
Review
of
Recognition for the
Battle of Long Tan

March 2008



Australian Government

A report commissioned by the Australian Government

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LETTER OF TRANSMISSION

Review of Recognition for the Battle of Long Tan

The Hon Kevin Rudd MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

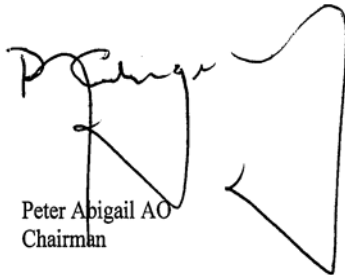
Dear Prime Minister

I am pleased to present the report of the independent panel appointed to review recognition for the Battle of Long Tan.

The review was conducted in accordance with the Terms of Reference and the Panel has arrived unanimously at the findings and recommendations contained in the Report. This Report is later than the date originally fixed, and the Panel is grateful for permission to extend the reporting date so that the issues could be thoroughly addressed.

The Panel wishes to record its high regard and respect for all involved in the Battle of Long Tan. Our examination of documentary evidence and interviews with key individuals have strengthened this impression. The Panel would therefore like to emphasise that nothing in this Report is meant to detract from the achievements of any individuals and units who fought the Battle of Long Tan or others who served in Vietnam.

Yours sincerely



Peter Abigail AO
Chairman

31 March 2008

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TERMS OF REFERENCE

Terms of Reference for the Review of Recognition for the Battle of Long Tan were issued by the then Prime Minister, the Hon John Howard, on 12 October 2007. On 17 October 2007 the Prime Minister added a reference to review service recognition of RAAF personnel posted to Royal Thai Air Force Base Ubon between 1965 and 1968. The complete Terms of Reference set out below were confirmed by the Cabinet Secretary and Special Minister of State, Senator the Hon John Faulkner, on behalf of the Prime Minister, the Hon Kevin Rudd MP, on 3 February 2008.

REVIEW OF RECOGNITION FOR THE BATTLE OF LONG TAN AND RAAF UBON

The government has decided to appoint an independent panel to review the treatment of award recommendations stemming from the Battle of Long Tan, and service medal recognition for service with RAAF Ubon.

With regard to the Battle of Long Tan, the review is to examine the documentary evidence available, consider the nature and context of the battle and the process that followed concerning individual and collective recognition, and seek to arrive at a fair and sustainable response to claims for further recognition.

The panel will interview key individuals and will consider material provided to it that is relevant under the terms of reference.

The review will have regard to the Imperial gallantry awards recommended at the time as well as claims for the award of the South Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry Unit Citation.

With regard to RAAF Ubon, the review will consider the merits of the claim for further service medal recognition by way of the Vietnam Logistic and Support Medal. The panel will examine the documentary evidence available and consider the nature and context of service at RAAF Ubon to arrive at a fair and sustainable outcome.

Any recommendations put to the government must maintain the integrity of the Australian honours system.

The review is to report to the Prime Minister by 28 February 2008.

On 26 February 2008 Senator Faulkner agreed, on the Prime Minister's behalf, to extend the reporting date to 31 March 2008.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE INDEPENDENT REVIEW PANEL

Chairman

Major General Peter Abigail AO (Retd)
Executive Director, Australian Strategic Policy Institute

Members

Major General Steve Gower AO AO (Mil) (Retd)
Director, Australian War Memorial

Brigadier Gerry Warner AM LVO (Retd)
CEO, RAAF Association (WA Division) Inc

The Independent Review Panel was supported by staff of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Review Secretary

Mr Peter Rush
Assistant Secretary
Awards and Culture Branch
Government Division

Secretariat Officer

Mr Glenn Gore Phillips
Awards and Culture Branch
Government Division

RECOMMENDATIONS

The number of awards made for the Battle of Long Tan is broadly consistent with comparable battles and ratios of awards achieved throughout the Vietnam War. However, the Panel believes that the moderation of awards by the Commander of Australian Force Vietnam (COMAFV) for the Battle was influenced by a unique set of circumstances, and resulted in a mix of awards that did not adequately recognise the gallantry exhibited in the Battle. The Panel finds that it would therefore be appropriate for the government to consider the following recommendations.

Recommendation 1

Major Harry Smith¹ be offered the opportunity to accept an award of the Star of Gallantry, the contemporary equivalent of the Distinguished Service Order (for gallantry) originally recommended to COMAFV.

Recommendation 2

Second Lieutenant David Sabben and Second Lieutenant Geoff Kendall be offered the opportunity to accept awards of the Medal for Gallantry, the contemporary equivalent of the Military Cross originally recommended to COMAFV.

Acceptance of the recommended contemporary awards should be conditional on return of the Imperial awards originally made and service records should be annotated appropriately.

Recommendation 3

No action be taken to make a contemporary award for any other participant in the Battle.

Recommendation 4

No action be taken to give retrospective permission for members of D Company 6 RAR to wear the insignia of the Government of the Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm Unit Citation.

Neither should any action be taken to award a contemporary unit citation for participation in the Battle.

¹ All personnel are referred to in this Report by their rank at the time of the Battle of Long Tan.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Brief history*

The Battle of Long Tan has, in recent years, achieved iconic status in Australian military history. It was Australia's most significant engagement in the Vietnam War, coming soon after the establishment of the 1st Australian Task Force (1ATF) at Nui Dat, in Phuoc Tuy Province, South Vietnam. The Battle, on 18 August 1966, pitted Delta Company, Sixth Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment (D Coy 6RAR) against at least two battalions of Vietnamese regular and provincial soldiers. The determination and gallantry of those involved, decisive command, strong and accurate artillery support, a well executed ammunition resupply, and the arrival of a relief force resulted in the Battle being decided in the Australians' favour, and the victory quickly became world news. The key aspects of the Battle, as understood by the Panel, appear in section 2 of this Report.

A uniquely Australian honours system was not established until 1975, so the gallantry awards for the Battle of Long Tan were from the British Imperial system then in use by Australia. Nine awards were made to members of D Coy 6RAR, and six further awards were made to members of other units (see section 4.1). The citations for Distinguished Service Orders (DSOs) to the battalion and task force commanders both mentioned their roles in the battle. The United States awarded its Presidential Unit Citation to D Coy, and 'Long Tan' is a Battle Honour of both the Royal Australian Regiment and the 3rd Cavalry Regiment (the ultimate parent unit of the 1st Armoured Personnel Carrier Squadron).

The Battle is also commemorated in Australia in other ways: the annual Vietnam Veterans' Day is observed on the anniversary of the Battle, 18 August; the tertiary education bursaries for eligible children of Vietnam veterans are called "Long Tan Bursaries"; and Defence Force secondary education awards for leadership and teamwork are also named for the Battle. The Panel is mindful that a wide range of recognition has been given for the Battle of Long Tan, and that other distinguished actions may not have received such prominence.

Following the Battle, recognition for the participants quickly became an issue. On 1 September 1966 the Vietnamese enquired whether the existing policy of not accepting foreign awards had changed. The Australian response was that it had not, that foreign awards could not be accepted without The Queen's permission. A parade at Nui Dat on 2 September 1966 was hurriedly reorganised, with intended South Vietnamese decorations being replaced with cigar boxes for the officers and dolls in traditional Vietnamese dress for the other ranks. This caused some resentment amongst those involved.

On 21 December 1966 the first set of Imperial gallantry awards for Long Tan was announced (further awards were announced later). The awards appeared to some to be less in number, and of lower standing, than expected. The appearance of the Task Force Commander's DSO on the same 21 December list, including reference to his command during the battle, was interpreted by some as having denied higher recognition to lower ranks. Speculation about a South Vietnamese unit citation for gallantry arose during 1967, but no such award materialised.

The documents recording the original Imperial award recommendations were filed, and in accordance with standard procedure they were released for public access after 30 years. In 1996 Maj Smith, the Officer Commanding D Coy in the Battle of Long Tan, accessed the records to see what had happened to the award proposals he recalled discussing with his superiors but which had, he thought, been changed or ignored. He discovered there was no

paperwork for some, and paperwork for others showed the proposed awards had been downgraded – including an initial recommendation for him to be awarded a DSO, which had been downgraded to a Military Cross (MC). He and others began to lobby the Government to rectify this perceived injustice – to restore the awards originally proposed by Maj Smith, and to approve the South Vietnamese awards they thought had been rejected at the time.

1.2 Treatment of Long Tan claims by previous reviews

There has been a succession of reviews, particularly of military awards, over the past 15 years. Maj Smith and his colleagues have sought to put their case before a number of them but, for various reasons, they have not been considered.

The 1994 Committee of Inquiry into Defence and Defence Related Awards (CIDA) was specifically limited to consideration of service and campaign medals (i.e. medals for service on particular operations which fulfils time, duration and place criteria). CIDA did not examine claims for individual gallantry awards. However, CIDA did establish a set of principles which guided its consideration, and these have proved useful to the Panel.

In 1997 the Inter-Departmental Committee (IDC) on Defence Honours and Awards recommended an End of War List – Vietnam (EOWL-V) for approval by the Government. The EOWL-V was confined to awards recommended at the highest level in Vietnam but which were subsequently altered or rejected in Australia. All the awards made in respect of Long Tan were in accordance with the recommendation made at the highest level in Vietnam, and therefore they were not within the scope of the EOWL-V. However, the awards resulting from the EOWL-V caused the quota limits which applied during the Vietnam War to be exceeded, and the Review Panel has therefore not felt constrained by the quota in its consideration. The quota is discussed in more detail in section 3 of the Report.

In 1998 the EOWL-V was subject to an independent review chaired by Mr Noel Tanzer AC (the Tanzer Review), after six persons did not accept the Australian Commendation for Gallantry as the present-day equivalent to the Imperial Military Medal (MM). The Tanzer Review concluded that the concept of “families of gallantry and distinguished service awards” was a better way to equate Imperial and contemporary Australian awards, instead of relative positioning in the Order of Wearing Australian Honours and Awards. The Australian Medal for Gallantry (MG) was determined to be the appropriate equivalent to the MM. Although the Tanzer Review heard evidence from Maj Smith and others, and recorded observations about their case and the quota system in Vietnam more generally, its terms of reference restricted its recommendations to the original six cases, and it could not recommend any outcomes for Long Tan. The Tanzer Review does, however, provide a sustainable precedent for considering contemporary Australian equivalents for Imperial awards.

The 2000 Review of Service Entitlement Anomalies in Respect of South-East Asian Service 1955-75, chaired by Maj-Gen R F Mohr (the Mohr Review), was allowed to review service where prima facie evidence was presented of possible anomalies. However, in regard to gallantry awards in Vietnam, the Mohr Review concluded that the then recent EOWL-V had considered these issues, and that the matter should remain closed. The Report of the Mohr Review records that two Long Tan veterans, 2Lt David Sabben and Sgt Bob Buick, provided written submissions, but the Report contains no detailed consideration of them.

In 2004, in response to representations by Maj Smith, the then Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence and Minister for Veterans' Affairs, the Hon Mal Brough, recommended to the Governor-General that the 22 individual South Vietnamese decorations that were to be presented on 2 September 1966 should be approved for wearing. Although the requirement

for a formal government-to-government offer could not be fulfilled, as the South Vietnamese government fell in 1975, the Governor-General agreed that there was sufficient evidence of an intention to offer the awards (for example, the presentation of cigar boxes and dolls on 2 September 1966). However, Mr Brough decided that the same process could not be applied to the claim for the Vietnamese unit citation. Maj Smith and his colleagues continued to lobby for acceptance of that award, as well as for a review of the Imperial gallantry awards.

1.3 Establishment of the Independent Review Panel

As a result of continuing representations from the ex-Service community, on 12 October 2007 the then Prime Minister, the Hon John Howard, announced the appointment of an independent panel to review the treatment of award recommendations stemming from the Battle of Long Tan. The Terms of Reference (TOR) were determined by the Prime Minister on the same day. The Panel was required to report to the Prime Minister by 28 February 2008.

The Federal Election on 24 November 2007 resulted in a change of government and a new Prime Minister. The Panel had already met twice before the election, and was mindful that the incoming government had committed to continuing the review of recognition for the Battle of Long Tan. Nevertheless, confirmation was sought and received that the new government endorsed the TOR.

1.4 Methodology

The TOR required the Panel to:

- review the treatment of award recommendations stemming from the Battle of Long Tan;
- examine and consider the Battle and the process that followed concerning individual and collective recognition and seek to arrive at a fair and sustainable response to claims for further recognition; and
- ensure that any recommendations maintain the integrity of the Australian honours system.

This allowed the Panel to:

- review the process and decisions made for individual awards within Australian Force Vietnam (AFV), including the decisions of COMAFV – this was different from the IDC EOWL-V and subsequent Review findings that were premised on the acceptance of COMAFV recommendations;
- identify the claims in terms of existing documentation and assess their validity in terms of the Principles established for the Review; and
- examine collective recognition for the Battle of Long Tan, including the claimed intention of the GRV to award a unit citation to D Coy 6RAR.

1.5 Principles – parameters of the Review

In approaching this difficult task the Panel examined the approaches of previous reviews, and formulated the following principles to guide its consideration.

Principle 1

This Panel will seek, in recognising the service of some, not to overlook or degrade the comparable service of others.

