



# 1967 - 68



**Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa.**

Good **morning** V2, V2 families and V2 guests.  
Many Veterans of wars have been unable to talk about their experiences, and that creates barriers between them, their family and society.

**Today** I would like to talk to the families of our veterans and let you glimpse the journey that your men took 48 years ago. Perhaps this will help you understand them better.

# Welcome

This is for the families of V2.

Some of the images you will see are graphic and may be upsetting.

They do however, tell the story of our journey as V2.

Young men and women join the NZ Army for a variety of reasons. Back in 1960, when I joined, it was for very patriotic reasons which included: God, Queen and Country.





Others joined for adventure and the chance to travel.

# Bugis Street 1966



Exotic *Kai* by day & exotic *Kai Tai* by night

• By day & night

Each of us had our own journey that brought us to V2.

Many arrived as private soldiers, some as NCOs or WOs and some as officers. Each of us had our critical part to play in V2.

We started as A and B companies in Uncle Po's Battalion in Terendak in 1965. We learnt a lot from that man.





# Terendak, Malaysia, 1965



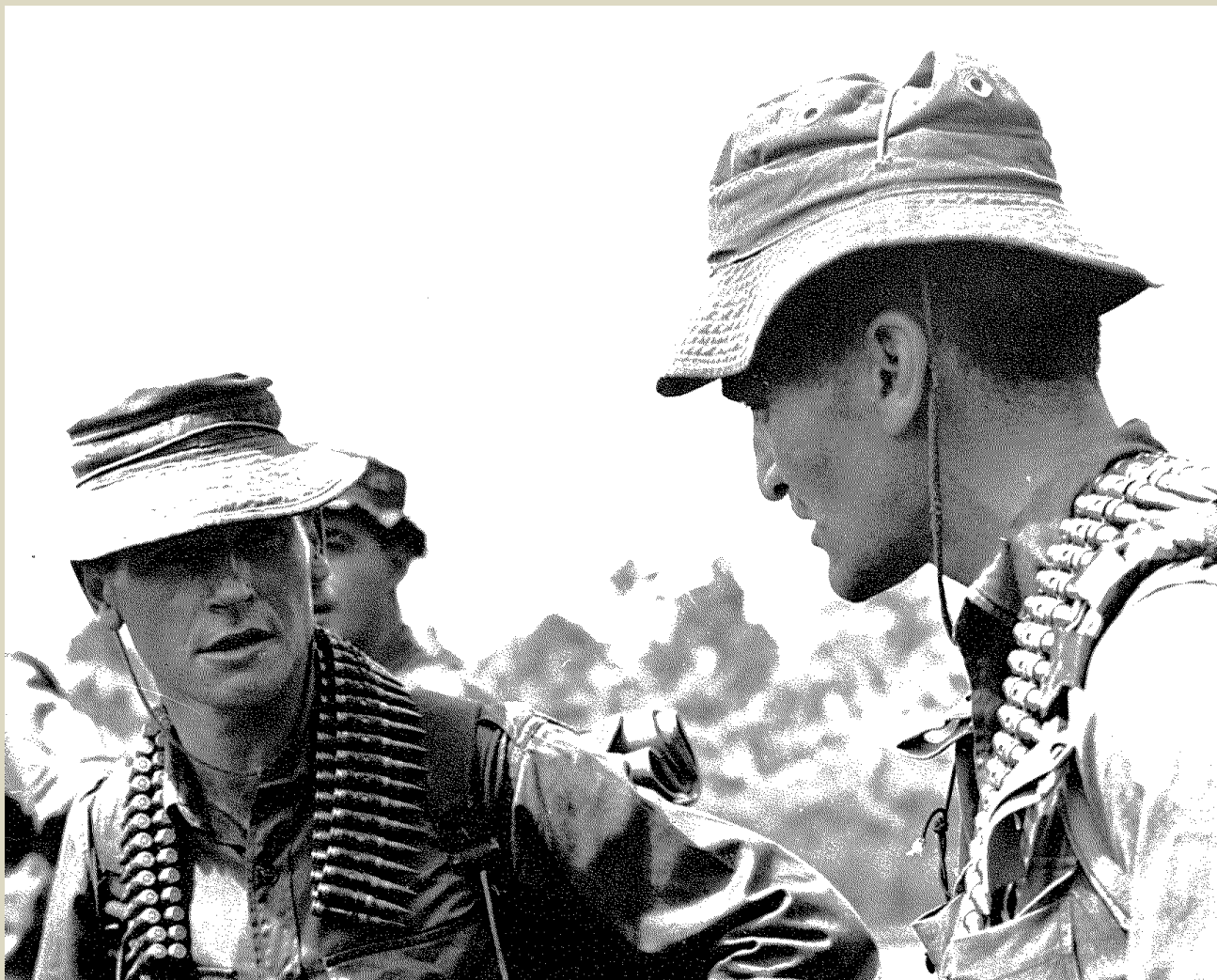


“Alley Cat” or **Maj Neil Schofield**, commanded A Coy and

“Punchy” or **Maj Brian Worsnop** commanded B Coy.

I was 1 Pl Comd and was very fortunate to have Greg Hill as my Pl Sgt.

# 1 Pl, A Coy



In 1966, we prepared for war.

In six months, I RNZIR was due to go to Sarawak in Borneo to help Malaysia stop Indonesian infiltrations.

That six months was spent training hard practicing jungle craft.





**1. Terendak**  
**2. Borneo**



(courtesy: K. Mackenzie)

In May 1966 we sailed to Kuching in Borneo in a converted freighter.



**1 RNZIR Troopship to  
Kuching, May 1966**



Our new home was a defended fire support base called Gunan Gajah.

Resupply was by parachute drop or helicopter as there was no road access.

# A & B Coy, FSB Gunan Gajah, 1966





# FSB Gunan Gajah sharp bamboo stakes



The main entertainment for the guys while back in base, was to watch movies and get our little Spider monkey Fred, drunk.

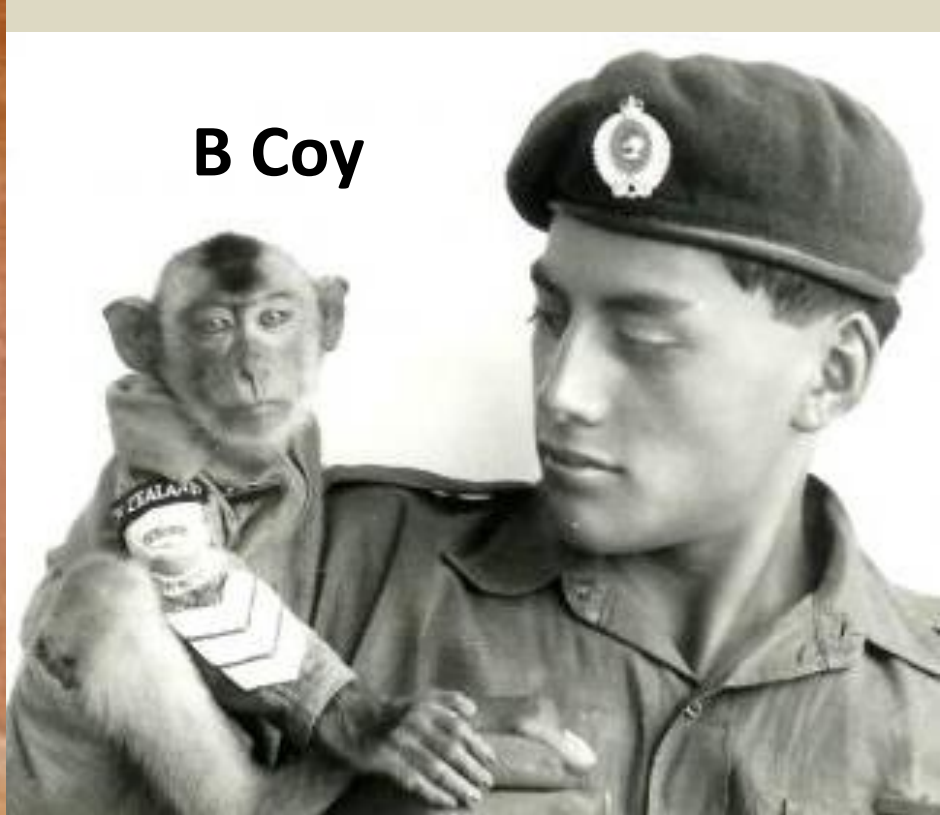
He would then pee on everyone from the rafters.



