

During this month, Flying Officer H.R. Thomas flew the first solo flight in a UH-1B, thus being the first pilot on 9 (UH) Squadron to be trained to solo standard by the instructors of that squadron. It is recorded that he probably was the first service member in the world to be converted direct from fixed wing aircraft to Iroquois helicopter.

April 1964 saw the beginning of tropical training exercises conducted in New Guinea. Those participating consisted of the Commanding Officer and nine (9) other pilots, four (4) crewmen and sixteen (16) NCO's and airmen. Familiarisation training was carried out at Lao and flights were conducted to Bulolo, Wau and Finnhafen.

The strength of the squadron as at the end of January 1965 was 172, consisting of 25 officers, 2 WO's, 6 F/Sgts, 17 Sergeants, 27 Corporals and 94 LAC's and AC's.

In February 1965 the squadron again conducted tropical training in New Guinea. Whilst in New Guinea they assisted in the recovery of bodies from the wreck of an Anson which crashed near the peak of Mount Kenevi during World War II.

On 6th December 1965 Wg Cdr R.S. Royston arrived on posting from RAAF Staff, London to be Commanding Officer wef 10th December.

On 12th April 1966, No 9 Squadron was renumbered No 5 Squadron. No 9 Squadron detachments at Darwin and Williamstown became No 5 Squadron detachments. Personnel and equipment previously at 9 Squadron were transferred to 5 Squadron. The unit operating Iroquois at RAAF Butterworth Malaysia, previously No 5 Squadron, became No 5 Squadron, Detachment "C" in name only, continuing to operate as an independent squadron.

No 9 Squadron RAAF was reformed on 13th April 1966 with Iroquois UH-1B Helicopters as its aircraft. The reform took place at RAAF Base Fairbairn and the squadron was scheduled to move to South Vietnam in June 1966.

This move resulted from recent decisions by the Australian Government which decided, as a result of an invitation from the Government of South Vietnam, to increase the Australian Armed Force commitment to that country. The Australian Army sent a Task Force and the role of 9 Squadron was to provide short range transport for the task force. Wg Cdr R.A. Scott, AFC, was appointed Commanding Officer of the squadron.

No 9 Squadron detachment "A" was formed and left for South Vietnam, arriving there on 3rd May. The detachment made arrangements for the reception and establishment of the squadron at Vung Tau which is approximately 40 miles South-East of Saigon.

On May 19th the Air Officer Commanding, Operational Command, AVM C.T. Hannah officially farewelled the squadron. The occasion was also declared an open day for the press who took extensive still and TV photographic coverage of the occasion. The squadron flew a formation of

eight (8) Iroquois over Canberra City before making a low pass over the base which created a very favourable impression for the visitors, particularly as it was the first occasion the pilots had flown together as a squadron.

No 9 Squadron Detachment "B" was formed on May 23rd under the command of Flt Lt W.S. Shepherd. This detachment comprised the ship's party on board the troopship HMAS Sydney which carried the squadron's aircraft and equipment from Australia to South Vietnam. On that day the squadron's aircraft were flown from Fairbairn and after a re-fuelling stop at RAAF Richmond, a squadron formation fly-past was held over the city of Sydney. This was also given extensive press coverage. After an overnight stop at RAAF Richmond, the aircraft departed at 15 minute intervals to land on the deck of the converted carrier HMAS Sydney. The aircraft were taken down the aft aircraft lift well and then stripped of their rotor blades below deck. Routine servicing and maintenance was carried out during the voyage. The ship sailed from Sydney on the afternoon of May 25th and arrived and anchored off Vung Tau on 6th June 1966. The main body of personnel departed from RAAF Richmond on 11th June by a Qantas Boeing 707 chartered aircraft. The aircraft stopped over at RAAF Townsville where the members on board were entertained by No 10 Squadron members. They again stopped for 4½ hours at Manila before arriving at Saigon airport. After a delay of 6 hours they left in a USAF C123 aircraft for Vung Tau. With the arrival of No 9 Squadron main part at Vung Tau on 12th June, Detachment "A" was disbanded.

The first operational mission was completed on 13th June when a critical shortage of ammunition occurred in Task Force Headquarters and 5 RAR areas. During the early days, 9 Sqn were concerned mainly with routine courier flights, however, on occasions they were brought into the thick of it by being required to carry out insertion and extraction of patrol in enemy territory. The aircraft met ground fire which required the crew members to wear chest and back protectors on such flights.

On 10th July, aircraft A2-1024 with Flt Lt Dohle as Captain was on stand-by at Task Force H/Qrs when at 1310 hours the crew were notified that they would be required to extract a 6 man patrol who had contact with a numerically superior enemy force. A second aircraft A2-1019 flown by Flt Lt Lane joined them. The SAS patrol had broken contact with the enemy and were waiting for pick-up. Both aircraft were airborne at 1330 hours and orbited overhead awaiting the arrival of two US Army armed UH-1B's which were to be their escort. The gun ships were late and at 1400 hours the aircraft began their run in for the pick-up. A homing to the SARBE beacon carried by the patrol was successful and as the aircraft flew overhead a marker panel was sighted. The aircraft touched down and the troops were loaded and just as the first aircraft became airborne, the starboard gunner (Sgt Roche) fired a burst at three figures on the edge of the clearing. At the same time, the starboard gunner of the second aircraft

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(Cpl Williams) saw a flash from a rifle in a four o'clock position from the front of the aircraft. He also saw smoke and heard shots as he returned the fire. He estimated the enemy to be only 50 yards away at that time. On talking to the troops after clearing the area they considered there were 20 VC in the immediate area, some within 20 yards of the aircraft. Neither aircraft was hit and although the gun-ships saw the exchange of fire, they did not fire as they were uncertain as to the location of other friendly forces. A similar but uninterrupted mission was carried out on the following day by 9 Squadron aircraft, one flown by Flt Lt Hayes, another by Flt Lt Shepherd with a third flown by the commanding officer Wg Cdr Scott overhead as top cover.

No 6 Battalion RAR was deployed on a search and destroy type operation on 25th July. Viet Cong forces carried out a mortar attack on one of the positions killing 2 soldiers and wounding 9. The US Army "Dust-off" (casevac) helicopters could not cope adequately with all the casualties and 9 Squadron were asked to assist. Four of 9 Squadron ~~helicopters~~ helicopters each carried 2 casualties whilst the fifth piloted by Flt Lt Hindley flew as top cover for the evacuation. All the casualties were taken to the helipad at the US Army 36 Evac Hospital at Vung Tau.

On 27th July, a four man SAS patrol requested an extraction from an area where it was not possible for a landing zone to be prepared. A decision was made to winch the patrol members out of the area and two aircraft flown by Wg Cdr Scott and Flt Lt Hindley departed to achieve the pick-up. Two armed CL-47 Chinook aircraft flew as escort. The patrol was sighted and Wg Cdr Scott set up an approach to the area which was a one foot wide spur. Cpl Williams was lowered to the ground by winch and the aircraft was hovered with the skids in the tree tops to enable the patrol members to scramble into the aircraft with the assistance of a leg-up from Cpl Williams who was then winched back into the aircraft by LAC Collins. The armed Chinook aircraft belonged to the US Army trial unit (53 Avn Det. which is in Vietnam determining the feasibility of the aircraft. The Chinook carries approximately 2 short tons of ordinance comprising better than 3500 rounds of 50 cal, split between 5 guns; 1600 rounds of 20 mm HE I between 2 guns; 650 rounds for the 40mm grenade launcher and 38 x 2.75 rockets of WP and HE. The aircraft usually fly in pairs and are capable of supressing quite a considerable area.

On 2nd August 1966, two aircraft one flown by Wg Cdr Scott, the other by Flt Lt F.P. Riley roped a six man SAS (Special Air Services) patrol into an area. In order to reduce the time spent at the hover, three men were roped from each aeroplane, the aircraft hovering a short distance apart. The lead, with his skids all but in the trees, roped from approximately 8 feet, whilst the second aircraft, due to the slope of the land, was roping from almost 30 feet.