Principle 2

Any decisions by the Panel to recommend further recognition must be based on official records or other compelling evidence.

Principle 3

To maintain the integrity of the system of honours and awards the Panel reaffirms its respect for the protocols of the operational awards system.

Decisions to recommend new or higher awards will only be made where a clear anomaly or manifest injustice can be established. In cases where the Imperial system did not provide recognition but where the Panel believes recognition is warranted, it should be made under the Australian system.

Principle 4

Recognising that access to Imperial awards is no longer possible, and that any new or higher awards recommended must be contemporary Australian awards, recommendations for them will need to satisfy the terms and conditions attached to those contemporary awards.

Principle 5

Normally only one medal within the Australian system of honours and awards should be given in recognition of a single period of service or action.

The Panel recognises that overseas service by Australian defence personnel in certain military operations may attract foreign awards or recognition. This should not affect the decision to award a medal or other form of recognition under the Australian system of honours and awards.

Principle 6

While the Panel has regard to previous decisions and interpretations on awards made by the Australian Government, military authorities, and previous reviews, it will not consider itself constrained by these in meeting its terms of reference. The Panel will take into account any new or additional information made available to it and will operate according to the normal standards of fairness.

Principle 7

The Panel will consider matters relating to honours and awards on their merits in accordance with the principles outlined above, and these considerations should not be influenced by the possible impact, real or perceived, on other potential claims for recognition.

1.6 Summary of claims

The Panel took the time to identify all the possible claims for further recognition. Maj Smith has led the campaign to review awards, and his lobbying over the years has specified a number of claims. The Panel was also open to other possibilities as the review of relevant documents and interviews proceeded.

Maj Smith's original 1997 claim was only to upgrade the MCs he said he originally proposed for his two surviving platoon commanders, 2Lt Sabben and 2Lt Kendall. In 2004 he included a claim for a posthumous Mention in Despatches (MID) to 2Lt Sharp, killed in the battle, and MCs that he says he suggested be recommended by other unit commanders: to Lt Roberts (1 APC Sqn) and Capt Stanley (161 Bty RNZA). He also included claims for unspecified awards to Sgt Alcorta and Pte Brett, both of A Coy 6RAR, for their gallantry in action during the relief column's approach to the Long Tan rubber plantation. Maj Smith claimed these had been suggested at the time but never processed. Maj Smith also observed that, if the original recommendations were to be honoured, the awards would need to be contemporary equivalents of the Imperial awards.

Along with the claim for the Government of the Republic of Vietnam's (GRV) Gallantry Cross with Palm Unit Citation (GCPUC), this is how the claim stood until shortly before the Panel met for the first time in October 2007. Following discussions with other veterans of Long Tan, Maj Smith then added to the claim the names of seven members of D Coy whose citations were ruled out on about 22 August 1966 by LtCol Townsend, CO 6RAR, as being "too many", and which were never formally submitted. (These seven members of D Coy are not named in this Report as their claims were not further pursued – see 4.6, below.) Maj Smith said these citations were revived when nominations for Vietnamese awards were considered about a week later (about 28 August 1966). As discussed in the introduction, these seven awards did not eventuate, being replaced by dolls in traditional Vietnamese dress on the day of the parade, 2 September 1966, but they were approved for wearing in 2004.

Also in October 2007 Maj Smith dropped the claim for Capt Stanley, as he was eventually awarded the MBE, a higher award than the MC Maj Smith claims he suggested. Maj Smith also claimed that he had originally cited Cpl Moore for an MM, but his claim for this to be considered for review was withdrawn given the death of the member.

During the Review the Panel became aware of evidence that FltLt Cliff Dohle, a helicopter pilot with No. 9 Squadron RAAF who was awarded the MID for his actions during the ammunition resupply, had originally been recommended for the DFC. The evidence indicates that in September 1966 two citations recommending immediate awards of the DFC to FltLt Riley and FltLt Dohle were processed through the RAAF chain of command in Vietnam and forwarded to Australia. COMAFV was not involved in this process.

It appears that a decision was subsequently taken by RAAF to defer those recommendations for consideration with others on a periodic basis. New citations were duly raised and processed in April 1967 and FltLt Dohle was recommended at all RAAF levels of command in Vietnam for the award of the MID. Based on this evidence the Panel could have concluded that no further review of the level of recognition for FltLt Dohle was warranted. However, the handling of his recognition bears similarities to that pertaining to some of the D Coy recommendations, and for this reason the recognition accorded to FltLt Dohle was included in the claims for consideration by the Panel.

Table 1 is the list of award claims, based on a review of all relevant documents, which was considered by the Panel.

Table 1 Award claims considered by the Panel

Name	Unit	Award made (1966-67)	Claim
Maj H A Smith	D Coy 6 RAR	MC	DSO
2Lt G Kendall	10 PI D Coy 6 RAR	MID	MC
2Lt D R Sabben	12 PI D Coy 6 RAR	MID	MC
Lt F A Roberts	3 Tp 1 APC Sqn	MID	MC
FltLt C M Dohle	No. 9 Sqn RAAF	MID	DFC
2Lt G Sharp	11 PI D Coy 6 RAR	Nil	MID
Sgt F Alcorta	A Coy 6 RAR	Nil	(not specified)
Pte R Brett	A Coy 6 RAR	Nil	(not specified)
Seven others (names withheld)	D Coy 6 RAR	Nil	MID
(Unit award)	D Coy 6 RAR	Nil	GCPUC

During the Review the Panel was also presented with names of several other individuals considered worthy of recognition. However, in the absence of any evidence of prior recommendation, and in accordance with the principles of this Review, these were not considered.

1.7 Nature of the Review

The Panel was mindful of the difficulty of making fresh judgements on events that took place over 40 years ago. Awards for individual gallantry involve subjective decisions made by those with the authority and knowledge to make the best possible judgements. Reviews of gallantry awards have traditionally been resisted in the past because they pose the very real prospect of compounding anomalies through the application of further subjective analysis. Even so, this Review could not fulfil its TOR without examining 40-year old judgements made by commanders within the theatre of operations.

The Panel engaged in a process that involved a detailed review of all existing documents and a search for further sources of relevant information in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Department of Defence, National Archives of Australia and Australian War Memorial. Although the Panel recognises that there is a good range of books that tell the story of the Battle of Long Tan, particularly the official history and a number of memoirs, the Panel decided to conduct interviews with a number of key individuals so that the Panel could better understand the context and conduct of the Battle and the recognition process that followed. A list of sources consulted, and key individuals interviewed, are set out in the Appendices.

The TOR did not invite written submissions, but unsolicited material was nevertheless contributed, and where relevant, it was considered. Most of the persons interviewed also provided written statements of their recollections, and these statements complemented their verbal testimony.

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet provided advice on the Australian honours system, and particularly the principles on which it operates, so that the Panel could better understand the environment in which awards decisions were made in 1966, the background

to previous reviews of awards anomalies, and the wider impact that possible outcomes of the review might have.

The Panel recognises the potential for this Review to create a precedent. However, the Panel believes that the application of its Principles will lead to recommendations that are both fair and sustainable, and should not place any pressure on the integrity of the honours system.

Finally, it is relevant to note that the Panel's review of these matters is restricted to assessing the merits of the claims and making recommendations to government. The authority to recommend and make awards remains with those empowered under the relevant award regulations to do so, and the Panel recognises that its recommendations are in no way binding on those decision-makers.

2. THE BATTLE OF LONG TAN

The following summary of the Battle of Long Tan, and the lead up to it, is constructed from official and personal accounts, including interviews conducted by the Panel.

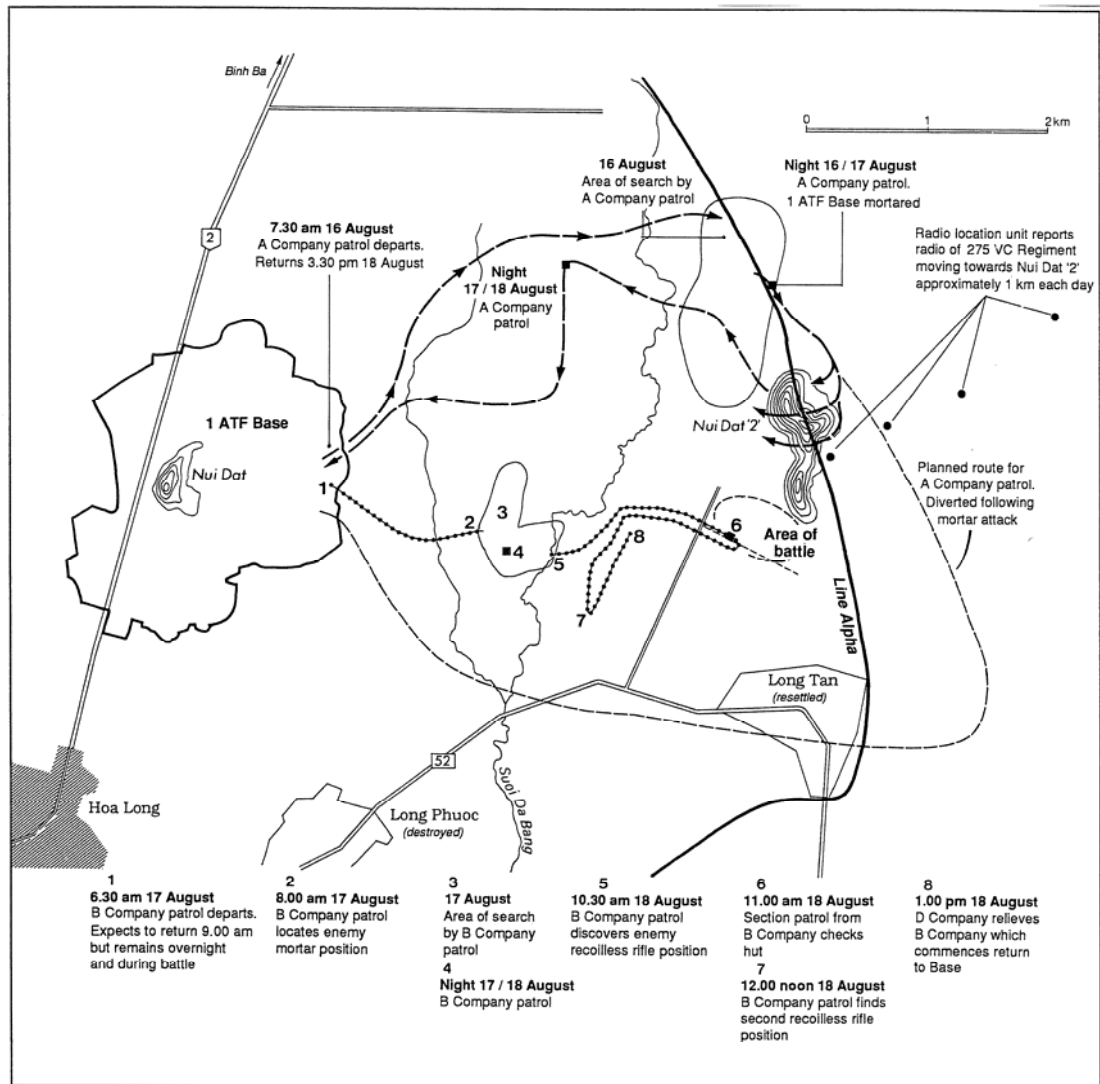
2.1 Operational context and intelligence

The First Australian Task Force (1ATF) was established at Nui Dat, Phuoc Tuy Province, in April 1966. Fifth Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment (5RAR), arrived in April-May, with 6RAR arriving in June. The early operations of 1ATF comprised the clearance of civilians away from the Task Force base, extensive patrolling to establish dominance over its immediate environs, and work to develop the base and its defences. Building and defence materials were scarce, and the monsoon kept everything wet, muddy and slow. Living conditions were basic and uncomfortable. Importantly, the base's defences remained rudimentary for some time.

These operations were conducted against an intelligence picture that suggested the presence of a large enemy force within the Province. 1ATF had many contacts with small enemy groups – almost daily – but by mid-August 1966 there had been no major contacts or confirmation of the intelligence assessment, and soldiers were becoming sceptical about the threat posed by the seemingly mythical “Binh Ba 10,000”, a large enemy force supposed to be waiting to the north for an opportunity to attack decisively. In the week leading up to the Battle of Long Tan signals intelligence reported that a radio thought to be from 275 Regiment (a North Vietnamese Main Force unit) was approaching the Task Force base from the north-east: its final known location being just to the east of Nui Dat 2. This information was closely held within the Task Force headquarters and not shared with the units of 1ATF. However, as a precautionary measure, the Commander 1ATF maintained his policy that patrols should not be conducted in less than company strength nor outside the range of artillery. Perhaps in response to the signals intelligence 6RAR was tasked to clear the area to the east beyond Nui Dat 2 and the unoccupied village of Long Phuoc. CO 6RAR did not mount the task as a declared battalion operation (with a name) but chose to conduct a series of sequential company patrols. A Coy, 6RAR began the first patrol on 16 August. Meanwhile, 5RAR was patrolling in the area of Binh Ba to the north of the base.