**A Coy**



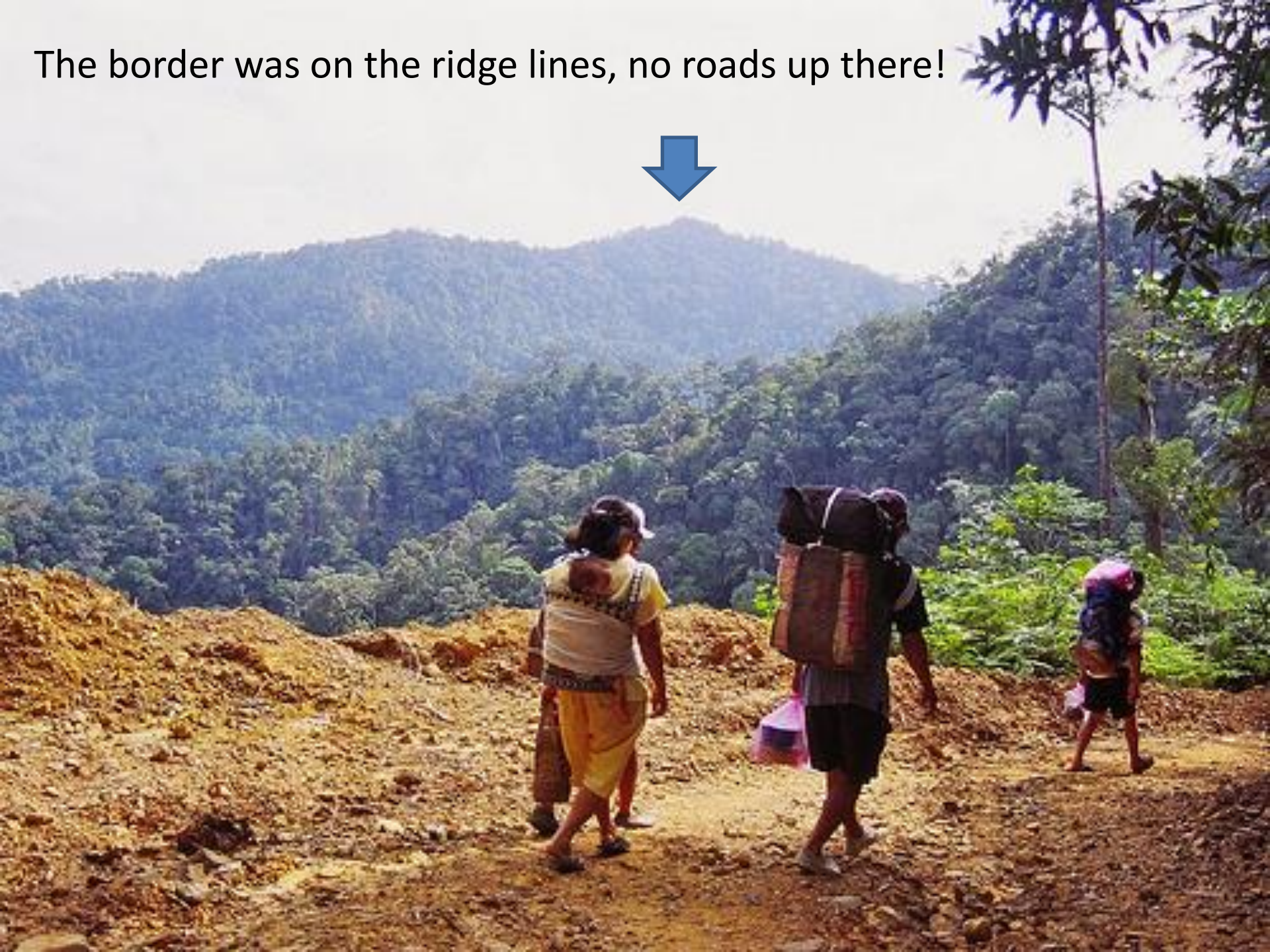
**B Coy**



During our six months on active service, we patrolled the border – which ran along the top of a mountain range.



The border was on the ridge lines, no roads up there!



We also had soldiers living in the villages to protect the locals.







The local Dayaks lived along the rivers in longhouses with subsistence agriculture and hunting.

# Dayak Longhouse & garden



They were also retired headhunters – or they said they had retired.





After six months of searching for the enemy, the war ended without us firing a shot in anger. We returned to Terendak in Malacca.



**Terendak 1967**



After six months of garrison duties, we heard that some of us were going to Vietnam. Great excitement!

We were a bit unhappy when we learned that we were going second. In the long run this was a blessing as we got six months to build our V2 team.

A Coy and B Coy combined to form V2. Everyone was a volunteer.



**A Coy lines,  
Terendak**

**B Coy lines,  
Terendak**





V2 OC was “Punchy” Worsnop and his 21C was Mike Dudman. Backing them up was CSM Dave Faulkner.



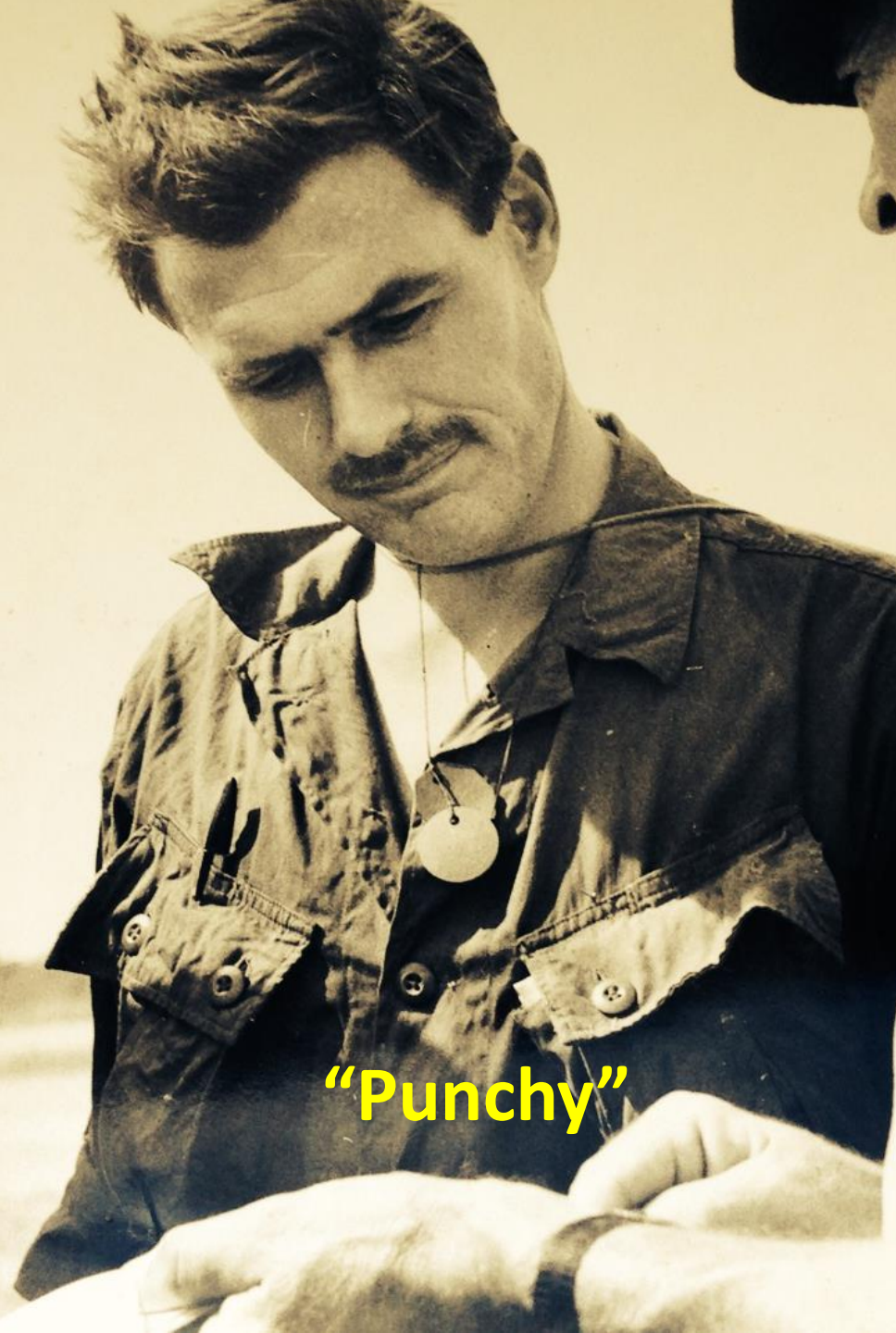
# Commander of **V2**

Maj Brian "Punchy" Worsnop MC





Mike



"Punchy"

We now became 4, 5 and 6 Pls plus reinforcements. By the time we got to SVN, half of us had served together for two years, and the others for at least six months. A & B Coys had merged well, we were a team.

