6TH BATTALION, THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN REGIMENT

A BRIEF HISTORY

Formation

6 RAR was raised under LTCOL C.M. Townsend in Brisbane at Alamein Barracks, Enoggera on 6 Jun 1965. Initially the Battalion consisted of a nucleus command structure of Officers and NCO, two rifle companies and some specialists provided by 2 RAR.

The Battalion was brought up to full strength when a large draft of soldiers from the first National Service intake arrived in Sep 65.

Vietnam 1966 - 1967

Following an intensive period of training for war, the Battalion farewelled Brisbane by a march through the city and embarked on HMAS SYDNEY for South Vietnam in May 1966. The Battalion arrived in time to celebrate its first birthday at Vung Tau before moving forward to join 5 RAR at Nui Dat in Phuoc Tuy Province and entering service as part of 1 ATF.

During the period Jun to August 1966, 6 RAR conducted two major operations. Operation ENOGGERA was the search and clearance of the previously unsettled village of Long Phuoc, and Operation HOBART was a five day search and destroy mission. The two operations accounted for 36 enemy casualties and the destruction of several camp installations and caches.

Operation HOBART also saw the Battalion come in contact with the enemy provincial Mobile Battalion D445 which was subsequently met and defeated at Long Tan.

Long Tan

Operation SMITHFIELD was opened by a mortar and recoilless rifle attack on the Task Force area on the night of 16/17 Aug 66. B Company was initially dispatched to clear the area to the east of the Task Force base. D Company took over from B Company on 18 Aug 66. D Company made contact with the enemy force of regimental size and were soon under attack from three sides. The battle was fought into the night under a blanket of mist and heavy monsoonal rain, but D Company held its ground with heroism and grim determination. The remainder of the Battalion deployed to aid the beleaguered Company. With the help of armoured personnel carriers of 3 Troop, 1st APC Squadron they hit the flank of a battalion size force which

was forming up to assault the rear of D Company, inflicted many casualties and forced the enemy from the battlefield. A Presidential Unit Citation was awarded to D Company by the then President of the United States, Lyndon B. Johnson. 18 Aug is now commemorated each year as Long Tan Day, in memory of the eighteen soldiers who gave their lives in battle.

Between Aug 66 and its departure to Australia in Jun 67, 6 RAR took part in seventeen more Battalion operations and supported a number of 5 RAR operations. These operation, along with the routine patrolling around the Task Force area, gradually wrested control of the Province from the Viet Cong.

Twenty three members of the Battalion received gallantry awards for the tour and 37 members gave their lives.

Townsville 1967-1969

The Battalion celebrated its second birthday at sea aboard HMAS SYDNEY during the return voyage to Australia. On arrival in Townsville the Battalion occupied Long Tan Lines at Lavarack Barracks and on 8 Jan 68 LTCOL D.M. Butler assumed command of the Battalion.

On 10 May 68 His Excellency, the Governor General of Australia, The Right Honourable Lord Casey, GCMG, CH, DSO, MC. KStJ presented 6 RAR with the Queens and Regimental Colours.

The Presidential Unit Citation awarded to D Company for the Battle of Long Tan was presented to the Officer Commanding D Company by the Prime Minister of Australia, The Right Honourable J.G. Gorton, MP, at Long Tan Lines, Lavarack Barracks on 18 Aug 68.

The Battalion then commenced another period of intensive training for war.

Vietnam 1969-1970

6 RAR embarked on its second tour of South Vietnam on 7 to 9 May, to relieve 4 RAR. Once in Vietnam the Battalion was renamed 6 RAR/NZ (ANZAC) Battalion on 19 May 69. This reflected the inclusion of a New Zealand component of two rifle companies, two sections of mortars and two assault pioneer sections.

The first Battalion operation was one of the most productive of the tour. Operation LAVARACK started on 30 May 69 with the establishment of a fire-support and patrol base to the North of Nui Dat. Each company then commenced reconnaissance in force of separate operational areas. By the time the operations ended on 1 Jul 69 there had been 85 contacts which cost the enemy 102 dead and at least 22 wounded. The Battalion's casualties were three dead and 29 wounded.

The third anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan was commemorated by a memorial service on the original battle ground during which a large cross was erected.

During the tour 15 Battalion operations were conducted.

