already had and comparing the information with what they already had.

547 Signal Troop (Australia's top secret radio tracking unit) at Nui Dat begin tracking transmissions from the radio of the enemy North Vietnamese Army (NVA) 275 Regiment. Due to the scarcity of radios amongst the enemy, they would only be found at the regimental level and it was logical for intelligence to assume that along with this enemy radio was with the entire 275 Regiment (2,500+ soldiers). 547 Troop keep tracking the enemy radio through to 14 August, locating its last position at the Nui Dat 2 feature on the edge of the Long Tan rubber plantation. Ironically, this is where the first major attack on 11 Platoon, D Coy comes from on 18 Aug.

30 Jul

D Coy, 6RAR ordered out for a 3-day patrol to the north east extremity of Line Alpha. They were to determine the extent of any enemy activity and locate and destroy any enemy camps.

¹ Australian Capt. Mike Wells and his staff were attached to USA and Sth Vietnamese command to stay on top of allied strategy and operations and provide assessments and up to date information to the Australian Task Force.

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9 Aug

Capt Robert Keep sent to 2 Field Ambulance hospital at Vung Tau. Capt. Keep has been the most vocal proponent of an imminent large scale enemy attack on the Australia task force base at Nui Dat.

15 Aug

Capt Keep transferred to the RAAF hospital at Butterworth, Malaysia.

D Coy return from their 3-day patrol. Ironically their patrol took them to the north east around the Nui Dat 2 feature where the last reported enemy radio signals were picked up and then back via the Long Tan rubber plantation and the rubber tappers hut, but with no contact with the enemy.

16 Aug

Chief Intelligence Officer Major John Rowe is evacuated to 2 Field Ambulance hospital at Vung Tau with Hepatitis. As fate would have it, 1ATF HQ had now lost both its intelligence officers.

Pte Paul Large from 12 Platoon fronts Major Harry Smith for punching a Lance Corporal. Large had been before Harry the Officer Commanding (OC) of D Coy three times previously. Harry was going to give him 21 days' field punishment and 21 days' loss of pay so Large asked for a court martial as he said he had good evidence and 4 witnesses to support his version of events. Large said he would have won the court martial as his witnesses would have said he only defended himself. Harry dismissed the charges. The real story was the Lance Corporal called Large a gutless little bastard so Large got stuck into him. His mates were prepared to lie to help him out!

A Coy, 6RAR followed the patrol route of D Coy and they were based just north of the Long Tan rubber plantation, patrolling south over Nui Dat 2. A Coy discovered signs of enemy. Late in the afternoon they had several small contacts with enemy dressed in greens (Viet Cong guerrillas wore black and only regular North Vietnamese Soldiers (NVA) wore green). During one of these engagements an enemy officer was killed who appeared to be carrying details associated with the firing of the mortars. A Coy harboured for the night. In the early hours on the morning of 17 Aug they were startled by the sounds of significant and sustained mortar and artillery fire on the Australian base at Nui Dat some 5 km's away.

17 Aug 1966

- | | |
|---------|---|
| 2.43am | The enemy bombard the Nui Dat base for 22 minutes resulting in 67 mortar craters. 24 Australians are wounded - one seriously who loses a leg. 7 vehicles are damaged and 21 tents damaged. The enemy artillery mainly and accurately targeted the Australian artillery, engineer lines and the FSCC command post. |
| 2.50am | Australian counter-bombardment artillery and mortar fire commences. |
| 4.10am | Australian artillery fire ceases. |
| 4.50am | Townsend orders B Coy, 6RAR to patrol out and locate the enemy firing positions. |
| 6.31am | B Coy with 80 men depart Nui Dat. |
| 8.00am | B Coy locate first enemy mortar base plate position. They fan out and eventually locate sites for 5 x 82mm mortars and weapons pits for 35 men. They also locate tracks from the enemy party and follow it. |
| 10.30am | The main track that B Coy are following fades away. |

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Midday 6RAR now had three separate elements searching for the enemy in the general area of the base plate positions and to the north east of Nui Dat. A Coy was 500 metres north of Nui Dat, 9 Platoon C Coy was to the south of the known base plate positions and B Coy was between the two approximately 2km's south west of A Coy and 1 km north east of 9 platoon. It was difficult to imagine that any significant numbers of enemy in the area could remain undetected. A Coy reported heavy enemy jamming of his radio transmissions.

5.30pm A porter party with food rations arrives at B Coy. B Coy stay out overnight to continue the search.

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7.05am B Coy recommences the search but 48 men out of their compliment of approximately 100, return to Nui Dat for their scheduled R&R (Rest & Relaxation).

8.00am D Coy HQ radio signaller Graham Smith advises Harry that he received a message for him to report to Townsend to receive orders for a company patrol. Harry issues an informal warning order to D Coy to prepare for a patrol.

8.30am D Coy begin to draw rations and ammunition, test fire their weapons and pack their equipment.

9.30am Harry Smith holds an 'O' (orders) Group with his platoon commanders; 2Lt Dave Sabben (12 Platoon), 2Lt Gordon Sharp (11 Platoon), 2Lt Geoff Kendall (10 Platoon), NZ Artillery Observer Capt. Morrie Stanley, D Coy CSM (Company Sergeant Major Kirby) and Harry's signallers to let them know about the patrol. Their orders are to locate the enemy mortar positions, locate and engage the enemy and relieve B Coy. Harry could feel the disappointment amongst his men at missing the concert. This concert scheduled for later that day was the first concert for the ATF in Vietnam and it featured the gorgeous 17-year older singer Little Pattie and Col Joye and the Joye Boys. Everyone had been looking forward to this rare treat and break from the monotony and boredom of life at Nui Dat. Some also felt that Harry's strained relationship with his boss Lt. Col. Colin Townsend (Commanding Officer of 6RAR) might have contributed to D Coy drawing the short straw, once again.

9.45am 9 Sqn RAAF Pilots Riley & Grandin in one chopper and Pilots Lane & Dohle in another pick up the Col Joye and Little Pattie party from the US Airforce Base at Vung Tau and fly them to Nui Dat.

10.30am The choppers carrying the concert party arrive at Nui Dat.

10.35am B Coy report that they have found enemy pits dug for 25 men and 22 empty tubes for 75mm RCL (Recoilless rifles) rounds.

11.00am Concert setup and rehearsals begin.

11.00am D Coy depart Nui Dat with the echoes of the concert rehearsals in the distance. Most of D Coy are pretty pissed off that they are missing the first ever concert at their base.

1.00pm D Coy rendezvous with B Coy approximately half way between the task force base and the Long Tan rubber plantation and have lunch. Harry Smith and B Coy Commander Major Noel Ford discuss the tracks that B Coy found and likely routes the enemy may have taken.

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3.00pm	D Coy leaves B Coy behind and begins to follow the enemy tracks towards the Long Tan rubber plantation.
3.00pm	Concert starts at Nui Dat.
3.15pm	D Coy enters the Long Tan rubber plantation. <i>See the battle diagrams at Appendix A</i>
3.40pm	11 Platoon has their first contact at track crossing. They kill one enemy soldier and recover an AK47. The company formation used at the time means that D Coy HQ is approximately 200 metres to the rear left of 11 Platoon, 12 Platoon some 200 metres behind D Coy HQ and 10 Platoon some 200 metres to the extreme left of 11 Platoon. <i>See the formation diagrams at Appendix B.</i>
3.40pm	11 Platoon Commander 2Lt Sharp gives Harry a SitRep over the radio and requests permission to follow up the enemy. Harry gives permission and 11 Platoon begin rushing after enemy.
3.42pm	The first artillery rounds were fired and these were put down onto a grid reference just south of 11 Platoon's initial contact.
3.45pm	A Coy have just returned to Nui Dat after an exhausting 3 day patrol and have showered, changed clothes and just about to eat a "steak sandwich and have a beer".
4.08pm	11 Platoon is suddenly hit by major enemy force with at least 2 machine guns. Left hand section gets hit very hard, 2 Australians killed instantly.
4.09pm	Sharp orders the right hand section of 11 Platoon to move forward (forming a back the front L shape) to fire directly across the front of 11 Platoon, towards the most intense enemy fire.
4.10pm	11 Platoon commander Sharp radios NZ Forward Artillery Observer Capt. Morrie Stanley requesting immediate artillery support. Enemy continues to attack 11 Platoon in large waves from the east with smaller probes from NW and SE.
4.10pm	B Coy told to hold at grid reference 458665 and wait for further orders.
4.11pm	Stanley warns Artillery of Fire Mission.
4.11pm	Stanley calls Fire Mission and advises 11 Platoon of incoming artillery.
4.12pm	The NZ 161 Artillery battery begins firing in support of 11 Platoon. There are 6 artillery guns in each battery back at Nui Dat. 2 batteries are Australian and 1 is New Zealand, all firing 105mm howitzers. There is also an American 155mm artillery battery at Nui Dat making a total of 24 artillery guns.
4.15pm	Sharp and 11 Platoon Sgt Bob Buick orders their right hand section to move back to protect the right hand flank of 11 Platoon (forming an upside down L shape)
4.15pm	Harry and D Coy CHQ continue to move forward to try and close the gap between them and 11 Platoon.
4.16pm	Sharp calls for artillery and reports attacks from left, front and right. He says, "It's bigger than I thought it was. They're going to attack us!"
4.19pm	Stanley requests upgrading of artillery to Fire Mission Regiment (all 24 artillery guns; 2 x Australian Batteries, 1 x New Zealand Battery and 1 x U.S. Battery – six guns each). It is initially

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refused as other batteries are supporting other units. One battery is usually in support of each battalion and one in general fire support. 5RAR was to the north with one Australian battery supporting them, the NZ 161 Bty was supporting D Coy and the other Australian battery was in general support of the task force.