Our time in Borneo had taught us lessons we were able to pass on to the newer guys. Overall, this saved time learning from mistakes - as we had already made those.

Most importantly, the majority of us had carried live ammunition in our weapons and had hunted an armed, trained and dangerous enemy.



We knew about the body-count in SVN, TV was full of it.

The press seemed to have free rein and some photographers had made their fortunes.



**What the world saw!**



***Kim Phuc* was burning -  
while the Media won prizes!**

There was time to think about the possible consequences of being in a war zone where the enemy were well armed, well trained, well led – and numbered in their thousands.





The next six months was a hard grind of realistic training. We trained as we intended to fight.

*Practice, practice, practice!*



We became invisible in the jungle, patrolling, navigating day and night, directing artillery and mortar fire, working with helicopters, laying ambushes, firing our weapons and even a claymore – we were ready.

# Finally we get to fire a Claymore mine

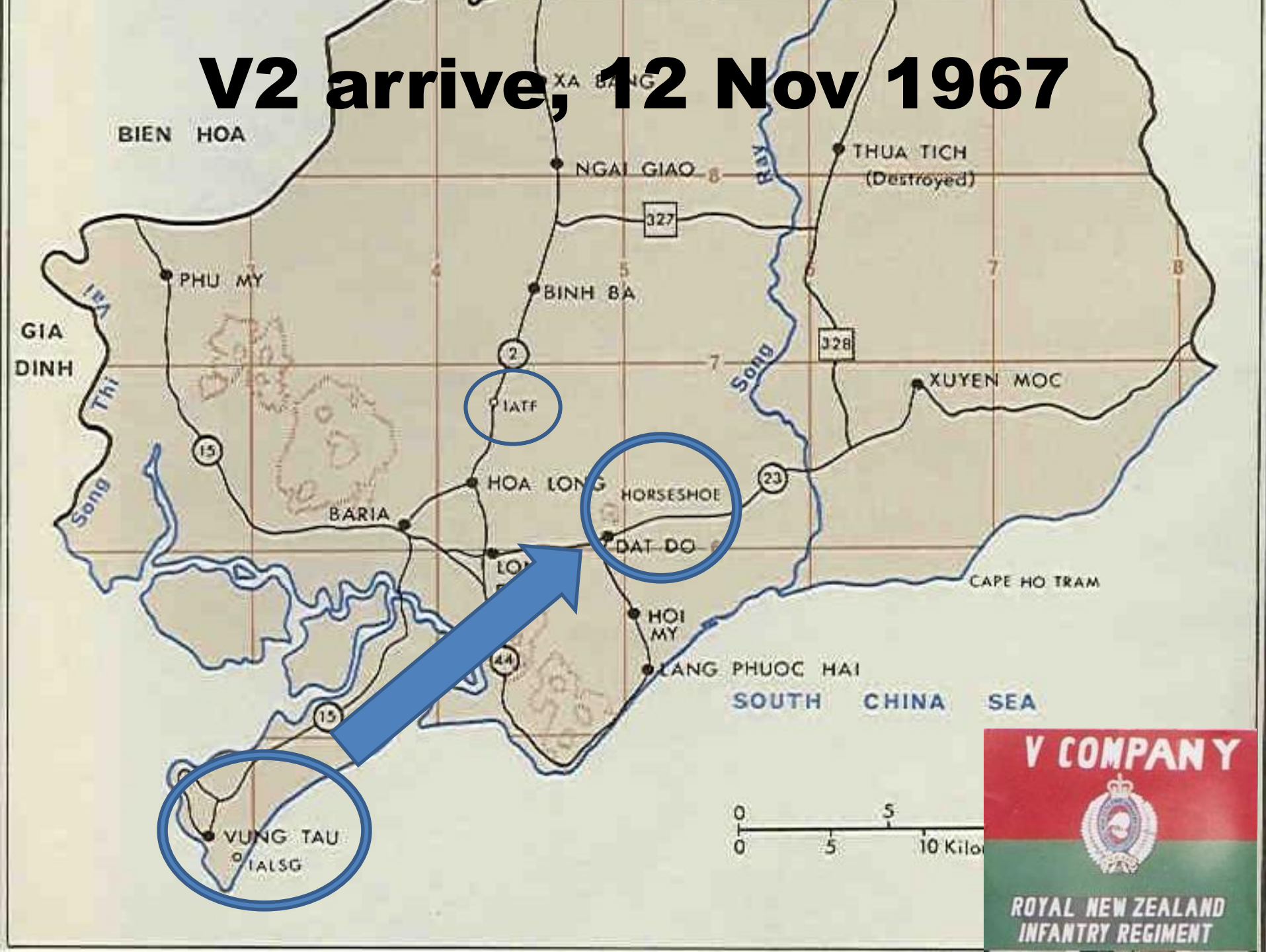




12 Nov 1967 the main body flew to Vung Tau for the adventure of a lifetime.

150 of us became part of 2RAR/NZ (Anzac) Battalion.

# V2 arrive, 12 Nov 1967



At Vung Tau airfield there were Chinook helicopters doing wheelies.

We climbed aboard our designated Chinook, and flew to the Horseshoe.





The Horseshoe is an extinct volcanic cone that was defended by a Rifle Coy – us for the next 51 days.

We had defensive bunkers that we lived in – but we spent much of our time patrolling the surrounding countryside.

# FSB Horseshoe





**5 PI Bunkers  
and trenches**

**Horseshoe, Nov 67**



The Horseshoe served two purposes, it housed an artillery battery that could mutually support the Aussie Task Force at Nui Dat – **and**



# 161 Bty at the Horseshoe, early 1967



**... and it** was the northern anchor point for the 11km long minefield that ran south, past Dat Do, to the sea.

The minefield and it's fence was meant to deny VC access to Dat Do village from the "Long Green".



# Horseshoe & the minefield

Long Green

Dat Do Village



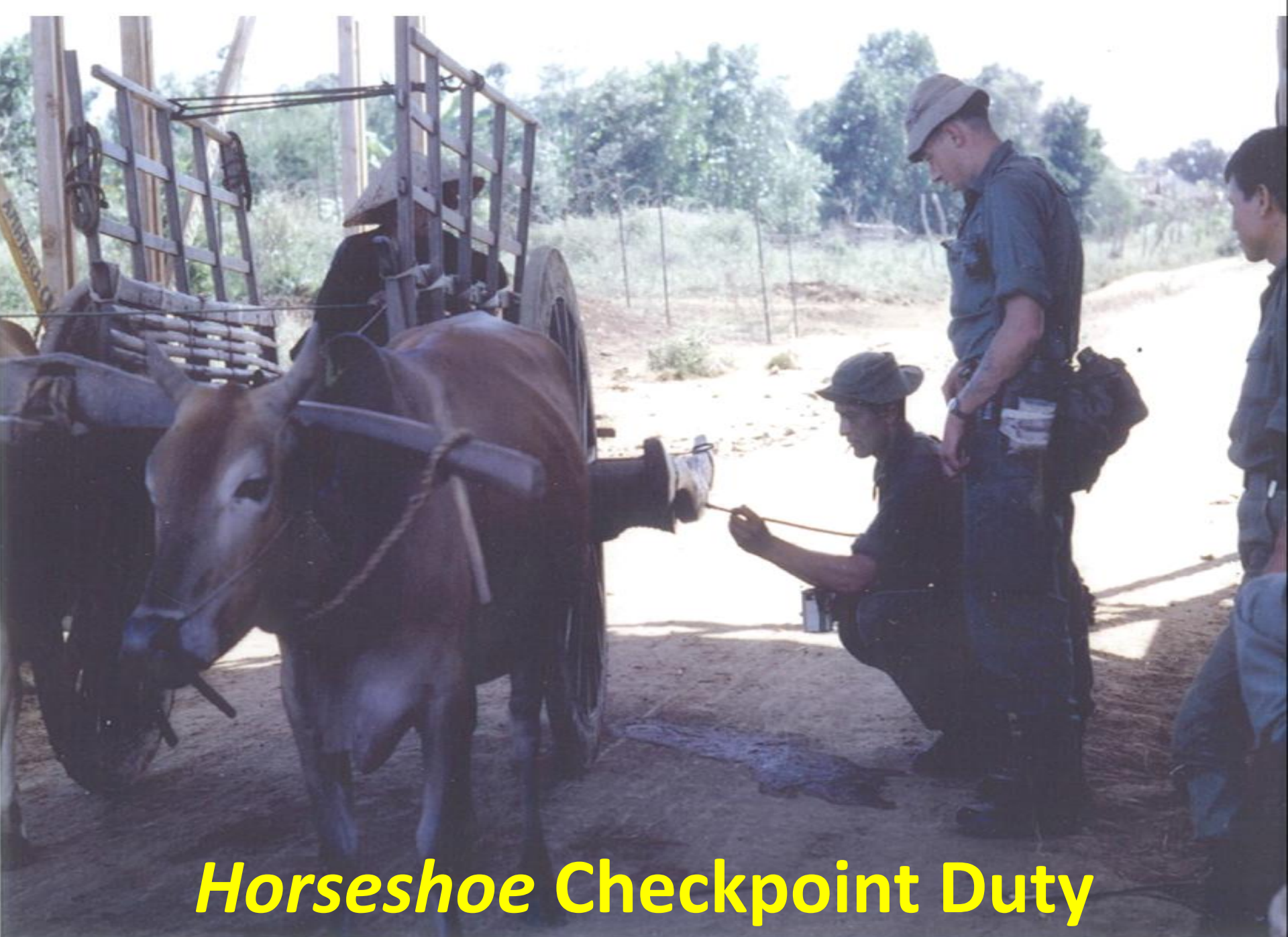
The minefield originally contained over 20,000 M16 mines.

