

AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND FORCES IN VIETNAM

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VIETNAM SERIES

Author's Note. The "Vietnam Series" orders of battle began life several years ago as a method of helping designers create more accurate Vietnam war scenarios for TalonSoft's *The Operational Art of War*® computer wargame. (This was later taken over by Matrix Games and revised as *The Operational Art of War III*®.) The particular web site hosting scenarios, order of battle, and TOE information has long since disappeared, although those original documents might still have a life somewhere on the internet. I have returned to all of them from time to time, adding additional information and doing some editing. However, their origin as wargame aids remains most visible in the documents on non-Vietnamese armed forces, which often contain information organized by arrival and departure in the theater.

The cover illustration is a screen shot of Stéphane "Boonierat" Moutin Luyat's scenario, "Vietnam Combat Operations, Volume 2: Defense Campaign—Stemming the Tide," created for *The Operational Art of War III*® and used with his permission.

Australian participation began in 1962 with the Australian Army Training Team (AATV), comprising 30 officers and warrant officers, this was increased in 1965 to 100 personnel, including some NCOs.¹ A flight (later 35 Squadron RAAF)² with Caribou transport aircraft had been in South Vietnam since August 1964. Australian troops were initially assigned to the US 173rd Airborne Brigade, until the 1st Australian Task Force (ATF) was established 1 April 1966. HQ Australian Army Forces, Vietnam, was at Saigon. HQ 1st Australian Task Force was at Nui Dat (just north of Ba Ria, provincial capital of Phuoc Tay Province). Task Force strength was initially around 4,500 men. This later increased to 6,300 and in 1967 grew to over 7,600. New Zealand troops totaled around 550 men in 1969, at their peak. Australia and New Zealand began their draw-down in 1970, and the last troops were gone in March 1971.

Note: unlike the US, Australia and New Zealand generally rotated whole units rather than individuals.

Date	Action	Formation	Units and Notes
25 May 1965	Arrival	US 173 Bde	1 st Bn R Austr Regt
21 Jul 1965	Arrival	US 173 Bde	161 st Bty RNZA
14 Sep 1965	Arrival	US 173 Bde	105 th Fd Bty RAA, 1 st APC Trp, ³ 161 Recce Flt AAAC ⁴
31 Mar 1966	Departure	US 173 Abn	105 th Fd Bty RAA
1 Apr 1966	Arrival	1 ATF	HQ 1 st Austr TF; 5 th and 6 th Bns R Austr Regt; 1 st Fd Regt RAA (- one bty); ⁵ 1 st APC Sqn [absorbed 1 st Trp]; 1 st Fd Sqn RAE (- one troop); 3 rd SAS Sqn (- one troop), 17 Cons Sqn RAE
Apr 1966	Arrival	1 ATF	9 [Helicopter] Sqn RAAF (UH-1) ⁶
14 Jun 1966	Departure	1 ATF	1 st Bn R Austr Regt
15 Jan 1967	Status	1 ATF	1 st APC Sqn redesignated A Sqn/3 rd Cav

¹ In 1970 it was increased to 222 personnel. Its personnel were gradually spread throughout the country. In December 1971, as Australia was withdrawing its combat forces, it was reorganized as the Australian Army Assistance Group, with 150 personnel including some engineering and support personnel, and relocated to Van Kiep in Phuoc Tuy Province. It departed 19 December 1972. During the course of the war, this small force earned four Victoria Crosses.

² Redesignated as a squadron June 1966. It was established as the RAAF Transport Flight Vietnam, with 6 Caribou.

³ Formed from 'A' Squadron, 4th/19th Light Horse (Queensland Mounted Infantry), which was an armoured car regiment. Not redesignated 1st APC Troop until March 1966; until then it was 1 Trp, 'A' Sqn of the 4th/19th.

