

• CHAPTER 13 •

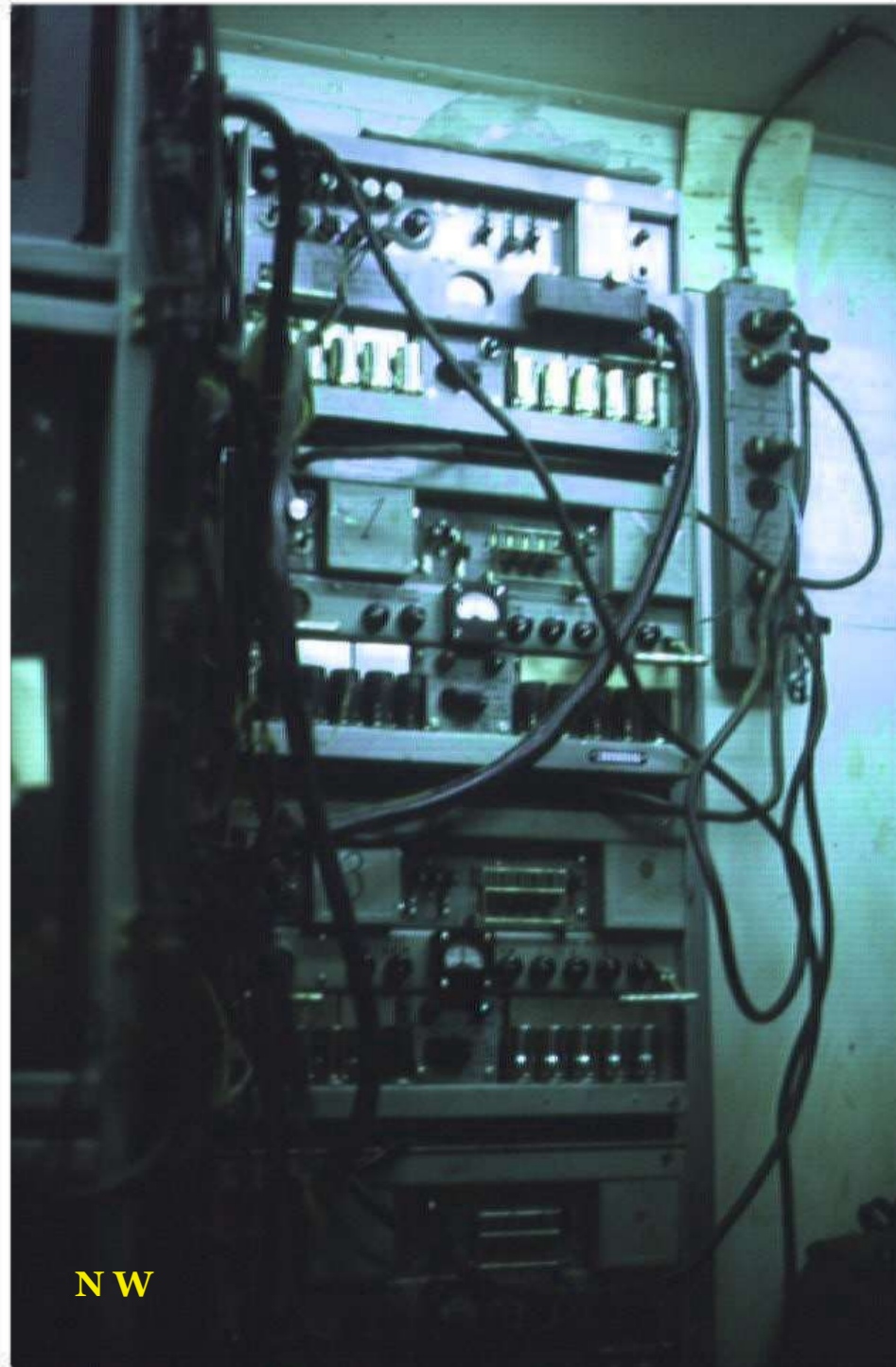
DEPLOYMENT TROOP

In the second half of 1969 I got a very welcome and sought after transfer to Deployment Troop. Its role was mainly to establish long range, high capacity radio communications from more forward areas. 104 Sig Sqn used those links to provide encrypted teleprinter services and telephone networks. Such communications were more hidden from enemy ears and in the case of telephone more direct, timely and informal.

The radios were housed in purpose built "Shelters" shown in the photo top right and worked back to similar set ups, especially on Nui Dat Hill, which we also provided.

The official Signals Corps Vietnam War painting below (from Pronto Website) shows 104 Sqn linesmen connecting up one of our shelters (left foreground, note the characteristic aerials) to their Comms Centre in an Armoured Personnel Carrier (mid right in the picture). The Chinook helicopter is bringing in another shelter



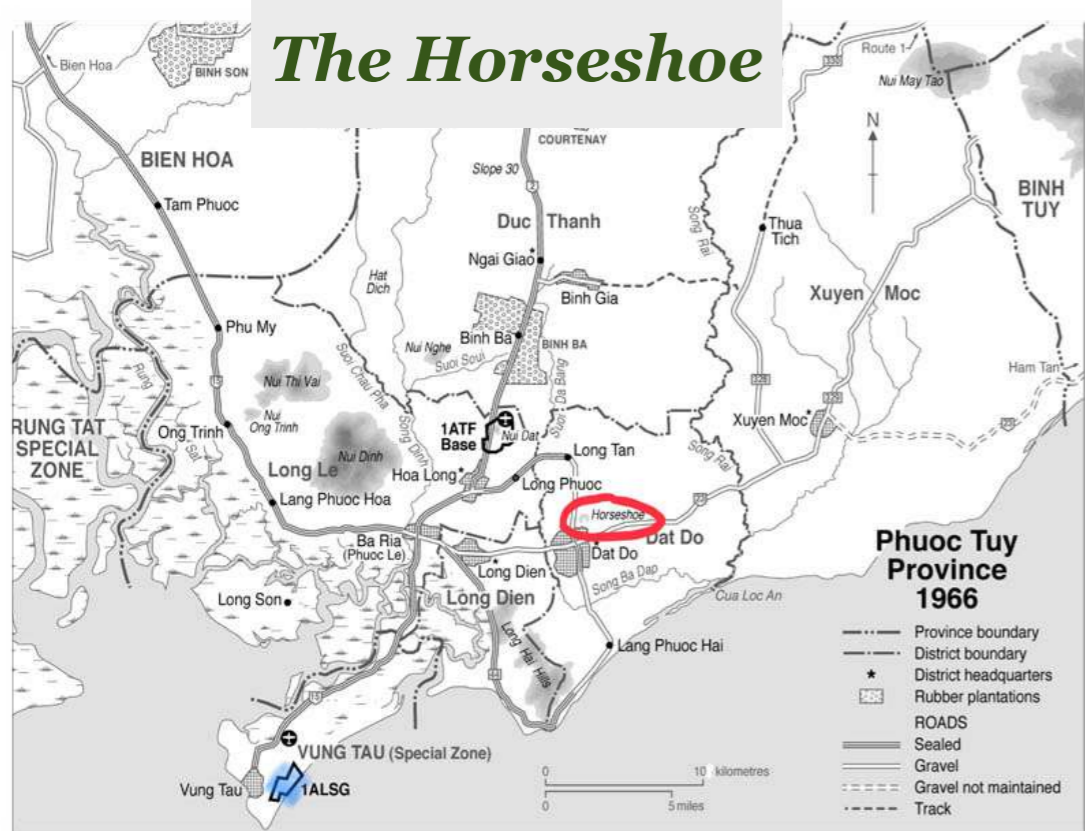


Top Left: Radio equipment inside the American designed Shelters. There were two sets like that, enabling Radio Relay/Retransmission capability, but in most set ups we only used one set. That meant that if something went wrong with the active radios we could immediately install the spare unit and quickly re-establish communications, which was the main aim. The faulty transmitter/receiver would be sent back to Vung Tau eg by chopper and another spare would instantly be on its way to us. Fortunately though the equipment was pretty reliable.

Bottom Right: Power was provided through generators based on air cooled Volkswagen engines (bottom right) which we could lift. We rotated and serviced those engines every so many hours although they could be an absolute pain in the butt to start at times. Of course if you have power you can have such luxuries as fans (see pic on previous page) and fridges.