During the Vietnam War, **55** Kiwis and Aussies were killed and **250** wounded by these recycled M16 mines.

We knew the Viet Cong were stealing mines from the “fence” and planting them in places like the “Long Green” – where we were going. Fortunately V2 avoided them.



Our main tasks here were to protect the Horseshoe, patrol the approaches to Dat Do to stop the VC getting to their support base there **and** man the Check Point through the Dat Do Village minefield.



***Horseshoe Checkpoint Duty***

On “Christmas Day” 1967, we were treated to -  
one can of beer, Christmas lunch - then we left  
to patrol the “Long Green” for a few days.

This was our routine.



**Christmas Day, 1967**





Our tour was in the dry season.

Patrols in the jungle could be several weeks long  
– without a wash or change of clothes.

Red dust and sweat were ingrained into our  
clothes and skin.

Green uniforms quickly became black with  
sweat then brown with dust.



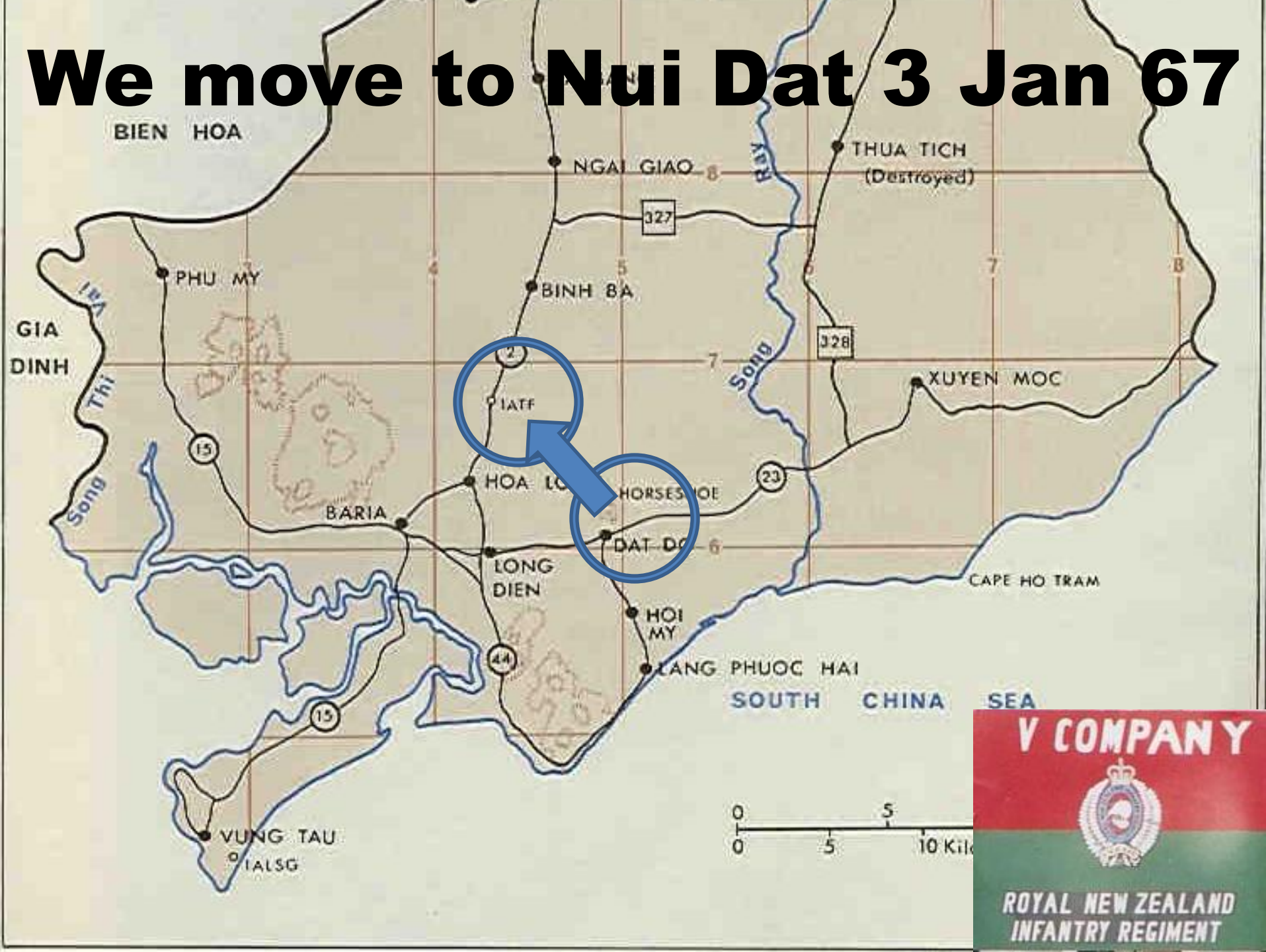
## ***“Long Green”***

- Tracks were mined by VC using M16 mines
- Lesson: ***“Don’t walk on tracks”***



Nui Dat was the Home of the 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Task Force, and we moved there on 3<sup>rd</sup> Jan 1967.

# We move to Nui Dat 3 Jan 67





We lived at the end of Luscombe airfield.

Vung Tau

Sigs  
**HQ ATF**

Arty

3 Cav

SAS

Engineers MPs

Rubbish dump

RAASC

Armd

Ordnance

**2 RAR/NZ**

**7 RAR**

**NZ**





V2

2 RAR/NZ

7 RAR

Armour/ Engineer  
Sig/HQ/Artillery

SAS

In Nui Dat, I mostly remember: our  
sandbagged tents, red dust and rubber trees.











Helicopters were more common than trucks.  
I was amazed at the sight of 22 Iroquois  
helicopters flying, landing, loading and  
departing in unison.

# “Kanga” Pad, Nui Dat, 1968





That is how we got to work.

We flew sitting on the floor of a chopper, no doors, no seat belts, wearing heavy packs, weapon and ammo –

heading for some hole in the jungle canopy.





**Heading to a jungle landing site**



In Phouc Tuy Province, our job was to seek out and destroy 274 Regt, D445 Bn & any local VC. 274 Regt was later reinforced with NVA.



