

Mention in Despatches (m.i.d.)

David Maihi Douglas

530325. Corporal.
Royal NZ Infantry Regiment
Whiskey Two Company

NZ Gazette Number 20 dated 2 April 1970

Citation

Corporal Douglas joined the Regular Force in May 1965. In **1966 – 67** he saw service in Malaysia, Borneo and then South Vietnam with Victor One Company. He returned to Vietnam as a section commander with Whiskey Two Company for his second tour of duty in **November 1968**.

On 23rd February 1969¹, Corporal Douglas was commanding a section as part of W Company defended position. During the evening stand-to his section came under heavy small arms and rocket-propelled grenade fire. Corporal Douglas was an early casualty, receiving a shrapnel wound to his right side. He refused treatment for his wound and, throughout the two hour engagement, he constantly forsook the safety of his own bunker to move amongst his section, encourage them, direct their fire and distribute ammunition. When the enemy withdrew he left behind six dead and evidence that he had suffered more casualties.

On 22nd June 1969², Corporal Douglas was leading his section along a track when they were engaged by a well-entrenched enemy using small arms and rocket-propelled grenades. Finding his observation restricted, Corporal Douglas crawled forward alone to within 20 metres of the enemy bunkers and from this exposed position directed the fire of his section. An attempt by the enemy, estimated to be in company strength, to outflank the section was observed by Corporal Douglas and by redirecting his section's fire the enemy attack was defeated.

Corporal Douglas remained in his exposed position to adjust artillery fire on to the enemy bunkers nearest him so that his section, and the rest of the platoon which had come up in support, could be safely extracted. Under the cover of this artillery fire, and although hampered by painful burns to his shoulder and abdomen, Corporal Douglas withdrew his section in good order.

On two occasions when painfully wounded Corporal Douglas continued to command his section with great skill and confidence. His bravery was an example to his men; his willingness to expose himself to danger ensured that casualties were kept to a minimum. As a result of the wounds he received on 22nd June 1969, Corporal Douglas was evacuated from Vietnam and

¹ 23/2/69 LCpl Douglas DM, WIA; LCpl Taupeti AA, WIA; Pte Atkinson PG, WIA; Pte Cope SM, WIA.

² 22/6/69 LCpl Douglas DM WIA;

hospitalised for six weeks. His bravery, outstanding leadership and his skill as an infantry section leader are worthy of recognition.

Additional Notes to the Citation

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On 23rd February 1969,

See 4RAR Regt history

On 22nd June 1969³, 1 PI Whiskey Two (Lt J. Moller) was patrolling a ridgeline seeking evidence of enemy movement. A forward scout, Pte SM Cope, found an old track, called his Section Commander (Cpl DM Douglas) forward to examine the track, and then continued to follow the track for a short distance. Cope spotted two old slit trenches that appeared to be unused, and commenced moving forward cautiously while Douglas brought his own gun group and that of Cpl RTR Kingi's section forward to cover Cope.

Moving a few paces forward, Cope saw one VC and fired two rounds at him from a range of 25 metres before taking cover behind an ant hill. The gun groups moved forward to give covering fire to extricate Cope when Pte GJ Dalziel, Douglas's machine gunner, seeing a group of about eight VC running across his front, fired a long burst at the,. The enemy retaliated, firing on both sections with RPG and small arms fire. Fragments from an RPG wounded Pte E Rawhiti. Cpl Douglas called for artillery fire, adjusting the rounds very close to his own position. A light fire team was also called to support 1 PI.

Cpl Douglas finding his vision restricted crawled forward to within 20 metres of the enemy bunkers and from an exposed position directed the fire of his section. The enemy attempted to outflank the section, but Douglas observed their movement and redirected his sections fire to defeat the enemy attack.

Lt. Moller ordered Douglas to break contact; the section commander continued to occupy his exposed position to direct artillery fire, which was witted to smoke to cover the withdrawal of the two sections. The smoke rounds provided an effective screen, allowing the platoon to withdraw back to the Company position, but the close proximity of the smoke rounds resulted in Cpl Douglas being burnt by white phosphorus.

Despite his wounds, Douglas withdrew his section in good order.

Once the platoon had withdrawn, the enemy position was subjected to heavy artillery and aerial fire, hindering the enemy's ability to withdraw to the extent that he was forced to abandon considerable quantities of food, supplies and

³ "We too were ANZAC's" – Regimental History for 6RAR (ANZAC) Bn. Lt Col Brian Avery, pages 112/113.

documents. The strength of the enemy group was unknown, although later estimated at about company strength, but the large bunker system appeared to house a hospital.

The contact resulted in one VC being killed by 1 PI, and two more died from the artillery supporting fire.

Cpl Douglas was subsequently Mentioned in Despatches for his bravery and leadership throughout the action and an earlier one in February 1969.