



8th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment

8th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (8RAR) was raised on 14 July 1966 at Enoggera in Queensland. It arrived in South Vietnam on 17 November 1969, relieving 9RAR on 25 November. The battalion formed part of the 1st Australian Task Force (1ATF) with 5RAR and 6RAR. It was based at Nui Dat, Phuoc Tuy province.

One of the major operations the battalion engaged in was Operation Hammersley (10 February–9 March), a reconnaissance operation in the Long Hai area. On 18 February the battalion uncovered an enemy bunker system that had been evacuated as a result of air raids. The battalion spent the remainder of the operation carrying out patrols in the area in order to engage the enemy. This was primarily done with ambushes, which yielded good results with relatively small risks. The battalion was awarded the Meritorious Unit Commendation, including Cross of Gallantry with Palm Unit Citation, by the South Vietnamese government for its involvement in Hammersley.

During its tour 8RAR was mainly involved in pacification operations in Phuoc Tuy, which 1ATF had adopted as its first priority in April 1969. This involved seeking out and destroying the enemy in its base areas, preventing enemy access to the civilian population, and helping to create a secure climate for South Vietnamese social, political, and military life. The work was demanding, dangerous, and monotonous and the primary task carried out by the battalion during its second tour.

As part of the pacification program 1ATF took part in Operation Cung Chung. This operation involved four phases of activity from 12 June 1970 to February 1971. Cung Chung involved intensive patrols and ambush. It aimed to deter the enemy from moving through the area by denying it access to food supplies, taxes, and troop recruitment. The operation was successful in limiting the ability of the Viet Cong (VC) to operate in the area but the stress of consistent patrolling placed a strain on the troops.

8RAR ceased operational involvement in October. It was not replaced and 1ATF fell to two-battalion strength. 8RAR arrived at Hamilton Wharf on 12 November 1970.

Glossary

1 Australian Task Force Vietnam; Pacification; Viet Cong; Phuoc Tuy Province; Nui Dat

Battle Honours

- Vietnam (1970-71)

Casualties

- 18 killed
- 103 wounded

Commanding Officers

- O'Neill, Keith John

Decorations

- 1 DSO
- 3 MC
- 2 MM
- 13 MID