On the night of 16-17 August 1966 mortar and recoilless rifle fire was directed at the 1ATF base from the east. Damage was light, but the threat to the base was clear. On 17 August A Coy, 6RAR was re-tasked to search for the firing positions to the north-east of the base and B Coy, 6RAR was despatched to search the area to the east towards Nui Dat 2. On 18 August A Coy returned to base and D Coy, 6RAR relieved B Coy. Maj Smith had named his company patrol Operation Vendetta. After an exchange of information D Coy proceeded to follow a possible enemy trail towards the Long Tan rubber plantation. (See map showing company patrol pattern 16-18 August 1966, below.)

Company patrol pattern towards Long Tan, 16-18 August 1966



Map 14.2 from "To Long Tan: The Australian Army and the Vietnam War 1950-1966" by Ian McNeill. Reproduced with permission of the Australian War Memorial.

2.2 Key aspects of the Battle

The Battle of Long Tan was a watershed in 1ATF operations. Combat on the scale of the Battle had not been anticipated by the Australians, nor had the level of training and aggression of the enemy. The Battle began with a minor skirmish that quickly led to a major engagement involving a series of platoon actions against potentially overwhelming odds in which each of the platoons of D Coy had to fight isolated defensive battles and was separately threatened with annihilation. When the company managed to consolidate in a defensive position it too was attacked on many fronts and faced destruction.

The Battle started when 2Lt Sharp's 11 Platoon was leading the D Coy patrol and encountered a small enemy group near the western edge of the Long Tan rubber plantation. The Vietnamese were not recognised as regular soldiers, which would have indicated the presence of more than a token force. 11 Platoon opened fire and vigorously pursued the enemy. Its progress was halted by heavy enemy fire which resulted in the platoon being

pinned down in a defensive position well ahead of the remainder of the company. The platoon was then attacked repeatedly on several fronts, suffering many casualties including its commander.

2Lt Kendall's 10 Platoon was ordered to link up with 11 Platoon and assist it back to the Company HQ position. However, it soon encountered a large force and was prevented from reaching the 11 Platoon position. During this time artillery support from the 1st Field Regiment had been called upon by the attached New Zealand Forward Observer Party, and this was to continue throughout the duration of the Battle, with additional fire being provided by US Army medium artillery.

2Lt Sabben's 12 Platoon was also ordered to break through to 11 Platoon, from a different direction, but it too ran into a large enemy force, and thus was prevented from reaching the 11 Platoon position. Very low on ammunition, the survivors of 11 Platoon, now under Sgt Buick's command, broke from the enemy and fell back, firstly to the 12 Platoon position, and then to the Company position.

With ammunition running low, Maj Smith had called for a resupply. Two helicopters of No. 9 Squadron RAAF carried out the mission in heavy rain. The lead helicopter, piloted by FltLt Frank Riley with co-pilot FltLt Bob Grandin, carried about a third of the ammunition to be delivered. The second helicopter, piloted by FltLt Cliff Dohle with co-pilot FltLt Bruce Lane, carried the remaining two-thirds, a considerably heavier load. In accordance with procedures developed in-country, the lead helicopter was to locate D Coy. However, the low cloud base prevented this being undertaken at the usual higher altitude. The more heavily laden second helicopter followed at a distance of 500-1000m. Once D Coy was located, with the assistance of coloured smoke, the resupply was delivered into the company position. Artillery support for D Coy had to be halted to allow the helicopters to fly safely into the area, and the enemy continued to attack, attempting to establish the size and position of the Australian force.

Meanwhile, 3 Troop, 1APC Squadron, with A Coy 6RAR aboard, departed the task force base to relieve D Coy. During its approach to the D Coy position the relief force attacked two enemy groups that were manoeuvring to attack D Coy. It broke through to D Coy as night fell. CO 6RAR was with the relief column and at this time took command of the entire force, including elements of B Coy that had arrived on foot from the west. With the onset of dark the enemy retreated and no further attacks occurred. The 6RAR force initially consolidated at the D Coy position, but later withdrew to the west to an area from which aeromedical casualty evacuation could be undertaken.

The survival of the Company can be attributed to the extraordinary performance of its members in fighting off the attacks; to the decisive command exhibited at each level; to the devastating effects of artillery, which was called in very close to each of the positions; to the fortuitous location of the final Company position on a shallow reverse slope that provided some protection from direct fire; to a timely and heroic helicopter ammunition resupply; and to the disruption of enemy plans for further attacks on D Coy by the movement, combat action and arrival of the APC-mounted relief force.

Whilst D Coy was undoubtedly the central participant in the Battle, and a critical contributor to its own survival, it is also likely that absent any of the other elements the outcome would have been gravely different. The Battle of Long Tan, which the Panel considers began with the first contact at 3.40 pm on 18 August 1966 and concluded at the end of the casualty evacuation some nine hours later, had at its core a heroic company battle but was, nonetheless, also the product of planning, decisions, and actions by other participants including the commanders at battalion and task force levels.

Had D Coy not prevailed at Long Tan the outcome would have been disastrous with the probable annihilation of the Company. The military and political consequences of this, so early in the commitment of the task force, would have been devastating.

The victory achieved at Long Tan was not only the avoidance of a potential military disaster. The heavy casualties that were inflicted on the enemy forced it onto the defensive over a critical period in the establishment of the task force, effectively removing the threat of an overwhelming ground attack on the 1ATF base. This was not fully appreciated at the time.

3. THE HONOURS SYSTEM

3.1 *Values underpinning the honours system*

The Panel recognised that the system of honours and awards used in Australia is underpinned by values which are held in high regard in our society and which characterise the way Australians view the world around them. These values include a sense of fairness, equity and an egalitarian commitment to acknowledge the quality of service and substance of action without regard to status or class. The Panel's consideration of claims for recognition sought to reflect these values with a generosity of spirit.

The integrity of the system is not undermined by reviews that adhere to these values. Indeed, the conduct of reviews that apply these values in concert with principles such as those set out in the introduction serves to enhance the integrity of the system.

3.2 *Development, and relationship with Imperial system*

The British Imperial system of orders, decorations and medals (honours and awards) evolved over time, and was the system used by Australia at the time of the Vietnam War, for both military and civilian purposes. A uniquely Australian honours system was introduced in 1975, at first comprising only three elements: the Order of Australia, the Australian Bravery Decorations, and the National Medal (for long and diligent service in specified occupations). Australian forms of award to replace all former Imperial awards were progressively introduced until 1992, when Australian governments ceased recommending Australians for Imperial awards. Her Majesty The Queen continues to make particular awards which are in her personal gift, without recommendation from any government.

The Order of Wearing Australian Honours and Awards sets out the relative positioning of Australian and former Imperial awards. Australian awards generally appear higher in the order than comparable Imperial awards. However, as the Tanzer Review recognised, the Order of Wearing does not satisfactorily reflect the relative standing of comparable Australian and Imperial gallantry awards. For example, the Imperial Distinguished Conduct Medal (a level 2 award) appears in the Order of Wearing below the Australian Medal for Gallantry (a level 3 award).

The four-tiered hierarchy of gallantry awards preferred by the Tanzer Review is reproduced in Table 2, below, to illustrate the relationship between Imperial and Australian awards.

Table 2 Translation of Imperial to Australian gallantry awards

Level	Recipient	Imperial Awards			Australian Gallantry Awards
		Navy	Army	Air Force	
1	Officer / WO / Other Ranks	Victoria Cross	Victoria Cross	Victoria Cross	Victoria Cross for Australia
2	Officer	Distinguished Service Order	Distinguished Service Order	Distinguished Service Order	Star of Gallantry
	WO / Other Ranks	Conspicuous Gallantry Medal	Distinguished Conduct Medal	Conspicuous Gallantry Medal (Flying)	

Level	Recipient	Imperial Awards			Australian Gallantry Awards
		Navy	Army	Air Force	
3	Officer / WO	Distinguished Service Cross	Military Cross	Distinguished Flying Cross	Medal for Gallantry
	WO / OR	Distinguished Service Medal	Military Medal	Distinguished Flying Medal	
4	Officer / WO / OR	Mention in Despatches	Mention in Despatches	Mention in Despatches	Commendation for Gallantry

3.3 Awards in the Imperial system

This outline of awards available under the Imperial system is limited to those used to recognise participants in the Battle of Long Tan, and those discussed in this Report. It is noteworthy that some of these awards could only be made to particular ranks.

Distinguished Service Order (DSO)

Awarded for conspicuous gallantry and leadership under fire or under conditions equivalent to services in actual combat with the enemy. In Vietnam the Australians quickly developed the practice of using the DSO to recognise sustained distinguished leadership of units – only one DSO was awarded to a person below the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel. That award, to a Major serving with AATTV, recognised his courageous leadership of a South Vietnamese battalion over a four-day operation. Every commanding officer of a battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment in Vietnam was awarded the DSO.

Military Cross (MC)

Awarded for gallant and distinguished service in action against the enemy. Limited to Majors, Captains, Lieutenants, Second Lieutenants and Warrant Officers.

Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC)

Awarded for an act or acts of valour, courage or devotion to duty whilst flying in active operations against the enemy. Available to air force commissioned officers and warrant officers, and also to officers of other services participating in air operations.

Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM)

Awarded for distinguished conduct in action in the field (bravery of a high standard, and if possible, demonstration of a degree of leadership). Available to all “other ranks”.

Military Medal (MM)

Awarded for a specific act of gallantry in the field, or for a continuous display of bravery over a specified period of active operations. Available to all “other ranks” and considered equivalent to the MC.

Mention in Despatches (MID)

Awarded for an act of bravery or for continuous good work over a long period. Available to all ranks. The MID could only be awarded when specially authorised, usually only during military operations.

Queen's Commendation for Brave Conduct (QC)

Awarded for an act of bravery. The QC could be awarded in operational or non-operational circumstances, and sometimes distinguished the act from one performed in the face of the enemy, that would attract the MID. Available to all ranks.

Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE)

Awarded for distinguished service, in peace or war, not necessarily under fire. For other valuable service not necessarily operational. Sometimes awarded for non-operational gallantry. Available to Majors, Captains, Lieutenants, Second Lieutenants, and some Warrant Officers.

3.4 Policy and procedure

Operational awards include recognition for gallantry in action or under fire, and distinguished service in military action. The process is administered by the Department of Defence and is characterised by protocols which include:

- **Recognition for gallantry or distinguished service** by individuals in the four-tier hierarchy described in section 3.2, measured by the degrees of heroism and peril involved in the action.
 - The Panel understands the four tiers each comprise ranges of achievement determined by qualitative and subjective thresholds. The absolute measures of performance inevitably vary across awards made in the same tier. The Panel recognises that with the best will injustice can occur where a lesser award is made for a performance that is clearly more worthy than others that were awarded a higher level of recognition.
- The **authority for determining recommendations** is vested in the chain of command down to those exercising the powers of a Commanding Officer. Subordinates may provide these commanders with advice of potential nominees, but have no formal authority in the process. Irrespective of the views of subordinates, in the absence of a recommendation by a Commanding Officer, there can be no award.
 - The 1960 publication by the UK War Office, "Pamphlet on Honours and Awards" is frequently referred to in military and diplomatic correspondence at the time of Long Tan as the authority on the subject. The pamphlet stipulates that "Citations will be initiated by Commanding Officers and be counter-signed by all superior commanders." (paragraph 4 (f)).
- The process of considering recommendations includes **evaluation and review (moderation)** at each higher level in the chain of command. Moderation is necessary to determine the specific and relative worthiness of actions. It is a routine part of the process and may lead to changes in award recommendations.

- The process should be **confidential**, even after the approval and announcement of awards. The protocol of confidentiality is necessary to preserve the integrity of the system, and to avoid unsustainable expectations of recognition.

The 1960 War Office pamphlet also prescribes a form for recommending awards at that time, known as a form “AF-W3121”. The Australian Army used this form for recommending awards, and in practice they were frequently drafted at company level and submitted to Commanding Officers to initiate the process. According to circulars and guidance from 1ATF files, these forms were routinely returned to units for re-typing and re-signing for a variety of reasons: corrections, tidying up and re-wording appear to have been the most common. It is therefore unsurprising that conversations would have occurred between commanders relating to award recommendations, and this was legitimately part of the moderation process. The RAAF and RAN did not use the AF-W3121, instead preparing award recommendations in a form more suited to their own internal processes.

The Panel noted the existence of differing versions of AF-W3121s for particular persons involved in the Battle of Long Tan. However, in view of the fact that re-typing forms appears to have been common-place, and that the version of a form filed at 1ATF may therefore vary from the version filed in Australia, a view was reached that the variations were not evidence of a departure from the protocols.

3.5 *The quota system*

The arrangements for making operational military awards under the Imperial honours system included the establishment by The Queen of what were known as ‘operational scales’, or quotas. Gallantry and distinguished service awards were available for all types of military activity, but where large numbers of forces were committed for extended periods, the quality and number of awards were controlled through the application of a quota. The quota prescribed the maximum number of awards that could be made each six months, and was expressed as a ratio of awards against the number of deployed personnel, e.g. “1:250” meant 1 award per 250 deployed personnel per six months. In the case of air operations, the ratio was expressed as awards per number of operational hours flown.