**33 NVA Regt**



**274 VC Regt**



**D445 VC Bn**

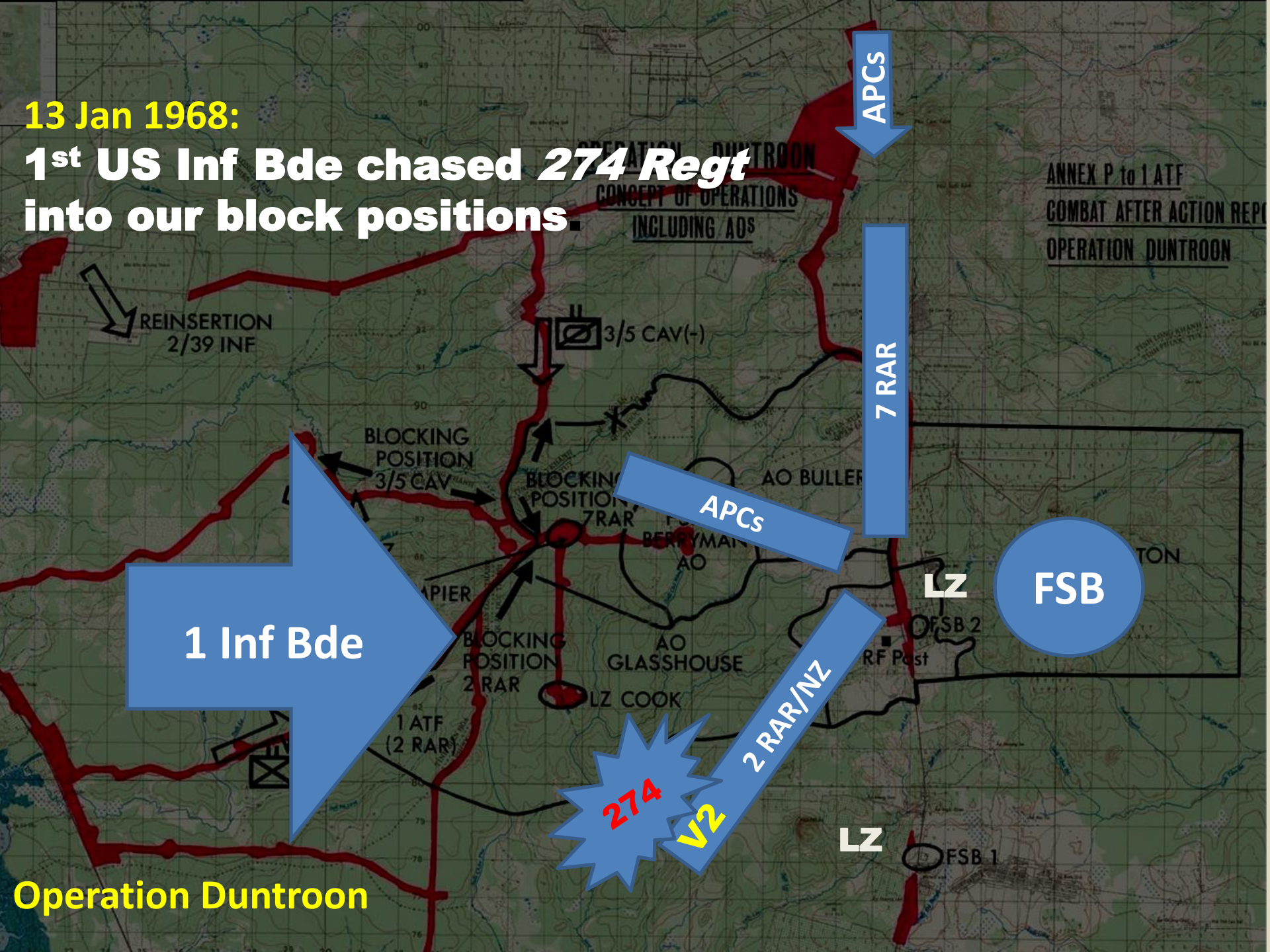


Our first big contact was at night on 13th January as the result of an ambush. V2 was spread out in blocking positions and all platoons came in contact with 274 Regt sub-units.



13 Jan 1968:

1<sup>st</sup> US Inf Bde chased **274 Regt**  
into our block positions.



1 Inf Bde

APCs

7 RAR

APCs

FSB

LZ

FSB 2

LZ

FSB 1

274

V2

2 RAR/NZ

BLOCKING POSITION  
3/5 CAV

BLOCKING POSITION  
7RAR

BLOCKING POSITION  
2RAR

LZ COOK

1 ATF  
(2 RAR)

3/5 CAV(-)

AO BULLER

AO GLASSHOUSE

AO BERRYMAN

REINTEGRATION  
2/39 INF

ANNEX P to 1 ATF  
COMBAT AFTER ACTION REPORT  
OPERATION DUNTROON

OPERATION DUNTROON  
CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS  
INCLUDING ADS

Operation Duntroon

To support us, we had 18 x 105mm guns firing high explosive and 8in guns firing illumination rounds over us.

The firepower was unbelievable.



**8 in (1/83 US)**



**105mm (161 Bty)**



**13**



Everything happened at night, as the VC tried to get past us.

All Platoons were engaging the enemy as they tried to breakout.

The noise was intense, claymores, machine guns, rifles and grenades.

Our hard training paid off.



**274 VC Main Force Regt**

Intelligence reports indicated Hanoi was planning a major offensive over the Tet New Year festival.





In preparation for this, 1 ATF units were deployed to help protect Long Binh and Bien Hoa – huge US bases.

Unfortunately, the NVA & VC had already infiltrated around the bases & were waiting to attack.

We would catch them on their way out however.



# Bien Hoa Airfield



# Long Binh Base





23 Jan, we flew in and helped build FSB Andersen.

This FSB was on the main approach to Bien Hoa and Long Binh.

It was a base for artillery and armour – as well as us.

**V2 arrives at  
FSB Andersen,  
23 Jan 1968**



**Operation Coburg**

Once built, we left for the safety of the jungle.





**Build FSB Andersen – then patrol the jungle**

# V2 were supported by FSB Andersen



21 Jan 68, Hanoi had attacked US Marine base at Khe Sanh with 20,000 NVA.

Their aim was to draw US forces to the north - away from Saigon.

As additional deception, Hanoi agreed to a **7 day** Tet ceasefire from 27 Jan.

**4 days later**, Hanoi launched over half a million NVA & VC troops in a massive coordinated attack on over 100 military bases, towns & cities in SVN.





# Hanoi's Strategy

1

**21 Jan:**

Diversion to draw US north to Khe Sanh

2

**27 Jan:**

Agree a 7 day truce then -

3

**31 Jan:**

Countrywide attacks during the truce!

Major targets in the south were Saigon, Bien Hoa and Long Binh.





**122mm rockets & mortars hit Bien Hoa, 31 Jan 68**



35 VC & NVA Bns attacked targets in and around  
Saigon.



**Saigon under attack 31 Jan 68**

The scale of dead and wounded from this offensive was appalling.

From January to March 1968, the enemy suffered 37,000 killed, wounded and missing.

By the end of the Offensive in September 1968, they had 45,000 killed and another 66,179 wounded or missing.





**45,000 NVA/VC killed**  
**111,178 NVA/VC casualties**

By the end of the offensive in September, the allied death toll was -

2,800 ARVN,

1,500 allied soldiers, and

14,000 civilians.