- 4.20pm Harry gets on the radio and forcefully requests urgent, additional artillery support as requested by Stanley.
- 4.20pm 2Lt David Harris aide to Brigadier Jackson (ATF Commander) and the most junior officer in 1ATF HQ was at the desk of the task force tactical operations centre when the messages started coming in. Working close to Jackson, Harris was privy to much of the intelligence information Jackson was receiving. He had also been greatly impressed by Keep's assessments before he had been medically shipped out to Vung Tau. Harris was convinced that an enemy main force unit had arrived somewhere near Long Tan. Over the spare radio in the operations centre he heard Smith describe the contact to Townsend. Harris recognised the significance of the green uniforms. He alerted Jackson who immediately came to the operations centre. Harris also phone Major Bob Haggerty commanding 1APC (Armoured Personnel Carriers) squadron and warned him that his standby troop might be needed.
- 4.22pm First Fire Mission Regiment (all 18 guns) are fired in support of D Coy. The 6 x US 155mm battery guns are fired in support totalling 24 guns.
- 4.22pm Adrian Roberts has a shower after returning from the concert. A soldier arrives and tells him he is required by his CO and that he needs to bring his map.
- 4.25pm D Coy position is mortared. As it continues to move, around 20 mortar rounds keep falling on their previous position. Harry orders everyone to move around 1-200 metres north east which unintentionally widens the gap with 11 Platoon.
- 4.25pm Artillery people attending the concert at Nui Dat start leaving to go to their artillery gun positions as they can hear artillery firing non-stop. Performers are alarmed at the artillery firing going on while they perform.
- 4.25pm Harry radios 10 Platoon and advises them to make their way to 11 Platoon and support them.
- 4.26pm Harry advises Townsend that the enemy is now probably company size (8-100 men) and that the enemy is now using mortars.
- 4.27pm Harry radios 11 Platoon and advises that he is sending 10 Platoon to them.
- 4.28pm Stanley converses with the MFC (mortar fire controller) on likely location of enemy mortars landing near D Coy. Darlington in the FSCC plots the bearing and orders the US 155mm to fire the counter bombardment mission. It neutralises the enemy mortars.
- 4.29pm Harry radios 2Lt Sabben to bring up his 12 platoon and take over the defence of the D Coy HQ position.
- 4.30pm Concert at Nui Dat breaks up partly because of rain and partly because of the artillery.
- 4.30pm As 10 Platoon keeps moving towards 11 Platoon they move down and up a bit of a dip and onto level ground. They come across approximately 100 VC lying on their backs. Kendall sees to his immediate front that an enemy assault wave is moving due south going in on 11 Platoon. Kev Branch heard Kendall saying, 'This is it. Keep going, keep going' – Branch was thinking to himself 'Christ he's mad! We'll be able to shake hands with 'em soon!'

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- 4.30pm Large waves of enemy are now attacking the 11 Platoon position from three sides. These waves are made up of 50-100 in two lines of one in front of the other. The Australian artillery takes out the reserve lines and 11 Platoon must fight off the first assault lines.
- 4.30pm A Coy who has just showered and tucking into a well-earned meal after a gruelling 3-day patrol is warned to get ready to go and help D Coy.
- 4.31pm 10 Platoon radios Harry of their first contact.
- 4.33pm 11 Platoon commander, 21 year old Gordon Sharp is killed. Sgt Buick takes over.
- 4.35pm Little Pattie is being driven around Nui Dat in Savage's APC.
- 11 Platoon make adjustments to artillery calling it in even closer.
- 4.35pm Adrian formally warned that his APC's are required. He sends out order across the radio for all APC's to regroup at 6RAR HQ in Nui Dat.
- 4.35pm 11 Platoon radio antenna is shot off, loses radio communications.
- 4.35pm 10 Platoon radio operator Pte Brian Hornung is calling in artillery when he is shot through the shoulder. The round continues on through the radio taking it off the air.
- 4.40pm Little Pattie and Col Joye are dropped off at the chopper pad to be flown back to Vung Tau. Col Joye is 'kidnapped' by a Sergeant who drove him away to drink with the soldiers. As the chopper departed Little Patti saw the continuous flash of artillery gun muzzles which she mistook for enemy explosions in the camp. Nobody tells her what is going on.
- 4.40pm 10 Platoon attacks rear of enemy and enemy turns and runs. 10 Platoon attempts to move again but they are quickly attacked from 2 sides and then pinned down with 3 Australians being wounded. Kendall sends wounded back to D Coy position along with a message that his radio is gone.
- 4.45pm 10 Platoon receives incoming mortar rounds. 10 Platoon's Sgt Rankin sees a blue flash at his feet, feels the air suck him up into the rubber trees and then he lands back on the ground with a thud but is miraculously unhurt.
- 4.45pm Pte Bill Akell the reserve D Coy HQ radio operator learns that the 10 Platoon radio is out. He advises D Coy CSM Warrant Office Jack Kirby that he has a spare radio. Kirby says "Go, go, go!" Akell not knowing exactly what direction 10 Platoon is, asks Dave Sabben. He then runs out through the Australian perimeter. On his way he comes across three enemy and kills them with a burst from his sub machinegun.
- 4.50pm D Coy medic Cpl Phil Dobson sets up a makeshift company aid post (CAP) in a small reverse hollow at the centre of D Coy's main position. (Eventually there would be 23 wounded Australians under his care and he didn't lose one of them). Dobson would also sometimes venture out under enemy fire to carry wounded back from the front line positions.
- 4.50pm Very heavy, monsoonal rain begins.
- 4.54pm Jackson approves in principle the sending of A Coy out on the APC's, but he won't release them yet.
- 4.55pm Akell arrives at 10 platoon with the spare radio. 10 contacts Harry and gives a Sitrep.

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- 4.55pm Some of 11 Platoon run out of ammo and resort to cheering the artillery as it crumps in amongst the enemy.
- 5.00pm 11 platoon's radio is restored. Buick contacts Smith and advises Sharp is KIA (killed in action).
- 5.02pm Harry requests an airforce airstrike and an ammunition resupply.
- Debate in the FSCC at Nui Dat between Jackson, Raw (RAAF Commander) and the US Air Liaison Officer about sending choppers. US offered but it would take 20 minutes to get their choppers from Vung Tau. 2 x Australian choppers were at Nui Dat as they brought in the entertainment party. Raw demurs' and says his standing orders won't allow him to send choppers in as the area isn't secure and they might lose the choppers. Jackson says "We'll I am about to lose a company, what the hell's a few more choppers and a few more pilots." (Witnessed by more than 5 people!)
- Pilots Grandin and Riley enter the FSCC after listening to the battle unfold over their radio in their chopper. They over hear the last stage of arguments. Riley insists they fly and will fly alone if needed as it's his chopper. In the face of the US offer and his own pilots threatening to go anyway, raw finally gives the OK for the choppers to go.
- 5.05pm 10 Platoon is ordered to withdraw back to the D Coy position as they cannot move forward to 11 platoon without sustaining significant casualties.
- 5.05pm 10 APC's reach A Coy at Nui Dat. The 100 men of A Coy mounts the APC's but they are ordered to wait.
- 5.09pm Buick advised to throw smoke to help the 3 x U.S. F4 phantom jets identify their position. Brian Halls throws a smoke grenade but made the mistake of throwing it immediately in front of their position blinding them so they could not see the enemy. With the monsoonal rain, the smoke wouldn't rise and just hung there so the jet pilots couldn't see it.
- 5.10pm Airstrike arrives in area but cannot identify friendly positions due to the bad weather so Harry waves off the jets as he needs the artillery (artillery had to stop while they are in the immediate area) and asks for the jets to drop napalm away from 11 Platoon and on the suspected enemy rear areas.
- 11 platoons situation is desperate, they are almost surrounded, half are either wounded or dead and they are running out of ammunition.
- 5.10pm Sabben now advised to take his 12 Platoon to 11 Platoon but leave one section behind to help defend the wounded and the D Coy HQ position as 10 Platoon are not back yet. This effectively reduces 12 Platoon from a strength of 30 to only 20.
- 5.15pm Sabben and 12 Platoon (only 20 men) leave the D Coy perimeter.
- 5.15pm 11 Platoon's Buick advises Harry that their situation is desperate. He is almost surrounded, suffering heavy casualties, cannot withdraw and almost out of ammunition.
- 5.20pm 12 Platoon's first contact with enemy.
- 5.20pm Harry requests airborne reinforcements.
- 5.20pm 10 Platoon arrives back at the D Coy position.