Reflecting the increasing control that the Australians exerted over the province, 6 RAR/NZ (ANZAC) was called on several times to assist in civil community projects and in the training of local government forces. Positive signs of the disintegration of the enemy's command and supply system were identified and by the end of the tour the enemy were forced to operate in small groups only, and struggle for their very existence.

As an indication of the success of the tour the enemy suffered 60 dead, 64 confirmed wounded and 51 captured as a result of Battalion operations. The Battalion also captured 480 assorted weapons and 13 tonnes of rice. The Battalion losses were 24 killed and 148 wounded. Twenty eight members received gallantry awards for the second tour.

Townsville 1970-1971

Between Apr and May 1970 6 RAR returned once more to Townsville occupying Samichon Lines.

On 1 Jun 70 LTCOL D.A. Drabsch assumed command of the Battalion.

The Battalion then began training for its forthcoming tour of duty in Singapore. The Battalion Colours were trooped on 18 Aug 70 to mark the forth anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan and on 4 Jul 71 6 RAR was granted the Freedom of the City of Townsville.

Singapore

By the end of Aug 71, 6 RAR established itself in Selerang Barracks, Singapore. 6 RAR joined 1st Battalion, The Royal New Zealand Regiment and 1st Battalion, The Royal Highland Fusiliers in 28 ANZUK Brigade based at Kangau Barracks.

LTCOL J.B. Healy assumed command of the Battalion in Dec 72.

Until its departure the Battalion was involved in a number of tri-national exercises up to brigade level. All of these exercises were conducted in Johore State.

With the change in government it was decided to withdraw the Battalion group from Singapore at the end of 1973. The Battalion returned to Enoggera Barracks, Brisbane between Dec 73 and Jan 74.

Return to Brisbane 1973

Upon the return to Brisbane, 6 RAR was almost immediately committed to aiding the Brisbane community during and after the Australia Day floods.

On 29 Mar 72 LTCOL J.B. Healy handed over command to LTCOL A.W. Hammett. The Battalion continued to train at company and battalion level until Mar 75 when it moved to Darwin to assist in the clean-up after cyclone 'Tracy'.

After returning to Brisbane 6 RAR resumed training for

conventional warfare.

LTCOL P.A. Stokes assumed command of the Battalion on 30 Jul 76.

LTCOL M.J. Harris, MC assumed command on 23 Jan 78.

LTCOL A.J. Mattay assumed command on 12 Dec 79.Early in 1980 6 TF was directed to form a parachute group based on an Infantry Rifle Company. 6 RAR was given this role (the role has since Dec 83 been with 3 RAR). The group consisted of: D Company, a Battalion Headquarters element, sniper section, and one section of assault pioneers, all from 6 RAR: and one troop of field engineers and a signals detachment from other brigade units. By Feb 81 the Battalion had reached the target of 180 parachutists and the first full scale deployment was undertaken near Ross in Tasmania in Exercise DISTANT BRIDGE.

LTCOL P.J. Langford assumed command of the Battalion in Jan 82.

In 1982, 6 RAR provided significant support to the Commonwealth Games held in Brisbane. Driver support, ceremonial activities, range butt parties and general administrative support were some of the major tasks allocated to the Battalion. 6 RAR also provided the Flag Party for the Closing Ceremony of the Games.

At the conclusion of the 1982 Long Tan celebrations, the Battalion Museum was officially opened by Mrs George Chinn. The Museum is named after WO1 George Chinn, DCM, the first RSM of 6 RAR.

The significant contribution by 6 RAR in the development of parachute doctrine for training and operations in the Australian Army came to an end in late 1983. The final D Company jump was conducted at Mt Walker on 8 Nov 83, with the parachute role now passing to 3 RAR.

LTCOL A.S. D'Hage, MC, assumed command of the Battalion in Dec 83.

LTCOL L.J. Studley assumed command of the Battalion in Dec 85.

LTCOL D.J. Mead assumed command of the Battalion in Jan 88. On 15 Sep 88, the Battalion was presented with new Queen's and Regimental Colours by His Excellency, The Governor of Queensland, Sir Walter Campbell, QC. The old Queen's and Regimental Colours were laid up at St John's Cathedral, Brisbane, on 13 Nov 88.

In January 1989, 6 RAR became the first unit in the Australian Army to be issued with the new service rifle, the F88 Austeyr.

In March 1989, the Battalion deployed to California, USA, to exercise with the American 7th Light Division. This was the first time since the Army's withdrawal from Singapore that a complete battalion has deployed outside Australia. 6 RAR was appointed as ambassadors for the City of Brisbane in Monterey, California.