**2,800 ARVN Killed**

**ARVN feed North Vietnamese prisoners**



**1,500 Allies killed**



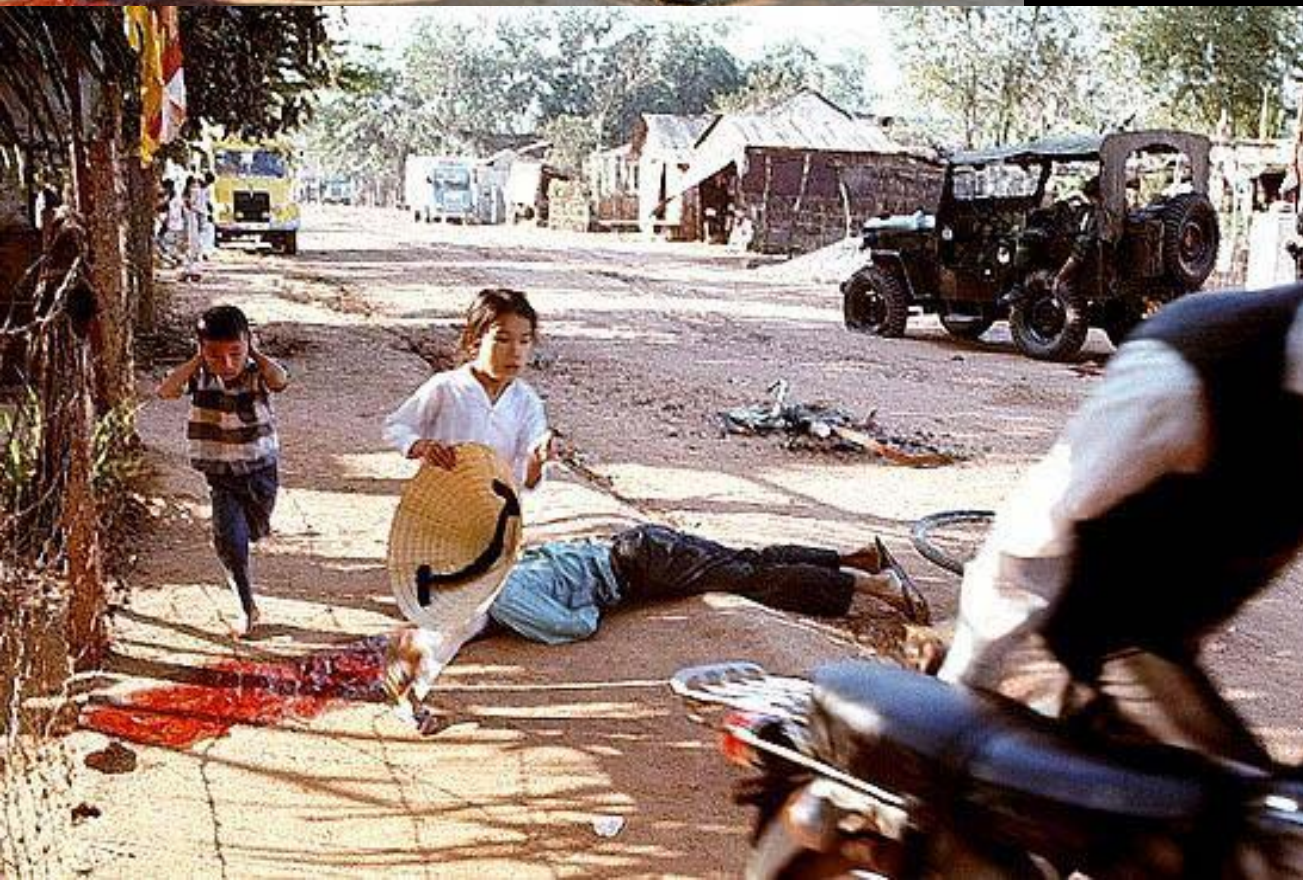
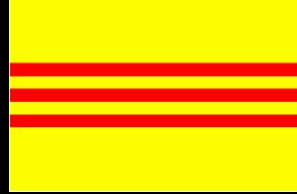
**Defending the US Embassy, Saigon**

Many of the civilians were murdered by Hanoi's execution squads.





**14,000+  
civilians  
killed**





VC casualties were massive and their infrastructure never recovered from this failed offensive.

VC Main Force units lost so many of their soldiers, that North Vietnamese regular soldiers had to make up the losses.

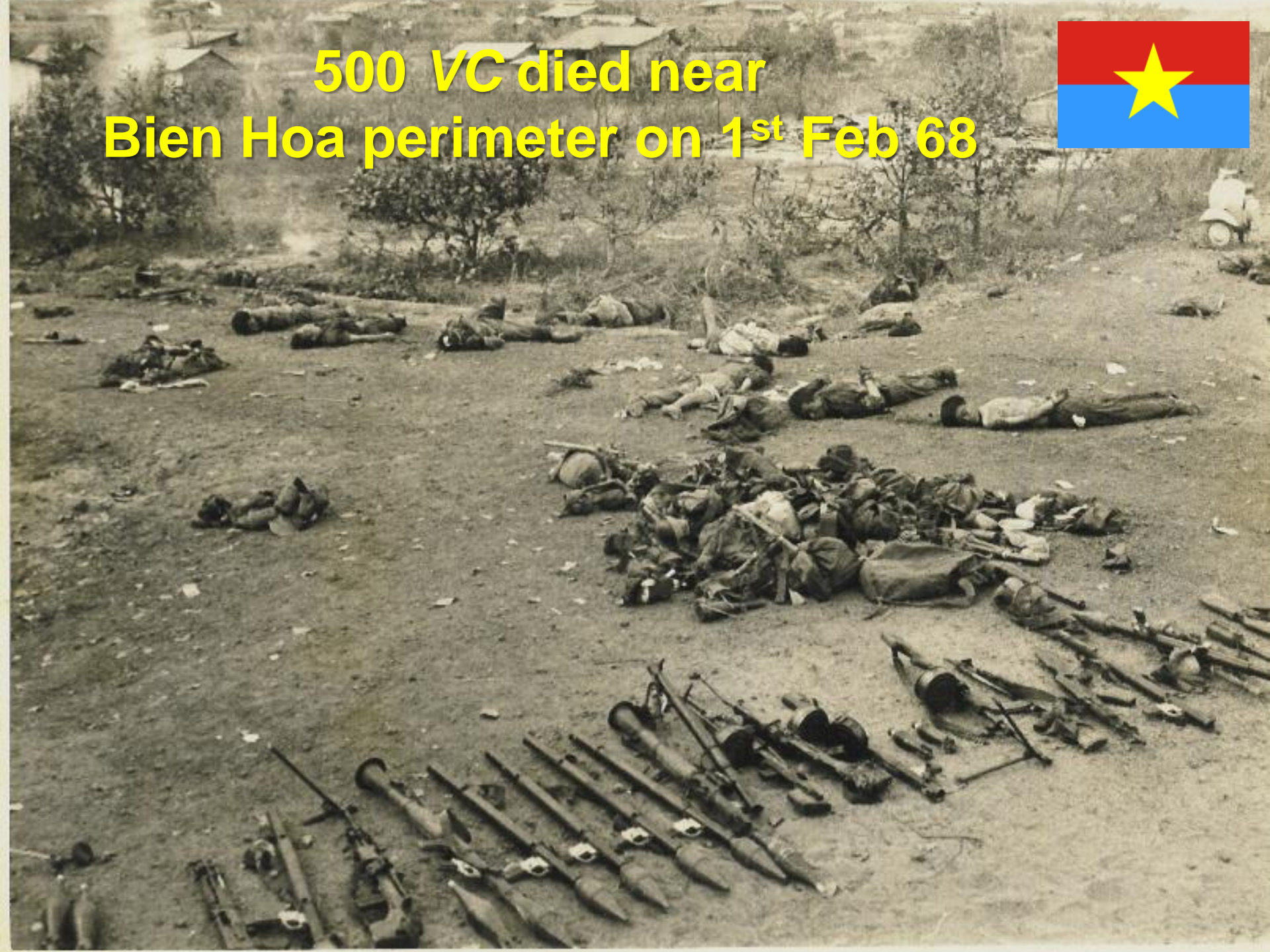
Hanoi's Tet offensive was a failure in the sense that they did not achieve any of their military goals.

Not a single town remained under VC control.

The South and its allies stood, fought and won.

The civil population did not rise up and support Hanoi as expected.

**500 VC died near  
Bien Hoa perimeter on 1<sup>st</sup> Feb 68**



Tet 68 did emphasise however that we were involved in a very political war where military results were often secondary to political results. Later we were to realize that while we were winning the battles in Vietnam, the war was being lost in Washington.





A hostile news media had turned a decisive military victory into a political defeat.

This media hostility had a far reaching and negative effect on many of our veterans when they returned home.



***Sensationalist reporting!***



**Tet 68, near Saigon**



Now - lets get back to V2 in the jungle.

On 27<sup>th</sup> Jan, we stopped patrolling and ambushing in the FSB Andersen area to observe the Truce.

We were on the approaches to Bien Hoa, Long Binh & Saigon.

# ***Tet 68*** **attacks**



**V2**

30<sup>th</sup> Jan we were ordered to assist B Coy, 2 RAR. They were pinned down in an enemy fortified camp.

We ended up attacking and capturing the bunker system.

After that, we went back to patrolling and ambushing.





**30 Jan 68,  
We rescue B Coy 2 RAR**



On 1<sup>st</sup> Feb 1968, Private Haere Desmond Hirini was killed in action.

He rests in his hometown of Kawerau.

Des was the first of our two Kiwis KIA with V2.  
We still feel that sadness today.



# Haere Desmond Hirini, V2

**KIA: 1 Feb 1968**





A week later on 6<sup>th</sup> Feb, Gunner Stuart William Ellwood, was killed in action.

Stuart was a 161 Bty signaler attached to our Coy HQ.

He was a Kiwi who fought beside us, he died among us. Stuart rests in Foxton.



# Stuart William Ellwood, 161 Bty

**KIA: 6 Feb 1968**



Stuart's body was winched out and the 161 Bty FO party now consisted of one lone gunner - Barry Toohill -

the enemy also knew where we were.





At first light on 7th Feb, a large force of enemy attacked our defensive position.

They hit us with machine guns, rockets – the lot.

They tried to over-run us but failed.

In the dim early morning light, several enemy got to within metres of V2 defences – and that is where they died.