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- 5.25pm A large group of around 200 enemy appear in front of D Coy's position (in front of where 10 Platoon were located). D Coy hear whistles and bugles and are then hit by two waves of assaulting enemy troops. Artillery takes out the reserve line and then D Coy would have to take out the first assault line with small arms fire. Not all enemy lying out there were dead or wounded and it was from these 'hidden' enemy that D Coy suffered their most casualties. They'd crawl forward and snipe at any Australians they could see. Stanley calls the artillery in ever closer down to within 100 metres at this point.
- 5.25pm Townsend has strong words with Jackson about releasing A Coy and the APC's out to help D Coy. Jackson is concerned that the attack on D Coy is a ploy to further reduce the defences at Nui Dat so the enemy could attack the main base.
- 5.30pm Jackson finally approves the release of A Coy and the APC's to go to help D Coy. Both Jackson and Townsend are seriously worried about possible ambushes waiting for them.
- 5.30pm Pilots Grandin and Riley, Dohle and Lane move to the chopper pad. They fly their two choppers from their chopper pad to the 6RAR pad to load the ammo resupply.
- 5.35pm Buick calls artillery on his own position. Stanley refuses but Buick advises Stanley that they are practically out of ammunition, they are surrounded and that they only have 10 able men left. Stanley stays the course and does not bring it in any closer as it is already 30-50 metres in front of 11 Platoon. Buick thinks Stanley made adjustments as the next few salvos are very effective at taking out the most immediate enemy assaults.

The sheer physical exertion of manning and firing the artillery was being compounded by a difficulty in breathing. A lethal haze was developing around the artillery guns and it could not disperse because of the monsoonal weather. Two men passed out from the fumes.

- 5.40pm Lightning hits the artillery positions knocking one NZ switchboard operator several metres back and another unconscious. The lightning also knocks out the Tannoy speaker system which is used to communicate orders to each gun and blows one of the dunnies to smithereens. They now have to resort to shouting orders through a daisy chain of men. Most of the spare Nui Dat personnel (cooks, drivers, admin) are now helping to keep up the supply of artillery ammunition to the artillery.

11 being attacked in force from 3 sides. Now estimates that there are 10 KIA and 8 WIA out of the original total of 28 men in 11 Platoon.

- 5.45pm Townsend issues orders to Roberts and his APC's carrying A Coy to go out to D Coy. They leave the 6RAR area towards the Nui Dat perimeter.

Artillery in support of 11 platoon now dropping to well within 50-100 metres of their position – danger close.

- 5.50pm Choppers with ammo depart Nui Dat. They initially struggle to lift off in the storm with the weight of the ammunition. Soon after takeoff the choppers lose sight of each other. The intensity of the rain reduced the efficiency of the rotors and the engine in each chopper was in danger of flaming out. The Huey's could only fly dangerously just above the tree tops at a reduced speed and their visibility was only about 50 metres.
- 5.50pm Artillery now stopped so choppers can fly in ammo resupply.
- 5.50pm APC's reach the perimeter wire of the Nui Dat base. Unbeknownst to Troop Commander Roberts, engineers had closed the gap. They then had to stop and wait and find someone who knew where the gap in the wire was but the engineers were having their evening meal. While

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the APC's waited with engines rumbling, some of the infantry watched the frenzied activity in the nearby artillery positions. Every available man, cook, driver, clerk, anyone around was slaving to feed the guns. It was then that the men of A Coy and the APC's began to understand how desperate D Coy's situation is. Finally an engineer arrives and pulls the barricade aside and the APC's rumble off.

- 5.55pm 12 Platoon in heavy contact but they decimate around 40-50 NVA. Sabben attempts to move forward again but is then attacked from two sides and eventually pinned down. 12 Platoon requests artillery to help.
- 5.55pm Just after the APC's begin moving out from Nui Dat Townsend advises the APC's to stop and come back and pick him up. Adrian sends 2 APC's back to get Townsend but continues towards D Coy.
- 6.00pm Choppers above D Coy position. They contact D Coy CHQ and ask for smoke to be thrown.
- 6.02pm 12 Platoon throws smoke towards 11 Platoon's position hoping they will see it and come to 12 Platoon's position.
- 6.03pm Chopper pilots advise that they see red smoke (wrong colour) and have to abort and go around again. They most likely saw the smoke thrown by 11 Platoon and not by D Coy HQ.
- 6.05pm 11 Platoon moves towards the yellow smoke which is thrown by 12 Platoon. 11 Platoon's Radio operator, Grice is killed as soon as he gets up.
- 6.05pm 12 advises Harry that survivors from 11 have reached their position but enemy attacking him from 3 sides. Harry orders them back to the D Coy position. Sgt Paddy Todd is accidentally left behind. Earlier, Todd was wounded through both ankles by a mortar which landed right next to him. He tells the others he is OK but after they leave he gets up only to realise he cannot stand. He starts crawling towards the D Coy position.
- 6.07pm On the way back to the D Coy position 12 Platoon see a large enemy force of around 150 solders waiting to move. Sabben orders them to stop and aim their machineguns down the avenues of trees. They open up and blasted them. Unknown to them Sgt Todd was between them and the enemy. Todd hugs the ground and quietly curses his situation.
- 6.08pm B Coy asks Townsend to go to D Coy. Townsend finally approves. B Coy move towards D Coy.
- 6.08pm Choppers call for smoke to be thrown again. Correct smoke identified. The first chopper dives on the position and they push the ammunition out and it drops out so accurately almost into the lap of Kirby that it almost kills him. Riley's chopper then directs the second chopper into the same position and they also push their ammunition out.
- 6.13pm 12 Platoon and the survivors from 11 Platoon are now at the D Coy's position. D Coy are finally all together in one place, in all round defence.
- 6.15pm Artillery restarted as soon as choppers are clear.
- 6.15pm As Sgt Todd was dragging himself grimly through the rain and mud and about half way back to the D Coy position there was a bit of a hedge which the enemy were running along. As he had a brief rest he saw two enemy approaching. At 20 metres he fired his SLR. He kills one and wounds the other. He carries on towards D Coy.

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- 6.15pm Kirby begins running about, distributing ammo to everyone, sometimes under fire and frequently joking about with his young soldiers to keep their spirits up.
- 6.15pm APC's reach the swollen creek. Townsend again orders Adrian to stop. Adrian leaves one APC to guard the river. 6 APC's barely cross the swollen stream. They all spin and turn in the swollen river with water right up to the top of the APC's. It looks like they won't make it across but they eventually do make it.
- 6.19pm In the 1ATF HQ / FSCC tension is so deep that some notice that those present – listening to the radio, are projecting themselves out from the tent and into Harry Smith's location – they all seemed to be drained of colour by the intensity of the feeling in the group.
- 6.20pm Problems emerge in the artillery positions caused by the continuous firing and heavy rain. When a shell is fired the resulting fumes are toxic especially if not dispersed. There was no wind and the rain is falling vertically preventing any dispersion of the fumes. Soon the sheer exertion of manning the guns was compounded by difficulty in breathing. A tremendous responsibility rests with the individual on the gun crew. Each round fired is potentially as lethal to Australian troops as it is to the enemy. Sites on each of the artillery guns are also fogging up under the humidity compounding the accuracy of aiming them.

D Coy comes under heavier contact from 3 sides.

Artillery is being brought in even closer to D Coy's position.

Back at Nui Dat empty artillery shells are piling up rapidly around the artillery guns and men are frantically trying to keep ammunition coming.

The artillery is being called to within less than 50-80 metres of D Coy position – danger close.

- 6.20pm Heavy enemy machineguns sweep the D Coy position with concentrated fire from the east and south-east.
- 6.20pm Harry advised Townsend that the enemy could be reorganising to attack their position in force. Two platoons are about 75% effective. One platoon has been almost completely destroyed. He is organising for all round defence. Harry advises that if the APC's aren't there soon, don't bother.

Alone, out in the shambles of rain, mud, trees, bodies and scattered equipment crawled the wounded Barry Meller from 11 Platoon. On and on he went, not knowing which direction he was moving at any given time.

- 6.22pm Adrian Roberts receives 3rd order to halt APC's and wait for Townsend.
- 6.25pm APC's enter the rubber and have their first contact with the enemy. Initially the APC's thought they were Australians and Roberts had them hold their fire. Then a VC fired and the spell was broken. One of the A Coy soldiers on top of an APC swiftly brought up his M16, got a running figure in his sights – forgetting that the line of sight is some 5 cm's above the barrel - his barrel was not above the gunshield of the .50 and his 5.56mm round drilled a neat hole through it. The APC's weren't aware of the presence of the Viet Cong D445 Battalion (around 500-600 enemy) until they were right on top of them and they stood up out of the scrub. The APC's had come out of the rain surprising them as much as the enemy surprised the Australians. D445 were moving around the flank of the C Coy position in order to close the back door and completely surround them.

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Sgt Frank Alcorta from A Coy 'jumps from the top of his APC' and in typical 'John Wayne' style dispatched quite a few enemy. Alcorta was now alone on the ground with his magazine empty so A Coy's Lt Dinham screamed for the APC to lower its rear ramp so they could get out and not leave their Sgt out there alone.

Peter Dinham's platoon of 30 or so A Coy infantry dismount from their APC's and attack the enemy in extended line.

Adrian orders infantry back into the APC's as they must get to D Coy.

6.28pm Sgt Paddy Todd crawls towards the D Coy position. He is fired upon by Australians who think he is enemy. He waves his hat and shouts, "Don't shoot, don't shoot! You silly bastards, it's Paddy Todd!" Buddy Lea runs out with another soldier and they carry him in, still under fire.