When Australia committed the 1RAR Group to Vietnam in 1965 planning commenced to recommend a quota for operations in Vietnam. The need for a quota became even more pressing when the Task Force was established in 1966, but the quota wasn’t formally approved until 1968. The delay in establishing the quota involved reconciling differences with the quota established for Korea, justifying the differing scales for each of the armed services to the satisfaction of the British authorities, and negotiating a joint quota arrangement with New Zealand. Despite having no quota formally in place, a draft quota was applied from mid-1966 as if it had been approved.

Separate quotas for awards and MIDs/QCs were established, as well as separate quotas for air operations. Since the Vietnam War was mainly a ground war, naval operations did not get a separate quota. The RAN Clearance Diving Team came under the operational control of Australian Force Vietnam and used the same quota as ground forces and RAAF non-aircrew.

Table 3 sets out the six monthly quotas established for the Vietnam War.

Table 3 Vietnam War quota for operational awards

Service	Type	Quota
Ground forces, RAN and RAAF non-aircrew	Awards	1:250
	MIDs/QC's	1:150
RAAF aircrew	Awards (FAC and Phantom)	1:300 operational hours
	Awards (helicopter ops)	1:400 operational hours
	Awards (bombers)	1:500 operational hours
	Awards (maritime recce and transport)	1:1000 operational hours
	MIDs/QCs	5 MIDs/QCs to every 3 awards

It has been well-documented that the quota system resulted in Army receiving the lowest rate of recognition of all three services, despite facing the overwhelming majority of enemy contact in Vietnam. The rate of awards for Vietnam was also the lowest achieved in all of Australia's wars. However, the quota was applied from mid-1966 until the withdrawal of most Australian forces in 1972, and by itself cannot be the basis of an individual claim of injustice within the context of the Vietnam War.

Impact of the quota system

The quota system was intended to control the quality and standing of awards. It did this by ensuring that awards were not devalued by too many being recommended and served as a moderating tool by ensuring that a range of recommendations for the same award over a period of time could be compared and graded.

However, the quota also placed an artificial ceiling on the extent to which gallantry could be recognised – recognition of major engagements needed to be tempered by Commanding Officers in the knowledge that awards needed to be rationed over each six-month period.

The contemporary system of operational military awards in Australia does not include quotas.

3.6 *The End of War List – Vietnam as precedent for review*

Gallantry awards from the Vietnam War have been subject to review before. The End of War List – Vietnam (EOWL-V), announced in 1998, recommended 81 additional or upgraded awards which had been downgraded or rejected under the quota in place during the Vietnam War. The integrity of the honours system was preserved by confining the EOWL-V to awards recommended at the highest level in Vietnam but which were subsequently down-graded or struck out in Australia. The decisions of commanders in the field were not interfered with. This preserved the formal authority of deployed force commanders in making recommendations based on a confidential system of moderation, and established a sustainable threshold for review.

Unlike the EOWL-V, the TOR for the present Review allowed the consideration of the treatment of recommendations within the Vietnam theatre of operations. Nevertheless the Panel sought to respect and preserve the formal authority of Commanding Officers in the field and to establish a sustainable threshold for review.

3.7 Criteria for a “fair and sustainable” outcome

The “fair and sustainable” outcome included in the TOR required the Panel to strike a balance between reviewing decisions of commanders in the field and maintaining the integrity of the Australian honours system. In short, the task was to address anomalies and injustices without creating new ones.

Anomalies and injustices may be founded in circumstances, interpretations, attitudes, and the application of terms and conditions, either by acts of commission or acts of omission. The Panel analysed decision making at all levels properly involved in making award recommendations up to the highest in-theatre commander (COMAFV for Army, COMRAAFV for RAAF). Wherever possible, the Panel sought to sustain the recommendations of Commanding Officers² and to examine the circumstances that caused changes during the moderation process.

The Panel also needed to identify what would constitute a reasonable basis for claims, and this is captured in Principle 2 (*Any decisions to recommend further recognition must be based on official records or other compelling evidence*). The integrity of the honours system would be threatened if the Panel accepted a claim for recognition without adequate proof that the award was formally recommended. Therefore only claims that had been initiated by a completed form of recommendation (AF-W3121 or otherwise), or compelling evidence that one had existed, would be considered.

² The term is not limited to unit commanders, but refers to all commanders exercising the powers of a Commanding Officer. In Vietnam, this included OC 1APC Sqn, Comd 1ATF and COMAFV.

4. INDIVIDUAL AWARDS

4.1 *Awards made for the Battle of Long Tan*

Nine awards were made to members of D Coy 6RAR for the Battle of Long Tan:

- WO2 John Kirby, the Company Sergeant Major of D Coy, was awarded a Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM), a level 2 award;
- Maj Harry Smith, the Officer Commanding (OC) D Coy, was awarded the Military Cross (MC), a level 3 award;
- two Military Medals (MM), level 3, were awarded: to Sgt Bob Buick who assumed command of 11 Platoon after 2Lt Gordon Sharp was killed early in the battle, and to Pte Ron Eglinton (6 Section, 11 Platoon machine-gunner); and
- five Mentions in Despatches (MIDs), level 4, were also awarded, to 2Lt Geoff Kendall (OC 10 Platoon), 2Lt David Sabben (OC 12 Platoon), Cpl Phil Dobson (D Coy medic), Cpl Bill Moore (OC 6 Section, 11 Platoon), and Pte Bill Akell (regimental signaller attached to D Coy).

Members of other units were also decorated for their performance in the Battle:

- Capt Morrie Stanley (Forward Observer, 161 Fd Bty, RNZA) was appointed a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE);
- Cpl John Carter (1APC Sqn) was awarded the DCM, a level 2 award;
- FltLt Frank Riley (helicopter pilot, No. 9 Sqn RAAF) was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC), level 3 (the citation for his award indicates that it recognised his entire tour, with his role in the Battle of Long Tan mentioned as a highlight); and
- three more MIDs were awarded, to Lt Adrian Roberts (OC 3 Troop, 1 APC Sqn), FltLt Cliff Dohle (helicopter pilot, No. 9 Sqn RAAF) and LBdr Willie Walker (FO party, 161 Fd Bty RNZA).

At the ends of their respective tours, LtCol Townsend (CO 6RAR) and Brig Jackson (Comd 1ATF), were both made Companions of the Distinguished Service Order (DSO), level 2 awards. Although the awards were in recognition of sustained distinguished service, the citations for both awards mentioned their command during the Battle of Long Tan. (Section 5.3 provides more detail on these two awards.)

4.2 *Adequacy of recognition*

A phrase which has gained currency in describing the awards made for the Battle of Long Tan is that they were “just short of insulting”. This phrase appears in a footnote to the official history, “To Long Tan”, and it’s worth putting it in context. The author, respected historian Dr Ian McNeill, actually wrote that “the quota system led to awards that were just short of insulting” – he did not level blame at the decision-makers, but at the system the decision-makers were compelled to use. Subsequently, the EOWL-V made recommendations for awards at the level recommended by COMAFV, and in doing so, reversed decisions made in Australia which, in many cases, would have been designed to keep awards within the number required by the quota. This resulted in ratios of awards that exceeded the quota.

Consistent with the outcome of the EOWL-V, the Panel felt that it should not be constrained by a need to ensure that any recommendations would comply with the Jul-Dec 1966 quota, and that it would be possible to redress perceptions of “insult” and injustice by considering award recommendations on their merits rather than by whether they could be accommodated by the quota. In other words, breaching the quota should not be seen as an impediment to redressing any identified injustices.

4.3 6RAR awards compared to other battalions

The Panel gathered information to test the assumption that the Battle of Long Tan was under-recognised by the number and level of awards made at the time.

The Panel accepted that it was the policy of CO 6RAR, early during the 1966-67 tour, to hold all award recommendations to the end of the tour, so that a proper comparison of actions could occur. However, the pressure to submit recommendations soon after the Battle of Long Tan (on 22 August) made this policy unworkable. The Panel heard from key individuals that a further review of unsubmitted award recommendations was conducted in the last month before 6RAR’s return to Australia, and this may have been an attempt by CO 6RAR to redress the perceived deficiencies in recognition accorded to members of his battalion. Additional award recommendations during 6RAR’s tour resulted in a further three awards announced at the end of March 1967, eight awards in late July 1967, another each in August and November 1967, and a final four awards announced in February 1968, for a total of 26 awards for the tour.

Taking into account awards granted as a result of the EOWL-V, in pure numbers 6RAR’s 1966-67 tour is amongst the best recognised of all RAR tours of Vietnam. Only 1RAR’s 1965-66 tour attracted more awards (33) – but it must be said that 16 of these were new awards from the EOWL-V, rewarding service or actions for which no award had been made at the time.

The Panel’s analysis counted only Australian members of the battalions, and no attached or supporting units. The Panel included awards from the EOWL-V. 6RAR’s 26 awards for the 1966-67 tour exceeds the mean average of 18 awards per battalion per tour by almost half as much again. The nine awards to 6RAR (all to D Coy) for the Battle of Long Tan account for just over a third of all awards to the battalion for the tour. 5RAR, which toured at the same time as 6RAR, was recognised with the same number of awards for its tour (26), but received more MIDs and fewer level three awards (MCs and MMs). 6RAR received a third of the average of 3 MCs per tour, but double the average of 3 MMs per tour, which means that, on average, non-commissioned officers and other ranks received more level three recognition than their counterparts in other battalions.

Given that the quota for Army was divided into two categories (honours 1:150 and MIDs/QCs 1:250), and that a strict application of the quota should result in a ratio of honours to MIDs of 3:5, it is notable that 6RAR’s 1966-67 tour resulted in a distribution of awards at almost exactly this ratio. However, the tours of most battalions resulted in ratios of honours to MIDs weighted more favourably towards honours than a strict application of the quota would have given. The Panel formed the view that at least a similar weighting towards honours for 6RAR could have been expected, given that it was involved in Australia’s most intense battle of the Vietnam War (the Battle of Long Tan), another major engagement (the Battle of Bribie), as well as significant battalion and company level operations.

In the Panel’s view, if there is any valid criticism of the awards to 6RAR for its 1966-67 tour, it is not that it received fewer awards than other battalions, nor that the distribution of awards

was out of proportion to the quota – it is that there were not as many higher level awards as would be expected, taking into account the circumstances of the tour and the ratio of honours to MIDs/QCs awarded to members of other battalions.

4.4 Long Tan compared to other Vietnam battles

Another aspect of the assumption addressed in section 4.3 is the standing of awards for the Battle of Long Tan compared to other battles in Vietnam. Table 4, below, makes this comparison (it also includes iconic battles of the Korean War). Significant factors for comparison are:

- duration of the battle
- size of the Australian force involved
- number of casualties (as an indicator of the ferocity of battle)
- resulting number of awards.

Taking into consideration the duration of the Battle of Long Tan, and the comparatively small size of the Australian force involved, the number of awards made to individuals for the Battle is, if anything a little above average. However, it could be argued that the mix of awards does not properly reflect the gallantry exhibited in the Battle and the outcome in terms of the establishment of the task force in the province.

Table 4 Comparison of operational awards for battles**A selection of major 1ATF Battles in Vietnam**

Battle	Dates(s)	Unit	KIA	WIA	Enemy KIA/WIA/PW	DSO	DCM	MC	MM	MID	MBE	DFC	Totals
Long Tan	18 Aug 66	D Coy 6 RAR with FO Pty	17	21	245-850/2/2		1	1	2	6	1		11
Long Tan	18 Aug 66	RAAF, A/B Coys, APC (+)	1	3	245-850/2/2	2 ¹	1			2		1	6
Long Tan (totals)	18 Aug 66		18	24	245-850/2/2	2	2	1	2	8	1	1	17
Bribie (Op Bribie)	17 Feb 67	A/B Coys 6 RAR (+)	8	27	50-70/0/0				2	8			10
Suoi Chau Pha (Op Ballarat)	6 Aug 67	A Coy 7 RAR	6	20	5/33/0		1	2	1	1			8
Binh Ba (Op Hammer)	6 Jun 69	D/B Coys 5 RAR (+)	1	10	99/6/8		1	2	1	1			5
Hammersley (Op Hammersley)	18 Feb 70	8 RAR (+)	1	33	13/0/1				2	3			5
Coral/Balmoral (Op Toan Thang I)	12-13, 15-16, 25-26, 27-28 May 68	1 RAR (+), 3 RAR (+)	25	100+	276/69/11	1 (3)	2 (3)	1 (6)	1 (2)	7 (11)			12 (25) ²

Iconic Australian Battles in Vietnam and Korea

Battle	Dates(s)	Unit	KIA	WIA	Enemy KIA/WIA/PW	DSO	DCM	MC	MM	MID	MBE	DFC	Totals
Long Tan ³	18 Aug 66	D Coy 6 RAR (+)	18	24	245-850/2/2	2	2	1	2	7	1		15
Kapyong	23-24 Apr 51	3 RAR	32	59	500+/7/0	1	1	1	4	5			12
Maryang San	2-8 Oct 51 ⁴	3 RAR	20	104	283(+)/7/50	2	2	10	10	13	1		38

¹ DSOs for Comd 1ATF and CO 6RAR that covered whole periods of command, but mentioned Long Tan within citations.

² Over half the awards which mention actions at Coral/Balmoral are for general service or multiple actions, making either passing reference to actions in Bien Hoa province or detailed mention of specific actions in or around Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral. The first figures in the table indicate awards specifically for Coral/Balmoral. The bracketed figures reflect total awards which mention action at Coral/Balmoral, including the specific ones.

