



**RAASC VIETNAM SUPPLY PLATOONS ASSOCIATION (VSPA)
NEWSLETTER JUNE 2012 EDITION**

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A MESSAGE FROM SUE HARTAS
AND FAMILY

Dear RAASC Veteran,

We hope this finds you well and enjoying the Autumn weather. Here's our latest news:

NEXT REUNION - PHILLIP ISLAND VIC – TBC for: MON 18 - FRI 22 MAR 2013

The word is out now folks – this should be a reunion for catching up with old mates and an incentive especially for some Victorian mates who have missed out in the past. It will also appeal to our Tasmanian, South Australian and Western Australian mates also, being a bit closer. QLD, NT and NSW members will enjoy a cooler, less humid climate.

Why not join us. KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR FURTHER DETAILS IN THE NEXT NEWSLETTER AND COME ALONG.

Attractions for the main three days on the island include:

Evening Meet and Greet - Cowes RSL

Vietnam Veterans museum

Philip Is. Nature park including evening penguin parade, Koala Conservation Centre and Churchill Island - historic homestead, working heritage farm and lovely gardens and walks, Grand Prix track, museum and Go Kart track (single site), Woolshed and wool spinning, Phillip Is Belgium Chocolate factory etc. Also Church service and VSPA plaque laying, AGM and Corps Dinner-at Cowes RSL

Accommodation varieties to suit including motel and caravan park close to the RSL. We are keen to see all members attend including our Widows of deceased members.

There will be a registration form in the next edition of the VSPA newsletter.

RENEWING YOUR ANNUAL VSPA MEMBERSHIP

Yes folks, it is that time again. We need you to return the membership form with your money to ensure the Association continues to provide the service it has continued to offer over the years. This is for financial year 1July2012 - 30Jun2013.

You will also note the membership form has two years listed at the top for those that have inadvertently forgotten to pay your previous year's (1Jul11-30Jun12) membership.

GOT PHOTOS OF YOUR RAASC VSPA MATES?

Perhaps you have managed to catch up with your mates recently but some of them were not able to join you-did you take some photos of the event?

Why not share it with those members who were not able to make it. While not a Facebook page, we have our own RAASC VSPA Picasa album.

If you know how to do it, go ahead and upload to the site - instructions for uploading to our website are at: <http://raascsupply.asn.au/photographs.html>. Let the committee know you have put them up there and we will let everyone know via newsletter and email. Otherwise, send it to the committee and we will do it for you. We accept email attachments and hard copy.

DEPLOYMENT OF RAASC SUPPLY PLATOONS TO VIETNAM BIEN HOA - VUNG TAU - NUI DAT 1965-1972

Editors Note-In keeping with previous editions, we are keen to provide some historical perspectives on the deployment of each of the Platoons and Companies to Vietnam. The story that follows has been distilled from various online sources. Here is the first on the initial deployment to the theatre. More to follow in the next few editions. Happy Reading!

Historical Background

29th April 1965, our PM announces the dispatch of an infantry battalion group to South Vietnam with an armored (APC) troop, a signal troop, gun battery and RAASC logistic support admin & Transport, RAEME, Medical and Dental, RAE and Light Aircraft.

1965 – initial deployment of logistic support

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1 RAR and supporting units are deployed to Bien Hoa airbase 28 km north east of Saigon and placed under command US 173rd Airborne as the third battalion of the Brigade. In May 1965 the 1st Australian Logistic Support Company (1 ALSC) deployed which included a detachment of RAASC foodstuffs and POL personnel.

Within 12 months, and with effective logistics and administrative support, 1 RAR have achieved dominance of their Tactical Area of Responsibility (TAOR).

1966 – Development of the Task Force

A year later, the Australians are given responsibility for Phuoc Tuy province, nearly two hours south east of Saigon. 1 RAR had completed its tour of duty and was replaced by 5 RAR who commenced operations on 24 May 1966 by participating in the clearance of the 1st Australian Task Force base at Nui Dat – Operation Hardihood.

For this operation the Battalion was under the command of (the same) 173rd (US) Airborne Brigade and worked alongside two American parachute battalions to clear the area out to mortar range, so that the base could be established.

This escalation of the conflict saw the Company deployed and regrouped in 1966 as 1st Australian Logistic Support Group (1 ALSG) Vung Tau, 27 kilometres SW of Nui Dat to provide all necessary logistic support to the 1st Australian Task Force (1 ATF).

As the build-up of 1ATF continued to three infantry battalions and supporting arms and services, the task of supporting it also increased. Fire Support Bases (FSB) were used more frequently and continued to expand operations further into Phuc Tuy Province until the eventual withdrawal of our troops in 1972.

What about the RAASC soldiers:

3500 RAASC personnel served in the conflict, of whom some 2000 RAASC members served in one of the three RAASC Companies that deployed to Vietnam. They were;

- 1 Coy which included 21 Sup PL 1966-67,
- 5 Coy which included 25 Sup Pl 67-72, both based at Vung Tau, and
- 26 Coy which included Det 52 Sup Pl late 67-71 deployed to 1 ATF Nui Dat.

1 Coy deployed as a complete unit whilst 5 Coy replaced the former on a trickle personnel posting system. Each Company comprised a headquarters, two transport platoons, a supply platoon, POL, air dispatch, RAEME and Postal elements.

Each of these capabilities, known as the “Brick” system, were all separate units on the ORBAT and deployed and grouped for command and control purposes under the RAASC Company Headquarters.

