

Office of the President May 12, 1971

PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION

THE CROSS OF GALLANTRY WITH PALM LEAF

The President of the Republic of South Vietnam takes profound pleasure in citing

The 161st BATTERY

ROYAL NEW ZEALAND ARTILLERY

for the Award of

**THE PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION OF THE CROSS OF GALLANTRY WITH
PALM LEAF**

On 17 July 1965 161 Battery, Royal New Zealand Artillery arrived in the Republic of South Vietnam. This small, all volunteer unit, was New Zealand's first and immediate contribution to the free world military forces who were fighting to preserve the integrity of a free nation against overt communist aggression.

Over the past six years the Battery has served continuously, with not one day out of action as a unit. While experiencing every change of fortune with the people of South Vietnam by their continued presence, the Battery has also built itself an enviable record for its professionalism and competency.

Initially the Battery served with 173D Airborne Brigade and during this period the Battery saw heavy fighting in Pleiku, Kontum, War Zone D, Ben Cat, Bien Hoa and the Iron Triangle. Their sterling efforts at that time were recognised on 12 October 1965 when the Republic of Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Silver Star was awarded to the Battery Commander for all ranks.

Since 1966 the Battery has served as part of 1st Australian Task Force, mainly in Phuoc Tuy Province, although it has seen hard action in Bien Hoa, Long Khan and Binh Tuy Provinces. During this time the Battery has served as an integral component of six successive Australian Field Regiments and provided close fire support to all nine Infantry Battalions of the Royal Australian Regiment.

It has also operated in support of expanding South Vietnamese Regional Force operations in the Province and was the first unit to provide artillery forward observers and fire support to Regional Forces' long range company operations. An immediate mutual respect between infantry and artillery of the two nations was achieved. Later operations in support of 302 (RF) Battalion in the Long Hais confirmed this strong liaison.

After six years of fighting the Battery has fired nearly a quarter of a million artillery rounds and occupied 73 fire support bases to provide fire support of free world and South Vietnamese ground troops. 21,138 fire missions have been fired including 665 missions in support of troops in direct close contact with the enemy. The Battery has itself served as infantry and, in this role too, clashed with the enemy. Most of the casualties sustained by the Battery were caused by mines. Only one officer and one soldier were killed directly as a result of enemy action.

In their long stay in South Vietnam the Battery soldiers have made many local friends, particularly among the children. Orphanages have been adopted wherever they have served but they also leave village walls and two schools behind them as a mark of concern for, and faith in, the future of the country they have fought for.

Lt. General Cao-Van-Vien
Chief, Joint General Staff, RVNAF