The Horseshoe



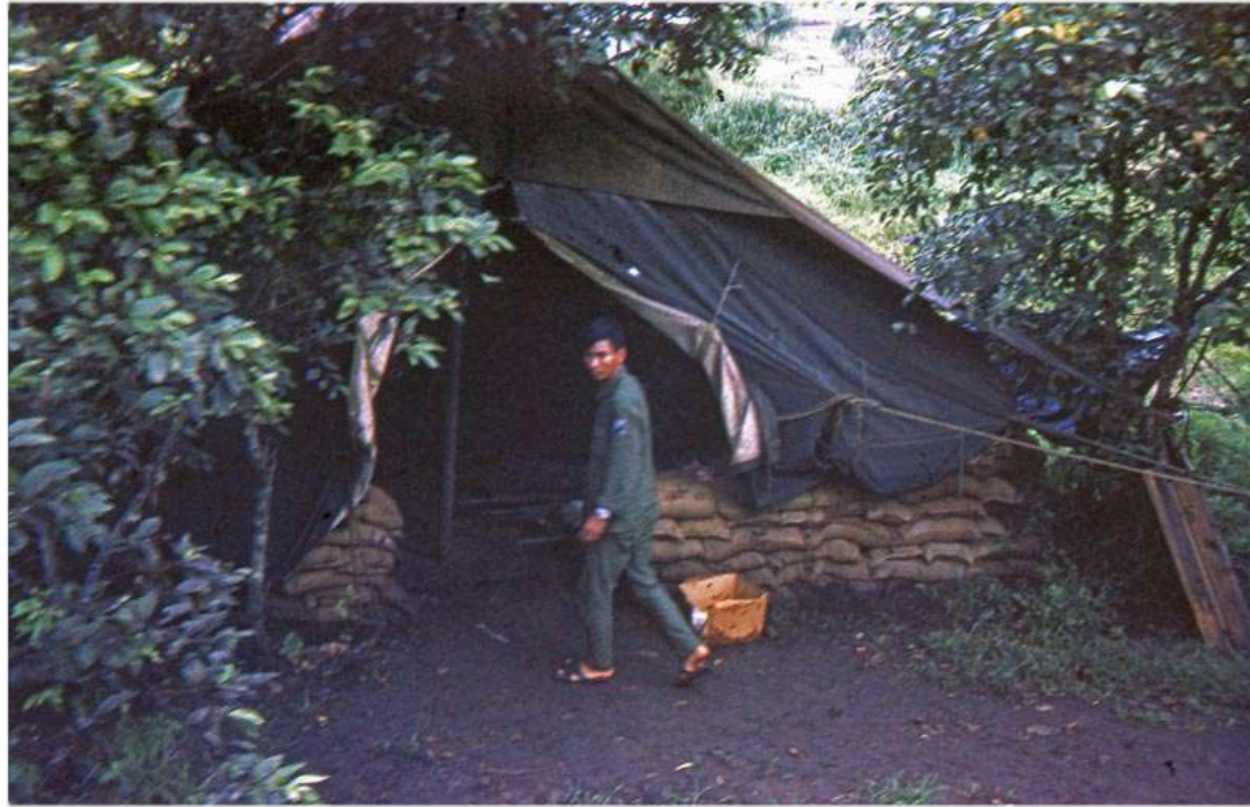
One of our permanent set ups was at The Horseshoe, a semicircular feature (bottom right) just north of Dat Do Village (a noted VC stronghold) and south east of Nui Dat via Long Tan. It was occupied by an Infantry Company and used as both a Fire Support / Patrol Base (see American Mobile Artillery top right) and a training camp for ARVN Soldiers (see photos overleaf).

It was also notorious due to an ill fated barrier minefield constructed from there to the coast to restrict enemy troops leaving the Long Hai hills. Unfortunately it wasn't (couldn't be?) properly protected and the VC deftly lifted many of the mines for very effective use against our troops. An Infantry soldier told me how he watched a captured VC woman walk barefoot along a track subtly detecting the prongs of the mines with her toes, they were good at their craft

Eventually the field was dismantled but by then the VC had become well supplied and very skilled in their use. During my time most of our casualties were from these mines (see the Hospital chapter).



EM



CS





The track leading into the horseshoe. Our set up was along the ridgeline shown in the top two pictures.





Top left: The mess facilities below our position.

Bottom Right: Looking back to the entrance, across dat Do village and to the Long Hai Mountains.

Bottom Left: Mud, mud, mud. A "Liney", hardworking guys who connected cables between the various elements of a Signals network eg radios, comms centres, switchboards and telephones





AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P09432.009

The pic top left shows our shelter being lifted into its permanent position at the Horseshoe. The one below shows how we set it up. Note the parachute over the top for shade and a shower block in the background. Plus tea/coffee making facilities and there might have been a fridge there as well.

The tents in the background (top left) belonged to the Infantry soldiers based there

Yes the guy bottom right is barefooted, wearing footy shorts and reading a paper. After all it was bloody hot and our mates back at Vung Tau would always let us know if any senior ranks were coming our way so we could then dress appropriately.





A working party helping to sandbag our position. That's me on the left of the picture above (before I was posted there).

Unfortunately, as you will read later, we didn't protect the adjacent tent or the sides of the shelter for some reason.



This Greg Rogers' photo shows him and Tony Neilsen (red hair) with one of the Kiwi infantry guys based next to us at times. A few of us can claim to be "true Anzacs" as we did directly support the New Zealand Company when it was there.

On first meeting Kiwis I couldn't believe how at dinner time they would take opened cans of by then warm beer into the mess. As beer was only available for a very limited time before dinner that way they got a couple of extra cans in. OK at times I may have followed suit.

Note how the shelter is mounted on metal strips. On my first night there I had just settled down to sleep on its floor, as I was "on duty", when there was this knock, knock on the closed door. I looked out but no one was there. Thinking it was my mate stirring me on his way to the adjacent tent I paid no more attention. Shortly after knock, knock again. "Are you stirring me" I called out as I looked out again, but no answer.

Lying back down my mind started to do the two Rex voices thing as the noises continued. "Maybe its someone trying to get me outside. Nah there has to be some explanation. But who is knocking?" I was getting pretty edgy as I couldn't fathom what was going on. Then as the door knocked again its handle moved. I had my rifle up to my shoulder, cocked, aimed, safety catch off hoping it wasn't someone coming in. Nothing happened and eventually I went to sleep, loaded rifle right beside me.

Next morning I asked my my mate if it was him only to get the reply "so you got caught too did you?". It was shock waves coming through through the metal flooring from mortars being fired nearby that was causing the noises. The scared Rex was wrong, it wasn't someone knocking, there was an explanation - False Alarm No 12.

This also raises the question how could we just go to sleep after a situation like that? It happened many times.



“What Have You Become?”

Just before Xmas one of the breweries in Sth Australia offered a deal that if some one bought a carton of beer they would send it to us. Dad was very generous and remember we may have had a fridge. So after dark (we had to be discreet) we would sit on the side of the ridge and have one or two whilst taking in the view across to Dat Do village. The photos right show that general outlook particularly the small clearing between the Horseshoe entrance and the Village.

One evening, in the company of a couple of Crunchies (Infantry soldiers), we were taking this in when all hell broke loose in the clearing. Tracer bullets were flying in all directions from our bunkers, the ARVN bunkers in the village and from the VC caught in the middle. Meanwhile, safely distant from danger, we were cheering them on, like spectators having a beer on the Hill at a test match.

Our guests were pointing out the VC's RPG* explosions near our bunkers when we heard a tank from further around the ridge move into position. Two splintex** rounds stopped everything, the VC were all killed. We let out an uproarious cheer, toasting as if we had just won the test match.

Alone, a bit later, my mind suddenly asked “what have I become, I just celebrated people being killed”. On the surface I had become exactly what I needed to be; cold hearted and capable just as the Army had moulded me. I consciously dismissed the question at the time (cognitive dissonance?) but sub consciously that was a very pivotal moment in my life. I did not like what I had become and as outlined in the next chapter I was also having serious doubts about the whole Vietnam War affair.



* **RPG = Rocket Propelled Grenade**

* * **Splintex rounds, a close range anti personnel weapon, blasted out hundreds of small metal darts, a bit like carpenters nails with little fins.**

Yippee shoots



Occasionally the Infantry would conduct nighttime H&I Shoots (Harassment & Interdiction) where a number of machine gun rounds would be fired at a selected grid reference. This usually involved the 50 Calibre weapons (below) that were mounted in the main bunkers (top left).

We got to join them one night, all taking turns on the 50 cal, listening to the characteristic thump, thump, thump as it spat out its huge rounds. There was also an M60 machine gun being fired below us. It was a real “Yippee shoot” as we poured out round after round, tracers marking the pathway to the targeted area.