WHAT IS AN RAASC SUPPLY PLATOON RAASC Sup Pl Orbat Summary (Division in Battle (DIB) 1966)

Pers: 2 Officers, 32 OR All ranks = 34

Equip: ¾ ton Vehicle Tractor/Trailer Forklift 3, LMG 2 MAW 1

Role: to receive hold and issue combat supplies (rations, POL, ammunition) for 6000 men

For the theorists and planners, the DIB looks good. What happened on the ground is something else entirely. We were underprepared for what lay ahead; Equipment, personnel, relationships with the Americans who had little idea of who we were and under what working arrangements exist are just some examples.

The first foolishness lay in the planning for this Group, which was done at Army Headquarters in Canberra: its composition was determined by first satisfying the needs of the fighting elements, then allocating to logistics units the leftover manpower within the specified numerical ceiling. The result was a logistic support element woefully inadequate for the dual task of both establishing a base from scratch and simultaneously supporting operations. (With thanks to RAASC historian for his comments).

THE SUPPLY PLATOONS

21 Sup PL was deployed in the virgin sandhills of Vung Tau about one mile from the township and about 300 yards from the sea. During the wet season it is under water and during dry it is under sand. The sand during all seasons is intolerable, except that at least everything remains clean, and only requires dusting. All food, water, clothing, vehicles, beds and bodies are perpetually covered with the powder-like sand.

The Supply Platoon has had peculiar problems which few other Supply Platoons in the history of the Corps could have possibly had. From trying to convince high ranking US Officers that "Marinated green bean salad and dill pickles" is not really Australian fare, to organizing the issue of fresh fruit for the Force in one day (which is a remarkable effort when considering that this fresh fruit on one occasion consisted entirely of lemons).

Until regular American supplies arrived, local purchase of fresh food commodities

From **Jul 1967 to Feb 1968**, the unit participated in and supported 1 ATF on every taskforce operation. During this time the Coy supported Operation Paddington where a total of 240 tons of ammunition was carried forward to the Fire Support Base (FSB).

CAPT. P.J.F. (Peter) Tuckett and his Platoon have done a fine job. These hard-working soldiers have become widely known amongst their fellow RAASC soldiers as "Jack's Platoon" because of their almost magical ability to produce results not only in provision of rations for Australian soldiers, but in their obtaining - by fair means or foul - more and varied aids to comfortable living than most Australian units.

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The Supply Platoon handles all the supplies and POL and the 1ALSG end of the Main Supply Route (MSR) and it has a detached section at 1ATF (Nui Dat) to store and distribute all the supplies, POL and ammunition at Nui Dat.

The Platoon now has got its new warehouse forklifts and has fiendish delight in stacking pallets three and four high. To offset the joys of new forklifts, the refrigerators have regularly blown every fuse they own; they have now been converted to electric power.

The Supply Platoon can speak with pride and has performed exceptionally well in the most adverse circumstances. *To give some perspective to the supply and transport support tasks in mid 1968, the numbers and locations of Australian personnel in Vietnam at that time were:*

*Saigon Area 455
1ATF (Nui Dat) 4,808
1ALSG (Vung Tau) 1,420
Total 6,683 (1)*

These forward Detachments were also deployed during May 1968 to Long Binh during the second Tet offensive and elements of 25 Sup Pl were actually at the Battle of Coral.

Next Edition- EXPANDED NEEDS OF THE TASK FORCE

NOTICE BOARD

DVA - AVAILABLE SERVICES

An **Essential Medical Equipment Payment** – an annual payment of \$140 to support those with higher than average energy costs because they rely on essential medical equipment at home. Persons holding a Commonwealth Government concession card or a Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold or White Card; and who use certain essential medical equipment, or have certain medical conditions that require the use of additional heating and/or cooling in their home, may be entitled to claim the Essential Medical Equipment Payment

Members, please be aware of this as it is not an automatic payment (it affects those on CPAP devices plus other devices) and must be claimed for.

You can find full details on the website www.dva.gov.au/householdassistance scroll down to Essential Medical Equipment Payment and click on 'Read more' for more details

MY ACCOUNT REGISTRATION NUMBER <https://myaccount.dva.gov.au/>

- Used to access your DVA file and lodge enquiries/travelling expenses, etc.

Please follow this simple two step process to register and get started with [MyAccount](#).

Step 1: Call 1800 173 858 to speak to a DVA officer and receive a registration number. You will need to go through a simple proof of identity process, so please have your DVA file number or client number ready.

Step 2: Once you have your registration number, visit www.myaccount.dva.gov.au, select the REGISTER NOW button and follow the on screen prompts to get your account logon. Please find attached a step-by-step guide to assist you.

The website also provides a helpful "how to" video for the registration process which guides you through the steps.

MyAccount is quick, simple and secure and services will be regularly updated. Keep an eye on the website to see what's new.

Please note: Currently experiencing a higher than expected volume of calls and they ask for your understanding if they are unable to answer your call immediately.

The Grocers and Gunners Vietnam tour - 06 – 28 November 2012

This five star, 23 days – no tents or huts this time – all inclusive tour will retrace your service in Saigon, Vung Tau and Nui Dat and take you as far north as the Chinese border.

Contact Phil Brookes: 0418 719 166

Email: brookes1@bigpond.net.au

Imperial China Tours: 1300 303 101 or 02 9221 0266 Email:

tony@imperialchinatours.com

A message from Sue Hartas and Family

Dear Committee and friends, RAASC VSPA - Your sympathy and condolences have been a great comfort to us and gratefully appreciated.

Love and God bless - Sue and family

And finally:

Keep in touch! If you know someone who might like to join us, let us know and we'll send them a free Association badge when they take up membership.

Bruce, Christina, Ray, Russ and Dave VSPA Association Executive

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