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These operations are but a few of the many carried out by No 9 Squadron during the 5½ years of their stay in South Vietnam, one other being during the Battle of Long Tan on the night of 18th August 1966 in which the small "D" Company of the 6th Battalion, RAR was ambushed by a very large force of Viet Cong. They were dramatically rescued under extremely difficult circumstances and, at the time of the rescue, the Company had only 100 rounds of ammunition between them and certain annihilation.

On 24th August, the Commander Australian Force Vietnam directed that four Iroquois be positioned at 1ATF Headquarters each day from sunrise to sunset.

The village of Hoa Long, approximately 3,000 metres south of Australian Task Force location was adopted by the Task Force for civil assistance. With this in mind, the school children of the village were taken for rides in the squadron's helicopters on an opportunity basis. Judging by the amount of noise and chatter coming from the children whilst they are airborne, this aspect of the programme was very favourably received by the villagers.

The squadron flew a record number of operational hours during October 1966 and also regrettably lost their first Iroquois. Aircraft A2-1018 departed from the Task Force main area with a crew of four together with two engineer soldiers and five boxes of TNT. The aircraft approached the location of "C" Company, 5RAR, hovered over the pad but the crew decided the pad was too small, so commenced an overshoot. A few seconds later the aircraft crashed into the jungle. The aircraft caught fire on impact. The captain, Flt Lt Dohle had managed to warn the crew before the aircraft entered the ~~thick~~ trees enabling them to brace themselves for the impact.

After the crash, Sgt Buttriss, who was not seriously injured, noticed the starboard gunner (LAC Farr) lying outside the aircraft but still with his safety belt on. Buttriss told Farr to get clear of the aircraft and at the same time dragged one of the Army passengers through the starboard cargo door on to the ground 5-6 yards from the aircraft. He then returned to the burning aircraft and attempted to drag the second Army passenger clear, but his pack was fouling the aircraft. As he pulled the pack off this soldier and dragged him clear through the left-hand door, Buttriss noticed that Flt Lt Dohle had left the aircraft. On returning to the aircraft for the second time, Sgt Buttriss attempted to tilt back the seat of the unconscious 2nd pilot, Flt Lt Middleton. As the left-hand door pillar had been pushed in, he could not tilt the seat; he tried to lift Middleton out over the top but, as he lifted him, he noticed Middleton's right foot was jammed between a big tree which had come through the front of the aircraft on the left hand side and the centre console of the aircraft. Buttriss ran to the front of the aircraft and tore some parts off in an effort to free Middleton's leg. Whilst again back in the aircraft, a flame shot out of the ~~lx~~ bulkhead and singed his hair. Buttriss gripped the small

fire extinguisher and sprayed it on the flames. As he was again struggling to lift Middleton out, two Australian Army soldiers arrived on the scene. Buttriss told one soldier to lift Middleton through the side door whilst he and the other soldier pulled pieces from the front of the aircraft. Just as everyone was safely behind the rocks, the aircraft ammunition started to explode and as the cargo of TNT started to burn the fire became extremely intense. The aircraft forward of the engine was completely burnt out. During an inspection later that day the Task Force Air Commander, Group Captain F.P. Raw decided to blow up the rest of the aircraft as it was in enemy territory. This was carried out with 70 lb of TNT.

Flt Lt Middleton and the two Army passengers were carried on stretchers back to "C" Company Landing Lane to await evacuation, whilst Sgt Buttriss, LAC Farr and Flt Lt Dohle walked; however, Flt Lt Dohle collapsed half way back and was carried the rest of the way.

A US Army helicopter evacuated Flt Lts Dohle and Middleton and LAC Farr to No 36 Evac Hospital at Vung Tau, whilst Sgt Buttriss and two Army passengers followed in a squadron aircraft.

Injuries sustained by RAAF members were:

Flt Lt Dohle	- Compound fracture of lumbar 2 and 3
Flt Lt Middleton	- Fractured mandible R/fibula, torn R/lateral ligament
Sgt Buttriss	- Bruises
LAC Farr	- Bruises and contusion

Sgt Buttriss's heroism was later recognised by an award of the George Medal. The citation read in part "In a situation which called for level-headed action and courage of the highest order, Sgt Buttriss showed a complete disregard for his own safety and, by his actions, was instrumental in saving the lives of four personnel who would otherwise have perished in the ensuing ~~fixxx~~ fire. His conduct was in keeping with the best traditions of the Royal Australian Air Force".

On 1st November 1966, aircraft A2-1021 was carrying four passengers from Task Force Headquarters to the village of Binh Ba. Just prior to touchdown, the crew heard an explosion at the rear left of the aircraft. The captain Flt Lt Riley, thinking he was under ~~makex~~ mortar attack immediately climbed away. On landing at a new location, the aircraft was shut down and it was learned that the rotor wash from the aircraft had set off a booby trap mine set in the barbed wire entanglement protecting the area. The aircraft received 20 pieces of shrapnel and one gunman, LAC Blossom had a piece lodged in his flk flak vest. Two of the passengers one being the Commanding Officer of 5 RAR suffered minor injuries.

As an aftermath of the Long Tan battle on 29th July, the Commanding Officer of 6 RAR ~~inxth~~ decided to present weapons to all the units who supported "D" Company of 6 RAR in their battle with a numerically superior VC force on that date. The Commanding Officer of 9 Squadron

together with two of the four pilots who had dropped ammunition to the Company during this battle attended the presentation. The squadron was presented with a 7.62mm AK47 Assault Rifle (Chicom Model 56) which was captured by "D" Company during the engagement. The weapon was mounted in a glass case and retained as a squadron trophy.

The first confirmed kills by 9 Squadron occurred on 8 November when an aircraft flown by Flt Lt Champion was required to strafe two sampans. Subsequent examination by ground troops revealed two sampans destroyed and the bodies of three VC in the sampans.

During the month of December 1966, three pilots previously classified as co-pilots, ie Flt Lts. Banfield, Munday and Grandin were awarded "C" Category Captaincy ratings. It was planned to upgrade the two remaining co-pilots, Flt Lt. Morris and P/O Haxwell in January 1967.

A change in command also took place on 16th December when Wg Cdr R.S. Royston took over command from Wg Cdr R.A. Scott. This was the second occasion that Wg Cdr Royston had taken over command of 9 Squadron from Wg Cdr Scott, the first being in December 1965 when the squadron was based at Fairbairn.

As at the end of December 1966, the progressive figures of the squadron's operational activities were:

<u>Op. Flying Hours</u>	<u>Sortees</u>	<u>Pax Uplifted</u>	<u>Medevacs Uplifted</u>	<u>Freight</u>	<u>VC KIA</u>
2,295	13,773	18,844	239	1,041,740	3 confirmed 5 probables 2 sampans destroyed

After leading an air assault with ARVN troops, the squadron's Commanding Officer was directed to an area on 11th January 1967 where there were four previously wounded ARVN soldiers who had encountered VC command detonated booby traps. On arrival at the area it was seen that there was no suitable landing site close to the troops, so Wg Cdr Royston decided to land on track where the ARVN were situated. This area was too small for the helicopter to land safely, but as three of the wounded were in very serious condition, Wg Cdr Royston decided to touch down and accept the risk of damaging the helicopter. The main rotor blades struck low trees and bushes to the rear of the aircraft, however, the wounded were safely loaded on board after a wait of 10 minutes and were taken to hospital at Vung Tau. There was little doubt that had the wounded not been evacuated, some would have died.

Extensive damage was done to the main rotor blades of the aircraft requiring new blades to be fitted.

As a result of this action Wg Cdr Royston was presented with the Vietnamese Gallantry Cross and Silver Star by the commander of the 18th ARVN Division. The ceremony took place on 26th January 1967 (Australia Day) at XUAN LOC, Vietnam.