³ To properly compare awards to Army personnel, the DFC and MID for RAAF helicopter pilots have been excluded.

⁴ Series of battalion attacks fought over six days.

4.5 How the awards were handled

The Panel examined primary documents and interviewed relevant persons to determine how the award recommendations were handled. The following points outline the sequence of events:

Army

- LtCol Townsend and Brig Jackson briefly discussed awards on the morning of 19 August 1966, on the battlefield.
- Upon return to base on 21 August 1966, Maj Smith was ordered to have citations for possible awards ready the following morning. He discussed all the possibilities with his officers and submitted a list to LtCol Townsend, which they discussed. LtCol Townsend rejected a number of MID recommendations on the spot as being “too many”.
- In his account to the Panel, Maj Smith said he suggested to the officer commanding 161 Fd Bty RNZA an MC for Capt Stanley, and that he suggested to the officer commanding 1APC Sqn an MC for Lt Roberts.
 - An award recommendation was considered by the NZ chain of command and Capt Stanley was awarded an MBE.
 - The MID awarded to Lt Roberts was initiated as a recommendation at that level.
- Maj-Gen Mackay (COMAFV) and Brig Jackson had agreed on the general number and level of awards within two weeks after the Battle.
- Brig Jackson concurred with the recommendations for the DSO for Maj Smith, and the MC for 2Lt Sabben and 2Lt Kendall.
 - At some point the AF-W3121s for 2Lt Sabben and 2Lt Kendall were returned to 1ATF to be re-signed by both LtCol Townsend and Brig Jackson as recommendations for MIDs. The files in Australia show only recommendations for the MID.
 - COMAFV downgraded Maj Smith’s recommendation to the MC. The AF-W3121 was not re-typed or re-signed by CO 6RAR and Comd 1ATF, and their original recommendations for the DSO remained on the form.
 - The Panel noted that the moderation process also included the upgrade of one award.
- The Panel views these changes as a legitimate part of the moderation process.
- Comd 1ATF’s final recommendations for awards for Long Tan were submitted to AFV on 26 September 1966.
- The awards to Australian Army personnel detailed in section 4.1 above were recommended by COMAFV, and were subsequently approved by military and government authorities in Australia.

RAAF

- On 3 September 1966 CO No. 9 Sqn RAAF, WgCdr R Scott, recommended FltLt Dohle and FltLt Riley for the DFC, in recognition of their performance in the Battle of Long Tan. The recommendations were endorsed by GpCapt Raw, as OC RAAF, Vung Tau, on 5 September and by AirCdre J Dowling, COMRAAFV,

on 6 September 1966. COMRAAFV forwarded the recommendations to the Department of Air, in Australia, by letter dated the same day.

- Documents obtained by the Panel show that the merits of the initial citations were considered in detail as part of RAAF's legitimate moderation process, and that a judgement was made to hold the recommendations for consideration with other recommendations at the expected end of the respective members' tours. FltLt Dohle's involvement in an aircraft accident in October 1966 was taken into account in reaching this conclusion.
- In April 1967 fresh recommendations were made for FltLt Dohle (this time for the MID) and FltLt Riley (again a DFC, but this time in recognition of achievements over the entire period of his tour), along with 14 other RAAF award recommendations. The recommendations were initiated by the then CO No. 9 Sqn RAAF, WgCdr R Royston on 6 April 1967, and endorsed by GpCapt Raw on 8 April 1967 and by AirCdre Dowling on 18 April 1967. The level of the awards recommended by the unit commander was not altered in the moderation process. This group of 16 recommendations progressed through the RAAF approval chain and government until they were announced on 28 November 1967.

The Panel found no evidence that the moderation of awards recommended for the Battle of Long Tan was influenced by malevolence or conspiracy, or that the process was subject to administrative error.

4.6 Awards subject to review

On the basis of the available evidence, the Panel determined that the only cases which could be the subject of this Review are:

- Distinguished Service Order for Maj Smith (awarded MC);
- Military Cross for 2Lt Sabben (awarded MID);
- Military Cross for 2Lt Kendall (awarded MID); and
- Distinguished Flying Cross for FltLt Dohle (awarded MID).

The Panel also determined that, in accordance with the principles of the Review, there was no sustainable basis to re-raise any consideration of an award to any other person for their involvement in the Battle of Long Tan. Undoubtedly there were other instances of bravery by a number of persons, but none of the other claims mentioned in Table 1 were the subject of recommendations initiated by an authorised commander so that a particular award might have resulted. The Panel did not think it appropriate for anyone to draft fresh citations, so long after the fact, on the basis of personal recollections. Accordingly, the Panel did not further pursue the following claims:

- MC for Lt Roberts (awarded MID);
- MID (posthumous) for 2Lt Sharp (no award);
- unspecified award for Sgt Alcorta (no award – though he was awarded MID for separate action);
- unspecified award for Pte Brett (no award);
- MIDs to seven others (no award).

5. ASSESSMENT OF CIRCUMSTANCES AND OUTCOMES

5.1 *Factors contributing to an anomalous outcome*

The Panel accepted that COMAFV legitimately recommended particular awards for the Battle of Long Tan, including some down-graded from the awards recommended by CO 6RAR and Comd 1ATF. Unless it could be determined that some special circumstances applied to the Long Tan awards, there could be no basis for differentiating this matter from any other case in which awards were altered in the course of moderation by the military chain of command. To change any awards in the absence of such circumstances could not be “fair and sustainable”.

Detailed examination of military and departmental files was undertaken to understand the decision-making context, and the Panel identified the following factors which, in its view, resulted in an anomalous outcome:

- The processes for handling honours and awards during 1966 were immature. 1ATF and RAAFV were newly formed and deployed. The higher levels of command in Australia apparently lacked an understanding of the challenging and hazardous nature of operations in Vietnam, compared with previous conflicts. This perception prompted Comd AAFV/1ATF (Brig Jackson) to request that the proposed operational scale of awards be made more generous. It is reasonable to surmise that the awards decisions of other senior commanders during 1966 would probably have been shaped more by their experiences in earlier conflicts than their understanding of conditions in Vietnam. The Battle of Long Tan, as 1ATF’s first major battle, occurred in this awards environment.
- RAAF award processes were not integrated with awards moderated by COMAFV, and the original citations for FltLt Riley and FltLt Dohle were among the first raised for No. 9 Squadron RAAF in Vietnam.
- Maj-Gen Mackay (COMAFV) was absent, in Canberra, at the time of the Battle of Long Tan. It is entirely possible that, had he been in country and alerted to the seriousness of the Long Tan situation as it evolved, the losses incurred, and the potential threat to the still-underdeveloped task force base, his consideration of recommendations may have been different.
- The quota as it applied in Vietnam led to the lowest ratio of awards to combat forces in any of Australia’s conflicts.
- The stringency in application of the quota within AFV during the period Jul 66 – Jun 67, prompted by direction from Canberra (military and ministerial), following ‘over-scale’ submissions in previous periods. In practice, COMAFV would appear to have sought equal numbers for both 5RAR and 6RAR throughout their tours of duty in 1966-67, perhaps without differentiating their actual achievements. It is possible that he limited his recommendations to the quota numbers and did not forward any ‘over-scale’ recommendations – a practice adopted by later COMAFV which subsequently provided the basis for the EOWL-V.
- The request for citations for awards following the Battle of Long Tan emphasised that they should be expedited, amid suggestions of a political imperative to mitigate community unease at the number of Australian casualties. The nature of the Battle had not been anticipated, the participants were still absorbing the

experience, and little (if any) thought had previously been given to honours and awards by the participants.

- The significance of the Battle of Long Tan, in terms of its scale, intensity and operational implications for the campaign in Phuoc Tuy Province, was not appreciated at the time. Commanders could not know whether the Battle was a singular event, or a portent of more similar actions. This uncertainty possibly constrained the level of awards recommended by COMAFV for the Battle.

The Panel believes COMAFV's decisions were affected by this combination of circumstances, resulting in awards which did not conform to the level of recognition which might otherwise have been expected from a military engagement of the type and scale of the Battle of Long Tan.

Turning to the question of the award of the DFC to FltLt Dohle, there seems to be a prima facie anomaly because two recommendations were separately raised, one for the DFC, another for the MID. Additionally, the initial citations for the DFC for both FltLt Dohle and FltLt Riley were very similarly worded, while the second set of citations were clearly different from one another. The Panel resolved to further investigate the matter (see 5.4, below).

5.2 Injustices arising from special circumstances – Army

Before progressing to solutions, the Panel felt it was worth specifying the injustices which arose from COMAFV's decisions. In the Panel's judgement:

- Both CO 6RAR and Comd 1ATF recommended Maj Smith for a DSO for gallantry, leadership and command in circumstances of grave peril. It is reasonable to conclude that they believed that Maj Smith's actions warranted that level of award. The downgrading of the award (to the MC) appears to underrate his performance in the Battle.
- Aside from the application of the quota, the Panel can find no other reason to understand why COMAFV downgraded Maj Smith's DSO to an MC. If the downgrading was prompted by issues related to the quota, then it is unfair, fails the test of Principle 1, and represents an injustice. The Panel formed the strong view that Maj Smith's actions were indeed worthy of the award of the DSO.
- If the platoons of D Coy had been operating independently and fought discrete actions, rather than as part of the Company, then – on the basis of most other awards to platoon commanders in Vietnam – their commanders would have received the MC. Their actions would certainly have been measured in the upper half of the MC 'band'. In the opinion of the Panel, a number of MCs awarded in Vietnam, including during 1966-67, may not have met their measure.
- The efforts by 10 Platoon and 12 Platoon to reach 11 Platoon had many hallmarks of independent actions – they were isolated and targets of discrete attacks by separate enemy groups and could not be supported by other elements of D Coy; communications difficulties put responsibility directly on platoon commanders; they had to conduct their own withdrawals back to the company defensive position, carrying their casualties with them.
- The level 3 recognition of the Platoon Sergeant of 11 Platoon (MM), whilst failing to recognise the two surviving platoon commanders at the same level (MC), is inequitable.

- The apparent denial of the MC to platoon commanders because their company commander was awarded that level of decoration is unfair and fails the test of Principle 1.

5.3 The DSOs awarded to Brig Jackson and LtCol Townsend

The awards of DSO to Brig Jackson and LtCol Townsend have been cited as the reason for Maj Smith to be downgraded to MC. The Panel believes it is worth noting that both awards were warranted because they relate to their entire periods of command:

- Brig Jackson's citation refers to his command of AATTV, AAFV, and 1ATF over more than 18 months during which the troops under his command had been in constant action. His last appointment had involved the raising of 1ATF from units of which he had little knowledge and no hand in their preparation. The establishment of 1ATF required the occupation of a new base in what was essentially enemy-dominated territory. He knew in August 1966 that his base was not prepared fully for defence and that two major North Vietnamese formations were operating in his Area of Operations, with indications that 275 Regt was positioned to the east of Nui Dat. He did not share this information with subordinate commanders and carried the burden of this knowledge virtually alone, although he set a policy to ensure that patrols were conducted by companies and not platoons and did not venture beyond artillery range. The base had been attacked by mortar and RCL fire. The Battle of Long Tan confirmed the presence of a major threat to the security of the task force base and a potential military and political disaster for Australia. COMAFV was absent (in Australia) and Brig Jackson had no senior Army commander with whom he could discuss the situation. He exercised command of task force assets throughout the Battle and its aftermath, and the result of the actions was a resounding victory which (as later realised) changed the course of events in Phuoc Tuy Province for a year or two. He was due to leave Vietnam in October 1966 and it was appropriate that his distinguished service be recognised by the award of a DSO, even though many have suggested that a CBE would have been an appropriate alternative. His award was a Periodic rather than Immediate award, but the announcement of his DSO in the same list as the first Long Tan awards (21 December 1966) fuelled conspiracy theories.
- LtCol Townsend's citation refers to his entire period of command in Vietnam. It was endorsed in theatre by the Acting COMAFV (not Maj-Gen Mackay) and was announced as a Periodic award in late July 1967. The performance of 6RAR and LtCol Townsend clearly warranted a high distinction and, although Long Tan was mentioned in the citation, there were many other battles that could also have been mentioned. 6RAR performed an outstanding tour of duty in Vietnam in 1966-67 and LtCol Townsend's DSO was testament to that. It is also relevant that during the Battle of Long Tan LtCol Townsend exercised command of his battalion by re-tasking companies and organising the relief of D Coy. He was exposed to enemy fire during the move of the relief column, and faced the threat of further ground attacks once he had joined D Coy at Long Tan. He took direct command of his forces deployed at Long Tan and made sound judgements concerning casualty evacuation and security against possible attack during the night. The following morning he issued new orders for battlefield clearance and the follow-up of the enemy. It was LtCol Townsend's normal practice to be 'on the ground' rather than separated from the battlefield. His award, seven months

after the Long Tan list was announced, was clearly warranted and probably had little if any influence on judgements about an award for Maj Smith.

5.4 *Injustices arising from special circumstances – RAAF*

Whilst the anomalous circumstances outlined at 5.1 above may have resulted in the downgrading of the DFC recommendation for FltLt Dohle, the evidence concerning the process suggests it was the result of legitimate moderation, and the injustice in his award of the MID is debatable.

