



AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES

Quote in Reply

DC/9/66

ADDRESS

103 Sig Sqn
AFPO 4
GPO SYDNEY
Sep 66

Duplicate of (7)

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SAIGON

10

Operations

There have been two major operations in the period. Operation TOLEDO followed on from the major contact of last month. It was an attempt to catch and destroy the VC who had been involved in the previous action. Involved in the operation were 173 (US) Airborne Brigade, a battalion from 1 (US) Division and a battalion landing team from the US Marines as well as ourselves. Unfortunately the VC moved too quickly or we moved too slowly and there was practically no contact. There were two phases to the operation, searches to the EAST and WEST of Inter-provincial route 2 (the road running NORTH-SOUTH through our position) to the NORTH of our TACH. In both phases the main search was carried out by 173 Bde from NORTH to SOUTH and we provided blocking forces at the SOUTHERN edge of the search area. Both battalions were involved in various aspects of the operation, but it was mainly 5 RAR.

The other major operation this month was operation VAUCLUSE. This was a search and destroy operation carried out through the NUI DINH hill mass (3365 and surrounding area) by 6 RAR. The operation was valuable in that it discovered and destroyed a number of VC installations but again contacts with VC were only slight. Because quantities of documents, food, medical supplies etc were found, the belief is that the VC were absent because they were involved in some actions associated with their pre-election campaign and not because they knew we were coming.

Radio

During operation VAUCLUSE it was again necessary to use a rebroadcast station on the hills above VUNG TAU when the battalion moved down to the SOUTH WESTERN slopes of the hill mass. This worked well and communications were maintained throughout the operation.

Prior to the operation, in case difficulties should arise, we had arranged with 161 Recce Flt for tests of aerial re-broadcast using both the Sioux and the Cessna. We provided the PRC-25's, suitable mounting arrangements have been developed for both aircraft and the trials were carried out successfully. The current arrangement is that the two PRC-25's and the re-transmission cable are held by our section with 161 Recce Flt and installed in whichever aircraft is tasked when a requirement arises. The installation only takes about 15 - 20 minutes.

We are still in the process of setting up the GRC-106 to operate as control station on the telegraph net. We intend to operate it remotely, with the set in the radio bunker up on NUI DAT and the morse key in the back of the sigcen. This will provide more comfortable operating conditions for the operators than the back of a vehicle, and will also cut out the necessity for the runner to go backwards and forwards between the sigcen and the telegraph net control station with messages. The system is not completely functional yet as we are still sorting out the power supply situation. I will write more about this next month.

Signals Duty Officer

When we first arrived up here I operated the procedure of having a Sigs Duty Officer on duty 24 hours a day, so that there was always one point which could be contacted with communications queries. This duty was performed by the 2IC, two troop officers and the SSM. It involved them being on duty for a morning or an afternoon of every second day and a night duty for 3 1/2 hours on three nights out of four. After this had been operating for a few months it became apparent that it could not be kept up indefinitely, so we have reverted to having a duty officer only at night. The duties are now performed by the 2IC, two troop officers, SSM, Sigcen Supervisor, radio Sgt and sigcen Sgt. They do duty for half a night and have as much of the following morning off as they need to catch up on sleep. The only necessity is to ensure that, for example, the radio officer and radio Sgt are not on duty on the same night and therefore off duty together the following morning. This now seems to be working satisfactorily.

Miscellaneous

I have had one of my technicians (Loplt FLETCHER) attend a two week course on the GRC-106, run by the US Army in SAIGON. He qualified on the course and according to reports performed creditably. This means that we have at least one technician who knows the set and will be able to pass the knowledge on to others.

At present we seem to operate on the average at about fifteen below establishment strength. Current figures are :

- a. Not arrived in theatre or returned to AUSTRALIA - 8
- b. R and R (out of country) - 3
- c. R and C (in country) - 2
- d. Hospital - 2

As this is a continuing figure, and certainly has not been better since we have been here, we look forward to getting the remainder of our people from AUSTRALIA.