Shortly before the squadron arrived in Vietnam in June 1966, a USAF Bird Dog FAC aircraft was lost in the vicinity of No 1 Australian Task Force. A patrol of "A" Company 5th RAR located the aircraft on 5th January 1967 about 6000 metres north-west of 1 ATF. Although this general area had been subject to search and destroy type operations and a number of patrols, the wreckage had not previously been discovered. However, this was not surprising as the aircraft had crashed in thick jungle. There was no landing zone in the vicinity of the crash ^{so} ~~for~~ a squadron aircraft piloted by Flt Lt Champion winched a USAF FAC pilot and two members of SAS into a small clearing near the crash site. This team inspected the crash and were later winched out by the same pilot, bringing with the the remains of the two pilots killed in the crash.

During January 1967, the squadron flew a wide variety of tasks. It participated in three major exercises, flew five air assaults, 16 company lifts and 11 insertions and extractions of Army patrols. They flew more than 355 flying hours for the month.

The air assaults involved the insertion of 290 troops - on two occasions 8 aircraft were used in the assaults. A total of 1512 troops were carried on Company lifts. Four emergency extractions were carried out requiring rapid response to the calls. On one of these occasions, a patrol was extracted from a desperate situation under fire from the VC. The rescue helicopter could not land and was under direct small arms fire at short range for over 5 minutes whilst winching the four soldiers into the aircraft one at a time from a 30 foot hover. During this period the port door gunner accounted for two Viet Cong.

During February the squadron participated in five major operations. In addition to other tasks it also flew 2 air assaults, 16 company lifts, 28 insertions and extractions of Army patrols and evacuated 117 casualties.

On 17th February one of the air assaults placed No 6 RAR in direct contact with a VC Battalion with fighting occurring on the edge of the landing site. A major battle developed. Many of the medevacs involved the emergency extraction of battle casualties and soldiers wounded by mines. Numerous evacuations were made from the battle area on the 17th February and on the 21st, 8 dead and 15 wounded of 5 RAR were evacuated from a very difficult landing site in heavily mined country at the foot of Long Hai Hills.

Two of the SAS extractions were emergencies and in an extraction of ARVN troops from Long Son Island, the three Iroquois came under fire from a number of VC strategically sited on a nearby ridge. The VC were engaged by two gunships with success. Two Viet Cong were claimed as probably killed by squadron gunners during the month.

No 3 SAS Squadron and No 9 Squadron had developed an extremely good working relationship; both units being very proud of the job they had accomplished in the past. As 3 SAS Squadron was to return to Australia, they presented No 9 Squadron with a VC rifle one of its patrols had captured. 9 Squadron returned the gesture by presenting 3 SAS with a

9 Squadron wall plaque. This was the second captured VC weapon to be presented to the squadron.

On the 15th March, an operation was devised in an attempt to set the jungle on fire and so force the Viet Cong to the open. A No 35 Squadron Caribou loaded with thirteen 44 gallon drums of petrol flew over a pre-planned area at 2,000 feet. The drums were rolled out of the aircraft and as the first one hit the ground, the starboard gunners of two No. 9 Squadron helicopters opened fire from 800 ft. They were firing tracers and instantly the whole area exploded with burning fuel. The task was repeated three times and although a big fire was started on each occasion the fire was not sustained. This was the first occasion that this type of bombing had been carried out and also the first time that No 9 and 35 Squadrons had worked together on a task.

On 24th March, the routine extraction of 2 SAS patrols took a turn for the worst when it was discovered that one patrol had dropped its URC-10 homing beacon on a landing zone. An immediate decision was made by Flt Lt. Munday to return to the LZ and collect the beacon. The two escorting helicopters put suppressive fire into the LZ shortly before Flt Lt Munday landed. The patrol quickly located the beacon and the helicopter cleared the area without incident. Had this beacon fallen into enemy hands it would have made the pick-up of future patrols an extremely hazardous operation.

A delicate and dangerous situation occurred on the 13th April 1967 due to the engine failure of an aircraft flown by Flt Lt Champion and Banfield engaged on the extraction of a SAS patrol. As the aircraft was lifting out of the LZ, a loud bang was heard from the engine and the aircraft started to settle. A high hovering autorotation was carried out and the aircraft settled back into the LZ fairly heavily spreading the skids. All crew and SAS members evacuated the aircraft, the SAS patrol moving into the treeline around the LZ to provide immediate security. The lead aircraft flown by Flt Lt Grandin informed operations at 1 ATF and Vung Tau of the emergency and then went in to pick up the crew as the gunships orbited the LZ to provide suppressive fire. Other 9 Squadron aircraft joined other aircraft in the area of the downed aircraft and flew ready re-action troops from 1 ATF to provide a security force to secure the LZ. Technical personnel from 9 Squadron were flown in to assess the damage and the downed aircraft was airlifted out by a US Army Chinook and flown to Vung Tau. An investigation revealed that the second stage of the compressor had failed.

The month of August 1967 started with medical evacuations of two Australians killed in action and five wounded in action. At 1400 hours on 1st August a ten-man long range reconnaissance patrol of No 3 Squadron Special Air Services (SAS) Regiment was successfully inserted. The aim of the patrol was to bring back prisoners for interrogation and arrangements were made with No 9 Squadron for the carriage of POW's if the operation was successful.

On successive days many incidents occurred. On 2nd August aircraft A2-1021 captained by Pilot Officer Davidson was fired on by Viet Cong forces in the XA Bang area while flying a re-supply mission. In the afternoon a long range reconnaissance patrol insertion was carried out. The following day the patrol called for emergency extraction which was carried out successfully. The following day, one * LRRP was inserted and another successfully extracted after they had made enemy contact. Two Australian wounded were evacuated.

Another extraction was carried out on the 5th and on the 6th a contact by 7th Battalion RAR in which 4 Australians were killed and 17 wounded resulted in 9 Squadron aircraft to be called for evacuation duties. The first aircraft flown by Sqn Ldr Cox came under heavy automatic weapon fire as it came to the hover prior to a hoist evacuation of the wounded. Sqn Ldr Cox's right boot was almost torn from his foot by one bullet causing a flesh wound whilst another partially severed his intercommunication lead. The aircraft suffered severe damage, including a smashed winch and was flown back to the Nui Dat for inspection. Subsequently another aircraft completed the winch evacuation of the killed and wounded through dense jungle cover.

Insertions and extractions of SAS patrols continued almost daily as much Viet Cong movement was reported. On 28th October a member of the British merchant vessel S.S. Glengarry became gravely ill. The ship was contacted 15 miles off shore and Sqn Ldr G.J. Ingram (Medical) was hoisted down on to the fantail to attend the sick crewman. Later Sqn Ldr Ingram and the patient were hoisted in and flown to No 36 Evacuation Hospital.

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January 1968 was a busy month for the squadron with a record total of 714 hours being flown. One Operation concluded on 6th January by assistance to US Army helicopter units in the withdrawal of Australian Task Force units to Nui Dat. On 11th January an operation started with the insertion of Nos 2 and 7 Battalions RAR into landing zones to act as a blocking force in an operation designed to strike at the 3rd Battalion 274 Viet Cong Regiment which intelligence forces had located in the area. The squadron supplied a flight of 6 aircraft as part of the insertions team in co-operation with 20 US Army troop-carrying helicopters and several light and heavy fire teams of armed helicopters.

During this period, squadron crews participated in several interesting casualty evacuation tasks. Early in the operation a US Army Dustoff aircraft crashed whilst hoisting casualties from an enemy contact in the late afternoon and 9 Squadron was called in to assist in the recovery. Two No 9 Squadron crews carried out the hoist recovery in darkness and with enemy movement reported on the small perimeters. Later in the same night the standby crew successfully hoisted three wounded New Zealanders from "W" Company 2nd RAR which had been involved in another enemy contact. In another instance the crew of a crashed armed helicopter of 135th Assault Helicopter Company was evacuated by hoist by 9 Squadron. All these incidents high-lighted the value of hoist equipped utility helicopters. Only a small proportion of US Army helicopters were equipped

with hoists and these aircraft were assigned to specialist Dustoff units.