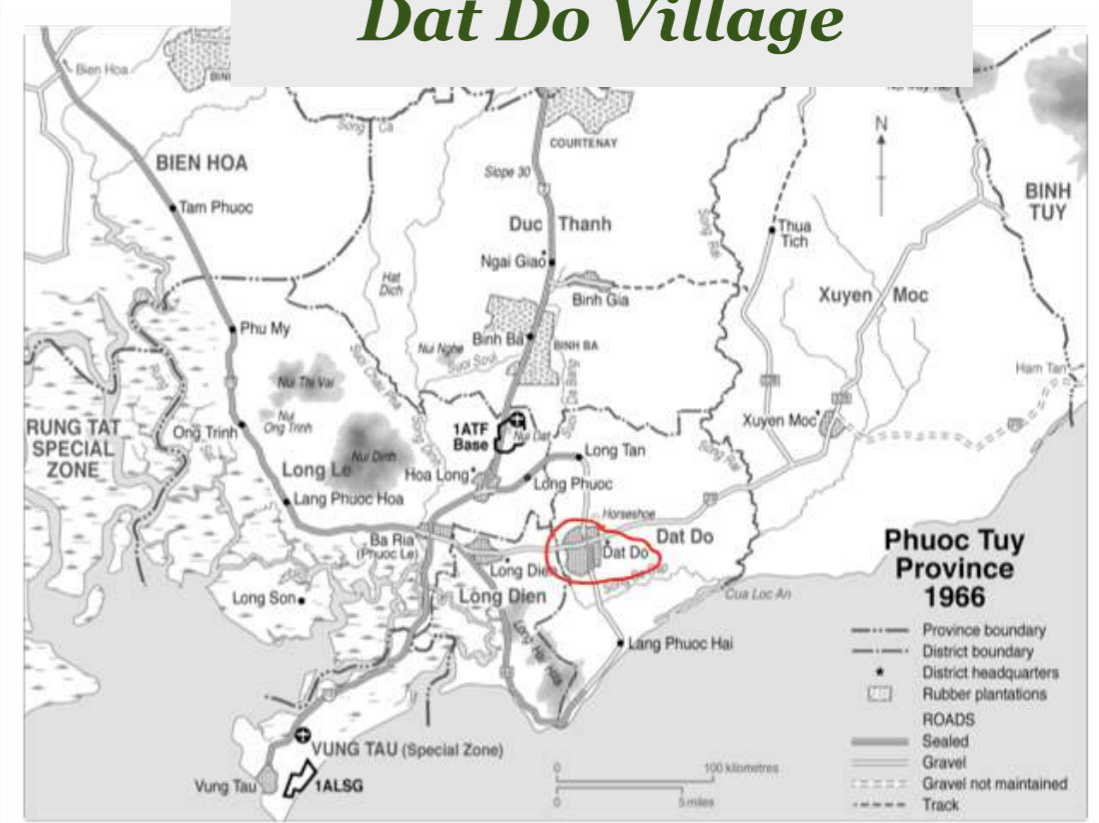
After a while we noticed that the tracer rounds were starting to drop short so we stopped firing. The barrel was glowing red hot, it had overheated and expanded causing the rounds to fall short. The M60, which had also stopped firing, was visibly red hot below us.

Everyone was standing around having a bit of a giggle when suddenly bang, the 50 cal fired off without anyone touching it. A round had ignited in the hot chamber causing another to be loaded and then fired. A few more followed but eventually everything settled down. Pretty serious “Boy’s Toys” we were playing with.





Dat Do Village



I got invited to go on some of the “water runs” into the nearby Dat Do village. A huge water bladder on the back of a truck was used to fill kerosene tins that local women had on the end of shoulder mounted bamboo poles (as shown on the next page).

These photos illustrate the type of housing and a street hawker selling something that obviously appealed to the kids.

Following photos also illustrate the amount of food plants that were growing amongst the houses





A couple of the distribution points and a young “apprentice” (bottom right) learning her trade





We were a pretty big hit with the kids. As a lookout I used to sit on the truck cabin, rifle in hand, and the kids would clamber up around me. As with the orphanage the number one kid would get to sit on my right, number two on my left and the rest would sort it out. Again this was all part of the “winning the hearts and minds” strategy but it was also a very special experience that I still recall fondly. There was a real connection to the people (ok some may well have had close links to the VC in that village) and a sense of doing something very valuable.

No VC, No VC

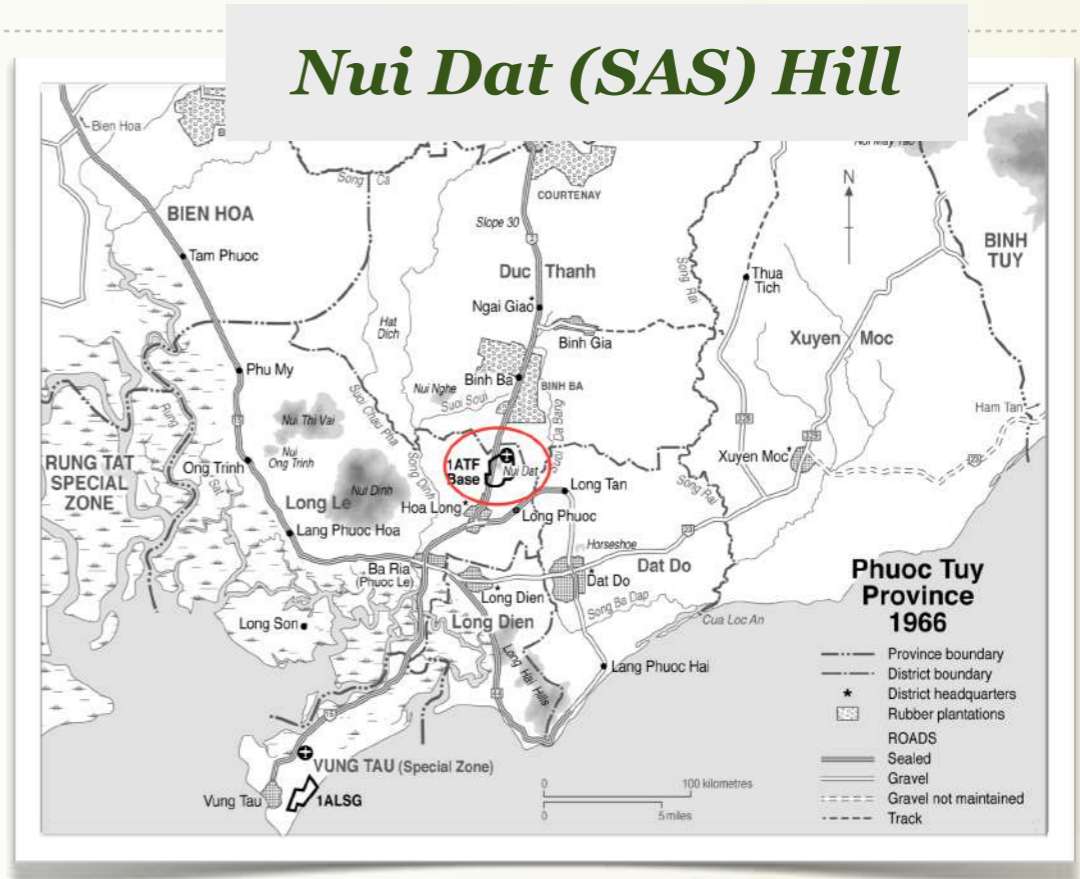
Sitting atop the truck one day, chatting away with the kids, I was startled by the ratatatatat ratatatat of automatic weapons firing close by. I spun round, rifle to my shoulder, ready for any enemy who may be coming at us.

“No VC, no VC” the older lad in this photo calmly declared as he tapped me on the shoulder. Apparently the ARVN were using a nearby rifle range.

So here was the big, tough (very scared) Aussie digger being comforted by this young kid. I don't think that is how the scripts were meant be written, but I certainly swallowed my pride that day.

What's the score now, False Alarm No 13?





Much of Deployment Troop's communications fed to our installation on the hill at Nui Dat. By my time there we were nicely set up in a hut with one of us attending the shelter at night.

Our mess and boozier was with the SAS Unit down the side of the hill.

That's me on the right of both pictures. Apparently I am cutting bread with a machete in the top one.