The Panel obtained archival documents in which the merits of the September 1966 recommendations for FltLt Riley and FltLt Dohle were discussed in detail. The two DFC citations told essentially the same story, relating the same events in slightly different terms. The outcome of the moderation process was that, although the recommendations did not merit that level of award, the commanders in Vietnam should hold the citations until the end of the two pilots' tours, to take into account their performances in a wider context, and then re-submit them. FltLt Dohle had been injured in an accident in October 1966, and at the time that this moderation occurred it was not clear whether he would return to duty with No. 9 Squadron. As it turned out he did not return. Procedurally speaking, the September 1966 recommendations were not down-graded or rejected, only deferred, as they came forward in a different form in April 1967. The Panel is satisfied that the recommendations were legitimately moderated, with the concurrence of RAAF commanders in Vietnam.

In considering the justice of the outcome, the Panel examined the actions of the two pilots involved in the resupply mission, and the natures of their respective citations.

FltLt Riley's aircraft, in accordance with established procedures, had a command role in the mission. His crew and passengers, leading the mission into monsoonal rain and a combat zone, carried the risk of being the first engaged by a possible attack. In the final stages of their approach to the D Coy position they flew low and slow over enemy positions. By contrast, FltLt Dohle's aircraft had the advantage of being able to hang back and be more alert to possible enemy fire, and to react to conditions affecting the lead aircraft. The two aircraft were exposed to similar hazards – but the elevated risks involved in leading the mission, and the successful location of D Coy, thus enabling the ammunition resupply, deservedly distinguish the pilot of the lead aircraft. The Panel also noted the differing natures of the successful citations raised for each pilot. FltLt Riley's citation recognised distinguished flying during his full tour of duty in Vietnam, whilst highlighting his actions in the Battle of Long Tan. The citation for FltLt Dohle referred only to his achievements during the Battle of Long Tan.

5.5 *Findings and conclusions on individual award claims*

The Panel's key findings on the individual award claims are:

Army

- 6RAR was generally recognised with numbers of awards consistent with its operational achievements, compared to other battalion tours of Vietnam
- The number of awards made for the Battle of Long Tan is broadly consistent with awards for comparable battles, but the level of awards is not commensurate with the scale of the Battle and the gallantry of those involved

- The processing of awards for the Battle of Long Tan adhered to established administrative practice and was not subject to any untoward considerations nor influences
- LtCol Townsend and Brig Jackson formally recommended awards of the DSO for Maj Smith and the MC for 2Lt Sabben and 2Lt Kendall
- The circumstances outlined in section 5.1 affected COMAFV's decisions to downgrade awards to Maj Smith, 2Lt Sabben and 2Lt Kendall, resulting in the injustices outlined in section 5.2

RAAF

- The award of the MID to FltLt Dohle is appropriate recognition of his clearly commendable role at a critical stage of the Battle of Long Tan, and is fairly differentiated from the DFC awarded to FltLt Riley, whose award recognised achievements for his entire tour of duty in Vietnam.

The Panel concluded that it would be appropriate to consider restoring the intentions of Maj Smith's immediate commanders by recommending contemporary equivalents of the DSO recommended for Maj Smith and the MCs recommended for 2Lt Sabben and 2Lt Kendall. No other awards are recommended because none of the other claims were the subject of formal recommendations by authorised commanders.

These re-gradings would accord a more appropriate level of recognition for the Battle of Long Tan while acknowledging that the number of awards made for the Battle was comparatively adequate.

5.6 The appropriate contemporary awards

Having decided to support the original recommendations by CO 6RAR and Comd 1ATF that Maj Smith be awarded the DSO and 2Lt Sabben and 2Lt Kendall be awarded the MC, the Panel then considered how to realise those recommendations in 2008.

The MC was awarded "for gallantry and distinguished service in action against the enemy". The contemporary award of the Medal for Gallantry (MG) is awarded to military personnel for acts of gallantry in action in hazardous circumstances. The Panel was satisfied the citations for 2Lt Sabben and 2Lt Kendall completely meet the conditions for the award of the MG.

The translation of Maj Smith's award is not as clear-cut. The four-tier structure of awards translates the DSO to either the Star of Gallantry (SG) or the Distinguished Service Cross (DSC). At first inspection, the Maj Smith DSO citation might not appear to satisfy the requirements for the SG, the gallantry decoration second only to the VC for Australia. It could be seen to point towards the DSC which is awarded for distinguished command and leadership in action. However, the Panel formed a clear view of the intent of CO 6RAR. He was not citing Maj Smith for distinguished performance throughout his tour of duty as was the basis of the majority of Vietnam DSOs. Rather he was seeking immediate recognition for outstanding gallantry and leadership in the most perilous circumstances, and recognition above that afforded by the MC.

The Panel notes that to date only one SG but some 35 DSCs have been awarded since introduction in 1991. This suggests clearly that the DSC is not the appropriate translation for Maj Smith's DSO recommendation.

Regardless of the wording of the 1966 citation written to support the award of the DSO, the Panel considers Maj Smith's performance of duty during the Battle of Long Tan to be entirely consistent with an award of the SG.

6. UNIT RECOGNITION

The claims for further recognition for the Battle of Long Tan include the Government of the Republic of Vietnam (GRV, or South Vietnamese) Gallantry Cross with Palm Unit Citation (GCPUC). This award was established as both an individual and a unit award by Presidential decree in 1950, and the Unit Citation Emblem was established by Presidential decree in January 1968. The Panel notes that there appear to have been no awards of the GCPUC to foreign units prior to the creation of the Unit Citation Emblem, although some of the awards made after its creation recognised achievements pre-dating 1968. The Panel also notes Maj Smith's specific claim to have been given the Unit Citation Emblem by a high-ranking GRV official, Mr Charles Tran Van Lam, in Saigon in May 1967.

Before exploring the claim in detail it is worth outlining the process of offering and accepting foreign awards.

6.1 *The foreign awards process during the Vietnam War*

The 1960 War Office "Pamphlet on Military Honours and Awards" sets out in detail the basis on which foreign awards might be exchanged. Generally, foreign awards would only be accepted where agreement had been reached with a foreign government on the procedure and scale of awards, and The Queen's agreement to the arrangement had been obtained. The Australian Government accepted this guidance, but felt that the relatively small number of Australians in Vietnam compared to Vietnamese and US forces made a general agreement for the exchange of awards unsuitable. Instead, The Queen's agreement was sought to accept a limited number of individual awards, on a case-by-case basis, during the Vietnam War. The Panel's examination of original records confirmed that, although the Vietnamese often formally offered awards (and these offers are recorded in Embassy files), they were rarely recommended to The Queen for approval.

Nevertheless, Australian commanders (including Brig Jackson) and successive Australian Ambassadors appealed to authorities in Australia for a relaxation of the general policy of not pursuing acceptance. The issue became the subject of successive reviews by defence administrative committees, beginning in 1965 and continuing until the withdrawal of Australian forces in 1972. From about March 1967 there appears to have been an inclination to accept foreign unit awards where they were formally offered (e.g. awards of the GCPUC to AATTV, No. 2 Squadron RAAF and 8RAR were accepted), but individual awards by and large were not accepted.

Formal offers of Vietnamese awards were made by a "Third Person Note" from the Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Australian Embassy in Saigon. These offers were passed on to the Department of External Affairs for assessment in Australia by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. If an award were to be accepted the recommendation for the approval was transmitted to The Queen via the Governor-General, and advice of the acceptance came back to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet via the same route.

Informal offers of Vietnamese awards were also frequently made during the Vietnam War, and it is these informal offers that are often referred to when numbers of Vietnamese awards to Australians during the war are cited. Vietnamese commanders in the field were authorised to make a wide range of awards without first obtaining permission through their chain of command. An informal procedure was established in about 1967 whereby an Australian who had received such an award could seek the permission of COMAFV, after the fact, to "receive" the award – but this was not the same as formal acceptance of the award.

Adherence to the formal policy would have required refusal of impromptu presentations of awards, so this informal process avoided giving offence to the Vietnamese. It also allowed COMAFV the opportunity to consider recommending an Imperial award for the same action or achievement.

At the end of the war several hundred such awards had been “received” but were never formally recommended for “acceptance”.

6.2 Modification of the foreign awards process

The 1994 Committee of Inquiry into Defence and Defence Related Awards (CIDA) noted the apparent impasse in approving Vietnamese awards made informally during the Vietnam War. The formal procedure required an offer of an award through diplomatic channels, but the South Vietnamese government fell in 1975 – there was no longer a government to make an offer. CIDA recommended that a means of formally accepting these awards be found, and in response to this recommendation, the Australian foreign award guidelines were amended in 1997, including a new paragraph 14:

“In extraordinary or unusual circumstances permission for the formal acceptance and wearing of foreign awards by Australians may be recommended to the Governor-General by the responsible Minister without a formal approach through diplomatic or other official channels to the foreign government concerned.”

Though this paragraph waives the need for a formal offer, it does not waive the need for proof of an intention to make an award.

6.3 Proof of offer for the GCPUC

With reference to Principle 3, the Panel determined that any verification of an offer of the GCPUC would be subject to the foreign award guidelines. In accordance with Principle 2 this meant that documented evidence or other compelling evidence would be required to establish ‘proof of offer’ for the GCPUC.

In the case of the 22 individual awards approved in 2004, the government’s decision to recommend approval to wear was founded on the provision of citations drafted in 1ATF for South Vietnamese military authorities, and the fact of the 2 September 1966 parade at Nui Dat, at which the awards were meant to have been presented but were replaced by dolls and cigar boxes at the last minute. A combination of documentary and compelling evidence supported the approval of these awards. It has been popularly understood that the approval was achieved by applying paragraph 14 of the guidelines, but this is not the case. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet advised that the recommendation for approval involved setting aside the guidelines in this exceptional case.

It has been reported that in recommending approval of the individual awards, the then Minister for Veterans’ Affairs claimed that the guidelines did not cover collective awards, and he was unable to address the unit citation. The Panel understands that the guidelines for foreign awards apply equally to unit awards, otherwise the earlier existing awards for 8RAR, AATTV and No. 2 Sqn RAAF could not have been approved.

The awards of the GCPUC to AATTV, No. 2 Sqn RAAF and 8RAR are fully documented. No similar evidence of an offer or intention (of any kind) by the GRV for the award of the GCPUC for the Battle of Long Tan has been found in official files. However, the 16 March 1967 Minute of a Department of Defence administrative committee, the Principal Administrative

Officers' Committee (Personnel), includes reference to *no* offer of a Vietnamese unit award, in discussion of the offer of the US Valorous Unit Award to D Coy for the Battle of Long Tan (the award was later made as a Presidential Unit Citation). The same Minute recommends that, where Vietnamese unit citations are offered, they should be accepted. Allegations that this document deliberately omits reference to an offer of the GCPUC for the Battle of Long Tan are not credible. Amongst collections of documents from a wide range of agencies, in which formal offers of foreign awards are routinely reported and then set to one side (because Australia's policy was not to seek The Queen's approval for them), there is not one mention of a Vietnamese offer of a unit award for Long Tan. The Australian Embassy in Saigon periodically followed up the progress of consideration of award offers with Australia, and there is no mention of an award amongst these documents either. It is also notable that the GRV did not raise the issue of an award to D Coy in communications offering numerous other awards to Australian individuals and units prior to 1975.

The only documented evidence to the effect of an offer of the GCPUC for D Coy is in the 1999-2000 letters to Maj Smith from Mr Tran Van Lam, although these only refer to an intention and cannot be corroborated by another ex-GRV authority. The Panel did not doubt that conversations with Vietnamese officials led Maj Smith to believe that an offer of the GCPUC would be made. However, the Panel has found no evidence that the GRV ever did make a formal offer in the terms required for approval under the guidelines – nor is there proof of intention of the same nature as that relied upon to approve the individual awards.

6.4 Conclusion on unit award claim

Maj Smith's recollection of a meeting with Mr Tran Van Lam in Saigon in May 1967 does not meet the requirement for documented evidence. His account has, since 1967, been the primary source of expectations of an award, and fuelled allegations of conspiracy against successive Australian Governments and military leaders. The Panel notes the force of the 1999 and 2000 letters from Mr Tran Van Lam to Maj Smith, describing an intention to offer the unit award. However, these letters do not constitute an offer of the award, and are not corroborated by any contemporary GRV documents which would satisfy the requirements of the foreign award guidelines.

The Panel found no evidence that the GRV formally offered the GCPUC for the Battle of Long Tan to the Australian Government, although the Vietnamese may have considered offering it. The Panel also found no evidence that the Australian Government intended to reject such an award, if offered. The Panel did find evidence that the award would likely have been accepted if offered.

As the Panel is bound to preserve the integrity of the honours system it feels it cannot undermine the system by recommending that the foreign awards guidelines be set aside to enable acceptance of the GCPUC for the Battle of Long Tan. In the Panel's view the level of "circumstantial evidence" for the unit award is weaker than for the individual awards and therefore not compelling.