⁴ Later 161 (Independent) Reconnaissance Flight. Arrived with 2 Sioux light observation helicopters and 2 Cessna 180 fixed wing liaison aircraft. Following creation of 1st ATF, increased to 6 Sioux and 3 Cessnas, along with a loaned O-1 Bird Dog. In late 1969, the Cessnas were replaced by a purpose-built Army cooperation and liaison aircraft, the PC-6 Turbo Porter. In early 1971 the Sioux were replaced by 8 OH-58 Kiowa. These were returned to the US when the flight left Vietnam.

⁵ 101st and 103rd Field Btys RAA.

⁶ Joined for period June 1966 to May 1969 by an RAN detachment of 8 helicopter pilots. In 1968, the squadron modified its helicopters to carry a forward-mounted 7.62 mini-gun, a rocket launcher and two M60 door-mounted machine guns.

Date	Action	Formation	Units and Notes
2 Mar 1967	Arrival	1 ATF	2 nd and 7 th Bns R Austr Regt; 4 th Fd Regt RAA (- one bty); ⁷ 1 st SAS Sqn (- one troop)
31 Mar 1967	Arrival	7 th Fleet	HMAS <i>Hobart</i> (guided missile destroyer) ⁸
19 Apr 1967	Arrival	35 th TFW	2 Sqn RAAF [Canberra] at Phan Rang ⁹
11 May 1967	Arrival	1 ATF	“V” “NZ Inf Coy
5 Jul 1967	Departure	1 ATF	5 th and 6 th Bns R Austr Regt; 1 st Fd Regt RAA (- one bty); 3 rd SAS Sqn (- one troop)
14 Sep 1967	Status	7 th Fleet	HMAS <i>Hobart</i> at Subic Bay replaced by HMAS <i>Perth</i>
16 Oct 1967	Arrival	MACV	RAN Helicopter Flight Vietnam ¹⁰
1 Dec 1967	Status	1 ATF	1 st Fd Sqn RAE completed
12 Dec 1967	Arrival	1 ATF	3 rd Bn R Austr Regt
17 Dec 1967	Arrival	1 ATF	“W” Inf Coy NZ ¹¹
19 Jan 1968	Arrival	1 ATF	1 st Bn R Austr Regt (second tour)
29 Jan 1968	Arrival	1 ATF	4 th Bn R Austr Regt; 12 th Fd Regt RAA (-one bty); ¹² C Sqn/1 st Armd Regt; 2 nd SAS Sqn (- one troop)
8 Feb 1968	Departure	1 ATF	1 st SAS Sqn (- one troop)
31 Mar 1968	Status	7 th Fleet	HMAS <i>Hobart</i> returns for second tour, replacing HMAS <i>Perth</i> at Subic Bay
26 Apr 1968	Departure	1 ATF	7 th Bn R Austr Regt
28 May 1968	Departure	1 ATF	4 th Fd Regt RAA (- one bty)
18 Jun 1968	Departure	1 ATF	2 nd Bn R Austr Regt
29 Sep 1968	Status	7 th Fleet	HMAS <i>Perth</i> returns for second tour, replacing HMAS <i>Hobart</i> at Subic Bay
5 Nov 1968	Arrival	1 ATF	9 th Bn R Austr Regt
5 Dec 1968	Departure	1 ATF	3 rd Bn R Austr Regt
12 Dec 1968	Arrival	1 ATF	NZ Trp SAS

⁷ 106th and 108th Field Btys RAA.

⁸ This marks the date that the *Hobart* first took up station off Quang Ngai province. It left Australia on the 7th and joined the Seventh Fleet on the 15th at Subic Bay, Philippines. The Australian destroyers served a variety of roles during their tours, including naval gunfire support of ground troops and on the destroyer screen for carriers. The dates in this document show replacements, which are not necessarily the dates that the destroyers left or returned to Australia.

⁹ The 5th Airfield Construction Squadron RAAF had gone to Phan Rang in January and February 1967 to build the necessary facilities for this squadron; presumably they left sometime after it arrived. The Canberra was a twin-jet tactical bomber (a version was used by the USAF as the B-57). No 2 Squadron served under the US 35th Tactical Fighter Wing.