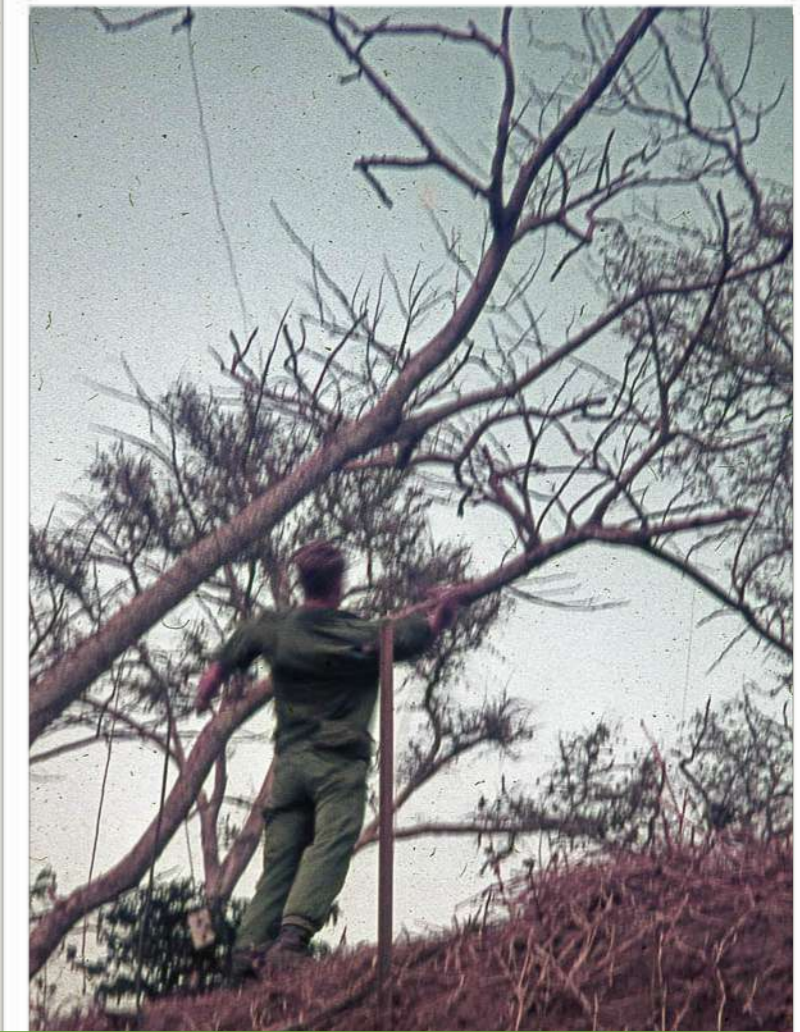
GR

The picture at left shows our hut in the background, the airstrip below that and the rubber plantations that covered much of 1ATF beyond that. The centre “bunker” housed our and a similar American shelter.

I was on duty there one night, sleeping on the floor, when I was woken up by a nice warm rat sleeping on my belly.

The next building was a generator shed and 104 Sig Sqn had a Radio bunker at the far end of the pic top right. That photo shows a partially completed mortar pit being constructed outside our hut. A couple of the willing sandbaggers who helped build it taking a break at right.





Many of these photos were taken during an exercise where several of us tested various communication systems, including the use of the Pantech mobile comms centre (top left) and shorter range radios (25 sets). Steve, an operator, is extending the range of those radios by casting an aerial wire into the trees (top right).

Of course we made the most of our time together as a group. As a Signals Unit we replaced on a one for one reinforcement basis rather than Unit for Unit as did many other corps. Of course we all looked forward to our “Reo” coming as we would be heading home. In the photo left we are writing a song *Send Me Reo Along Mate* to the tune of *Tie Me Kangaroo Down Sport*. I don’t remember the words but do recall that some of it was a bit bawdy, unsurprisingly.

“Waltzing Matilda” was a bit of a favourite song guaranteed to bring on a severe dose of homesicknesses as did a sighting of what looked to be the Southern Cross at one stage.



The hill was a prime piece of real estate for views. The pics at the top show the Luscombe Field airstrip primarily used by cargo aircraft eg Caribous. To avoid any artillery fire the aircraft spiralled in to land and take off and during red alerts the runway would also be closed. However, a mate was onboard an aircraft coming from Saigon that must have held some important cargo as they did land during an alert. Apparently they spiralled in steeply, touched down at the left end of the strip above and braked so hard he thought they would end up in the cockpit. They lurched into the apron area shown with the tailgate down, hurled the load out near the hut and raced straight back to the strip where they gunned it off into a steep climb, again using just half the runway.

I actually saw two of those lumbering Caribous having a mock “dog fight” over the strip one day.

As previously mentioned the RAAF were very good. I watched a helicopter practicing engine failure drills over that strip one day. Apparently the idea is that as they fall the aerodynamics will keep the blades rotating and at the last minute the pilot adjusts their pitch to provide up lift and a “soft” landing. I was watching this chopper hovering when suddenly it nose dived. “What the ...” but at the last moment the aircraft stopped, its tail rotor swinging down through a 180 degree arc, only missing the ground by meters. Gaping in awe I watched them do it a couple more times - gutsy stuff.

Being atop the hill was often like being at a (very deadly) air pageant. I watched one of the “push me, pull you”* spotter planes (top right) flying low above of the trees west of Nui Dat with a Phantom jet circling wide of it, like a ravenous shark. Occasionally the spotter would lift up and fire a white smoke marker at a target he had detected then quickly clear the area as the phantom keeled over to race in low then lift and launch its bombs onto the marker. In no time the spotter was back reassessing the situation. Again very gutsy stuff.

The pilot of one of the American needle nosed jet fighters often took delight in buzzing our airstrip. You could pick him up way to the west as he turned to make his run. From the hill you were looking down on this huge, silent dart thrown by some giant. Suddenly the sound would hit as he launched himself up and into a Victory roll at the end of the runway. He usually repeated it just in case anyone missed him.

“Puff the Magic Dragon” (below right) also put on spectacular light shows with its flares and three side mounted mini guns blazing away thousands of rounds at enemy targets on the nearby plains. Those guns, which can be seen just before the side door in the picture, could place a round every couple of meters as they passed over. I often thought how thankful I was that the enemy didn't have similar weaponry to us, it must have been sheer hell under the stuff thrown at them.

* Note the pushing and pulling propellers at each end of the fuselage .