Buddy Lea is taking Todd back to the medic Dobson at the Company Aid Post in the middle of D Coy's position when they spot some enemy. Todd says, "Hey Buddy have a look there." Buddy says, 'That'll be A Coy, they're on their way.' Todd says, 'We'll, they must have changed uniforms mate because they are all in black!' Buddy drops Todd and pops behind a tree. One VC was in front of the other. Buddy steps out and lets go with his sub machinegun but one of the VC was too quick and got Buddy in the left shoulder. However, Buddy's burst of fire kills the two VC. Todd laughs. It was unbelievable to Todd as it look like a fight at the OK Corral. Todd says, 'You silly old bastard.' Buddy's 2IC Jack Jewry see's that Buddy is wounded, comes over to help and as he kneels down to bandage Buddy he falls across Buddy's back. Jewry is killed instantly by an enemy bullet.

The conditions are so bad now that many of the D Coy soldiers were having to manually put rounds up the spouts of their weapons. Rifle and machineguns were jamming up as the mud, water and dirt started to seize the working parts.

6.32pm Stanley calls in artillery even closer to within 30-50 metres of the D Coy position - Danger Close. The FSCC at Nui Dat refuse saying it is unsafe.

6.33pm Harry gets on the Radio and says, 'Give us the fucking guns where want them or you'll lose the bloody lot of us.'

6.35pm First major human wave assaults begin on the D Coy position. There would be 2 lines of between 60-100 NVA and VC attacking. With the assault group around 150 yards out, the artillery would come in and wipe out the reserve group who would be about 100 yards behind the first assault group. Survivors from this wave would then join the next wave as the pass by and so on. D Coy would have to fight off the assault wave with small arms fire. The assaults would be preceded by whistles and bugles and supported by machine guns. The main thrusts went in on D Coy on the east, south-east and south. The brunt of this fighting was taken by 12 and 10 Platoons. 4 more Australians were killed and several wounded in this period.

Stanley under pressure and stress is worried about artillery hitting the Australians and calls Stop! Stop! Stop! He is given calming support by Fire Controller and fellow New Zealander Harry Honner over the radio. Stanley regathers himself and recommences the artillery fire.

Company Sergeant Major (CSM) Kirby continues to move around D Coy's perimeter checking in on the wellbeing of his men, distributing ammunition, carrying wounded back from the front lines and keeping everyone's spirits up. As enemy mortars fell on them, as enemy bullets pounded into them and the force of the Australian artillery impacted on them the Australians kept trying to dig into the mud with their bare hands to get some cover but to no avail.

Kirby sees an enemy wheeled machine gun setting up less than 50 metres away from the D Coy front lines. Knowing that this could decimate their position, he lunges out from the D Coy perimeter and kills the machine gun crew, put the machinegun out of action and safely returns to D Coy defensive position.

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- 6.35pm The APC's have their second contact. They encounter a group of around 100 enemy. The enemy begin attacking Cpl Carter's APC fitted out as an ambulance. Roberts watches an enemy RCL (recoilless rifle - bazooka) crew line up Carter's APC. Roberts cannot raise them on the radio. The first round hits a tree which partially falls across Carter's APC. The second round hits the branches of the tree they just shot down. Carter, his .50 machinegun jammed, leaps up on top of his APC with his WWII Owen machinegun and kills this RCL crew and a few people around it. The APC driver was throwing up magazines.
- Roberts sends one of the APC's back to Nui Dat with one wounded aboard. There are now only 6 APC's moving toward D Coy. Roberts orders the APC's to break contact and continue to move toward D Coy.
- 6.45pm Smith orders D Coy to "shrink the perimeter and surround the wounded".
- 6.48pm More waves of 2 lines of between 80-100 NVA and VC attack D Coy's position from 3 sides. Many of the D Coy soldiers now begin to think they won't get out alive.
- 6.50pm Townsend's party of 3 x APC's join the 6 APC's with Adrian. They continue forward in contact with enemy.
- 6.52pm Stanley keeps calling in the artillery even closer and walking it from left to right and back again across the fronts of the D Coy positions.
- 6.55pm More waves of two lines of between 80-100 NVA and VC attack D Coy's position.
- 6.55pm The APC's assault to the east and sweeps through the major concentrations of enemy.
- 7.00pm 28 men of B Coy arrive at D Coy's position.
- 7.10pm At last light D Coy hear the APC's coming. Enemy begin to withdraw as the APC's sweep through them with their deafening .50mm heavy machineguns. Artillery briefly stopped for APC's. Artillery moved out to a greater distance from D Coy's position to follow up the withdrawing enemy.
- 7.20pm Defensive lines are organised with the additional 100 A Coy soldiers and the 9 APC's. Ammunition and water are distributed to the beleaguered and exhausted D Coy soldiers.
- 7.25pm Townsend provides a hurried Sitrep by radio to 1ATF HQ advising that he estimates that D Coy is now non-effective and that there is 25 dead and 40 wounded. It seems like a disaster to everyone, more so to Jackson and the others back at Nui Dat.
- 7.30pm As so much artillery has been fired, an urgent ammunition resupply of 1,000 rounds is requested. This cannot be trucked in from Vung Tau due to the risk of enemy ambushes so it is brought in by Chinook choppers.
- 7.40pm Roll calls are conducted across the D Coy men to determine who is dead, wounded and missing.
- 7.45pm Townsend regroups the force and calls in the company commanders for an assessment.
- 8.35pm Townsend radios an updated Sitrep to 1ATF HQ advising that own casualties appear to be 5 dead, 16 wounded and 15 missing. Townsend advises Jackson that as it was night they could not secure the battlefield or locate the 15 missing soldiers from 11 Platoon.

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8.45pm	After speaking with Townsend, Jackson is seen walking over to a chair. He sits down and then buries his head in his hands. Everyone thinks it has been a disaster as nobody knows what, if anything has been done to the enemy, there is a large number of Australian dead and wounded and 15 Australians are still missing.
9.00pm	1ATF advise the choppers that there will be 18 men requiring medical evacuation.
9.00pm	On their own and against orders various members of A Coy bravely crawl out into the pitch black night to see if they can find any of the missing Australians. They can hear moaning but whenever they get close it stops. They return empty handed.
9.15pm	Two Fire Mission Regiment missions are called down onto areas of the Long Tan plantation.
10.45pm	D Coy, A Coy and the APC's move off into the pitch black night and light rain to a landing zone on the edge of the rubber plantation. There are four dead, eight stretcher cases and six walking wounded. D Coy travel on the APC's and A Coy and B Coy walk out behind them with each man having to hold the webbing of the man in front so as not to get lost in the dark. All the while everyone is still expecting an enemy attack again.
11.05pm	The APC's reach the landing zone area and form a box square around the D Coy troops. To help guide the choppers, each APC turns its internal light on and opens a top hatch for the choppers to see.
11.25pm	A Coy and B Coy arrive at the landing zone position.
11.25pm	Another Fire Mission Regiment is called onto areas of the Long Tan plantation.
Midnight	The first chopper arrives overhead to evacuate the dead and wounded. It was a US Chopper. It landed quickly with its lights on and took out the three most serious wounded. Six more slow dustoff's without lights took place and these were all RAAF. The dead and wounded were flown to the Army hospital at Vung Tau.

19 Aug

12.50am	All chopper evacuations are completed.
02.45am	A Fire Mission Battery was called onto an area near the Long Tan plantation, the last 8 rounds are fired.

At some point during the night Townsend orders Harry to take D Coy back to Nui Dat first thing in the morning as they have been through so much. Harry has a strong argument with Townsend saying no way, they are his men out there and they must be the ones to go back and find them and see what, if anything, they have done to the enemy.

4.00am	Townsend radios 1ATF for the remaining APC's to bring out 6RAR HQ, C Coy and a section of mortars. He also obtains a US chopper airlift to bring out one company from 5RAR. This left only two rifle companies of around 200 soldiers to defend Nui Dat.
5.15am	US Lt General Seaman sends US Major Piper and a group of US Staff Officers to Nui Dat by choppers to ascertain what they could about the battle. They met a very ashen faced and almost speechless Jackson as 1ATF HQ. No one felt that they'd had a major victory, they believed they'd had a major defeat.