¹⁰ Eight pilots and some support personnel, attached to US 135th Assault Helicopter Company.

¹¹ The two New Zealand infantry companies (from 1st Bn, Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment, then in Malaya) were first placed under the operational control of 2nd Bn Royal Australian Regiment. In March 1968 they were integrated into the 2nd RAR/NZ, or “Anazac”, Battalion. This continued with 4th Bn RAR, then 6th, and then the 2nd again. As units rotated, the successors would be V2 and W2, etc. Formally they were Victor and Whiskey Companies.

¹² 102nd and 104th Field Btys RAA.

Date	Action	Formation	Units and Notes
28 Jan 1969	Arrival	1 ATF	5 th Bn R Austr Regt (second tour)
3 Feb 1969	Arrival	1 ATF	3 rd SAS Sqn (- one troop) (second tour)
10 Feb 1969	Departure	1 ATF	C Sqn/1 st Armd Regt
11 Feb 1969	Arrival	1 ATF	B Sqn/1 st Armd Regt
25 Feb 1969	Arrival	1 ATF	1 st Fd Regt RAA (second tour) ¹³
28 Feb 1969	Departure	1 ATF	1 st Bn R Austr Regt
4 Mar 1969	Departure	1 ATF	2 nd SAS Sqn (- one troop)
11 Mar 1969	Departure	1 ATF	12 th Fd Regt RAA (- one bty)
30 Mar 1969	Status	7 th Fleet	HMAS <i>Brisbane</i> replaces HMAS <i>Perth</i> at Subic Bay
7 May 1969	Arrival	1 ATF	6 th Bn R Austr Regt (second tour)
12 May 1969	Departure	1 ATF	A Sqn/3 rd Cav
13 May 1969	Arrival	1 ATF	B Sqn/3 rd Cav
30 May 1969	Departure	1 ATF	4 th Bn R Austr Regt
28 Sep 1969	Status	7 th Fleet	HMAS <i>Vendetta</i> replaces HMAS <i>Brisbane</i> at Subic Bay
18 Nov 1969	Arrival	1 ATF	8 th Bn R Austr Regt
5 Dec 1969	Departure	1 ATF	9 th Bn R Austr Regt
22 Dec 1969	Departure	1 ATF	B Sqn/1 st Armd Regt
23 Dec 1969	Arrival	1 ATF	A Sqn/1 st Armd Regt
3 Feb 1970	Arrival	1 ATF	1 st SAS Sqn (- one troop) (second tour)
10 Feb 1970	Arrival	1 ATF	7 th Bn R Austr Regt (second tour)
20 Feb 1970	Departure	1 ATF	3 rd SAS Sqn (- one troop)
24 Feb 1970	Arrival	1 ATF	4 th Fd Regt RAA (second tour) ¹⁴
5 Mar 1970	Departure	1 ATF	5 th Bn R Austr Regt
28 Mar 1970	Status	7 th Fleet	HMAS <i>Hobart</i> (third tour) replaces HMAS <i>Vendetta</i> at Subic Bay
28 Apr 1970	Arrival	1 ATF	2 nd Bn R Austr Regt (second tour)
10 May 1970	Departure	1 ATF	1 st Fd Regt RAA
28 May 1970	Departure	1 ATF	6 th Bn R Austr Regt
28 Sep 1970	Status	7 th Fleet	HMAS <i>Perth</i> (third deployment) replaces HMAS <i>Hobart</i> at Subic Bay
1 Nov 1970	Departure	1 ATF	“V” NZ Inf Coy withdrawn Nov 1970
12 Nov 1970	Departure	1 ATF	8 th Bn R Austr Regt
16 Dec 1970	Departure	1 ATF	A Sqn/1 st Armd Regt
17 Dec 1970	Arrival	1 ATF	C Sqn/1 st Armd Regt (second tour)
6 Jan 1971	Departure	1 ATF	B Sqn/3 rd Cav
7 Jan 1971	Arrival	1 ATF	A Sqn/3 rd Cav (second tour)
27 Jan 1971	Arrival	1 ATF	12 th Fd Regt RAA (second tour) ¹⁵
8 Feb 1971	Arrival	1 ATF	2 nd SAS Sqn (- one troop) (second tour)
	Departure	1 ATF	1 st SAS Sqn (- one troop)
12 Feb 1971	Arrival	1 ATF	3 rd Bn R Austr Regt (second tour)
20 Feb 1971	Departure	1 ATF	NZ Trp SAS