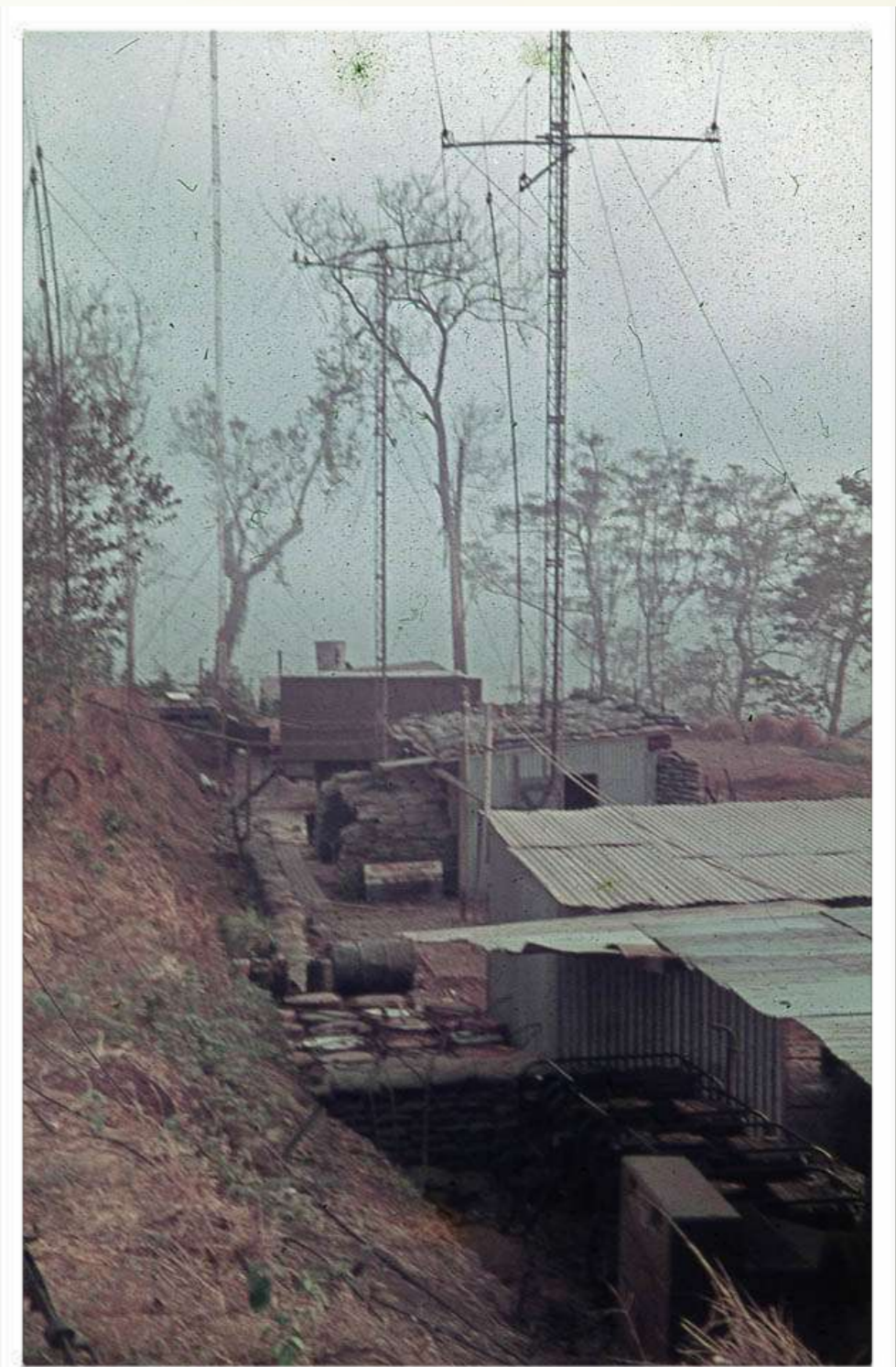


At Nui Dat Hill one time we were chatting to a dope smoking American technician who operated their shelter. He had only known Aussies for two weeks but had a pretty good grasp of our behaviour and sense of humour. A truck with a crane then arrived to swap their generators. “Weak as piss” I gibed “using a crane for that. We would just lift them up with a couple of blokes”. “Yeah man but there are three generators” he replied “you guys would take the first two off then decide it’s time for a piss break. You’d leave the last one till tomorrow”. Totally untrue of course.

He said he had already worked out that if Australia and America ever went to war against each other he would get his commanders to load up every available aircraft with beer, drop it into the Australian lines, wait a few hours then walk in and capture the lot of us.

Another American, holding an M16 Armalite rifle was wondering how he could get it back to America. “Why?’ I asked “it’s not really a hunting rifle”. “Man when those riots start back home you need a baby like this” he replied.

We came from different worlds it appeared.





As mentioned we were catered for at the adjacent SAS mess and boozer. I recall my first time in their boozer along with another newcomer David. I expected to see a mob of rough, tough looking blokes but those guys were selected for their cool headedness rather than brawn, although they were obviously physically and mentally tough as well. On introducing ourselves we got the reply “see it takes two of you to replace one of us” (which was probably a gross underestimate). They were relating our two names to their recently lost mate Trooper David Fisher, something they were taking pretty hard. They had an amazing record and only lost a few of their own. We heard some amazing stories of their close encounters eg as they would lay camouflaged right on the edge of VC camps gathering intelligence and being almost peed on by VC unaware of their presence.

I have mentioned that the Brigadier was very strict on grog and he had duty officers closing boozers at the stroke of 10 pm (if he hadn't already sprung an alert). However we were drinking in the SAS bar with Ray Simpson, a Victoria Cross winner, when the duty officer came to the door and saw him. Apparently there was a tradition that a VC winner could declare when a bar would close and Simpson quietly said “20 minutes, ok”. The Officer returned later and got Simpson's nod to close up. I think we all ended up in one of the tents though. Simpson did have an aura of bravery and capability about him and I was not surprised that he had earned a Victoria Cross.



DP

Entertainers performed at the “Luscombe Bowl” at the end of the Nui Dat air strip. It was a bring your own chair arrangement.

Of course I don’t remember the mini skirts but do recall one of the female entertainers cracking jokes that almost had us blushing.



SJ

104 Sqn Mates



On some "off duty" nights I would visit a lot of mates I had down at 104 Sig Sqn. This usually meant a few hours in the their boozier, named the "Abraham Club" after one of their guys who was killed in action*. As there was a curfew I would camp in the vacant bed of someone on duty and return to The Hill the next morning.

I also got invited to Xmas Lunch in their mess. Nice to be looked after by their Officers in the traditional way. The Xmas message below is from the Adelaide paper "The News".

*Fortunately there were only a few Sigs killed or wounded in Vietnam but I know of so many near misses that I often wonder if we were the luckiest Corps there.

GCI

Season's greetings from Vietnam



PTE. CLYDE SLACK, Macclesfield, 2nd Advanced Ordnance Depot, Vung Tau: "Hello there's to you, Beverley, n, Dad and all. I e you have a merry istmas and that the goes well. I'll be king of you"



PTE. MALCOLM LINKE, of Nuriootpa, 2nd Advanced Ordnance Depot, Vung Tau: "Hello Mum, Dad and my brothers and sisters. Here's hoping you have a happy Christmas and New Year. I should have a good time"



PTE. PETER RENSHAW, of Crystal Brook, 5th Company RAASC, Vung Tau: "Best wishes and a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to Mum and Dad and the family. Best wishes to all my friends at home."



CPL. Mal SHEPHERD, of Port Pirie, Advanced Ordnance Depot, Vung Tau: "Hi, Joan, Rose, Bill, Kym and Ian. Hope you are all OK. Am bursting to get home."



SIGNALMAN REX FISHER, of Port Pirie, 110 Signals Squadron Vung Tau: "Best Christmas wishes to Mum and Dad and all at home. Thanks for parcels and letters and I'll see you all soon."



PTE. NEVILLE CHALMERS, of Kielpa, 5th Company, RAASC, Vung Tau: "How are you Mum and Dad, Trev and Janine and all the folks at home. Hope you all have a good Christmas. I'll be having as good a one as possible."



SIGNALMAN GLEN MICKAN, of Coonalpyn, a member of 110 Signals Squadron, Vung Tau: "I wish Mum and Dad and the rest of the family and friends and relatives a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year."

Long Binh - Saigon



Now I am sure it was for a very good reason, not just a “swan”, but a few of us took an “official” trip to the American base at Long Binh and then to nearby Saigon (below). We flew in an American Otter (left).

In Saigon we could wear civilian clothes but if in uniform we had to carry a rifle. Now that caused a problem as taxi drivers would not stop if they saw we were armed. Obviously they had had a few bad experiences. We became quite adept at standing face on to the traffic, waving both arms at oncoming cabs, with our rifles hidden behind our legs. When they stopped and we then grabbed the rifles they weren't game to take off. Mentholated Salem cigarettes and washing powder, which we were cheap for us, were prime currencies for those taxi drivers.

At bottom left is the “Free World Building” the headquarters of all Vietnam operations. The Australian command was supported by a detachment of 110 Sig Sqn.



SJ





We stayed at the Canberra BEQ (Batchelor Enlisted Quarter) where the Aussie troops were housed in Saigon. As can be seen in the top photos it was well screened against grenades etc and was constantly guarded.

Whilst there I could hear a great commotion in a side street. Looking out I saw a funeral procession, probably Buddhist, and what struck me was that it appeared to be a celebratory rather than a mourning process. Quite in contrast to our usual approach I thought.





A few scenes around Saigon including the Zoo at top.