Long Range Reconnaissance Patrols continued to be inserted and extracted by the squadron at a steady rate. Aircraft requirements for a special operation which began on 24 hours notice on 24th January with No 1 ATF Headquarters moving forward to a position North East of Saigon in Bien Hoa Province. The aim of the operation was a search and destroy sweep of areas which it was considered strong enemy forces were infiltrating to position for attack on the Long Binh area and 9 Squadron were again employed in re-supply of both battalions in the field from a forward Task Force Maintenance Area during daylight hours. Throughout the operations, No 9 Squadron deployed 4 aircraft forward each day as well as supplying a further one or two aircraft for tasks in support of 1 ATF (rear).

On the second day of the operation one aircraft was damaged by enemy action during the hoist evacuation of wounded for 2 Battalion RAR. The pillar between the cockpit and cargo compartment was pierced by a small-arms round which severed the radio "intercommunications" loom in the process and deprived the crew of all means of communication. The round eventually lodged in the crewman's plaid-vest causing only shock and bruising.

During the first half of April 1968, operations continued in the Long Hai Hills with the 2nd and 3rd RAR Battalions occupying holding positions whilst engineers located and destroyed the massive cave complexes in the area. In many cases the steep and rocky terrain did not allow the preparation of landing pads and the large amount of explosives required by the engineers would have placed an excessive strain on already overworked hoists. As an alternative method of delivery, loads of explosives each weighing 840 lbs. were slung externally about 30 feet below the aircraft skids and delivered vertically into the crevices and small gullies which abound in Long Hai. In this fashion about 30,000 lbs of explosives were delivered by the squadron. A further 30,000 lbs. were delivered as internal loads.

On 21st April 1 TAF commenced a further operation in co-operation with the US 9th Division which involved assault helicopter company uplift of the 2nd and 3rd RAR Battalions to an area east of Long Binh and the move of 1 ATF Headquarters to Bearcat US Army Base. Each battalion was allotted an Area of Operations in which they were to ambush expected enemy infiltration moving toward Long Binh and Saigon for a repetition of the TET offensive. The squadron assisted in the move of the battalions to their operational areas and carried out tactical re-supply of company, platoon and battery units in the field from a forward Task Force Maintenance Area located at Bearcat.

The 2nd and 3rd Battalions RAR were moved north when the current area of operations proved unproductive from the point of view of enemy contacts.

On 12th May, the 1st and 3rd Battalions RAR were flown to another area approximately 20 miles north of Saigon astride a suspected Viet Cong infiltration route. Simultaneously the 2nd Battalion returned to Nui Dat in preparation for return to Australia. This month also saw a large turnover of pilots and crewmen leaving for Australia at the termination of a twelve months term. Two captains were upgraded to provisional category "C" allowing them to function as operational captains in all tasks except those associated with LRRP insertion and extraction. Later in the month, eight additional pilots were posted to the squadron, thus starting the build up of aircrew pending the arrival of additional aircraft.

~~Air~~ An interesting insertion of a 6 man SAS patrol into the Nui Thi Vai's was carried out in the early morning of 8th June 1968. Whilst diversion was provided by the LFT and spare Albatross aircraft, the "Slick" aircraft was sneaked into the landing zone at low level from a different direction. The insertion was successful in spite of a large number of Viet Cong reported to be in the area. The air of the SAS patrol was to capture an enemy radio transmitter being operated in the area.

At 1300 hours on 10th June a SAS patrol attacked an enemy base camp containing approximately 11 Viet Cong. Results of the action were 8 Viet Cong killed, 3 possibly killed. A transmitter/receiver, one carbine, a pistol and documents were captured. The patrol was then extracted. Aircraft and their captains carrying out the extractions were:

A20378	Flt Lt D.H. Porter
A2-376	Lt Cdr R.A. Waddel-Wood RAN
A2-382	Plt Off R.W. Adam

Bien Hoa was mortared during the night but no damage was done to the detachments' aircraft nor were there, luckily, any RAAF casualties. One member "heard" the "all clear" sound about 10 minutes after the warning siren and climbed back into bed. The following day he was told there was no such thing as an "all clear" signal.

At 1000 hours on 17 June a SAS came in contact with 5 enemy troops whose dress indicated that, possibly they were North Vietnamese Army troops. The result of the action was 5 enemy killed and 1 Australian wounded. The patrol was extracted under fire. During the extraction a US Army gunner was wounded when an M60 machine gun exploded on his gunship aircraft. No damage was sustained by No 9 Squadron aircraft or personnel.

On 19th July 1968 a Vietnamese Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol (LRRP) was extracted after being located by ~~mirr~~ mirror flashes and panel; communications with base had broken down. This was the first Vietnamese LRRP to be extracted by the squadron.

Prior to the above action, on 5th July a six man SAS Patrol contacted 25 - 30 enemy resulting in 13 Viet Cong being killed. By the time the request for extraction had reached Operations Section, all Albatross aircraft had landed back at Vung Tau and were being signed off. However, within 20 minutes an extraction team was standing by at Nui Dat awaiting the arrival of a Light Fire Team (LFT) from Bien Hoa. Albatross Lead departed Nui Dat before arrival of LFT and made contact with patrol and with

161 Reconnaissance Flight orbiting the patrol's position. By the time the LFT AND Albatross 2, 3 and 4 arrived in the area, darkness had set in but there was some illumination from the moon. Albatross 2 was guided to the Patrol's position by strobe light and the extraction was uneventful. During the extraction, the LFT, "The Bandits" of 118th AHC US Army put up a fine display of flying and gunnery for which a letter of appreciation was forwarded to the CO of the unit by No 9 Squadron Commanding Officer, Wg Cdr J.A. Paule.

In August an 8 man patrol in Nui Dinh mountains contacted and unknown sized Viet Cong force. Instead of being extracted this infantry patrol was re-inforced with an additional 84 troops. The task involved four troop carrying Iroquois, one Command and Control Iroquois, two US gunships and two Sioux helicopters of 161 Recce. Flight. Despite severe communication difficulties, the task was completed without incident.

An unusual operation was mounted at short notice during the afternoon of 7th October. Three "slick" aircraft led by the CO carried 26 members of the Provincial Reconnaissance Unit (PRU - Vietnamese) described as a motley collection of outthroats, to a mud flat just north of Long Son Island. A Hoy Chahn had reported a VC camp, guarded by 6 VC in which a wounded VIP was resting. The purpose of the mission was to capture him as, if successful, it would have been the most important capture to date. Unfortunately, due to the difficulty of the terrain and the lack of seaborne assault craft the "prize" eluded capture. However, 22 sampans, quantities of rice and salt were destroyed and, with the help of the LFT, two camps were also destroyed. The entire operation lasted just over three hours after which the PRU were returned to Baria.

No 9 Squadron continued unceasingly with insertions and extractions, long range reconnaissance patrols, crop spraying, relief of troops, medevacs etc and for their untiring efforts they received a just reward in winning the Duke of Gloucester Cup for the years 1967-68. The Citation read:

"The 9 Squadron arrived in the Republic of Vietnam on 12th June 1966, and operates Iroquois helicopters. The Squadron was employed during the period 1966 to 1967 in active operational support to the allied ground forces, frequently engaging in hazardous operations under prolonged periods of exposure to enemy fire. A measure of the determination with which No 9 Squadron has pursued its task is the number of awards for gallantry and devotion to duty, amount them several Distinguished Flying ~~Max~~ Crosses and a Conspicuous Gallantry Medal, conferred upon Squadron members during the year. The high standards of operational proficiency, technical efficiency, and morale reflect highly on all members of No 9 Squadron."