¹³ Now with 101st and 105th Field Btys RAA.

¹⁴ Now with 106th and 107th Field Btys RAA.

¹⁵ Now with “A” and 104th Field Btys RAA.

Date	Action	Formation	Units and Notes
1 Mar 1971	Departure	1 ATF	NZ 161 st Art Bty withdrawn Mar 1971
10 Mar 1971	Departure	1 ATF	7 th Bn R Austr Regt
18 Mar 1971	Departure	1 ATF	4 th Fd Regt RAA
29 Mar 1971	Status	7 th Fleet	HMAS <i>Brisbane</i> (second deployment) replaces HMAS <i>Perth</i> at Subic Bay
1 May 1971	Arrival	1 ATF	4 th Bn R Austr Regt (second tour)
4 Jun 1971	Departure	1 ATF	2 nd Bn R Austr Regt
14 Jun 1971	Departure	MACV	RAN Helicopte Flight Vietnam
Jun 1971	Departure	35 th TFW	2 Squadron RAAF [Canberra]
30 Sep 1971	Departure	1 ATF	C Sqn/1 st Armd Regt
15 Oct 1971	Departure	1 ATF	2 nd SAS Sqn (- one troop) HMAS <i>Brisbane</i> returns to Australia
19 Oct 1971	Departure	1 ATF	3 rd Bn R Austr Regt
18 Nov 1971	Departure	1 ATF	1 st Fd Sqn RAE
20 Dec 1971	Departure	1 ATF	12 th Fd Regt RAA
Dec 1971	Departure	1 ATF	9 [Helicopter] Sqn RAAF "W" NZ Inf Coy withdrawn at the end of 1971
12 Feb 1972	Departure	1 ATF	17 Cons Sqn RAE
19 Feb 1972	Departure	RAAF	flight, 35 Sqn RAAF
8 Mar 1972	Departure	1 ATF	161 (Indep) Recce Flt AAAC
12 Mar 1972	Departure	1 ATF	HQ 1 st ATF; 4 th Bn R Austr Regt; A Sqn/3 rd Cav

Australian/NZ TOEs

Australia

Australian Infantry Battalion ca. 1965¹⁶

HQ and HQ Company (166 personnel), heavy weapons company (198 personnel, with 12 81mm mortars and either 4 106mm recoilless rifles or 8 Carl Gustav 84mm recoilless rifles; also includes a pioneer platoon); and five rifle companies.

Rifle company (188 personnel, in HQ and 4 rifle platoons. Heavy weapons include 2 GPMG¹⁷ and 3 3.5" rocket launchers in HQ.)

Battalion aggregate 1304 personnel.

The later and more common battalion organization:¹⁸

Battalion HQ Group (5 officers and 31 other ranks)

4 Rifle Companies (each 5 officers and 118 other ranks)

Company HQ (2 officers and 13 other ranks, 1 GPMG)

Support Section (6 other ranks)

3 Platoons, each

Platoon HQ (1 officer and 3 other ranks)

3 Rifle Sections (each of 10 other ranks, 1 GPMG)

Support Company

Support Company HQ (1 officer and 12 other ranks)

Mortar Platoon (2 officers and 31 other ranks, 6 81mm mortars)

Anti-Tank Platoon (1 officers and 31 other ranks, 16 medium anti-tank weapons¹⁹)

Signals Platoon (1 officer and 39 other ranks)

Assault Pioneer Platoon (1 officer and 31 other ranks)

Surveillance Platoon (1 officer and 14 other ranks)

Administration Company

Headquarters (1 officer and 6 other ranks)

Quartermaster Platoon (3 officers and 42 other ranks)

Medical Platoon (1 officer and 38 other ranks)

Aggregate strength: 37 officers and 755 other ranks (792)

'A' Squadron, 3rd Cavalry Regiment, January 1967²⁰

Squadron Headquarters: M577A1 ACV and 4 M125A1 mortar APCs(?)