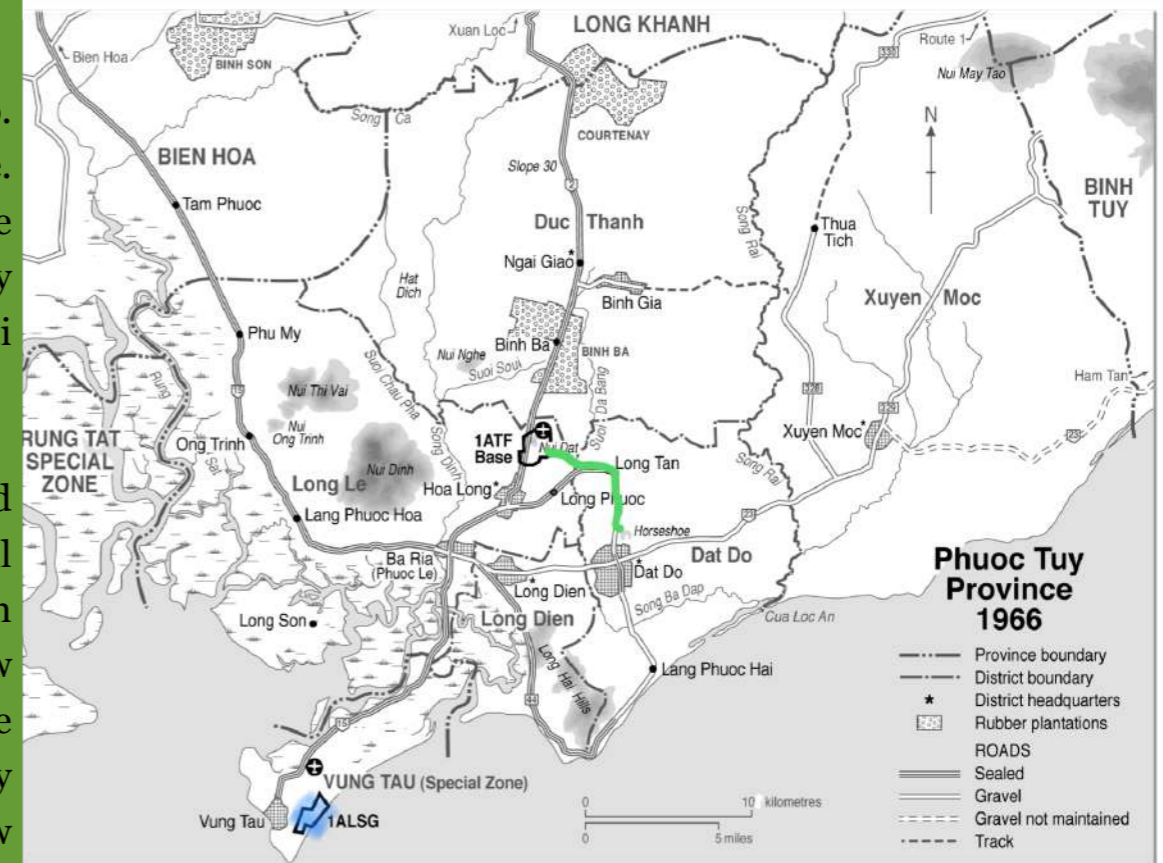
Road via Long Tan

Once we were sent out to the Horseshoe to help out with some work they had to do. Being pretty hot and parched we asked if they had any cold water in the fridge. “Nope” came the reply. “Any gophers* then?” “Nope” came the reply again. “Have you got anything cold?” “Take a look”. The fridge was full of VB which certainly helped to chill the situation but left us in a slightly unfit state for the journey to Nui Dat via the Long Tan area.

To make matters worse just as we were leaving the guys told us that the ARVN had been ambushed along there a couple of days before. “She’ll be right”, which may well have been Dutch courage talking, and off we went in the Landrover. Some way down the track we came to an area where the thick grass on each side of the very narrow road was higher than the vehicle and for some distance. “Oh shit”, it was a prime ambush zone from which there would be little chance of escape. We suddenly became very sensible and very scared but gritted our teeth and continued, now desperately hoping “she’ll be right”.

Fortunately it was False Alarm No 14, although after I had left Vietnam some Deployment Troop guys did encounter a mob of VC on that track, using some deft accelerator work to get out of strife.