6.5 Other considerations – an Australian unit award

The Panel considered whether it would be appropriate to recommend a contemporary Australian unit award in recognition of the Battle of Long Tan. The Panel decided not to recommend such an award for a number of reasons:

- It would be inappropriate to consider awarding a contemporary Australian unit citation to D Coy 6RAR, in an effort to “match” the US PUC. There should be no expectation that foreign awards will be “matched” by Australian awards.
- An Australian (Imperial) unit citation was not available before 1991, but is now. If it had existed, either D Coy (for Long Tan) or 6RAR (for the entire tour) may have received a unit citation. However, to recommend the award would be at odds with Principle 1, insofar as any combination of the units involved in the Battle would result in disproportionate recognition of some units, and restricting an award to D Coy only would not appropriately recognise all those who contributed to the victory.

It is noted that the Unit Citations for Gallantry recently awarded to the Special Air Service Regiment and Fourth Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (Commando) were for extended operational tours, not single battles, for which individuals received gallantry awards. The Panel therefore turned its consideration to whether a wider award might be appropriate.

In reviewing background material and making comparisons against later Australian involvement in the Vietnam War more generally, the Panel recognised that 6RAR’s 1966-67 tour faced a unique sequence of challenges, which was met with a series of consistently outstanding responses. The Panel noted that 6RAR’s 1966-67 tour could be perceived to rank alongside contemporary recipients of the Unit Citation for Gallantry. However, the individual actions of both 6RAR and 5RAR’s 1966-67 tours were recognised at the time through the available individual awards, at comparatively high levels. To make a contemporary Australian unit award now would throw the level of recognition relative to other battalion tours out of balance, and the Panel therefore decided against recommending such an award.

Individual recognition of the OC D Coy, Maj Smith, with the Star of Gallantry (a level 2 award) would bestow considerable wider prestige on D Coy 6RAR for the Battle of Long Tan. Furthermore, awards of the Medal for Gallantry (a level 3 award) to 2Lt Sabben and 2Lt Kendall, along with the existing level 3 award (Military Medal) to Sgt Buick, would allow the members of each D Coy platoon to claim equal recognition for their part in the Battle. The Panel does not feel that further collective recognition is required to rectify the identified injustices in recognition for the Battle.

7. OTHER ISSUES

The Panel recognised that claims for further recognition were based on a range of beliefs and theories about circumstances and behaviours. While not all of these theories had to be addressed in order to resolve the recognition issues, information gathered by the Panel can put them to rest, and this Report would be remiss in not taking the opportunity to do so.

The Panel concluded that lack of knowledge about the system of honours and awards, particularly at sub-unit level; the opaqueness of the system to those not directly involved; and the periodic announcement of awards in batches; in combination, fuelled (and have sustained) unsubstantiated allegations of conspiracy among those aggrieved at the outcomes, and particularly in D Coy, 6 RAR.

The catalogue of issues is addressed below.

7.1 *Issues regarding individual awards*

- *It is anomalous that the surviving platoon commanders were only awarded the MID while Sgt Buick received MM, RAAF helicopter pilots DFC and MID and the NZ FO the MBE.*

The Panel accepted the apparent injustice of Sgt Buick receiving a level 3 award (MM) while the surviving platoon commanders received level 4 awards (MID) – see section 5.2.

However, the awards to RAAF personnel were subject to a separate quota to Army, were not recommended until April 1967, and were announced in November 1967. The DFC was awarded for distinguished flying throughout a tour of duty and not just for actions at Long Tan. The RAAF MID was awarded for action at Long Tan only, and is considered appropriate recognition. The MBE to the NZ FO was handled through NZ channels.

- *Maj Smith's DSO recommendation was downgraded by COMAFV because of collusion by RMC generals to decorate Brig Jackson rather than Maj Smith, an OCS officer.*

Brig Jackson and LtCol Townsend did recommend Maj Smith for the DSO. The Panel found no evidence of a conspiracy to deny recognition on the basis that Maj Smith was trained at OCS.

- *Brig Jackson was awarded the DSO at the expense of Maj Smith's company and that set in train the downgrading of other awards.*

The Panel is not convinced that Brig Jackson's DSO was at the expense of one for Maj Smith. Further, the downgrading of 2Lt Sabben and 2Lt Kendall's MCs to MIDs was probably motivated by a need to preserve awards in the 'honours' category of the quota, quite separately from any consideration of the appropriateness of awarding Maj Smith a DSO instead of an MC, which are both in the same quota category.

- *Operation Smithfield was a construct that incorrectly or untruthfully downplayed Maj Smith's company operation Vendetta, and facilitated DSO awards to CO 6RAR and Comd 1ATF.*

Elsewhere in the report it has been illustrated that CO 6RAR and Comd 1ATF's awards were deserved without having to create a task force operation to support award recommendations. All awards for Operation Smithfield relate to the actions in the Battle on 18 August. Operation Smithfield was a legitimate task force level response to a large-scale threat.

- *The “Generals’ RMC Club” opposes a review of Long Tan awards because of the questionable awards to Brig Jackson and LtCol Townsend, and Chief of Army and Chief of the Defence Force do not favour such a review because it would show that Brig Jackson should have been reprimanded rather than decorated.*

The review has found not the slightest evidence that Brig Jackson should have been reprimanded, and the Panel believes this contention is both baseless and an unfortunate comment on a commander placed under extreme pressure during his period of command.

- *The Commendation for Exemplary Service awarded in February 2007 to a participant in Operation Bribie (February 1967) seems to set a precedent for re-opening the EOWL-V.*

The Commendation for Exemplary Service awarded by the Hon Bruce Billson MP in February 2007 is not a part of the Australian system of honours and awards and creates no anomalies or precedents in the review of gallantry awards or with regard to the EOWL-V.

- *Deceased senior officers colluded to deny D Coy 6RAR honours for the Battle of Long Tan.*

As the senior officers are deceased it is not possible to question them on this issue. However, the Panel is satisfied that the moderation process applied to the Long Tan awards can be fully explained without any suggestion that there was collusion between senior officers.

- *The MID for the Vung Tau ALSG Postal Officer, simply for doing his job, demeaned the MIDs for the Battle of Long Tan announced in the same 21 December 1966 list.*

Documents obtained in the course of the Panel’s research established that the MID to the OC, Detachment, 1 Division Postal Unit, was announced in the Commonwealth of Australia Gazette on 30 March 1967. Though this was the same Gazette that announced the MID to Cpl Bill Moore, it did not coincide with the initial list of Long Tan awards, and could not have coloured perceptions at the time. The MID to the postal officer recognised his determination and conscientious dedication in overcoming difficulties with the postal service for the expanded force in Vietnam. The Panel observes that the MID was an appropriate award for this service, and that it is not relevant to the standing of the Long Tan awards. If any comparison of the MIDs for the Battle of Long Tan is made, it should be in the context of the 170 MIDs/QCs or Commendations for Distinguished Service awarded to members of the battalions of the Royal Australian Regiment that toured Vietnam.

- *Only commanders have been recognised for the Battle of Long Tan – there were no awards for ‘the diggers’. The seven MIDs rejected by LtCol Townsend should be awarded.*

The Panel notes that the nine awards to D Coy for the Battle of Long Tan include two to Privates, two to Corporals, and one each to a Sergeant and a Warrant Officer. The remaining three awards were to commissioned officers. The Panel heard from several sources about instances of bravery that were not recognised at the time because award recommendations were never made. The Panel reiterates its finding, on principle, that in the absence of a recommendation initiated by an authorised person at the time, it is not sustainable to consider making a fresh award to anyone, regardless of rank.

7.2 Issues regarding unit recognition

- *Maj Smith was personally awarded the National Order of Vietnam and GCPUC Clasp by Mr Tran Van Lam in May 1967, as a token award for his company pending The Queen's approval which was thought to be underway in Canberra.*

The Panel has no doubt that Maj Smith sincerely believes that the Vietnamese advised him of a unit award in May 1967, however: Mr Tran Van Lam is not an authority on what the Australian Government's response may have been; there is no evidence that a formal offer of the GCPUC was made (but there is documentary evidence that an offer was not made); and the GCPUC Emblem was not authorised for award in May 1967.

- *Successive occupants of the positions of Chief of Army and Chief of the Defence Force have used 8RAR jealousy as an excuse for not considering the GCPUC offer to D Coy.*

8RAR 'jealousy' is not a persuasive explanation for declining to examine the issue of the GCPUC; the sentiments of ex-8RAR veterans have been included in briefings by the Department of Defence in the past for completeness, not as a core argument. The Panel believes that the recognition of 8RAR with the GCPUC is irrelevant to this Review.

- *There is ample evidence to show there was an offer of the GCPUC to D Coy 6RAR in parallel to the US PUC. It was common knowledge that the GCPUC had been offered and was in the approval pipeline.*

The only evidence of an offer of the GCPUC is Maj Smith's own recollection, which he invited Mr Tran Van Lam to confirm in 1999, and which appears to be the basis for the belief of others (the 'common knowledge' appears to be on the basis of Maj Smith's report). The Panel believes Maj Smith's recollection is sincere, but a private conversation and personal letters cannot sustain a recommendation for the acceptance of an award.

- *The Prime Minister verbally indicated on 17 August 2006 that the GCPUC could be approved under the same protocol as the 22 GRV awards approved in 2004.*

The Panel believes any indication given by the Prime Minister was without the benefit of the advice and research available to the Panel, and it disagrees strongly with this conclusion.

- *All 'coalition' forces in South Vietnam were awarded the GCPUC by the GRV in 1972, and this is shown on the US Army Honours Web Site, and includes NZ and Australian troops.*

The US Army accepted an award of the GCPUC to MACV and US Army Vietnam and all subordinate units, by US Department of Army General Order 8 of 1974. The US Army does not have authority to accept awards on behalf of Australian or NZ units. While some Australian and NZ units may have been under operational control of US units during the Vietnam War, they remained under formal command of Australian Force Vietnam. Those Vietnamese awards accepted by Australia were on the basis of formal offers made to the Australian Government, not to the US Government.

- *There is anecdotal evidence that files related to the offer of the GCPUC remain locked away or have been destroyed.*

The Panel found no credible evidence that any files relating to an offer of the GCPUC have been either hidden or destroyed.

- *Relevant folios have been removed from an AWM file because they were linked to a visit by then Minister for Army, Malcolm Fraser, to Vietnam in October 1966 during which he sought to placate GRV President Thieu over rejection of awards for the Battle of Long Tan.*

Mr Fraser visited Vietnam in June-July 1966, and again in mid 1967. There is no evidence that he visited Vietnam for a second time in 1966, and the Panel finds the allegation to be baseless. Even had he visited, there are no records of any conversation.

- *The most significant proof of offer of the GCPUC is in the two letters (1999-2000) from Mr Tran Van Lam.*

While this is the most significant indication of any sort, it is not sufficient evidence on which to base a recommendation for approval of the award.

APPENDICES

1. Acknowledgements

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The Review Secretariat, in turn, tapped numerous external resources to collect information and find interviewees. At the Australian War Memorial, sincere thanks are offered for the input and assistance rendered by Mr Ashley Ekins, Head of the Military History Section; and to Mr Jeremy Richter, Ms Mary Pollard, and all the staff at the Research Centre's reading room, who made available valuable military records and reference material so quickly and efficiently. At the National Archives of Australia, thanks to Ms Carolyn Connor, Ms Julia Church, the curators and the staff at the Canberra reading room, for likewise so cheerfully retrieving and examining material for access, sometimes at very short notice. Mr Anthony Staunton, of the Department of Veterans' Affairs, generously shared his personal database of gazetted military awards, and his general knowledge on the subject, to assist the Panel with statistical analyses.

At the Department of Defence's Directorate of Honours and Awards, the Panel is grateful for the cooperation and assistance afforded by Ms Irene Wilson, Mr Pat Clarke, Mr Brett Mitchell and Mr Graham Wilson. The Army History Unit provided useful guidance on a number of occasions. Valuable assistance was also provided by Dr Aaron Fox of the New Zealand Defence Force's Medals Office, and Major Tausia Tarsau of the New Zealand Army General Staff.

To each of the persons the Panel interviewed, the Panel's sincere thanks are offered for sharing your time, your recollections, your opinions and your insights. For some it was far from the first time they had shared their knowledge of the Battle, but others had never spoken of some subjects to anyone before. The Panel's investigations and conclusions are richer for your generosity.

Finally, thanks to Mr Graham Smith, President of the 6RAR Association Committee, and a Long Tan veteran, who assisted on a range of issues from finding key individuals for interview to identifying relevant source material.

While all these people generously assisted the Panel with information and advice, the views and conclusions contained in this Report are those of the Panel, and do not necessarily represent the views of anyone else.

2. Panel Activity

2.1 Meetings and attendance

Friday, 19 October 2007

Attendance: Peter Abigail (Chair); Steve Gower, Gerry Warner (Members); Peter Rush, Glenn Gore Phillips (Secretariat); Margaret Varghese (PM&C).

Friday, 16 November 2007

Attendance: Peter Abigail (Chair); Steve Gower, Gerry Warner (Members); Peter Rush, Glenn Gore Phillips (Secretariat).

Thursday, 13 December 2007 (interviews)

Attendance: Peter Abigail (Chair); Steve Gower, Gerry Warner (Members); Peter Rush, Glenn Gore Phillips (Secretariat); plus interviewees (see below).

Tuesday, 15 January 2008 (interviews)

Attendance: Peter Abigail (Chair); Steve Gower, Gerry Warner (Members); Peter Rush, Glenn Gore Phillips (Secretariat); plus interviewees (see below).