In early January 1969, Albatross 11 captained by Sqn Ldr H.R. Thomas was fitted with an aerial public address system to aid in the cordon and search of My Xuan Village. Three brief tapes were played to inform the villagers:

- a. to remain in their houses and that they were surrounded. Anyone attempting to move from their house would be shot;
- b. that troops were about to search the village and that they (the villagers) were to remain in their houses;
- c. they were to move later to the holding for interrogation.

On 5th January the crew of Albatross 03 captained by Sqn Ldr B.L. Dirou sighted a sampan. On the approach of the aircraft, two Vietnamese males jumped overboard from the sampan and attempted an escape by swimming underwater. A gust of wind swept aside a piece of canvas in the sampan exposing two SKS type rifles and bandoliers of ammunition. A second concealed sampan was sighted nearby. The swimmers and the sampan were machine-gunned resulting in two VC KIA and two sampans sunk.

On 9th January a "sniffer" mission was conducted in the area Xuan Moc East to the beach. The purpose of the operation was to determine to what extent this area is being used by the enemy and to get an idea on the number using the area and how many may be there.

Tracks sighted and readings obtained indicated continuous heavy use by a large number of enemy. Every track showed up as a hot spot on the sniffer box. During the mission a large number of small fires were noted to "go out" indicating they were hurriedly extinguished. One sampan was found intact and shot up with M60 fire. Major hotspots were indicated at known base camp and bunker positions. One camp was occupied at the time of the sniffer; the gunner and crewman both reporting movement as the aircraft passed over.

Conclusion formed was that the area was probably being extensively used by rear services enemy groups. It was thought that the VC 84th Rear Services Group was operating in the area. Tracks tended to lead to and from the beach indicating re-supply from the sea. A number of graves were sighted. Among these were four plots of 20 + graves. They had no headstones and were not old which seemed to point to there being a hospital in that area which was not having success with casualties.

Vung Tau airfield and dockyard were rocketed on 21 January. A total of eight rockets impacted in the area. There was nil casualties or damage to aircraft and installations. The rockets were fired from Long Song Island.

The Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Mr. Gough Whitlam, MP, visited Vung Tau and Nui Dai and was flown in Albatross 03 captained by ~~Sqn~~ Lt. Cdr R.A. Waddell-Wood RAN.

Due to an unfortunate combination of circumstances, a patrol of 9 RAR entered a minefield around the ARVN Training Camp. Albatross Night Dust-Off 1 and 2 were called and took off at 3 a.m. to lift out casualties. Albatross NDO1 (Flg Off P.W. Davies) took out 2 lying, 1 sitting and 1 KIA from pads and then hoisted out an engineer from the minefield who had stepped on a mine whilst attempting clearing operations to reach another casualty. Albatross NDO 2 (Fl Lt G.A. Oldfield) lifted out 2 KIA and 2 WIA from the minefield.

The following is fairly typical of a "sniffer" mission: Two aircraft and a Light Fire Team took off for a specially selected area about 32 miles from Vung Tau. At 1015 hours the first run of the mission started at low level from South to North. The runs are done on parallel tracks at low level. On the fifth run, going North, the port gunner sighted two women tending a garden. The "sniffer" box started to give more frequent readings. Not long after sighting the women, the pilot of Albatross 02 smelt the aroma of Chinese cooking and the "sniffer" box indicated maximum readings. On the following run the crew could again smell cooking. The "sniffer" continued to give maximum readings in the area. Further on, freshly cut trees were observed and a maximum "sniffer" reading indicated recent activity. Several other sightings of freshly cut trees and a bunker were also noted. At another area, a patch of white sand with mounds \pm 1/2 feet high, 7 feet long and 3 ft wide suggested graves. Around, but not over the mounds were footprints which led into tracks to the beach which may have been made by porters carrying supplies from a beached sampan. After the final "sniffer" run Albatross 01 (Fl Lt R.A. Budd) ordered the gunships to fire rockets into the mounds noted previously. No direct hits were made and nothing uncovered to reveal the contents of the mounds. The flight then returned to Base.

On 10th May, an ARVN Company from 2/48th Battalion was in danger of being over-run by VC. The heavy fire team engaged the enemy and broke up the attack and then returned to Nui Dat to re-arm and re-fuel, during which time US Navy OV-10 aircraft were suppressing for the ARVN. On return to the area the Bushrangers again engaged the VC and also supported the Dust-off of 2 ARVN WIA. No hits were recorded on the aircraft despite intense ground fire. Seven VC KIA (body count) were credited to the squadron from this operation.

The Heavy Fire Team was called out again to engage an enemy company hiding in a rubber plantation. One US Cobra was also operating. A sweep by ground forces showed a body count of 14 VC, seven claimed by 9 Squadron and seven by the Cobra.

Another incident occurred on 19th June 1969 when an aircraft was shot down in the Dong Hai Mountains. Flg Off J.R. Sampson in Albatross 03 arrived at the position 5 minutes later. LAC K.J. Shipp, Crewman, volunteered to go down by winch and check for survivors. He discovered one dead in the aircraft and having been advised there were three occupants, searched an area of approx. 30 yards radius for 10 minutes. He was winched out because the aircraft fire was causing the white phosphorous rockets to explode. It was then advised that the aircraft, a Cessna 02 had been hit by an RPG 7 round and that one parachute was 250 yards downwind of the crash site. LAC Shipp was again winched down and searched a new location without success. A second body was later found by ground troops in thick bush.

Wg Cdr R.W. Hibben arrived on 14th May to assume command of No 9 Squadron from Wg Cdr J.A. Paule who was posted to No 5 Squadron.

On 17th August a lift of "A" and "D" Companies, 6 RAR, was carried out. The Coy's together with a cross were moved to Long Tan in preparation for the 3rd anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan which took place on 18th August 1966.

On 21st August, Albatross 04 (Pl Off Treloar) was called to a Dust-off by "A" Company of No 5 RAR. The Company had gone into a bunker complex of a VC Regiment and sustained casualties. Three who were WIA were hoisted into the aircraft which was 15 - 20 minutes in hover. The aircraft was under ground fire during the dust-off and five hits were sustained, one round entering the chin window then lodging in the instrument panel. None of the crew received injuries but the unfortunate lying patient received two further injuries from AK fire to the thigh and throat. The aircraft was flown to Nui Dat and declared unserviceable. The operation was ~~flawless~~ ~~flawless~~ ~~flawless~~ a very fine performance by all concerned. Australian casualties for the action were 1 KIA and 31 WIA.

October proved to be a very busy month for the squadron. The hours flown were the second highest since the squadron formed but in the process two aircraft were lost in action and as both were irrecoverable it was necessary to destroy them. The squadron was actively engaged in troop positioning throughout the TAOR moves involving three RAR battalions, ARVN and RF Troops.

Operations such as Medevacs, Long Range Reconnaissance, Insertion and Extractions, Crop Spraying and Relief of troops continued at a rate too numerous to include individually in a brief history.

To February 1970 a summary of statistics for the squadron was as follows:

	<u>February 1970</u>	<u>Progressive Total</u>
Hours flown	1251.50	35,277.50
Sortees flown	4488	166,139
Pax carried	10,096	280,659
Medevacs carried	45	2,640
Freight carried (lbs)	559,230	19,858,740
Viet Cong (KBA)	1	50
Viet Cong (KBA Poss)	4	40
Aircraft damaged by E/A	3	18

The effort in achieving 1250.50 hours in the 28 days of February, accompanied by an 86.16% serviceability rate (an all time high since the introduction of 'H' Model Iroquois) reflected considerable credit upon the ability of the squadron servicing flight.

On 22nd February the LFT sighted and maintained surveillance over 4 suspected VC in a non-civilian access area. With warning fire, the suspects were forced to remain stationary until Albatross 03 and an American Helicopter inserted ground troops to effect a capture. The suspects subsequently proved to be fishermen. On the 25th of that month, whilst conducting a "sniffer" mission an aircraft sighted 15 persons again in a non access area. Similar holding tactics were adopted until Albatross

16.
aircraft inserted a ground party to effect capture. Again the captives (all women and children) were released after interrogation indicated their innocence. In this instance the LFT had been given clearance to engage, however the flight leader (Flg Off J.H. Driver) very wisely withheld fire pending more positive identification of the suspects. Although neither incident resulted in the capture of enemy personnel, two very significant factors emerged:

- a. The value of the LFT as a holding agency pending deployment of ground forces; and
- b. Further emphasis upon the absolute necessity for positive identification before engaging human targets.