Troop (Nos 2, 3 and 4), each

Troop Headquarters: 2 M113A1

Three sections, each 3 M113A1

Support Arms Troop

Two sections, each

The initial troop began with only 8 M113s, increased September 1965 to 13 plus 2 M125A1 mortar carriers. It left Australia with 53 personnel, along with 6 RAEME other ranks. There were

¹⁶ This dates from a period when the Australians had their version of the US pentomic division, with five large infantry battalions, similar to the US battle group.

¹⁷ Australia used the US M60 as its medium, or general purpose machine gun (GPMG).

¹⁸ This is the theoretical standard battalion. Sources indicate that battalions in country varied even among themselves in how they organized.

¹⁹ Other sources show 4 or 6 120mm Wombat anti tank weapons, and indicate battalions in South Vietnam might have substituted US 90mm or 106mm weapons.

²⁰ This is taken from a drawing showing silhouettes, and appears to omit some additional M113s at squadron headquarters. There are some inconsistencies among the sources for this unit.

also fitters M113s (see note below). The squadron began with two troops, redistributing them later to form the three shown above. It also had a support troop with headquarters (2 M113A1), 4 M125A1 mortar carriers (two sections of 2 each), and a support arms sections (4 M113A1 with recoilless rifles[?]). When the squadron changed to three troops, the mortar carriers went to squadron HQ. In April 1971 it was reorganized with Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4 (FSV) and Support Troops.

The armoured squadron arrived with a headquarters (two tanks) and two troops (four tanks each), plus two with bulldozer attachments, two bridge-layers and an armored recovery vehicle; there were also three spare tanks. They were equipped with the Centurion Mk 5. Additional replacement tanks were brought in later to keep the squadron up to strength.

Note: armoured and APC units would be supported by light aid detachments from the Royal Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (RAEME).

New Zealand

New Zealand Infantry Company ca. 1965

HQ (12 personnel, one 2" mortar and one GPMG) and four rifle platoons (each 31 personnel, one Carl Gustav and one 2" mortar).

Company aggregate 136 personnel.

New Zealand Field Battery RNZA

The original strength was 9 officers and 101 other ranks, with four 105mm L5 pack howitzers. The battery was later expanded to six howitzers. In 1967 the weapons were replaced with the 105mm M2A2 howitzers.

Unlike most Australian and New Zealand units, the battery remained in country and personnel rotated after a 12-month tour of duty.

The Royal Australian Artillery also began with the 105mm L5 pack howitzer. They later received the 105mm light howitzer M101A1.

Selected Glossary

AAAC	Australian Army Aviation Corps
ATF	Australian Task Force
Cons	Construction
Fd	Field [used by artillery and engineers in unit titles]
FSV	Fire Support Vehicle
HMAS	Her Majesty's Australian Ship
RAA	Royal Australian Artillery
RAAF	Royal Australian Task Force
RAE	Royal Australian Engineers
RAEME	Royal Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers
RAN	Royal Australian Navy
RAR	Royal Australian Regiment; sometimes show as R Austr Regt
RNZA	Royal New Zealand Artillery
RNZIR	Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment
SAS	Special Air Service

Sources

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Note: war diaries for most Australian units serving in Vietnam are online [2007] at www.awm.gov.au/diaries/seasia/. While I looked at a few, I did not really utilize this resource for additional information, although I had hoped to get more detail on the organization of the APC squadron.