**274 Regiment, attack us at dawn**

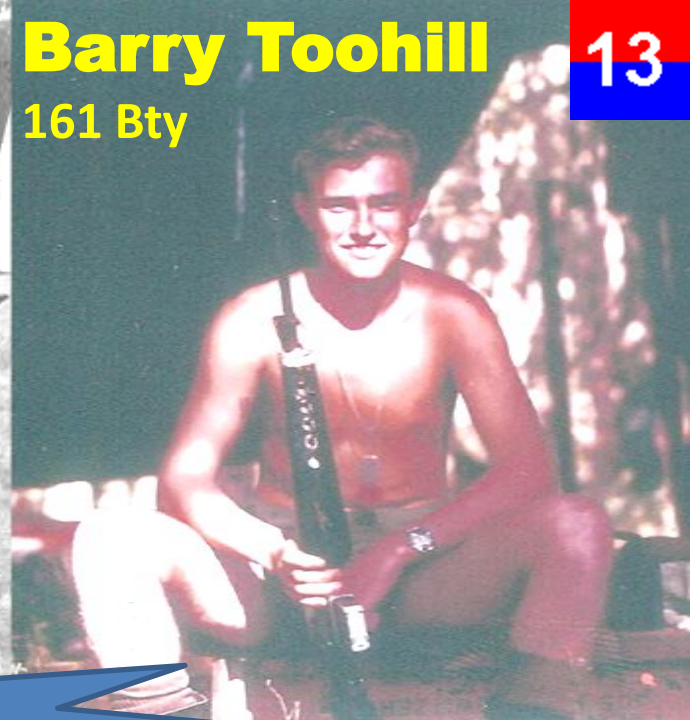
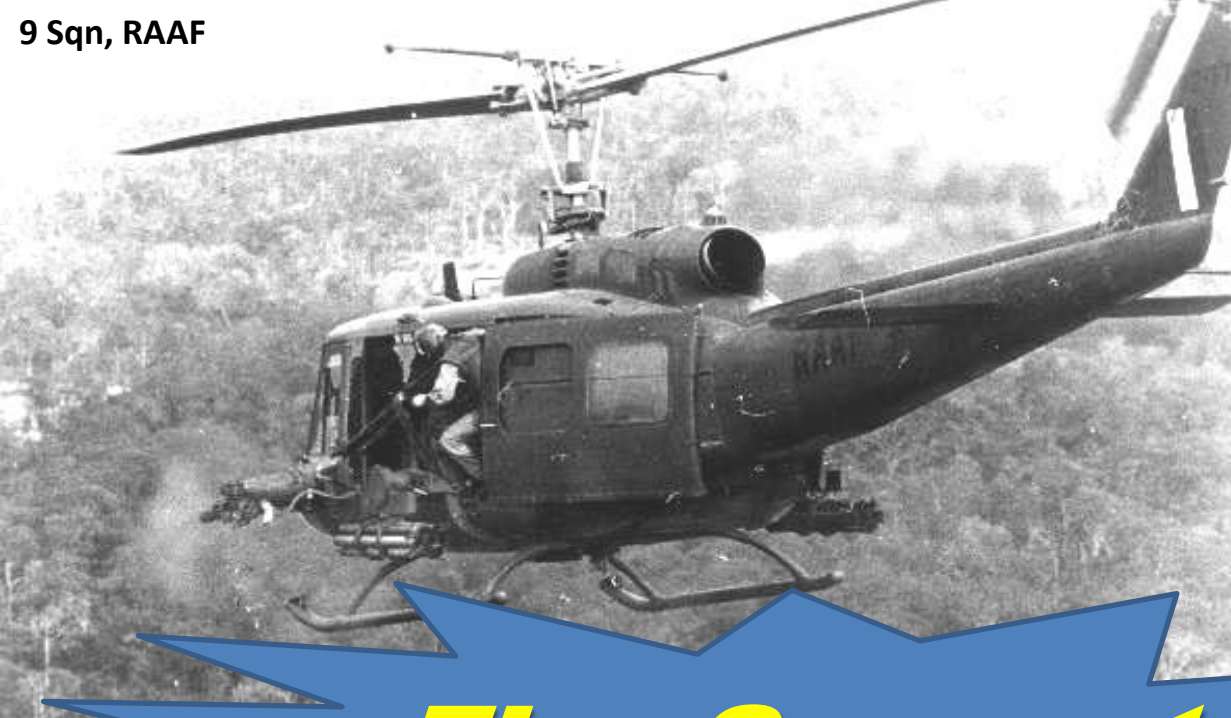


Our own artillery rounds were landing so close to us that some V2 were wounded.

Kiwi Gnr Barry Toohill controlled the fire of both the artillery and the gunships.

He did an awesome job.





# ***Fire Support***



1/83 US (175mm)



104 Bty (Aust)



By mid-morning, the enemy from 274 Regt were driven off.

They had suffered heavy casualties.

We gave the enemy a hiding – and dug enthusiastically for the first time.

# VC weapons and dead







Digging had  
not been very  
popular up to  
now, but .....



We had our tragic moments when our dead and wounded needed to be medically evacuated.

During this attack, Howie Wilson, Ross Niwa and Albie Collins were badly wounded.

By 9.00am, our six wounded had been evacuated by Dustoff or flying Iroquois ambulance.

I have great admiration for the “Dust-off” crews. They were professionals.

Once in their hands, soldiers were unlikely to die of wounds. Phenomenal.

***“Dustoff”*** – most professional  
ambulance service in the world!



On a lighter note, our commander Punchy - who was a heavy smoker, took two AK47 rounds through his pack.

They shot the filters off his cigarettes and punctured his can of peaches.

Punchy was not amused – but we were!



Coy HQ, smoko break



14 Feb we left Andersen in APCs. The 100 vehicle convoy headed back to Nui Dat. That trip took 3.5 very worrying hours.

Sugar Bristow was a near casualty. He fell off the back of his APC onto his head. He stood up & shook his head - no damage was done to either Sugar or the road!



## V2, 100 vehicle convoy back to Nui Dat





Back in Phouc Tuy province we again patrolled and ambushed around the villages.

We needed to stop armed VC entering and terrorizing the families.

**Back in Phouc Tuy Province again**



**Operation Oakleigh**

- and rubber plantations



Operation Cooktown Orchid



Contacts were often at night - short but violent.  
By day the VC bodies were laid out in front of  
the village Police station for next-of-kin ID.

**VC dead  
await ID**



- In a Feb Cordon & Search operation, we helped move more than 14,000 villagers out of Long Dien village for a day.
- Then we searched their houses for arms, food caches, VC & deserters.
- On 17 Feb during another cordon & search, Nick Eriwata used his martial arts skills and knocked out an escaping VC who didn't want to surrender.



**- and cordon & searches**



**Operation Clayton**

**IDs are checked by ARVN intelligence teams**



**We search for VC, food & weapons caches**





## V2 extracting after searching a village



One day we were told to climb the Long Hai Hills, a major enemy stronghold.

The hills were bald through shellfire, bombing & agent orange.

# Looking across the hills to the coast



**Operation Pinaroo**



8 Mar we rode in APCs through suspected VC  
laid M16 minefields.

After that it was a very slow and very careful  
climb on foot to the top.