March 26th was a day of incidents. Albatross 02 (Flt Lt. D. Paterson RNZAF) received ground fire when carrying out logistic support. Fortunately no one was injured and the aircraft continued flying. Albatross 01 (Flg Off J. Bach) had a rotor strike after deplaning members of a combat assault into the area. SAS patrols were inserted into enemy territory unopposed. "C" Company, 7 RAR were moved to a new location. "Bushrangers" were kept busy supporting Dustoff and Albatross aircraft. US Dustoff 13 received ground fire whilst taking out 2 wounded personnel. Whilst the "Bushrangers" were suppressing the area an ARVN member trod on a mine resulting in 1 KIA and 9 WIA (ARVN). US Dustoff 13 also took out these members while "Bushrangers" gave close support.

The culmination of the days flying on 9th May 1970 was a 16 aircraft fly past over Nui Dat and Vung Tau to celebrate the squadron's 4th Anniversary in the country. The fly-past was led by Wg Cdr R.W. Hibben, the out going Commanding Officer. It was a tremendous effort on the part of the maintenance flight to get all 16 aircraft airborne at once. The fly-past was the last flight for Wg Cdr Hibben before being succeeded in the post of Commanding Officer by Wg Cdr P.L.H. Coy on 14th May.

No 8 RAR featured in a big move on 29th June 1970. B and C Company moved from Kapyong while elements of D Company moved from Le Loi. Two SAS patrols were also extracted on that day. LFT had a successful day, claiming 2 VC KBA and 1 possible KBA. One (1) VC was WIA. Bushrangers were investigating a report of 7 persons being sighted. While making low passes over the area the LFT saw an enemy run ~~xx~~ out of low scrub. Flg. Officers Dalgleish and Upham in their aircraft engaged the enemy with the above results. The squadron's 40,000 flying hour ~~xx~~ in the country was also flown on this day.

On 3rd July 1970, disaster struck when Albatross 01 (Flt Lt C. Ellis) crashed and burned. All four-crew, Flt Lt Ellis, Flg Off Marman, LAC McNair and AC Scheer were medevaced from the crash site suffering severe burns and shock; LAC McNair being later transferred to the Intensive Care Unit of No 1 Australian Field Hospital at Vung Tau. As a result of the crash, the aircraft (A2-768) was completely destroyed and LAC McNair died from his injuries on 20th July in the presence of his wife who had been flown from Australia to be at his side. The other crew members were medevaced to ^{AUSTRALIA} A

During September several drops of fuel drums were made against illegal gardens. The drums were ignited by tracer bullets fired from the aircraft.

Three dead and five sitting wounded were medevaced from USB Lloyd Thomas which was on station south of the Nui Tam Bo hills. The injuries were caused from an exploding gun turret. On the same day (11 September) a MAY DAY call was followed up and found to be a US helicopter downed near an allied base; all the crew were unhurt.

In between the usual intense activity of the squadron during the month, and official farewell was given to the OC RAAF Contingent, Vung Tau, Gp Capt R. McKimm at a dining in night held in the Officers' Mess. Many senior US and Australian Army Officers attended.

On 27th September, 2 Albatross and 2 Bushrangers met the CAS. Air Marshal C.T. Hannah CB, CBE, at the Freeworld Heliport, flew to Nui Dat, carried out a TAOR Reconnaissance and thence to Vung Tau. The CAS also had an informal tour of the squadron working area.

On the 28th, the outgoing officer commanding of RAAF Contingent was in the lead aircraft of a fly past of 6 Iroquois flown to farewell him from Vung Tau.

The 22nd October was an exciting day for an SAS patrol which went "hot" for the second time in three days when they were fired at from three sides by upwards of 20 enemy. Bushrangers were scrambled from Nui Dat and arrived to find Patrol 34 in a small clump of trees bounded by open ground on all sides. Bushrangers set up a firing pattern to suppress while the patrol moved to a more suitable position. During the firing passes, both Bushrangers aircraft (Flg Off Townsend) and (Flg Off Lowe) were fired on from the ground. In the meantime the clicks had "fixed up" from Nui Dat and a third gunship arrived from Vung Tau. At 1258 hours, Albatross 02 (Flt Lt Wood, RNZAF) extracted the patrol who had worked their way back to their original position in the centre of the clearing. After two Bushrangers had expended on the target, a further Bushranger arrived on the scene and directed artillery and an airstrike on the target. BDA reported a great amount of surface damage in the area.

The 4th November was also a fairly active day with all roles of 9 Squadron being utilized. There were two Special Air Service (SAS) tasks, one an extraction and the other an insertion. The patrol went "hot" when two VC armed with AK 47 and M 79 weapons were sighted 25 - 30 metres from where the Albatross inserted the patrol. An uneventful extraction was carried out soon after with the exception that the two aircraft carrying out the extraction were fired on from the ground during passes. The third Bushranger was called up to the target and also expended in the target area. A further action occurred as a result of a patrol being fired on by two or more enemy with automatic fire. A HFT (Heavy Fire Team) laid ordnance in the area and the ground call sign recovered 1 VC KIA, 2 VC WIA, 1 AK 47 weapon, rifle grenades 310 detonators, packs and food.

laid

November continued to be a most active month for the squadron with dramatic incidents occurring daily. A significant aspect was the increased rate of flying for the squadron which flew 246 more flying hours than for the previous month; the total being 1443-50 hours. The squadron also assumed the aeromedical evacuation responsibility for the Australian Task Force and the crew showed a remarkable enthusiasm for the role.

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1971 →
With the advent of Christmas Day and the consequent "cease fire" the squadrons activity for the day was naturally well down which was reflected in the "Bushrangers" times of 35 minutes each. There were notable visitors in the Navy Minister, Mr Killen and the Army Chaplain General who visited many units of the ATF. Unfortunately people still got hurt or hurt themselves and during the day flew five Australian medical transfers. Two VN civilians with facial injuries were also flown from Van Kiefr to ROK Hospital, Vung Tau. At Nui Dat the resumption of heavy artillery signified that the 'cease fire' was over.

The units historian describes 11th January as being a very quiet day despite operations revolved around a SAS 12 man fighting patrol which ambushed 3 VC resulting in two of the enemy being KIA and one badly wounded. The wounded mans blood trail was followed into an enemy camp area. Albatross and Bushranger aircraft had been called forward and the gunships supplied forward suppressive fire for the patrol as they moved to the camp. The Bushrangers suppressed the camp prior to the ground assault causing one large hut to burn and several secondary explosions. Demolitions were winched to the patrol and after the action, lasting approx. 3 hours, the 12 men were winched-out. Apart from one Australian transfer, DUSTOFF carried two VN children, one with fragmentation wounds to medical centres at Saigon and Baria. Both patients came from LONG SON ISLAND.

The most significant aspect for the month of March has been the sharp increase in enemy contact missions requiring close air support; this has resulted in 1 pilot and 1 crewman killed-in-action and 1 crewman wounded. A number of aircraft also suffered battle damage.

One Viet Cong killed by air and another wounded and subsequently captured, were credited to gunships during an operation on 4th March. On the night of 3rd March and early morning of the 4th, gunships maintained continuous support of a patrol of No 3 RAR following an enemy contact; subsequent Dustoffs by squadron aircraft were also covered by the gunship team.

On 15th March 1971, Albatross 01 received ground fire over the LONG HAI's whilst carrying out a reconnaissance of the area during a VULCAN drop. A second VULCAN drop was directed on to the source of fire by Bushranger 71.