* Gophers = cans of soft drink

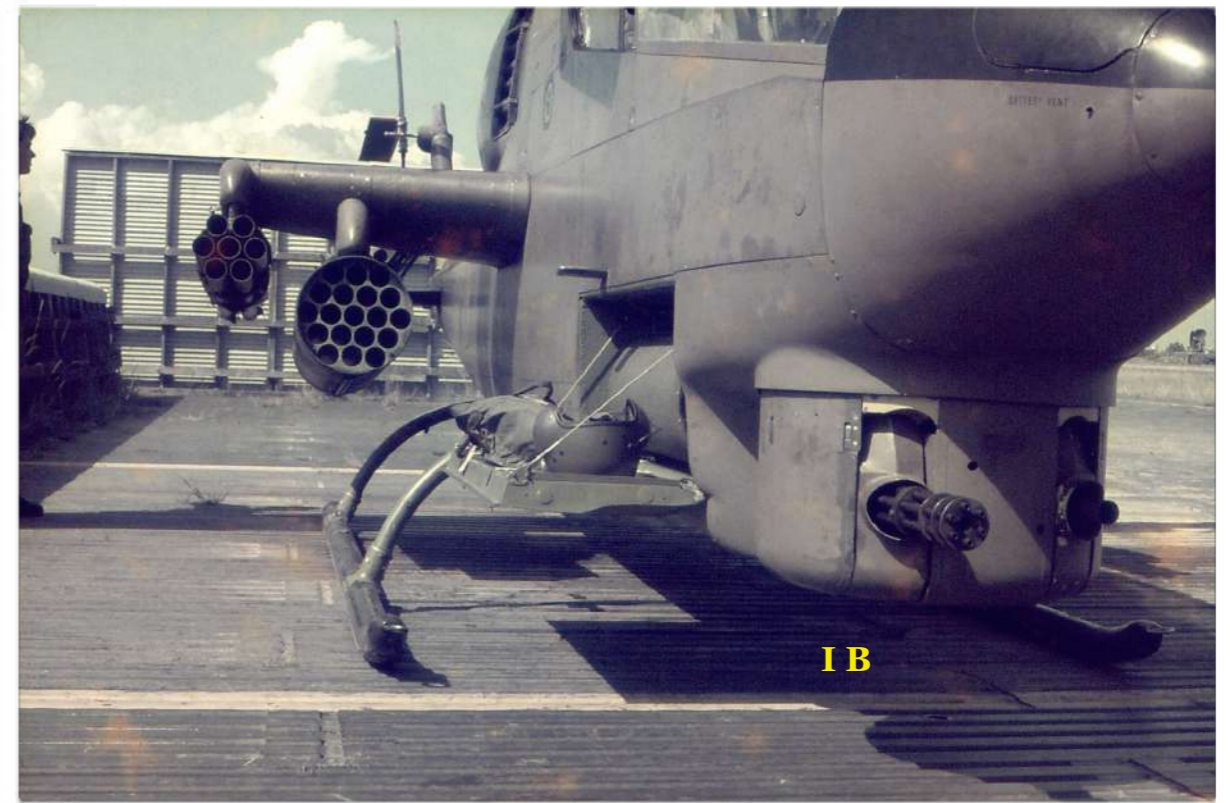


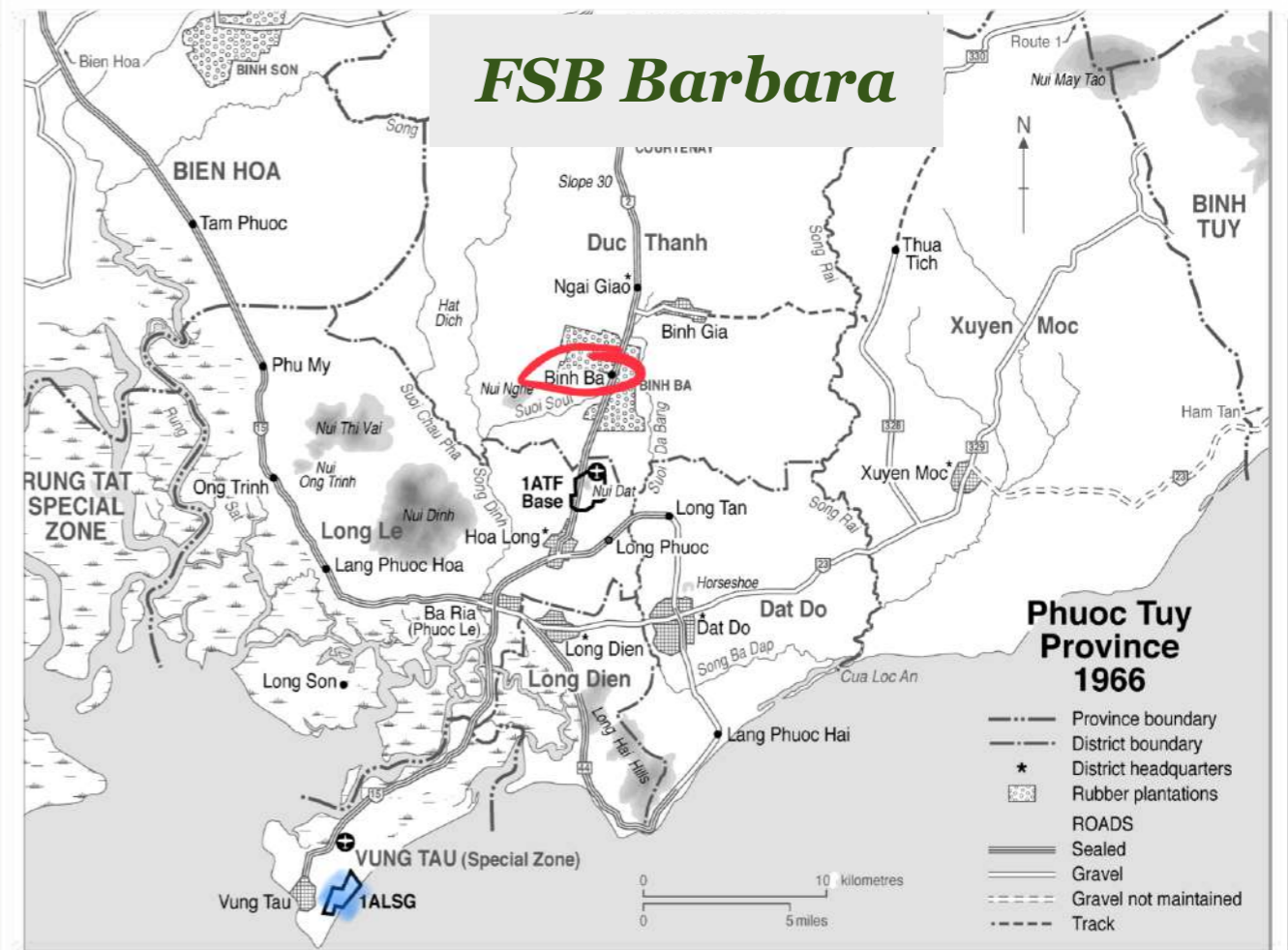


As we approached the back gate to Nui Dat we came across a fire power demonstration by Huey Cobra gunships (as shown in these photos). They were equipped with rapid fire miniguns and other weapons in an articulated nose cone which followed the pilots direction of view (see right). On the sides they carried rocket pods.

As they came in from behind us you could see and hear the whoosh, whoosh of rockets flying at the target. Their impacts were followed by hundreds of sharp cracks as the supersonic rounds from the miniguns turned the area in front of us to dust. There would be no escape if you were caught in that

The shape of the Cobras and they way they prowled around also put me in mind of sharks. We often watched them at night, their tracer bullets outlining a continuous red parabola followed by a sound like a ship's foghorn. As I've said I was so thankful the VC didn't have that sort of weaponry.





Fire Support Base Barbara, just north of the village of Binh Ba, was nestled amongst rubber trees (above). Binh Ba had been the site of a mammoth battle involving tanks and APCs (Armoured Personnel Carriers) a few months prior to us being there.

Another thing we were told at Canungra was to never run over any pot holes in the roads as they could be newly laid mines. As we drove up by Landrover there were fresh, unavoidable pot holes everywhere. Again it was a case of grit the teeth and keep going (“She’ll be right”). Fortunately that was False Alarm No 15 but Dave Morgan tells in his book (see Preface) of a vehicle, in front of his, hitting such a mine with fatal consequences.

The women right, possibly in Binh Ba village, were a local “road gang” repairing such potholes by hand.





As these were temporary set ups our shelters were mounted on trucks driven into bulldozed trenches. The picture top left shows the generators arranged in front of the truck, a parachute for shade/camouflage and the aerials mounted very low. It was learnt (eg at the Battles of Coral/Balmoral) that high mounted aerials, whilst probably more effective, provided an obvious indicator to the enemy of where major communication systems, a prime target, were located.

The structures top right were the “sleeping quarters”. They were corrugated iron half tubes, covered with sandbags, into which you crawled for a good nights sleep. The adjacent sandbagged walls provided further mortar protection and firing positions if attacked.



*This Wasn't a False Alarm, well
a bit of it was*



Of course you didn't get to sleep all night as everyone took two hour watches, in pairs, in the bunkers. These were all linked through portable radios (25 sets) and I think it was every half hour, each bunker and adjacent APCs would report in. One night the tanks were patrolling round outside the wire and their noise, especially the clanking of their tracks, was both eerie and frightening. Especially for the nearby villagers as they still had vivid memories of the recent battle. One of the tanks broke down and can be seen being recovered in these early morning photos.

As the tanks moved away all went quiet again but then we thought we could hear people just outside the wire. We weren't certain but then the bunker next to us reported that they could hear enemy. Shortly after the one near the gate said they could see people moving on the track in front of them. This one wasn't a False Alarm and I don't know why flares weren't fired and why we didn't engage. Anyway everything then went into limbo, had the VC gone or were they still there? I had many mates who had been attacked in these bases so it wasn't a fanciful possibility that they could hit us. Fear levels were pretty high and the pair of us soon "noticed" that a dark shape in front of us was occasionally moving. Now my father, a World War 2 hero, had warned me that ones imagination could run away with you in such situations so I tried to keep a level head, assuring us it was just a tree stump we could see. However with the M60 machine gun at my shoulder, safety catch off, finger wrapped around the trigger it was another case of two Rexs talking in my head. The scared one and the level headed one trying to convince each other of their case.

Fortunately that bit was False Alarm No 16 as the dawn light revealed that it was just a tree stump that had been "moving", Dad was right. However the VC had definitely been out there.

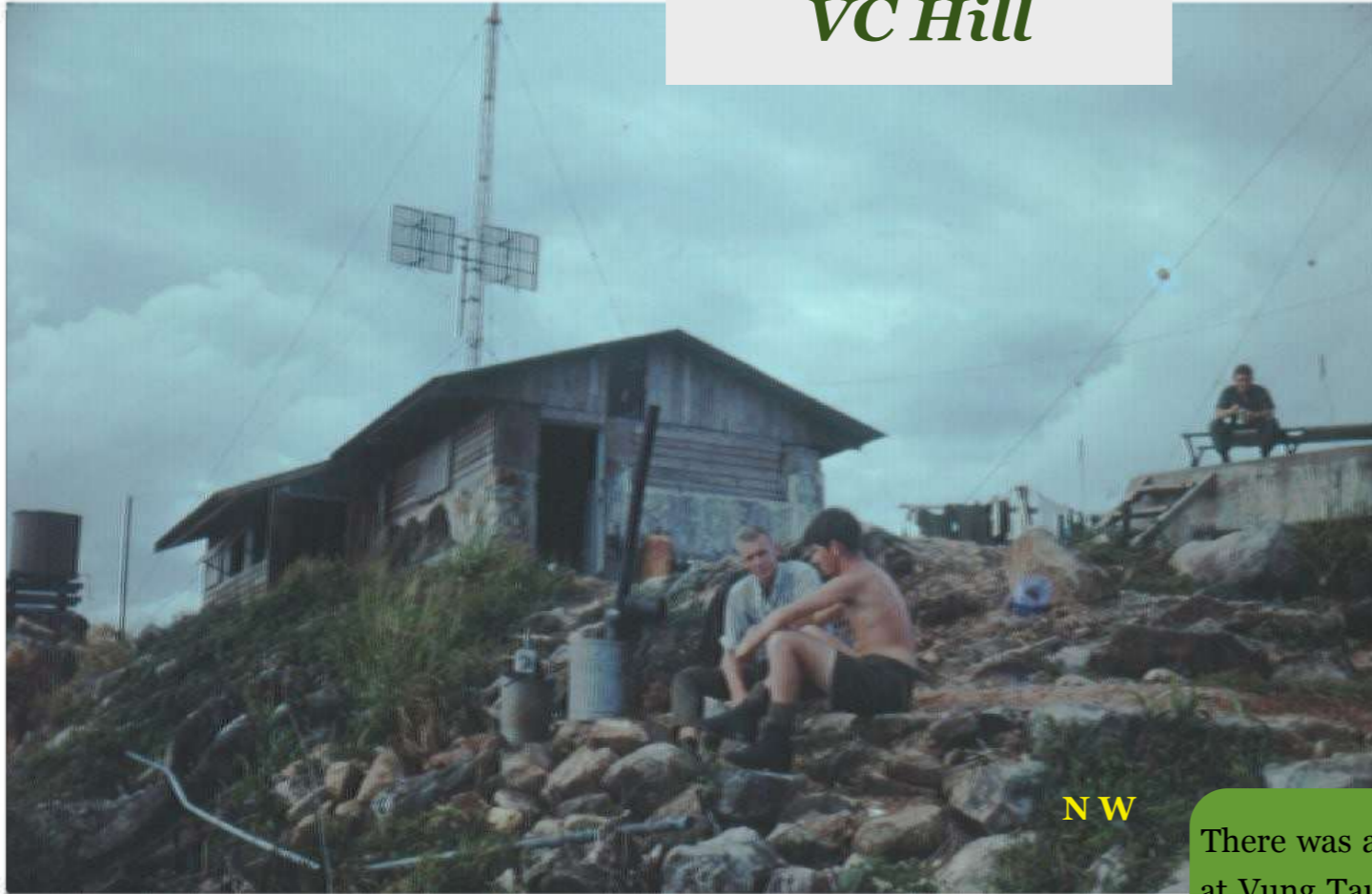
This was also a case where after a very scary experience I could just go to sleep when my shift in the bunker was over. Was this because we were bloody tired, because we knew someone else was then looking out for us or was there some deeper psychological response. It has been pointed out to me that animals will often retreat to a recuperative den after a traumatic experience and I have wondered if we do something similar.