In August 1989, 6 RAR deployed to Wyndham in the East

Kimberlies to participate in Exercise Kangaroo 89 where the Battalion's main role was to protect vital assets in and around Wyndham and protect the main approaches to the south.

LTCOL A.J. Molan assumed command of the Battalion in Jan 90.

In April 1990, 6 RAR became the first unit in the Australian Army to be issued with the new Section Light Support Weapon, the F89 Minimi,

In April 1990, 6 RAR was once again reacted to provide flood relief assistance after heavy rains in Central Queensland. A company sized group deployed to the towns of Charleville and Cunnamulla providing manpower, stores and ration support to the devastated area.

East Timor

6 RAR was warned for operational service in East Timor in Oct 99. The Battalion was brought up to full strength and reinforced by up to 400 soldiers within a three-week period. 6 RAR commenced a period of intense training and preparation for Active Service culminating in Exercise Tolkien's Revenge at Wide Bay Training Area after which the Battalion was declared ready for operational service.

6 RAR relieved 5/7 RAR in Balibo on ANZAC Day 2000 and commenced their six-month tour of duty on the border with West Timor as part of Sector West. The Battalion dominated AO Townsend, named after 6 RAR's first CO, LTCOL Colin Townsend, DSO, By conducting an intensive program of active patrolling and tracking, surveillance, blocking and other security operations. 6 RAR's positions were attacked in May and June and eventually were to be involved in nine separate contacts inside East Timor. As a result of these high tempo offensive counter Militia operations in Aug 00, the Battalion retained the tactical initiative and prevented the Militia from achieving any of their stated aims. The Battalion assisted in the evacuation of UN and NGO personnel from Atambua in West Timor and undertook an intensive range of Civil Military Liaison operations throughout it's tour.

Appendixes: 1.   6th Battalion, The Royal Australian
Regiment - Theatres of Service

2.   6th Battalion, The Royal Australian
Regiment - Commanding Officers

3.   6th Battalion, The Royal Australian
Regiment - Regimental Sergeant Majors

4.   6th Battalion, The Royal Australian
Regiment, Allied Regiment - Text of the
Presidential Unit Citation

5.   6th Battalion, The Royal Australian
Regiment - Miscellaneous Information

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THEATRES OF SERVICE

FROM	TO	COUNTRY	BASE	BDE/DIV/TF
Jun 65	May 66	Australia	Enoggera	6 TF/1 Div
May 66	Jun 67	Vietnam	Nui Dat	1 ATF
Jun 67	Nov 67	Australia	Enoggera	6TF/1 Div
Nov 67	May 69	Australia	Townsville	3 TF/1 Div
May 69 (6 RAR/NZ ANZAC)	May 70	Vietnam	Nui Dat	1 ATF
May 70	Jul 71	Australia	Townsville	3 TF/1 Div
Jul 71	Dec 73	Singapore	Kangau	28 ANZUK Bde
Dec 74		Australia	Enoggera	6 BDE/1 Div
Apr 00	Oct 00	East Timor	Enoggera	INTERFET

6TH BATTALION, THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN REGIMENT

COMMANDING OFFICERS

6 Jun 65 - 7 Jan 68	LTCOL C.M. Townsend, DSO
8 Jan 68 - 31 May 70	LTCOL D.M. Butler, DSO
1 Jun 70 - Dec 72	LTCOL D.A. Drabsch, MBE
Dec 72 - Mar 74	LTCOL J.B. Healy
Apr 74 - Jul 75	LTCOL A.W. Hammett
Jul 75 - Jan 78	LTCOL P.A. Stokes
Jan 78 - Dec 79	LTCOL M.J. Harris, MC
Dec79 – Dec 81	LTCOL A.I.J.M.Mattay
Dec 81 - Dec 83	LTCOL P.J. Langford
Dec 83 - Dec 85	LTCOL A.S. D'Hage, MC
Dec 85 - Dec 87	LTCOL L.J. Studley
Dec 87 - Jan 90	LTCOL D.J. Mead
Jan 90 - Dec 91	LTCOL A.J. Molan
Jan 92 - Dec 93	LTCOL M.A. Evans
Jan 94 - Dec 95	LTCOL G.R. Baker
Dec 95 – Dec 97	LTCOL S.J. Dunn
Dec 97 – Dec 99	LTCOL J.F.Edwards
Dec 99 – Dec 01	LTCOL M.J.Moon, DSC