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6.55am	2 Troop of 1 APC Squadron with the remaining elements of 6RAR onboard, leave Nui Dat and roll east towards Long Tan. At the same time, D Coy 5RAR was lifted by US Army choppers to a landing zone near the D Coy position.
7.30am	Townsend gathers the officers and gave his orders for the assault back into the battle area. 15 Australians were still missing and it was not known what the enemy would do or where they were.
7.40am	Jackson arrives at this assembly point by chopper just as Townsend is giving his orders.
8.45am	The Australian force begins moving back to battlefield with artillery and airstrikes still firing into the plantation. D Coy lead the way on the APC's, headed towards 11 Platoon's final position with the other elements sweeping the surrounding features and area.
9.21am	D Coy 5RAR reports one VC body sighted.
9.50am	D Coy 6RAR reports 12-15 enemy bodies.
10.00am	Jackson departs Long Tan battlefield back to Nui Dat.
10.10am	Jackson radios a SITREP to HQ AFV (Australian Force Vietnam) in Saigon.
10.20am	D Coy 6RAR asks for a bulldozer to bury approximately 100 enemy dead. As the scale of the losses is evidenced by the numbers of bodies and widespread devastation so did the realisation that D Coy had achieved a stunning victory.
10.35am	D Coy come across a wounded Barry Meller from 11 Platoon who is waving and leaning against a rubber tree.
10.45am	D Coy come across the final 11 Platoon position and discover the remaining 13 missing are all dead still in the firing positions with their fingers still on the triggers of their weapons, facing outwards towards the enemy. The rain has washed them clean and they all still seemed to be alive. This sight had a profound effect on all who witnessed it and many a tear was shed. They also discover a very weak and seriously wounded Jim Richmond lying in the mud and calling out "Sgt Buick, Sgt Buick".
11.05am	D Coy 6RAR report that they have found the 15 missing Australians. 13 KIA and 2 wounded. By this time, some 113 enemy bodies and 2 enemy wounded had already been discovered.
2.35pm	The toll of enemy dead rises to 168.

Gen Westmoreland and his staff and a press contingent visit the battlefield arriving by chopper. Nobody believed that a small group of 108 Australians and New Zealanders had fought such a pitched battle against an overwhelmingly larger force and won. Westmoreland and others had to see it first hand in order to believe it. Westmoreland tours the battlefield along with Harry Smith and Geoff Kendall. They come across a group of D Coy diggers digging graves and burying enemy bodies. The General walked up to Australian soldier, Wild Bill Doolan and said, 'You've done a good job fellows but this is the dirty part'. Doolan replied, 'She'll be right mate. We can handle it.' This address to the US General in dry, classic Aussie style created newspaper headlines.

4.15pm	The toll of enemy dead has risen to 180 but many drag marks and blood trails were discovered indicating many more dead and wounded had been dragged away from the battlefield.
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6.10pm The toll of enemy bodies has risen to 188.

20 Aug

245 enemy bodies recovered but scores more enemy graves and bodies were found after this and for the next 2 weeks. However, the Australian government had set a deadline for the body count so as to advise parliament and the media and so to this day the official death toll has been frozen at 245.

A memorial service is held in the Nui Dat tent lines of D Coy 6RAR. Confronted with the rows of empty bunks and tents, many burst into tears.

21 Aug

5.40pm 6RAR arrive back at Nui Dat after two days of searching, burying enemy dead and recovering enemy weapons.

Back in the base the mood was subdued as the diggers, exhausted, moved back into the tent lines where the kit of the casualties was glaringly missing. In Dave Sabben's tent, which he shared with Gordon Sharp, half the tent was now just an empty bed. Sabben just sat and stared at it for a while trying to come to grips with the implications of what they'd been through.

A memorial was held in the tent lines of D Coy.

22 Aug 1966

D Company, 6RAR are sent to Vung Tau en masse, for a well-earned R&R break. Ironically, Vung Tau was also used as a rest centre for the Viet Cong.

2 September 1966

The government of South Vietnam realised that the Battle of Long Tan was significant and wished to award decorations to the Australians involved. But at almost the last moment, with the ceremony already arranged and those attending it already in place, word was received from Australia that the traditional policy of non-acceptance of foreign awards was to be observed.

This was embarrassing both to the Vietnamese and to the Australians, and a compromise was reached. The Australians paraded and were presented with dolls in Vietnamese national dress, and also cigarette-cases and lighters. When those who had been selected for awards returned to their units, there were some hilarious scenes as they tried to convince their fellows that they really had been presented with dolls.

It says much for the often-maligned Vietnamese that they went ahead with the ceremony, persisting in observing the spirit of honouring their allies. Many another nation would have reacted to the last-minute decree by officially seeing it as an insult. It also says much for the sense of humour of the Australian soldier that the incident was borne and accepted without much rancour, though once again he had been treated shabbily by the people in Canberra.

Before and after Long Tan, many South Vietnamese decorations and awards were accepted by individuals and units. At least 622 awards are known to have been made by the US and GVN authorities to individual Australians, plus four unit awards. Two of the latter went to AATTV — the US Meritorious Unit Commendation and the GVN Cross of Gallantry with Palm Unit Citation and the third, a similar GVN award, to 8RAR. The fourth was the Presidential Unit Citation awarded to D Company for the Battle of Long Tan.

Only the unit awards are officially recognized by the Australian authorities and allowed to be worn. Because of the confusion policy at the time, individual awards are not recognized.

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Messages of congratulations for the Battle of Long Tan streamed into 1ATF from the Australian and US hierarchy. From Harold Holt, Prime Minister of Australia, from General William Westmoreland, from General Jonathan Seaman Commander IFFV, and from General Cao van Vien Chief of Staff, Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces.

11 January 1967

On Luscombe Airfield at the 1ATF Nui Dat base in Phuoc Tuy Province, South Vietnam, gallantry awards for the Battle of Long Tan were presented to 11 Australian soldiers in a simple but impressive ceremony.

Nine of the awards were won by officers and men of Delta Company, of the 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, for their heroism at the epic battle of Long Tan just four months earlier on 18 August 1966.

Awards included a Military Cross, a Distinguished Service Medal, three Military Medals and six Mentioned in Despatches. The former Commander of the Australian Task Force, Brigadier O.D. Jackson, who himself was awarded a Distinguished Service Order for his outstanding leadership during two years in Vietnam, presented the awards.

Accompanying Brigadier Jackson was Australia's new Task Force Commander, Brigadier S.C. Graham, who was met at the ceremony by the senior RAAF officer at the Task Force, Group Captain Peter Raw.

After addressing the parade, Brigadier Jackson presented the Military Cross to Major Harry Smith, of Hobart, who commanded Delta Company during its historic battle. Major Smith's citation stated that his leadership, calmness and determination, and disregard for personal safety inspired his soldiers to beat off enemy of vastly superior numbers.

28 May 1967

U.S President Lyndon B Johnson, awards The Presidential Unit Citation (ARMY) for Extraordinary Heroism to D Company, Sixth Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment.

By virtue of the authority vested in me as President of the United States and as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the United States, I have today awarded the Presidential Unit Citation (Army) for extraordinary heroism to D Company, Sixth Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment, The Australian Army.

D Company distinguished itself by extraordinary heroism while engaged in military operations against an opposing armed force in Vietnam on August 18, 1966. While searching for Viet Cong in a rubber plantation north-east of Ba Ria, Phuoc Tuy Province, Republic of Vietnam, D Company met and immediately became engaged in heavy contact. As the battle developed, it became apparent that the men of D Company were facing a numerically superior force. The platoons of D Company were surrounded and attacked on all sides by an estimated reinforced enemy battalion using automatic weapons, small arms and mortars. Fighting courageously against a well-armed and determined foe, the men of D Company maintained their formations in a common perimeter defence and inflicted heavy casualties upon the Viet Cong. The enemy maintained a continuous, intense volume of fire and attacked repeatedly from all directions. Each successive assault was repulsed by the courageous Australians. Heavy rainfall and a low ceiling prevented any friendly close air support during the battle.

After three hours of savage attacks, having failed to penetrate the Australian lines, the enemy withdrew from the battlefield carrying many dead and wounded, and leaving 245 Viet Cong dead forward of the defence position of D Company.

The conspicuous gallantry, intrepidity and indomitable courage of D Company were in the highest tradition of military valour and reflect great credit upon D Company and the Australian Army.

Battle of Long Tan – Facts, Figures and Timeline

August 1966 to June 1967

6RAR took part in seventeen additional Battalion operations and supported a number of 5 RAR operations. These operations along with the routine patrolling around the Task Force area gradually wrestled control of the province away from the Viet Cong.

6 June 1967

6RAR celebrated its second birthday at sea aboard HMAS SYDNEY during the return voyage to Australia. On arrival in Townsville the Battalion occupied the Long Tan Lines at Lavarack Barracks, Queensland.

During this first tour of Vietnam, 37 members of 6RAR were killed and 23 members of the Battalion received individual gallantry awards.

18 August 1968

Two years to the day after the Battle of Long Tan, at a parade in Townsville, Queensland, Australian Prime Minister Mr John Gorton Presents the United States Presidential Unit Citation to D Company, 6RAR for Extraordinary Gallantry at the Battle of Long Tan.

The Australian Prime Minister, Mr John Gorton pinned the citation ribbon to 6RAR's regimental colours and congratulated D Company on its award. Present at the ceremony were the Minister for the Army, Mr Phillip Lynch, his wife, and the new American Ambassador to Australia, Mr William Crook with Mrs Crook. Also present were members of D company including Major Harry Smith, MC of NSW and Sergeant Bob Buick, MM, of WA.

18 August 1969

Installation of the Long Tan memorial cross in Vietnam at the site of the Battle of Long Tan.

The concept to commemorate the Battle of Long Tan with a memorial cross and a dedication ceremony was decided at a meeting in late 1968 at HQ 6RAR in Lavarack Barracks, Townsville. The meeting involved the commanding officer, Lt Col D M Butler; the second-in command, Major L D Johnson; and the adjutant, Captain M J Harris. The need for this contingency plan had been given impetus by a recent presentation of a United States of America Presidential Unit Citation (Army) to D Company 6RAR by the Australian Prime Minister. This idea was carried to Vietnam with the battalion and was committed to an operational plan at 6RAR-NZ (Anzac) Battalion Headquarters in Nui Dat, Vietnam, in July and August 1969.

