

LIFE

AUSTRALIA

12 PAGES IN COLOR:
AUSTRALIANS AND
NEW ZEALANDERS
IN VIETNAM

B Company on patrol

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LIFE goes out on patrol
with an Australian company



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B Company: Search and Destroy

The B-52s had come over during the night, making the ground rumble as they dropped their bombs only 10,000 meters away. The echo of their huge jets seemed scarcely to have died when the men of B Company, Sixth Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, were roused for their mission. By 8 a.m. they were filing out of the former rubber plantation that was now their base. Their patrol was a four-

day "Search and Destroy," to locate any outpost or arms or rice cache of the Vietcong, and destroy it. Rifles at ready, walking at single file and keeping 50 feet apart, B Company followed its lead scouts as they cut their way through the jungle. They found a deserted VC command post and three rice caches, and destroyed them all. Then they also found themselves in a bit of trouble (next pages).



All but concealed in the foliage, B Company's men cut through the jungle, occasionally emerging in waist-high bush. The lead scouts avoid paths so as to keep from being ambushed. B Company has never been ambushed.

Photographed for LIFE by RICHARD SWANSON



A necessary but risky rendezvous in mid-patrol



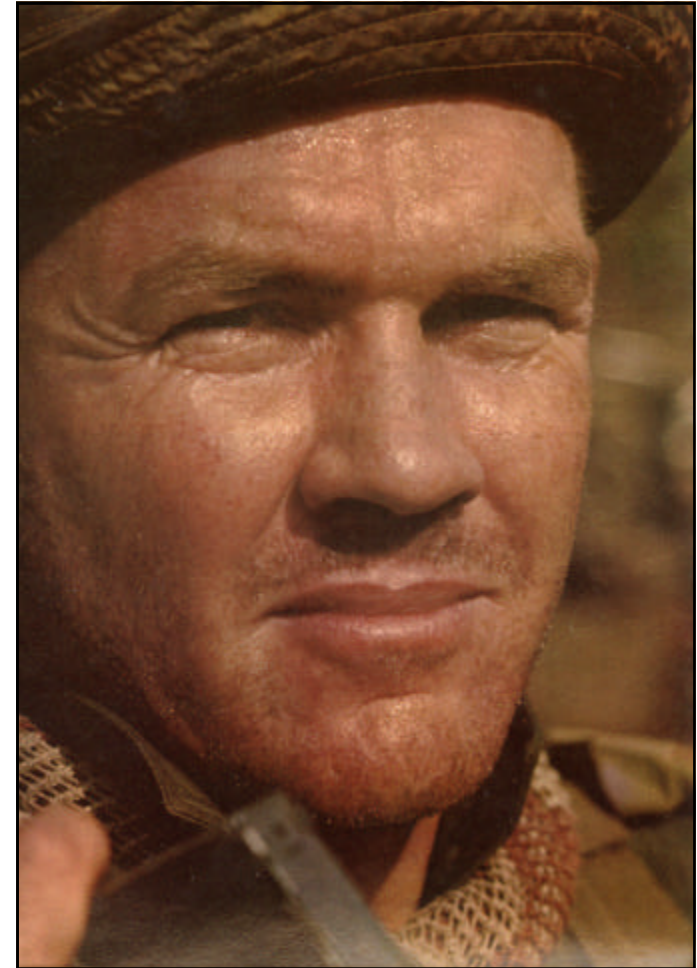
By the second day B Company was running short on water. The going was hot, the canteens were draining fast, and every river bed was dry. The Company Commander, Major Ian McKay, disliked calling for a resupply by helicopter because it would reveal his position to the Vietcong. But he had no choice. He radioed for a helicopter rendezvous.

By the appointed time the men were drinking water in canteen capfuls. They stood in the treeline of the jungle while a detachment warily went out in the clearing. A red smoke grenade (*above, left*) indicated "All Safe" as the chopper made a pass over the clearing. Then it clattered to a stop. At its doorways were crewmen with rifles ready for a VC attack. The full canteens were quickly unloaded, and the empty ones, stuffed in burlap sacks, thrown aboard. The helicopter quickly rose and scurried away. B Company proceeded, its water replenished, but its men more on the alert now that they had advertised their position. Two days later the helicopters came in again to pick the men up and ferry them back to base, their search-and-destroy mission accomplished without a casualty.





Sgt Kevin Brady, a 10 year veteran, who is better known as “Butch”, is the chief organiser of innumerable crap games. “Bank’s not in this many money, mates,” he says, ‘just to give you a good time’. But on the night before going on patrol the bank (ie. Butch) wound up with \$800



Captain E.H. Stevenson, second-in-command of B Company, better known as “Ted”, conducted the helicopter rendezvous shown on the previous pages. When the chopper crew complained that the unloading was taking too much time, he acidly pointed out that they were 10 canteens short.

New Zealand artillery scrambles and fires in support

Scrambling to their gun positions on an alert, and letting go with six 105-mm. howitzers all at once, the 161st Battery, Royal New Zealand Artillery, supports the Australians and the troops of other nations in Vietnam. New Zealand has about 150 troops in Vietnam, and Prime Minister Holyoake has said that he is considering sending an infantry battalion currently stationed in Malaysia, now that "confrontation" has gone the way of Sukarno.

The tragic complexities of the war in Viet-

nam were sharply illustrated in a bizarre accident this month when an Australian contingent made a thrust into a rice land near the village of Dat Do, just east of Saigon. Running up against guerrilla resistance, the Australians called for artillery fire to help clear the Vietcong out. New Zealand artillery was flown into position. But when the battery opened fire on the scattered guerrilla positions, some of the shells fell directly on the Australian troops. Four Australians were killed and five were wounded.



At the alert, New Zealand artillerymen race to gun positions. Of the 120 men in the 161st Battery, about half are Maoris.



Major John Donohue, head of the civic action force, holds a Hoa Long resident nicknamed "Rabbit"

An important, and more rewarding, mission

When Australian troops rolled through Hoa Long on their way to their new base at Nui Dat last May, the silent, hostile atmosphere in the village was palpable. As one soldier put it, "You could smell the VC." Today Hoa Long is a noisy, busy, happy village.

The reason lies in a program directed by a major from Sydney named John Donohoe (left). He calls his project WHAM (for "winning hearts and minds"), and he and his 16 men have worked wonders throughout Phuoc Tuy province. WHAM even has its own flag, which flies gaily on the radiator cap on a Land-Rover frequently overflowing with enchanted Vietnamese youngsters. Donohoe's men help build schools, provide doctor and dentist care, teach English and hand out rice captured nearby from the Vietcong ("We tell them we are returning what's rightfully theirs," he says).

Hoa Long occasionally has to be searched, so insidious is the VC virus. But though once a Vietcong stronghold, the village is now regarded as pacified. Major Donohoe and his men are confident that their mission is as important as their comrades' search-and-destroy missions—and more rewarding as well.



With WHAM flag on radiator cap, a Land-Rover takes a group of Hoa Long youngsters for a ride.



Captain James Hoggart treats young dental patient under the anxious eye of the boy's mother.

**Between patrols, a chance
to 'let it off'**



>Welcome visit is paid by Sherry Laidis, touring Vietnam with an Australian "Get Hog" show.



Mission accomplished, B Company relaxes. The men consumed nearly all of a week's beer ration.