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REGIMENTAL SERGEANT MAJORS

6 Jun 65 - 15 Sep 67	WO1 G.E. Chinn, DCM
16 Sep 67 - Jun 70	WO1 J. Cruickshank
Jun 70 - Jan 74	WO1 K. Davidson
Jan 74 - Jun 75	WO1 K. Stockley
Jun 75 - Mar 77	WO1 J. Husband, BEM
Mar 77 - Feb 80	WO1 N.R. Eiby
Feb 80 - Aug 81	WO1 L.V. O'Sullivan
Aug 81 - Dec 83	WO1 M.J. Poole
Dec 83 - Dec 84	WO1 G.E. Bland
Dec 84 - Dec 86	WO1 J.W. Burns
Dec 86 - Nov 88	WO1 R.J. Brittain
Nov 88 - Dec 90	WO1 P.G. Stammers
Dec 90 - Dec 92	WO1 G.C. Dyer
Dec 92 - Dec 93	WO1 C.M.Goodwin
Dec 93 - Dec 95	WO1 S.Purdie
Dec 95 - Dec97	WO1 M.R.Bishop,OAM
Dec 97 - Dec 99	WO1 M.G.Maunder
Dec 99- Dec 01	WO1 D.M.Ashley

6TH BATTALION, THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN REGIMENT

TEXT OF THE PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION

By virtue of the authority vested in me as president of the United States and as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the United States I have today awarded

THE PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION (ARMY)

FOR EXTRAORDINARY HEROISM

TO

D COMPANY, SIXTH BATTALION, THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN REGIMENT

THE AUSTRALIAN ARMY

D Company, Sixth Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment distinguished itself by extraordinary heroism while engaged in military operations against an opposing armed force in Vietnam on 18 August 1966. While searching for Viet Cong in a rubber plantation north east of Ba Ria, Phuoc Tuy Province, Republic of Vietnam, D Company met and immediately became engaged in heavy contact. As the battle developed, it became apparent that the men of D Company were facing a numerically superior force. The platoons of D Company were surrounded on all sides by an estimated reinforced enemy battalion using automatic weapons, small arms, and mortars. Fighting, courageously against a well armed and determined foe, the men of D Company maintained their formations in a common perimeter defence and inflicted heavy casualties upon the Viet Cong. The enemy maintained a continuous, intense volume of fire and attacked repeatedly from all directions. Each successive assault was repulsed by the courageous Australians. Heavy rainfall and a low ceiling prevented any friendly close air support during the battle. After three hours of savage attacks, having failed to penetrate the Australian lines, the enemy withdrew from the battlefield carrying many dead and wounded, and leaving 245 Viet Cong dead forward of the defence position of D Company. The conspicuous gallantry, intrepid and indomitable courage of D Company were in the highest tradition of military valor and reflect great credit upon D Company, Sixth Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment and The Australian Army.

THE WHITE HOUSE   LYNDON B. JOHNSTON

May 28, 1968

6TH BATTALION, THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN REGIMENT

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

The Long Tan Citation

A United States Presidential Distinguished Unit Citation was presented to D Coy, 6 RAR for the action at Long Tan, Vietnam, 18 Aug 66. The Citation was presented to OC D Coy on the second anniversary of the battle by the Prime Minister, The Right Honourable John G. Gorton, MP.

The Citation is represented by the blue Long Tan Streamer, which is attached to the Regimental Colour pike on Long Tan Day by CSM D Coy, and the blue rectangle which is worn above the right breast pocket by members of D Coy, and those who were members at the time of the battle.

Battalion Music. Musical compositions played in the Battalion are:

Company Marches:

A Coy	'Nui May Tao'
B Coy	'When Johnny Comes Marching Home'
D Coy	'Long Tan'
Spt Coy	'The Polka'
Admin Coy	'Lili Burlero'

Bugle Call. The D445 Local Force Battalion bugle call has been adopted by 6 RAR. The score is lodged with DMUSIC.

Freedom of the City of Townsville. On 4 Jul 61, 6 RAR was granted the Freedom of the City of Townsville thus commemorating the close association which had developed between the citizens of Townsville and members of the Battalion. This occasion was the first time that a battalion of the RAR had been given this honour.