On the trip back from Barbara there was a driver, our troop Commander in the passenger seat and another technician and myself in the back of a Landrover. Every thing was pretty cosy except that we were completely covered in dust. As I had been at the Horseshoe for a while my hair was pretty long, well in Army terms at least, and it soon became completely matted, our faces and clothes also red from the dirt.

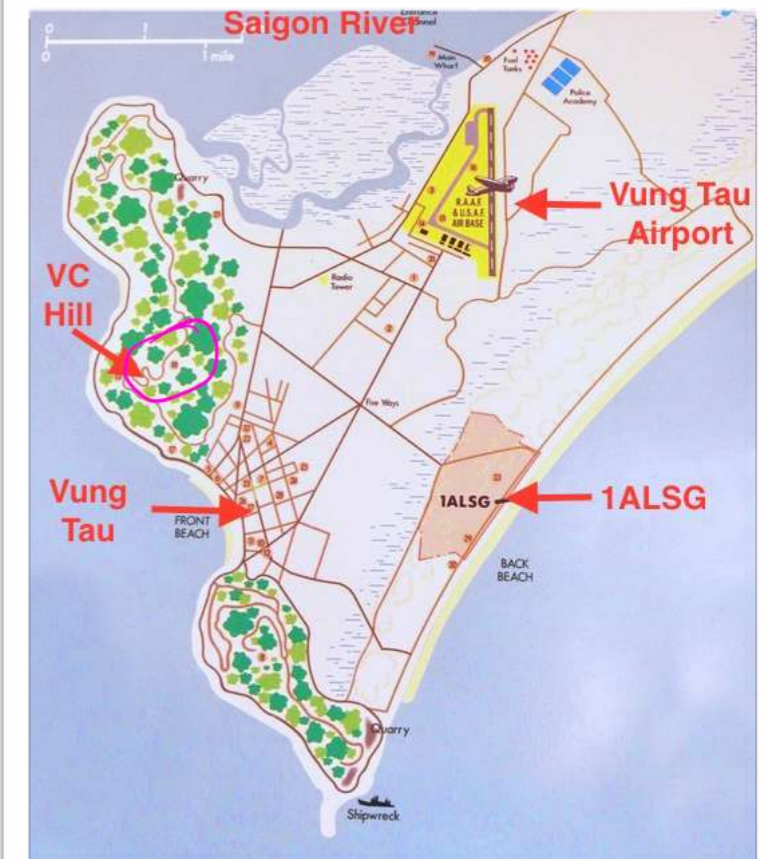
Any way we were just rounding this sharp left bend when there in an open paddock that had been hidden by a mound of bulldozed dirt, was a Vietnamese in black pyjamas, carrying a shotgun. I immediately raised the alarm only for the Officer to reply “bullshit” to which the other tech responded “no it’s not bullshit”. “What do you think we should do?” our leader asked. I, by then furious, responded in pretty strong terms “I think we should go and get him, DON’T YOU’*. We went back only to see another Vietnamese, in a smart uniform, standing by a Jeep behind that mound of dirt. They were on our side, from the Sth Vietnamese Regional/Popular Force who we had been told often dressed like the VC. Ok another False Alarm (No 17).

* Note that I said the guy was carrying a shotgun, which meant that we would have been out of his range whilst he was well within range of our SLRs. Thus going back was not a particularly daring option as it was pretty one sided.

VC Hill



NW



There was another “permanent” shelter established on top of VC Hill (aka Radar Hill) at Vung Tau. It was on a little spur adjacent to a huge American signals base (bottom left).

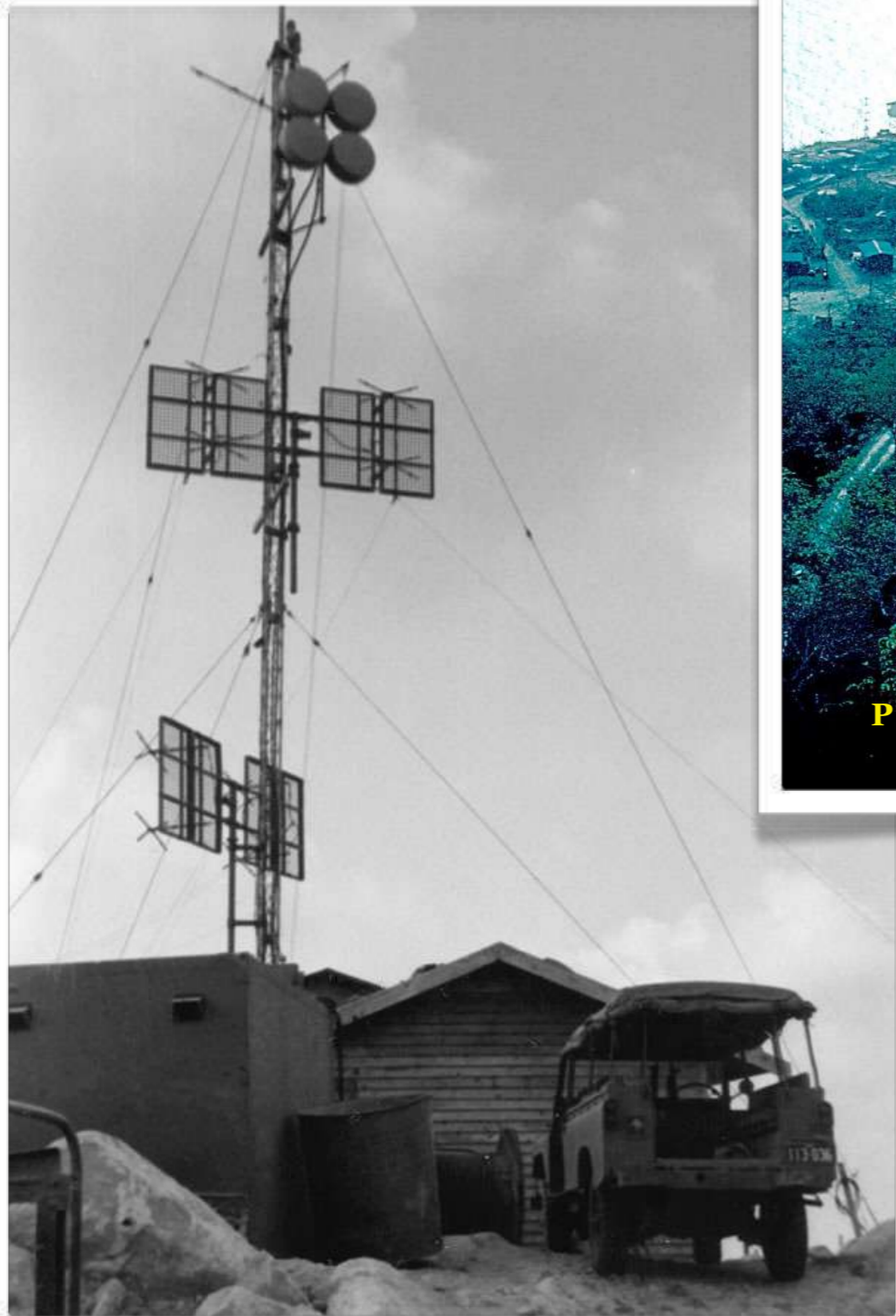
As shown top left there was an old accomodation hut and a French era concrete bunker which was a great spot for drinkies. The views from there were amazing. Whilst the location did seem a bit exposed to enemy incursion it had a fail safe early warning system in place. There had been so many empty beer cans thrown over the wire from atop the bunker that it was nigh on impossible for anyone to move through there without making quite a racket. The marihuana plants growing there may have also quelled any aggression.

One afternoon, perhaps after a few beers, we decided to “test fire” some hand held rocket flares. I let one go on a fairly flat trajectory and it landed, still flaming on the roof of one of the closest buildings shown at left. It was like watching a disturbed ants nest as all these Yanks came running out to see what was happening. “It wasn’t me, it wasn’t me”.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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Pic at left shows the shelter in front of the hut on VC Hill, aerals in the background.

View above shows the twisty, steep track up to the Hill and I think that is the Australian Navy Clearance Divers camp in the background.