EXACTLY A YEAR AGO

Young veterans of the 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, will be celebrating the first anniversary of their arrival in Vietnam, when they march through the streets of Brisbane on June 14.

A year ago to the day they were ferried by helicopters to the plantation headquarters of the 1st Australian Task Force base at Nui Dat, South Vietnam.

The Commanding Officer of the 6th Battalion, Lieutenant-Colonel Colin Townsend, told his troops aboard HMAS Sydney on their way home today, that the past year had been marred with tragedy and sorrow.

"A total of 36 of our comrades have given their lives and many more have been wounded.

"Theirs is probably the greatest contribution of all.

"Remember them with pride as you march through the streets of Brisbane and as you make joyful reunions with wives, sweethearts, and families," he said.

The 6th Battalion took part in 21 unit operations against the Viet Cong during their twelve month tour-of-duty. It also joined the 5th Battalion in six major operations into enemy held territory.

A total of 13 gallantry awards were won by officers and men of the 6th Battalion, including one Military Cross, one Distinguished Conduct Medal, three Military Medals, six Mentioned-In-Despatches, a Queen's Commendation and a British Empire Medal.

The majority of these awards were won during the bloody battle of Long Tan on August 18, last year, when Delta Company of the 6th Battalion clashed with the Viet Cong's 275th Regiment and D 445, the enemy provincial Mobile Battalion.

In that battle the 6th Battalion accounted for 245 Viet Cong killed, about 500 wounded and took three prisoners.

Some 100 weapons were captured, including small arms, rocket launchers, heavy machine and anti-tank guns, and tons of ammunition and explosives.

About 35 enemy camps were uncovered and destroyed along with miles of tunnelling and trench complexes.

When the monsoon season struck the Battalion had to work in thick mud to establish a defensive area.

The daily two inches of rain filled their weapon pits in 15-minutes.

In these conditions the Australian soldiers demonstrated their initiative by providing for their needs with improvisations.
An ammunition box or packing case was a prized possession. It meant floorboards, cabinets, tables, or simply a seat to relax on at the end of the day.

The 6th Battalion have handed over a modern, well planned and comfortable base to their successors, the 2nd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel N.R. Charlesworth.

When the veterans of the 6th Battalion arrive home they will be given an average of two months leave, which will be taken after the march through the streets of Brisbane.

Lists: A and B.

Further information:

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OTHER STATES: ADPR AT COMMAND HEADQUARTERS

2 June 1967