On 20th March during a smoke re-supply of a No 3 RAR patrol in contact with the enemy, Bushranger 71 received ground fire; the co-pilot receiving severe head wounds which proved fatal."

On 21st March, during a re-supply mission in the LONG HAI's, Albatross 01 came under fire which resulted in injury to the crewman and one Army passenger. The aircraft sustained damage and was landed at a nearly secure area where the injured members were dusted off.

On March 31st, Albatross Dustoff 1 was asked to evacuate 3 patients from a patrol of 2 RAR who had been in enemy contact. As the Dustoff aircraft approached to the hover to carry out winch recovery, it received ground fire which resulted in severe head injuries to the crewman who later died. The aircraft sustained damage and was landed at a nearby secure area.

The morning of April 17th was routine and without incident. In direct contrast, the afternoon saw a Dustoff 1 aircraft shot down and destroyed in the Long Hai hills. Whilst Albatross 01 (Wg Cdr F.H. Coy) was flying a reconnaissance, Dustoff 1 (Flg Off M.F. Castles) was called to an army company to medevac casualties from a land mine explosion. During the Dustoff, a winch using a stokes litter, the aircraft took ground fire, lost power and crashed over the winch site, bursting into flames. Beneath the aircraft was an Australian MATT adviser, a US adviser (both killed) and one RF (Regional Force) in the stokes with part of his lower legs missing, but who managed to get clear. The four RAAF members - Flg Off Castles, Plt Off Ford, Cpl Stephens and AC Zegers escaped from the aircraft but the Army Medic L/Cpl Gillespie was killed. Flg Off Castles (Captain) then transmitted over "GUARD" frequency on his survival radio the condition and numbers of his crew members and headed for another location. The area was still insecure and the possibility existed that it was mined. The Dustoff then successfully joined the call sign. Bushrangers led by Plt Off Bishop who had been providing cover for the Dustoff had problems ascertaining friendly positions, partly because of their spread and partly because their English speaking interpreter had been killed in a crash. The Bushrangers then suppressed while Albatross 01 went down and picked up the 4 RAAF members from Dustoff 1 plus 4 Regional Force (RF) casualties from the original mine incident. Co-ordination between Albatross 01 and the gunship team which was alternating 4 ships, particularly considering the communications problem with the people on the ground, was first class - Two other Dustoffs were flown for Vietnamese personnel during the 24 hour period.

May 1971 was reasonably quiet month although most Squadron roles were utilized. Three (3) extractions were carried out in support of No 2 SAS patrols in contact. There were no squadron injuries and no damage to aircraft, however, one (1) SAS member received shrapnel wounds prior to extraction. Statistics as at the end of May 1971 are:

SUMMARY OF OPERATIONAL STATISTICS

	<u>MAY 1971</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Hours flown	1034.30	53139.30
Sorties Flown	3083	220293
Pax Carried	5444	227665
Medevacs Carried	93	3914
Freight Carried	330,840	25,489,188
Viet Cong KBA	-	62
" " KBA (Possible)	-	79
AIRCRAFT DAMAGED BY ENEMY ACTION	-	32
AIRCRAFT DESTROYED BY ENEMY ACTION	-	1

ORDNANCE EXPENDED DURING MAY 1971

	<u>TRAINING AND TEST</u> <u>FIRING</u>	<u>OPERATIONAL</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
M60	52100	56,940	109,040
MINI GUN	146,450	115,520	261,970
ROCKETS (HE 101b and 171b head & Flechettes)	516	407	923

June 71, in contrast to the previous month, was the most active month for the squadron for some time. No 1 ATF mounted "Operation Overlord" during the second week in an effort to seek and destroy enemy main force units known to be labouring in the border area between Phuoc Tuy and Long Khanh Provinces. The operation commenced on 5th June with the deployment to the forward area of both battalian headquarters as well as the Task Force Headquarters. US Army utility, heavy lift and gunship helicopters supported the moves. No 9 Squadron fielded its entire complement of aircraft comprising 8 utility aircraft, 4 gunships, 2 medevac aircraft and a command and control aircraft. The deployment phase was carried out smoothly and without incident.

For the succeeding 10 days the squadron was geared to maximum effort in support of the operation. Following a few days of little action, elements of 4 Battalion RAR came in contact with units from 3/33 NVA Regiment. The enemy was well established in a large bunker system and gunship support was called for. Elements of C Squadron 1 Armed Regiment also moved in to support. Most of the squadrons tasks were involved with this action and consisted of medevac missions, re-supplies of ammunitions to the infantry and the armour in contact and gunship operations. During the day an aircraft from the squadron crashed at the hoist site while attempting an operational demand re-supply to the infantry in contact. Two of the crew were killed and the other two plus an army dispatcher aboard sustained various injuries and were later hoisted out with other casualties. At times the contact was supported by US gunships and medevac aircraft but No 9 Squadron flew a total of 206 sorties for 91 hours 25 minutes to last light.

time to time but none as heavy or as prolonged as that of the 7th. Later in the period, the squadron was involved in quick re-action re-deployments of elements of both battalions in response to the changing tactical situation on the ground.

Other operations of the squadron during the month were:

- a. On June 3rd a medevac of an Australian adviser and ten Vietnamese of 302 RF Battalion in the Long Hai mountains following a mine incident.
- b. On 8th, 18th and 30th June, 9 Squadron aircraft successfully extracted patrols of 2 SAS Squadron which had encountered large groups of the enemy.
- c. On 25th June, a Dustoff aircraft received one small arms round through the tail rotor while performing a hoist evacuation following a contact

July 1971 was a month free of incidents and operations could be described as being of a routine nature.

August commenced with the prospect of more exciting operations in store when on the 1st, three troop lifts were carried out. In the afternoon an SAS patrol discovered an occupied bunker system and Bushranger aircraft carried out an airstrike at that location, but this prospect was not to be fulfilled for a few days as the rather dull routine operations continued until the 8th when the day commenced with a sniffer mission with some good results. A large trooplift was carried out and four Special Air Service operations were also carried out. Two patrols were inserted and two extracted. In early afternoon a request was received to medevac a Vietnamese wounded as a result of a contact just north of Long Hai mountains. Albatross Dustoff 1 carried out the task landing in an area secured by members of 302 RF Coy, whilst cover was provided by Bushrangers 71 and 72. Immediately the Dustoff aircraft had become airborne, the unit on the ground again came under enemy fire. The Bushrangers then engaged the area at the request of the ground callsign and continued to provide fire support until contact was broken.

12th Again on 12th August three SAS patrols were inserted. In the early afternoon "C" Company, 3 RAR contacted a number of enemy forces and Bushrangers 71 and 72 were called to provide firesupport. They were later joined by Bushranger 73 and a rotation was set up to provide continuous Bushranger support. When the unit had secured a suitable LZ, Albatross Dustoff was called forward to medevac three Australian wounded and one injured as a result of the contact. During the engagement groundfire was directed at the Bushrangers and one round was found to have passed through the nose of Bushranger 73. Also medevaced during the day were three US personnel suffering from burns. One Australian and one Vietnamese were also flown to hospital at Vung Tau.

September was a busy month for the squadron, but with the usual insertions, extractions and medevacs etc. September 21st was a long and busy day. Both B and D Coy, 4 RAR who were taking part in a special operation had major contacts with enemy forces in bunker systems. A major fire fight ensued and contact was not completely broken until well into the night. Bushrangers 71 and 72 provided fire support for both call signs in contact in rotation with a number of US light fire teams. The major part of the squadron's role in the battle was medevacing the wounded from both locations and both Albatross 1 and 2 assisted Dustoff 1 in providing support as the task was too great for one aircraft. At the close of the days flying, 25 sorties had been flown to medevac 24 Australian dead and wounded. Bushrangers 71 and 72 provided cover for dustoff operations as all the wounded had to be winched from the contact area and the security of the elements on the ground was at the best only temporary and makeshift. The squadron continued to provide support until well into the night with the light fire team flying support missions and three Albatross aircraft carried re-supplies of ammunition until midnight. By the time they were released the Bushranger crews had been on duty continuously for 15 hours and Albatross 1, 2 and 3 for 18 hours.