**APCs were big targets, but –  
better than standing on a mine!**

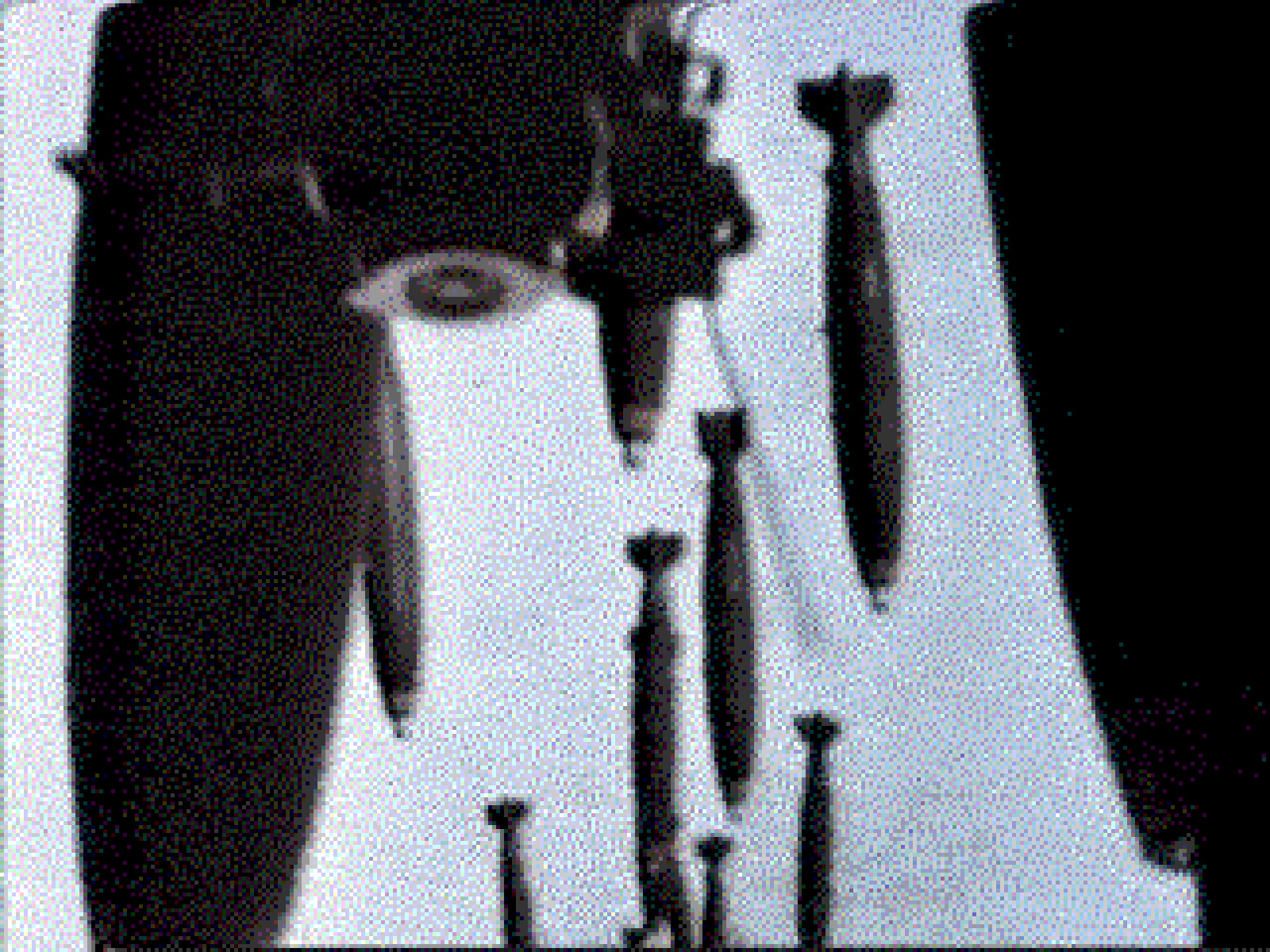


Once at the top, we were ordered back down because a B52 strike was due in the next valley.

Three B52s dropped about 90 x 1,000 lbs bombs on suspected VC and NVA caves. What a spectacular sight.







- We were 1000m away and dust fell on us like heavy rain.
- The bomb craters made a mess, they quickly filled with stagnant water, mosquitos and probably plenty of Agent Orange chemicals as well.



**Huge B52 dust cloud coming towards us over barren hills!**





## Landscaping with B52s



- During another operation we flew into the sea-side village of Lang Phouc Hai to put in a Cordon & Search.
- Part of our cordon was on the beach – and a bit exposed. We spent the night making sure no one escaped.
- As dawn broke, the whole village seemed to advance toward our beach cordon.
- When the villagers had reached the wet sand, they stopped -       squatted and performed their morning toilet ritual.



# *Lang Phouc Hai village at low tide*



Operation Ashgrove Tram

Some of our guys were thinking of digging for  
Pipis – but changed their minds when they  
saw what was left on the beach.



**WARNING**



**POISON**



Our last operation started on ANZAC Day. We went back into the FSB Andersen area. It ended sadly for me.

During a fire mission on 27 Apr, an Aussie mortar fired off-line and three rounds landed on 4 Pl and wounded 5 of our men.

So much for “friendly Fire”. We were extremely lucky.

**25 April 1968**



**Operation Toan Thang**

- Graham Duncan's thumb was a bit shorter - but no one had life-threatening wounds. Graham, Sugar, Bruce & Gary all required evacuation & hospital care.
- For some time, Kani White didn't realise he was wounded in the foot so he walked to the FSB.
- We left the area on 10 May and flew back to Nui Dat.





3 days later, we drove to Vung Tau, climbed into a Bristol Freighter and plodded back to Terendak, our job was done.

V3 had taken over.





*13 May 68: Our ride home!*



- Many of us then continued the journey back to NZ and a mixed reception.
- Our job was to protect the South Vietnamese from harm, to allow them to enjoy life and bring up their families in peace.
- They did not rise up during Tet 68 possibly because they wanted to be left in peace.
- To the best of our ability, we protected them from harm. Soldiers died doing that.
- History may judge V2 as the most successful Kiwi company to be deployed into Phouc Tuy Province. We did our job well.

*The right to live in peace!*



When we got home, we found out there is a price to pay for helping other people in an unpopular war.

NZ society did not understand or support what we were sent to Vietnam to do.





- In calendar terms, V2 were together for 12 months & our V2 war lasted six of those 12 months. However for many Veterans, the emotional scars are still there 48 years later.
- Patrolling in the jungle had its particular stresses. Our work days were 24 hours long for two to four weeks at a time.
- Day and night we were dark shadows in the jungle. Being silent and invisible kept us alive.
- Contact with the enemy was at very close range, an explosion of violence and bloody. Men lived on their nerves, everyone's life was at risk.

The background of the slide is a pixelated version of the Australian flag, featuring the Union Jack in the canton and the Southern Cross constellation on a blue field.

# **V<sub>2</sub> Operations:**

***Forester***

***Canungra***

***Duntroon***

***Coburg***

***Oakleigh***

***Clayton***

***Pinnaroo***

***Ashgrove Tram***

***Cooktown Orchid***

***Toan Thang***



- A lot of war's Veterans have not been able to talk to their families about their experiences.
- For some, the *adventure of a life-time* became a dark *nightmare*.
- Many suffered PTSD that changed their behaviour, some developed chronic health problems - some became ill through contact with chemical defoliants – such as Agent Orange –
- Some became depressed and hid from society.
- Too many have died too young.

- There are many accounts of men and women returning from wars changed forever. Many of us fail to recognize those changes and get the help we need – and are entitled to.
- Many partners are left confused, frightened and upset by being unable to cope with these behavior changes. These changes were triggered by the job we were asked to do.
- NZ Vietnam veterans have an incidence of PTSD of about 25%. Some recovered with time and others are still not healed – or hide from treatment.



# PTSD & Agent Orange

**“25%+ of Vietnam veterans suffer  
from *PTSD*.**

**Many have other health problems”.**

Carol MacDonald, Kerry Chamberlain & Nigel Long

*Massey University Report, 1991*



- Post traumatic stress disorder has been called: shell shock, combat stress, battle fatigue, war neurosis and post-Vietnam syndrome. PTSD is a wound that does not bleed.
- Symptoms might be: difficulty sleeping, flash-backs, drinking too much, mood changes, outbursts of anger, shutting it out, reaction to loud noises, avoiding crowds and not talking about what is worrying them.
- “Shutting it out” does not solve the problem as evidence shows flash-backs and nightmares often occur again much later in life – like now.
- It is vital that those who suffer from PTSD know they are not alone. They did not commit a crime, they are a victim of war and a society that turned it’s back on them. They are wounded soldiers.

Now, we must look after those who are left.

If your Veteran has not had his health checks and applied for a **Veterans pension** and the **War Pensions Treatment Card**, then he must do so.

We can help him do that. He owes it to himself and his family.

0800 553 003

# War Pensions Treatment Card

## Note to General Practitioners and Pharmacists

This Veteran is entitled to have routine medical treatment and medication for the listed disabilities paid for by the War Pensions Processing Unit. If specialist treatment is required, call us for prior approval.

Send accounts to: War Pensions Processing Unit, P O Box 9448, Hamilton.

NAME

REFERENCE NUMBER



MINISTRY OF  
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT  
*Te Manatū Whakahiato Oru*



These reunions are part of the healing process. It is never too late to start healing.

# Tribute 08

## We carry our Dead



Finally, today we celebrate the lives of those  
who were part of V2 and have now passed on.  
We will remember them.



**V2, *Brothers-in-Arms***



Enjoy our reunion and thank you for your  
courtesy in listening to this brief account of our  
V2 journey together.

**Ka kite ano.**

# Together, we are -

# V2

*"Do not regret growing older, it is a privilege many are denied"*



*This presentation was prepared by and delivered by  
Tony Howell during the V2 Reunion, held in the  
Napier RSA over 13 to 15 November 2015.*