The plan was executed by the battalion on the third anniversary of the battle, 18 August 1969.

The Cross was designed and constructed by 'Pioneers' from the 6RAR-NZ Anzac Battalion's Assault Pioneer Platoon and the construction work was overseen by Sgt Allan McLean.

There were a number of difficulties experienced by the Assault Pioneer Platoon during construction of the Cross in the 6RAR-NZ lines at Nui Dat. There were difficulties during delivery. The Cross was suspended under an RAAF UH-1H Iroquois helicopter and during the journey began to swing dangerously, particularly when being lowered through high rubber trees around the small LZ at Long Tan. Difficulties overcome, the cross was erected and dedicated in memory of the fallen.

The Long Tan memorial cross is only the second foreign war memorial allowed in Vietnam. The other being a French memorial at the site of the Battle of Dien Bien Phu which took place in 1954.

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31 March 2008

The Australian Government accepted the recommendations of an independent panel to award Lt Col Harry Smith MC (retired) Australia's Star of Gallantry, second only to the Victoria Cross. The star was previously known as the Distinguished Service Order, and although Harry Smith was originally recommended for the honour for extraordinary bravery, his superiors downgraded it to a Military Cross.

Two Delta Company platoon commanders from that long-ago afternoon, Second Lieutenant Dave Sabben (12 Platoon) and Second Lieutenant Geoff Kendall (10 Platoon), were awarded the Medal for Gallantry, equivalent to the Military Cross they were supposed to have received four decades ago.

It was also the intention of the South Vietnamese Government to also award the Gallantry Cross with Palm Unit Citation (CGCP) to Delta Company in 1966 for the Battle of Long Tan but this was not approved at the time by the Australian Government. However, the 2008 Australian Panel finally recommended approval for Delta Company to wear this honour. The government accepted and approved the panel's recommendation.

October 2009

The Australian Government accepted more Tribunal recommendations for the Battle of Long Tan:

- Flight Lieutenant Cliff Dohle, RAAF be awarded the Distinguished Service Medal, the contemporary equivalent award to the Distinguished Flying Cross for leading the helicopter ammunition resupply to D Coy, 6RAR during the battle. This DFC was the original award for which he was properly recommended in 1966 by all levels of Australian command in Vietnam.
- Delta Company, 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, be awarded the Australian Unit Citation for Gallantry for its performance at the Battle of Long Tan in August 1966.

18 August 2011

In a poignant ceremony in Brisbane, Australian Governor-General Quentin Bryce presented the Unit Citation for Gallantry and individual awards to the remaining members of D Company Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (6RAR) on the 45th anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan. Over 80 members of the original Company paraded before the Governor-General at the Enoggera Barracks in Queensland.

The Unit Citation for Gallantry including streamer and warrant were presented to Mr Geoff Kendall MG and Mr David Sabben MG. Boxed emblems of awards were also presented to the Long Tan veterans, and Ms Bryce pinned the Medal for Gallantry onto the lapel of Mr Sabben.

The Battle of Long Tan was one of the heaviest of the Vietnam War, resulting in the death of 18 soldiers and the wounding of 24.

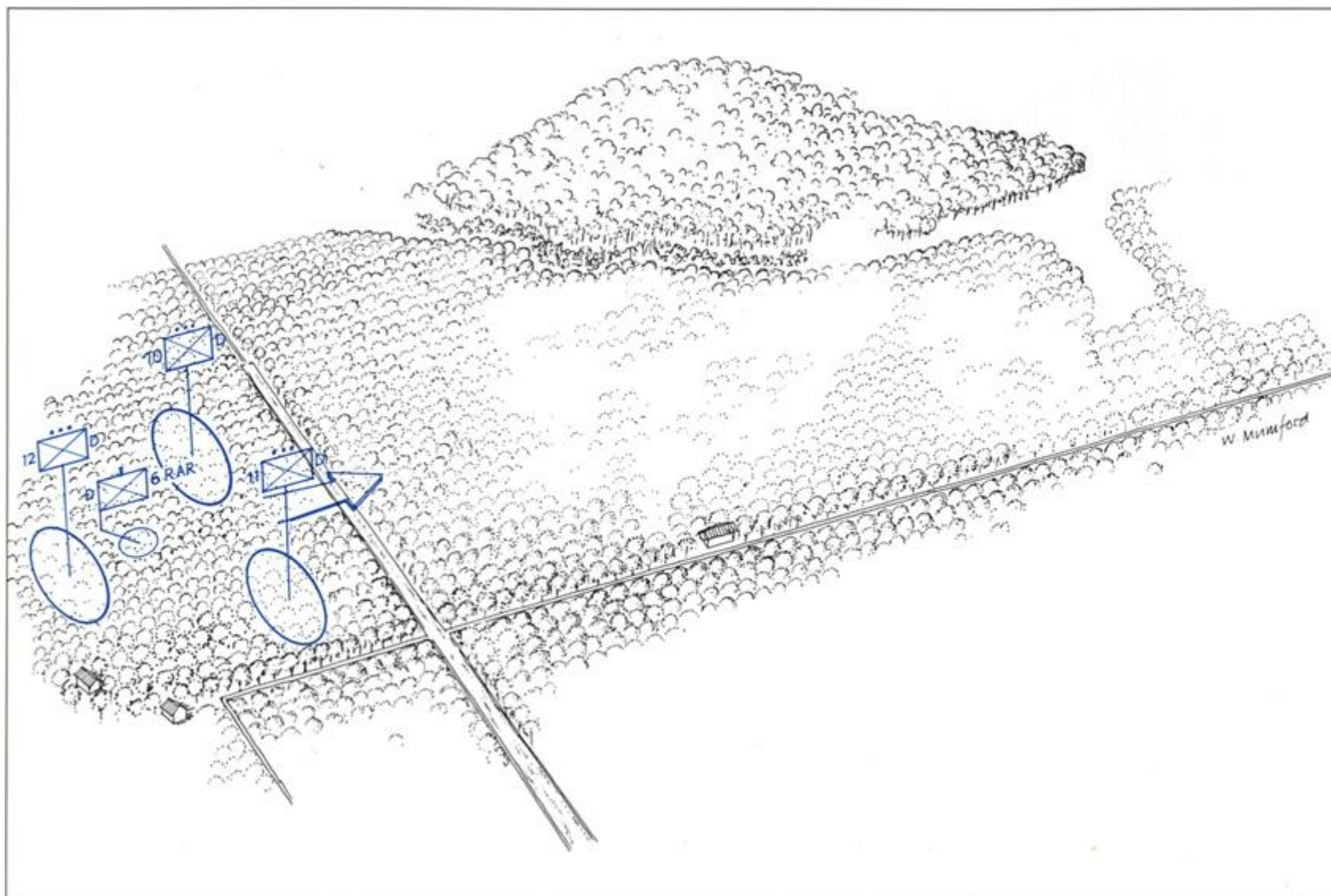
April 2015

Lieutenant Colonel Harry Smith SG MC (Retd) (former Officer Commanding D Company 6RAR) attended a hearing in Maroochydore, Queensland. Harry Smith had applied to the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal (the Tribunal) for review of a decision by the Chief of Army to refuse to recommend 13 members of the Australian Army who fought at the Battle of Long Tan for a range of gallantry awards, including a Victoria Cross for the late Delta Company 6RAR CSM, Warrant Officer John 'Jack' Kirby DCM.

[Details of the final awards](#) Harry Smith has been chasing. These awards would bring well overdue justice and closure to the men who participated in this important, historic event.