By the morning contact with the enemy had been broken as he made good his withdrawal under cover of darkness. A number of sorties were flown into the area of the previous days contact to re-supply the units and carry out further dustoffs. A further three Australian wounded were medevaced from the area.

October 1971 commenced with a rather busy day for the squadron but was probably one of the last busy periods in that theatre due to the reductions in offensive operations as the Task Force prepared for withdrawal. SAS patrol 35, the last patrol to be inserted by 9 Squadron, was inserted without incident and another patrol was extracted without incident. Two major troop lifts were flown, moving B Coy 3 RAR to Nui Dat and C Coy 4 RAR also to a new location. Bushrangers 71, 72 and 73 provided fire support for RF troops in contact with the enemy and dustoff aircraft medevaced two Cambodian wounded to Rok hospital Vung Tau together with one wounded Vietnamese.

On 5th October the squadron carried out its last SAS operation in South Vietnam when it extracted patrol 35.

On 6th October, 3 RAR embarked on HMAS SYDNEY for return to Australia but due to lack of availability of CH47, (Chinooks), 9 Squadron undertook the task of moving the "diggers" to the ship. In all, 160 sorties were flown to transport 500 troops.

Despite a slackening off in activities, Bushrangers had an active and successful day on 22nd October 1971. During a visual reconnaissance of Long Son Island, a patrol located a small system of enemy bunkers and structures in a mangrove swamp. A heavy fire team (HFT) comprising Bushrangers 71, 72 and 73 led by Flt Lt Leyrey-Meyer engaged the area expending all their ammunition. After the strike, the patrol carried out a reconnaissance of the target and gave a battle damage assessment of 100% ordnance on target and 85% total damage. A remarkable effort considering the target area was approx. 20 metres square.

November 1971 was to be the last month of the squadron's mission in South Vietnam and despite a slackening of operations it might be said that they remained to the last. On 1st November a simulated SAS patrol insertion was carried out and a heavy fire team of Bushrangers carried out an airstrike against a suspected enemy base camp. The following day Bushrangers provided cover for a convoy of trucks. During the ensuing days the squadron performed many routine but important tasks such as troop moves, Bushranger air strikes, sniffer missions, patrol extracts, medevacs etc. On 6th November they flew 142 sorties transporting troops and equipment to HMAS Sydney. By the 7th, all the units of 1 ATF had been progressively withdrawn from Nui Bat. Nui Bat was finally abandoned and the APCs moved in convoy to Vung Tau protected overhead by Bushranger aircraft.

Although there were no longer any elements of 1 ATF deployed in the field, the squadron provided a reduced standby of four slicks, two Bushrangers and one night dustoff all on 30 minutes standby at Vung Tau. On 9th November 1971 the squadron marked the cessation of tactical operations in support of 1 ATF with a 16 aircraft flypast in formation; the formation consisting of three box - four of slicks, and one box - four of Bushrangers, flew past the 1 ALSG area at Back Beach and Vung Tau in boxes line astern, then a box of boxes. Then finally reformed to make a figure nine. The formation was led by the Commanding Officer, Wg Cdr P.W. Mahood.

Despite the "final" flypast the squadron was still required for emergency operation until it was finally necessary to withdraw the aircraft for cleaning and servicing prior to their return to Australia.

The redeployment was in four parts spread over three weeks. Personnel were moved on 3 civil chartered aircraft and a servicing party, aircraft and equipment were moved by sea on HMAS Sydney. The first step in the squadron's withdrawal was taken as 14 officers and 10 airmen embarked on a Qantas Boeing 707 for repatriation to Australia on 2nd December.

Between 5th - 7th December the squadrons resources were directed towards packing and winding up squadron affairs. All aircraft had to be completely stripped and cleared to meet quarantine requirements as well as being brought up to 100% serviceability for storage. The technical, equipment and administrative flights worked many hard hours to meet an almost impossible withdrawal schedule. The second major step in the withdrawal took place with the arrival of HMAS Sydney. A party of 18 NCO, and airmen was embarked under the command of Sqn Ldr J.H. Dunn. The sixteen aircraft were then flown aboard and were stowed below decks ~~after~~ after having their rotor blades removed. The

The servicing party maintained the aircraft during the 11 days voyage to Australia and serviced and assembled them ready for flying off the ship on arrival at Brisbane.

The majority of the remainder of the squadron returned to Australia on 9th December. The Commanding Officer, Wg Cdr P.W. Mahood, 6 officers and 42 airmen embarked on Qantas Charter Flight 178.

The last member of the squadron to leave South Vietnam, Plt Off J.D. Thynne left for Australia on 17th December in a RAAF C130 accompanied by the squadron's classified material. The party which had flown to Townsville, joined up with the party which arrived on HMAS Sydney to form a RAAF Contingent which marched through the streets of Townsville with 4 RAR's "Welcome Home" celebrations. The contingent then boarded the Sydney for the voyage to Brisbane.

Whilst the servicing party aboard the Sydney spent the day and most of the evening preparing the aircraft for flight on the 19th while the remainder of the contingent enjoyed a tropical cruise along the eastern seaboard of Australia as the ship sailed from Townsville to Brisbane.

Early on Sunday 19th December, HMAS Sydney hove to and anchored off Caloundra Qld. After final servicing to pre-flight, eight aircraft were flown from the ship to Maroochydore airport. As soon as the decks were clear the servicing crew brought up the remaining eight aircraft and prepared them for flight. The operation to move all the squadron's aircraft and personnel from HMAS Sydney to Maroochydore was completed by 0830 hours. The squadron's 16 aircraft were subsequently flown as a single formation to RAAF Base Amberley, the squadron's new quarters.

Thus ended a historically unique phase in RAAF operations - the return to Australia of a now mature, versatile, armed, logistical, troop carrying/medevac air component of the 1st Australian Task Force.

The squadron was officially established at its new home, RAAF Base Amberley, on 20th December 1971. The Detachment "A" which had been formed to prepare for the squadron's homecoming and re-forming at Amberley was disbanded and on that date Sqn Ldr T. Ward was appointed Temporary Commanding Officer. The following day the squadron stood down for Christmas and New Year break.

NO 9 SQUADRON

SUMMARY OF OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES JUNE 1966 - DECEMBER 1971

AIRCRAFT - IROQUOIS

<u>Flying Hours -</u>	Operational	Non Operational	Total
	52,964	5,804	58,768
<u>Sorties</u>	223,487	14,319	237,806
<u>Weapons Expenditure</u>	2.75 inch		29,285
	7.62 MM Ammunition		15,512,361
<u>Loadings</u>	Passengers		414,818
	Aeromedevacs		4,357
	Freight (lbs)		26,855,160
<u>Damage, Casualties, Losses</u>	Aircraft - Permanent		7
	Major		8
	Minor		42
	Personnel - Killed		5
	Missing		Nil
	Injured		19

NO 9 SQUADRON BRIEF HISTORY
ABBREVIATIONS

APC	Armoured Personnel Carriers
ARYN	Army Republic of Vietnam
ATF	Australian Task Force
ATOC	Air Training Operations Centre
BDA	Bomb Damage Assessment
EA	Enemy Action
FFA	Fire for Fire Area
HFT	Heavy Fire Team
KIA	Killed in Action
KBA	Killed by Air
LFT	Light Fire Team
LRRP	Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol
LZ	Landing Zone
NDO	Night Dust-off
PRU	Provincial Reconnaissance Unit (Vietnamese)
RAR	Royal Australian Regiment
RF	Regional Force
RRF	Ready Reaction Force
SAR	Search and Rescue
SAS	Special Air Services
TAOR	Tactical Air Operational Responsibilities
VC	Viet Cong
VNAF	Vietnamese Air Force
WBA	Wounded by Air
WIA	Wounded in Action