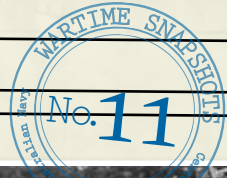


WARTIME SNAPSHOTS



Commemorating the 50th anniversary of the commencement of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War

A wounded soldier is carefully unloaded from an RAAF Iroquois helicopter at the 8th Field Ambulance, Nui Dat in August 1967.

Australian War Memorial VN67010420



Background

Between August 1962 and May 1975 nearly 60,000 Australian men and women including navy, army and air force personnel served in the Vietnam War. Of that number, 521 died and more than 3000 were evacuated with wounds, injuries or illnesses in what ranks alongside Afghanistan as one of the longest operational commitments in Australian military history. A small number of Australian service personnel continued to serve in Vietnam as Embassy guards after 1972 and in 1975 the Royal Australian Air Force was involved in evacuating civilians and Australian diplomats during the war's final days.

The Vietnam War, in essence, was a conflict between North and South Vietnam. It had wider implications because the North had a communist government. The United States of America and her allies, including Australia, saw the conflict as a key part of the Cold War by preventing the spread of communism in South East Asia; North Vietnam, however, saw their opponents as simply a replacement of their French colonial masters who were preventing the country's unification.

In the early years, Australia's participation in the Vietnam war was not widely opposed. But as the commitment grew, as conscripts began to make up a large percentage of those being deployed and killed, and as the public increasingly came to believe that the war was being lost, opposition grew. The fall of Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City) in April 1975 brought an end to the war, which by then had spilled over into neighbouring Cambodia and Laos. Millions lost their lives, millions more were made refugees. On 3 October 1987, Australia's Vietnam veterans were honoured with a formal Welcome Home March in Sydney. In that year, Long Tan Day (18 August) became known as Vietnam Veterans Day, and it continues to be observed as a day of remembrance. Five years later, on 3 October 1992, a dedication ceremony took place for the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial, which formally commemorates the sacrifices of all Australians who served in Vietnam.

The Vietnam War saw significant advancements in battlefield medicine. In the Second World War, a soldier had an 85% chance of survival if they were treated by a medic within the first hour of being wounded, compared with an estimated 28% in the First World War. The Korean War saw the first large scale use of helicopters to evacuate men from the front lines for treatment at M*A*S*H (Mobile Army Surgical Hospital) units. In Vietnam, the medic's job aboard 'Dust-off' helicopters was both to treat the wounded and accompany them back to a field hospital. Soldiers evacuated within the first hour of being wounded in Vietnam had a 98% survival rate. Medics were armed for the first time in the Vietnam War. In addition to their medical kits, they carried semi-automatic rifles, grenades, and other weapons. Red crosses on helmets and arm bands were no longer worn, to prevent them being a visible target for enemy snipers.

References

- Department of Veterans' Affairs, Australia and the Vietnam War, 2007.
- Chris Coulthard-Clark, The RAAF in Vietnam: Australian Air Involvement in the Vietnam War 1962-1975, 1995.
- Bruce Davies, Vietnam: The Complete Story of the Australian War, 2012.
- Jeffrey Grey, Up Top: The Royal Australian Navy in Southeast Asian Conflicts 1955-1972, 1995.
- Paul Ham, Vietnam: The Australian War, 2007.
- Ian McNeill, To Long Tan: The Australian Army and the Vietnam War 1950-1966, 1993.
- Brendan G. O'Keefe and F.B. Smith, Medicine at War: Medical aspects of Australia's involvement in Southeast Asia 1950-1972, 1994.

Websites

South East Asian Conflicts:

Vietnam War (Q6)	vietnam-war.commemoration.gov.au
Tunnel Rats (Q5)	vietnam-war.commemoration.gov.au/combat/index.php
Map of Phuoc Tuy Province (Q2)	vietnam-war.commemoration.gov.au/combat/viet-cong-tunnels.php
	vietnam-war.commemoration.gov.au/phuoc-tuy-province/map-phuoc-tuy.php

Australia and the Vietnam War (Publication with pdfs):

dva.gov.au/commems_oawg/commemorations/education/Documents/Aus_and_the_Vietnam_war.pdf	
On The Home Front (Q3)	Topic 5
Reporting & Representing the War (Q7)	Topic 4
1987 Welcome Home March (Q9)	Topic 8

Australian War Memorial:

awm.gov.au	
Vietnam War (Q6)	awm.gov.au/atwar/vietnam.asp
Vietnam Veterans' Day (Q9)	awm.gov.au/blog/2008/08/15/vietnam-veterans-day/
Long Tan Memorial (Q9)	awm.gov.au/wartime/55/long-tan-cross/
Major Peter Badcoe VC (Q8)	awm.gov.au/people/524.asp

Royal Australian Army Medical Corps:

raamc.org.au/medichistory.html	
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Battlefield Medicine (Q4)



Teaching Activities

Use the poster, background information and websites listed above, to answer the following questions:

- Look at the Remembrance Day poster.
 - What graphic device did the designer use in this poster? What does it highlight?
 - Who can you see in the poster and what are they doing?
 - What technology is depicted in the poster?
 - What items in the poster reflect its period in Australian history?
- The Australia and the Vietnam War website contains a map of the Phuoc Tuy province.
 - Print out a copy of this map and highlight the following locations: Nui Dat, Vung Tau, Long Tan, and Binh Ba.
 - Choose two of these locations and write a paragraph briefly describing their significance in the Vietnam War.
- Using published opinion polling and election results from 1966 to 1972, found in Topic 5 of Australia and the Vietnam War, describe the changes in public support for Australia's involvement in Vietnam?
- Describe the similarities and differences between battlefield medical treatment of wounded soldiers from the Second World War to Vietnam.
 - What technological advances were available to medics in the Vietnam War?
 - Why did medics carry weapons?
 - What factors contributed to the 13% increase in the survival rates of being treated within an hour of being wounded in the Vietnam War?
- Who were the 'tunnel rats' and what was their role?
- Read two veterans' accounts of the Vietnam War.
 - What can you learn from these sources about the living and fighting conditions during the war?
 - List four points for each account.
- How did television change the way wars were reported? How did this technology impact on public support for Australia's involvement in Vietnam?
- Major Peter Badcoe was one of four Australians to be awarded the Victoria Cross (VC) for his actions during the Vietnam War. Research this VC recipient and write a paragraph describing the circumstances in which he received this decoration.
- In groups, discuss and answer the following questions:
 - What is the significance of the Australian memorial at Long Tan?
 - How do we remember Vietnam War veterans?
 - Why was the 1987 Welcome Home March important to many veterans after their experiences on their immediate return from Vietnam?