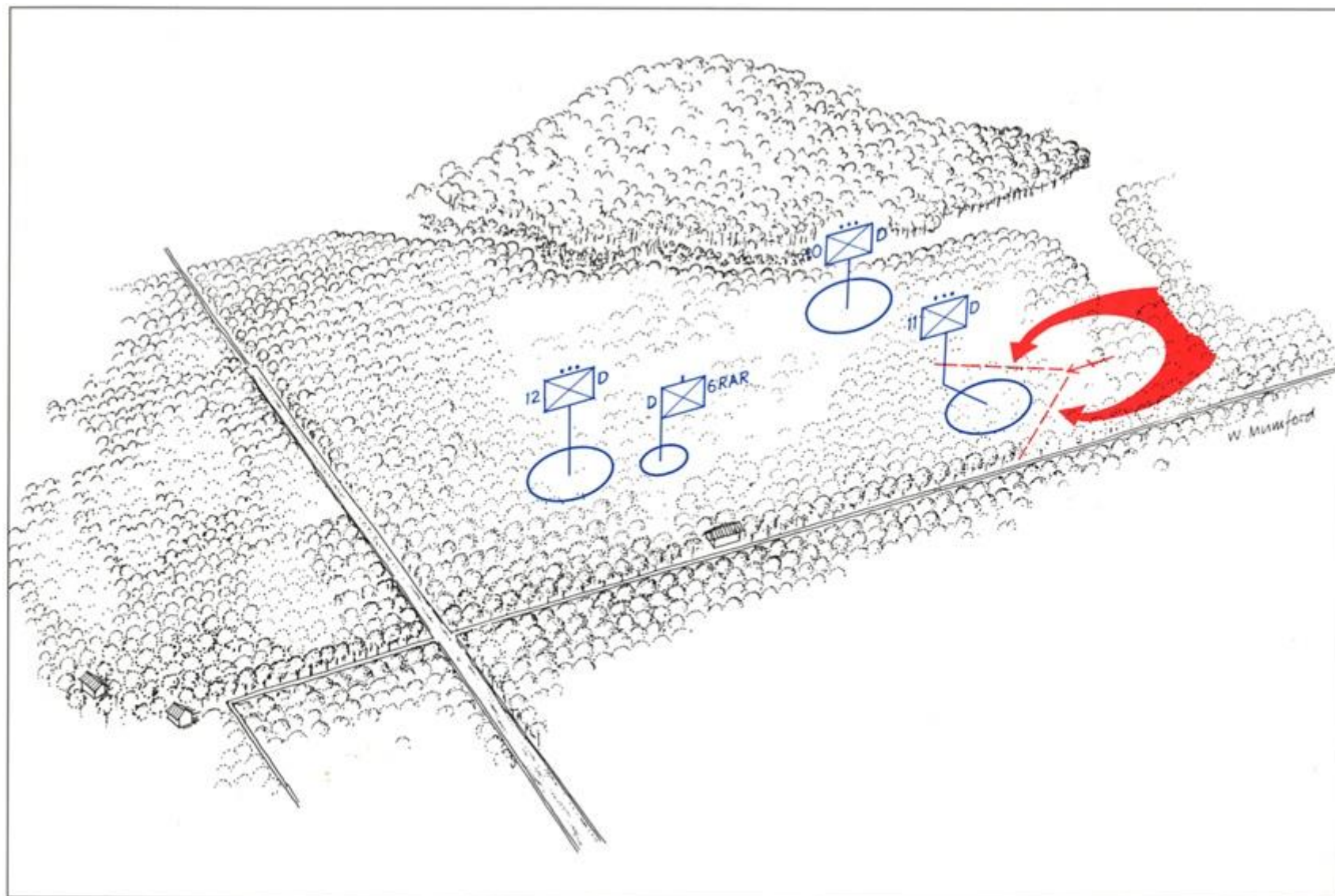
Appendix A

Battle Diagrams



Sketch 14.1 3.15 p.m. 18 August, D Company patrol enters Long Tan rubber plantation

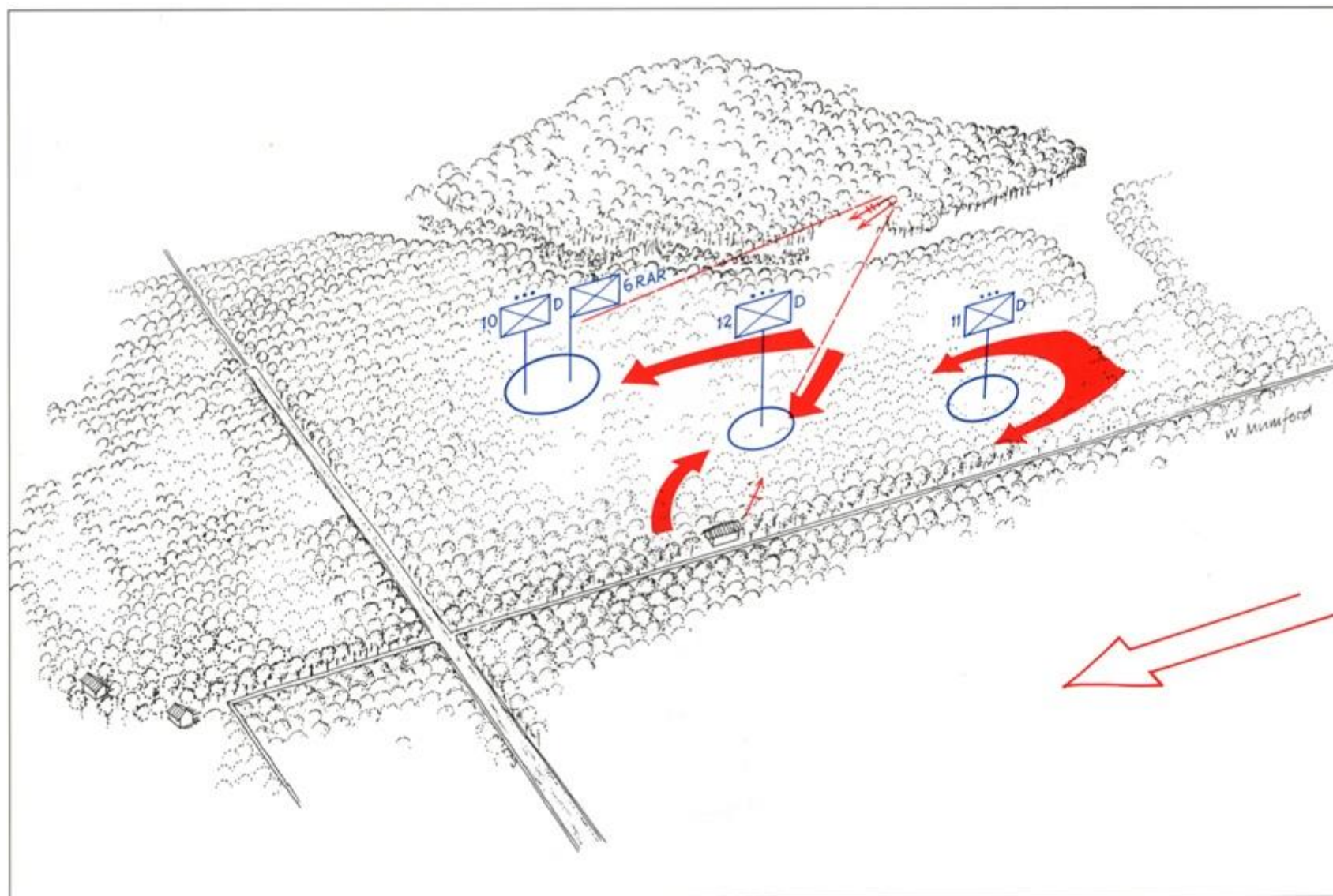
Battle of Long Tan – Facts, Figures and Timeline



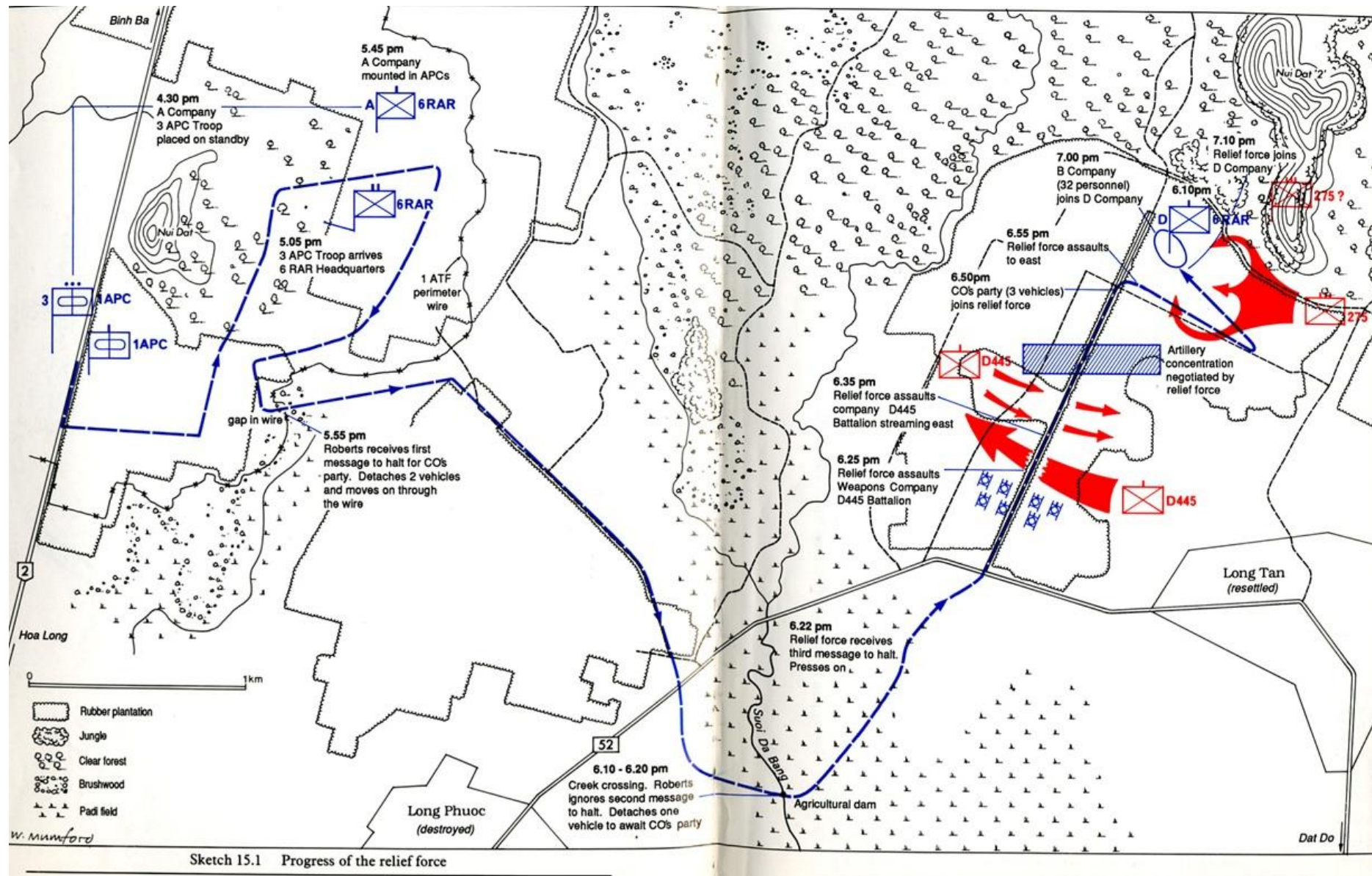
Sketch 14.2 4.20 p.m. enemy build-up against 11 Platoon