Monday, 21 January 2008 (telephone interviews)

Attendance: Peter Abigail (Chair); Steve Gower, Gerry Warner (Members); Peter Rush, Glenn Gore Phillips (Secretariat); Margaret Varghese (PM&C); plus interviewees (see below).

Friday, 1 February 2008

Attendance: Peter Abigail (Chair); Steve Gower, Gerry Warner (Members); Peter Rush, Glenn Gore Phillips (Secretariat); Margaret Varghese (PM&C)

Friday, 15 February 2008

Attendance: Peter Abigail (Chair); Steve Gower, Gerry Warner (Members); Peter Rush, Glenn Gore Phillips (Secretariat)

Monday, 17 March 2008

Attendance: Peter Abigail (Chair); Steve Gower, Gerry Warner (Members); Peter Rush, Glenn Gore Phillips (Secretariat); plus interviewee (see below).

2.2 Persons interviewed

13 December 2007

Harry Smith	(Maj, OC D Coy, 6RAR)
Peter Dinham	(Lt, PI Comd, A Coy, 6RAR)
Adrian Roberts	(Lt, OC 3 Tp, 1APC Sqn)
Max Turrell	(Capt, Adjutant, HQ 6RAR)
Charles Mollison	(Capt, A/OC A Coy, 6RAR)

15 January 2008

Brian McFarlane	(Maj, OC C Coy, 6RAR)
Owen O'Brien	(Maj, OC Admin Coy, 6RAR)
Peter Dinham	(Lt, PI Comd, A Coy, 6RAR)
Ian Hutchison	(Capt, GSO3 Ops, HQ 1ATF)
Ian Savage	(2Lt, Tp Offr, 1APC Sqn)

21 January 2008 (by telephone)

Bob Hagerty	(Maj, OC 1APC Sqn)
Brian Passey	(Maj, Ops Offr, HQ 6RAR)
David Harris	(Lt, LO to Comd 1ATF)

17 March 2008

Bruce Lane	(FltLt, No. 9 Sqn RAAF)
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3. Bibliography

3.1 Books

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Allen & Unwin, 2004

Ham, Paul "Vietnam: the Australian War" HarperCollins, 2007

"Huy Chuong an Thuong Tron Quan-Luc Viet-Nam Cong-Hoa" ["Medals and Decorations of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces"], published by the Army of the Republic of Vietnam, Saigon, 1969 (National Library of Australia catalogue no. "VIET 1359")

McAuley, Lex "The Battle of Long Tan" Century Hutchinson, 1986

McNeill, Ian "The Team: Australian Army Advisers in Vietnam 1962-1972" University of Queensland Press in association with the Australian War Memorial, 1984

McNeill, Ian "To Long Tan: the Australian Army and the Vietnam War 1950-1966" Allen & Unwin in Association with the Australian War Memorial, 1993

McNeill, Ian and Ekins, Ashley "On the Offensive: the Australian Army and the Vietnam War, January 1967-June 1968" Allen & Unwin in Association with the Australian War Memorial, 2003

Mollison, Charles "Long Tan and Beyond: Alpha Company 6 RAR in Vietnam 1966-67" Cobbs Crossing, 2006 3rd Edition

Sylvester, John, Jr "The Decorations and Medals of the Republic of Vietnam and Her Allies 1950 to 1975" Medals of America Press, 1995

Williams, Iain McLean "Vietnam: A Pictorial History of the Sixth Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment" Printcraft Press, 1967

3.2 Reports

Committee of Inquiry into Defence and Defence Related Awards (1994);
Gen P C Gration, Chair

Review of Australian Honours and Awards (1995); Ms Clare Petre, Chair

Independent Review Panel of the End of War List – Vietnam (1999); Mr Noel Tanzer, Chair

Review of Service Entitlement Anomalies in Respect of South-East Asian Service 1955-75 (2000); Maj-Gen R F Mohr, Chair

3.3 Archived material

Key to Archives series

Archive series	Agency/organisation which created the file (series description)
(AWM)	(Australian War Memorial holding, separate from Archives collection)
A703	Department of Air, Central Office
A1838	Department of External Affairs, Central Office
A1946	Department of Defence, Central Office
A2880	Governor-General (correspondence files)
A4531	Australian Embassy, Republic of Vietnam, Saigon
A5840	Secretary to Cabinet/Cabinet Secretariat (Second Holt and McEwen Ministries - folders of decisions of Cabinet and Cabinet committees)
AWM98	Headquarters Australian Force Vietnam, Army Component
AWM103	Headquarters 1ATF, Nui Dat
AWM115	Army Headquarters (Vietnam War records)
AWM121	Department of Army, Central Office (Directorate of Military Operations and Plans (DMO & P))
AWM276	Australian Army Assistance Group Vietnam
AWM293	Australian Army Training Team Vietnam
M1373	Department of Army, Central Office (Speeches and Press statements of Malcolm Fraser, as Minister for Army)

Material consulted

Archive series	Control Symbol	Title	NAA Barcode
(AWM)	F03791	Film item: "6RAR [Long Tan] memorial service DPR/TV/435" (4 min 50 sec)	-
(AWM)	F10109	Film item: "6 th Bn RAR, Memorial Service DPR/TV/435" (1 min 23 sec)	-
A703	642/1/12 Part 6	Honours and Awards – Policy	3108030
A703	642/3/16 Part 1	Awards for Operational Service – Vietnam	12342285
A703	642/3/16 Part 2	Awards for Operational Service – Vietnam	12342286
A703	642/3/22 Part 1	Honours and Awards – Vietnam – Policy	12342305
A703	1967/3764	Recommendations for honours and awards for RAAF personnel serving in Vietnam [1965-1969]	11373928
A1838	1535/46/3 Part 1	Decorations and awards – Vietnam – General	3352082
A1946	70/3231	Operational Scale of Awards for Australians Serving in South East Asia	-

Archive series	Control Symbol	Title	NAA Barcode
A2880	5/5/103	Vietnam Government Award – Cross of Gallantry with Palm Unit Citation to Aust Army Training Team Vietnam	4780051
A2880	5/5/34	Honours and Awards – Gallantry Awards (Operational) [includes approval of Gp Capt Raw's DSO, FltLt Riley's DFC and FltLt Dohle's MID]	1371537
A2880	5/5/95	Honours and Awards – Gallantry – RAAF No. 2 Sqn, 8RAR Cross of Gallantry with Palm	1372275
A4531	101/9 Part 1	Saigon – Foreign Decorations and Others	5036854
A4531	101/9 Part 2	Saigon – Decorations and awards	8159580
A4531	101/9/1	Saigon – Vietnamese Campaign Medal	8159582
A4531	201/2/7/1 Part 3	Saigon – Vietnam – Military – all aspects	12122407
A4531	215/4/3	Saigon – AFV – General and Administration	7557986
A5840	546/FAD	Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee – Cabinet Minute – Additional Contribution to Vietnam Force	1889941
AWM98	R445/4/14	HQ AFV – Honours and awards – General – Flying crews	833811
AWM98	R445/4/6 Part 1A	HQ AFV – Honours and Awards – Letters of commendation – Units and personnel in Vietnam	833804
AWM98	R723/1/17	HQ AFV Report – General – HQ 1ATF	794657
AWM98	R875/1/5/2	HQ AFV – Visits from 1ATF	8748989
AWM103	375	II FFV Regulations and Personnel (etc)	5190767
AWM103	R445/1/7/1	Honours and Awards – General Part 1	852572
AWM103	R445/2/4	Honours and Awards – General	852580
AWM103	R445/3/1/1	Honours and Awards – Foreign – SVN Citations – D Coy 6RAR	852582
AWM103	R445/3/2/2 Part 1	ARVN Awards to Australian Personnel A-K Part 1	949264
AWM103	R445/3/2/2 Part 2	ARVN Awards to Australian Personnel A-K Part 2	8748603
AWM103	R445/3/1/2 Part 1	ARVN Awards to Australian Personnel L-Z Part 1	949386
AWM103	R445/3/1/2 Part 2	ARVN Awards to Australian Personnel L-Z Part 2	8748602
AWM115	6	Australian force contribution to Vietnam – report by Defence Committee – December 1966	5194236
AWM115	19	1ATF Standard Operating Procedures	5194249
AWM115	45	1ATF Standard Operating Procedures Book 2	5194275

Archive series	Control Symbol	Title	NAA Barcode
AWM121	161/A/4 Part 1	Defence Chiefs of Staff Committee – South Vietnam	713479
AWM276	R445/4/19	HQ AAAGV – Honours and Awards – General – Policy – Commonwealth Awards	897905
AWM293	R445/2/3	AATTV – Awards – ARVN – Unit Citation for AATTV	890983
M1373	3	Press statements and radio talks 1966 (Malcolm Fraser)	-

4. **Abbreviations used**

Abbreviation	Meaning
1APC Sqn	1 st Armoured Personnel Carrier Squadron
1ATF	1 st Australian Task Force (at Nui Dat, Phuoc Tuy Province, Vietnam)
2Lt	Second Lieutenant (rank)
6RAR	Sixth Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment
AAFV	Australian Army Force Vietnam (predecessor to Australian Force Vietnam)
AATTV	Australian Army Training Team Vietnam
AFV	Australian Force Vietnam
AirCdre	Air Commodore (RAAF rank)
AM	Member of the Order of Australia
AO	Officer of the Order of Australia
ARVN	Army of the Republic of Vietnam
AWM	Australian War Memorial
BEM	British Empire Medal, or the Medal of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (Imperial distinguished service award)
Brig	Brigadier (rank)
Bty	Battery (artillery sub-unit, as in "161 Bty RNZA")
Capt	Captain (rank)
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CIDA	Committee of Inquiry into Defence and Defence Related Awards (reported 1994)
CO	Commanding Officer (used for commanders of units or formations battalion equivalent size, as in "CO 6RAR")
Comd	Commander (as in "Comd 1ATF")
COMRAAFV	Commander, Royal Australian Air Force, Vietnam
Coy	Company (as in "D Coy")
Cpl	Corporal (rank)
CSM	Conspicuous Service Medal (Australian military award for distinguished service in non-warlike circumstances)
DCM	Distinguished Conduct Medal (Imperial gallantry award)
DFC	Distinguished Flying Cross (Imperial gallantry award)
DSC	Distinguished Service Cross (Australian distinguished service award)
DSM	Distinguished Service Medal (Australian or Imperial distinguished service award – both systems have an award of this name)
DSO	Companion of Distinguished Service Order (Imperial gallantry or distinguished service award)
EOWL-V	End of War List – Vietnam (1998)
FO	Artillery Forward Observer (attached to deployed infantry, to direct artillery fire support)

Abbreviation	Meaning
GCPUC	Gallantry Cross with Palm Unit Citation (GRV gallantry award)
GpCapt	Group Captain (RAAF rank)
GRV	Government of the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam)
Hon	the Honourable
HQ	Headquarters
IDC	Inter-Departmental Committee (as in "IDC on Defence Honours and Awards")
II FFV	Second Field Force Vietnam (US military formation)
LBdr	Lance Bombardier (artillery equivalent of Lance Corporal)
LO	Liaison Officer
Lt	Lieutenant (rank)
LtCol	Lieutenant Colonel (rank, battalion commander)
LVO	Lieutenant of the Royal Victorian Order
Maj	Major (rank, company commander)
Maj-Gen	Major-General (rank)
MBE	Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (Imperial distinguished service award)
MC	Military Cross (Imperial gallantry award)
MG	Medal for Gallantry (Australian gallantry award)
MID	Mention in Dispatches (Imperial gallantry or distinguished service award)
MM	Military Medal (Imperial gallantry award)
MP	Member of Parliament (post-nominal used by Members of the House of Representatives)
NAA	National Archives of Australia
OC	Officer Commanding (used for sub-units below battalion, as in "OC D Coy 6RAR")
OCS	Officer Cadet School, Portsea, Victoria
PI	Platoon
PM&C	Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
Pte	Private (rank)
PUC	Presidential Unit Citation (US award)
QC	Queen's Commendation for Brave Conduct (Imperial award for brave conduct by civilians or military personnel in non-warlike circumstances)
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RAAFV	Royal Australian Air Force, Vietnam
RAHA	Review of Australian Honours and Awards (reported 1995)
RAN	Royal Australian Navy
RAR	Royal Australian Regiment
RCL	Recoil-less Rifle (weapon used by enemy in Vietnam)
Regt	Regiment

Abbreviation	Meaning
RMC	Royal Military College, Duntroon, Canberra
RNZA	Royal New Zealand Artillery
SG	Star of Gallantry (Australian gallantry decoration)
Sgt	Sergeant (rank)
Sqn	Squadron (as in "No. 2 Sqn RAAF", "1APC Sqn")
Tanzer Report	Report of the Independent Review Panel into the EOWL-V, chaired by Mr Noel Tanzer AC (1999)
TOR	Terms of Reference (for this Review)
Tp	Troop (as in "3 Tp, 1APC Sqn")
USMACV	United States Military Advisory Command Vietnam
VC	Victoria Cross (Imperial and Australian gallantry decoration)
WgCdr	Wing Commander (RAAF rank)
WO1 (or WO2)	Warrant Officer Class One (or Two) (non-commissioned rank)