Sketch 14.3 5.10 p.m. 10 Platoon attempts to relieve 11 Platoon

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Battle of Long Tan – Facts, Figures and Timeline

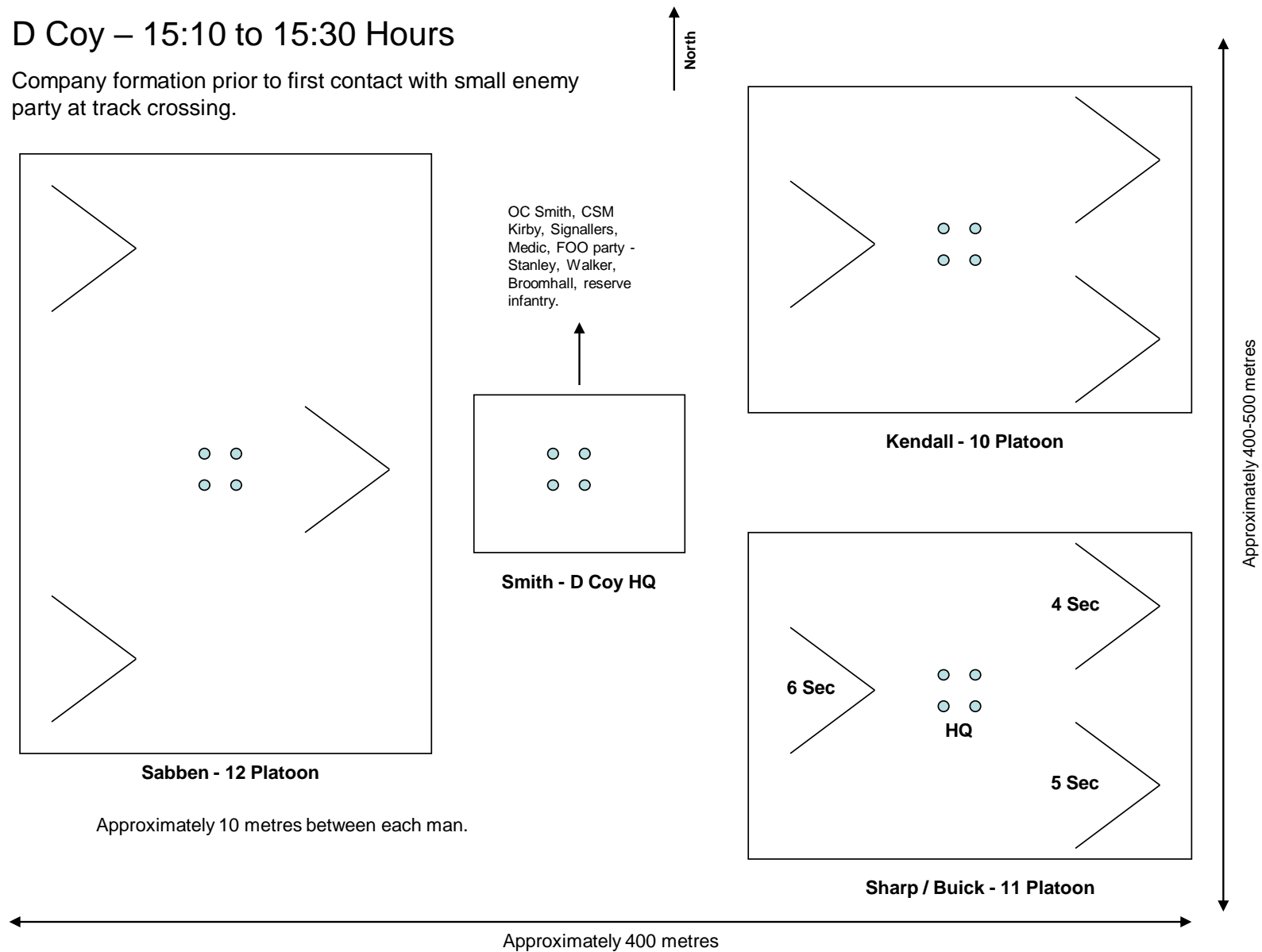


Appendix B

Formation Diagrams of D Coy, 6RAR

D Coy – 15:10 to 15:30 Hours

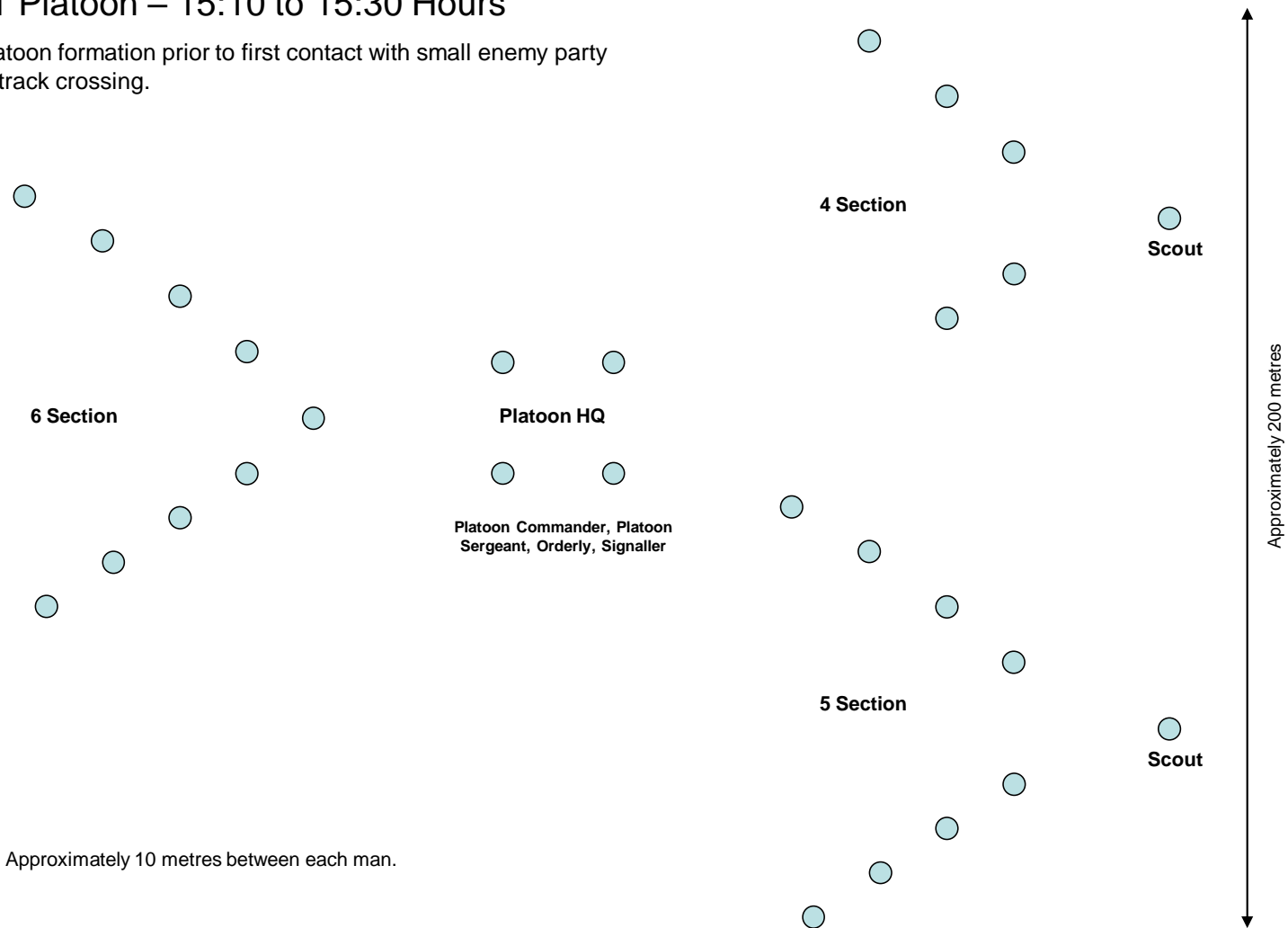
Company formation prior to first contact with small enemy party at track crossing.



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11 Platoon – 15:10 to 15:30 Hours

Platoon formation prior to first contact with small enemy party at track crossing.



11 Platoon – 15:55 to 16:10 Hours

Platoon formation following up enemy after first contact at track crossing.

