

BATTLE OF BINH BA

AWARDS

1. Operation HAMMER was fought over three days (6 to 8 June 1969) involving elements of the 1st Australian Task Force (1 ATF) based at Nui Dat. Operation HAMMER later became known as the Battle of Binh Ba.
2. The following Australian Army personnel were awarded the Military Cross (MC) for their actions on Op HAMMER (wholly or partly):
 - a. Captain R. (Ray) De Vere, RAAC, 3 Troop (Tp) B Squadron (Sqn) 3rd Cavalry Regiment (3 Cav Regt);¹ and
 - b. The late Second Lieutenant B.J. (Brian) Sullivan, RAAC, B Sqn 1st Armoured Regiment (1 Armd Regt).^{2 3}
3. The late Sergeant B.K. (Brian) London, RA Inf, was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM) for his command of 10 Platoon D Company (Coy) 5th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (5RAR) during Operation HAMMER.⁴
4. Corporal P.F. (Peter) Strudwick, RAAC, B Sqn 3 Cav Regt was awarded the Military Medal (MM) for his actions during Operation HAMMER.⁵
5. 2nd Lieutenant P.H.D. (Peter) Rogers, AA Avn, 161 (Indep) Recce Flt, was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) for his actions in Vietnam, including Operation HAMMER on 7 June 1969.⁶
6. Leading Aircraftman D.T. (David) Moles, RAAF No. 9 Squadron, was awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal (DFM) for his actions in Vietnam, including Operation HAMMER on 6 June 1969.⁷

Mentioned in Despatches

7. The following personnel were mentioned in despatches (mid) during Operation HAMMER:
 - a. Major M.P. (Murray) Blake, RA Inf, Officer Commanding (OC) D Coy 5RAR ;^{8 9} and

¹ Alexander M Palmer, *Vietnam Veterans - Honours and Awards Army*, Military Minded, Perth, 1995, p. 73

² op.cit., p. 264

³ The late Second Lieutenant Brian Sullivan was originally recommended for the MC for his bravery on 16 Feb 69. This was downgraded to MID, but upgraded to Medal of Gallantry in the End of War List. Sullivan was one of the very few Australians to be recommended for the MC and Bar for service in Vietnam.

⁴ Alexander M Palmer, op. cit., p. 159

⁵ op. cit., p. 263

⁶ op. cit., p. 225

⁷ http://www.awm.gov.au/research/people/honours_and_awards/person.asp?p=378858

⁸ Alexander M Palmer, op. cit., p. 21

- b. Major R.E. (Rein) Harring, RA Inf, OC B Coy 5RAR.¹⁰

Commanders in June 1969

8. Some Australian Army officers were recognised for their command of Australian formations or units in Vietnam during 1969, including the period of Operation HAMMER. Those commanders are shown below.

- a. Brigadier C.M.I. (Sandy) Pearson, OBE, MC, Commander 1st Australian Task Force (Comd 1 ATF), was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) for his command of 1st Australian Task Force.¹¹
- b. Lieutenant Colonel D.M. (David) Butler, RA Inf, Commanding Officer (CO) 6RAR, was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) for his command of 6RAR in Vietnam, including the period of Operation HAMMER.¹²
- c. Lieutenant Colonel C.N. (Colin) Kahn, RA Inf, CO 5RAR, was awarded the DSO for his command of 5RAR in Vietnam, including the period of Operation HAMMER.¹³
- d. Lieutenant Colonel P.C. (Peter) Gration, RAE, CO 1st Australian Civil Affairs Unit, was awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for his command of the Civil Affairs Unit, including the period of Operation HAMMER.¹⁴
- e. Wing Commander R.W. (Nugget) Hibben, AFC, CO RAAF No. 9 Squadron was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) for his command of No. 9 Squadron, including the period of Operation HAMMER.¹⁵
- f. Major A.H. (Alex) Smith, RAAC, OC B Sqn 1 Armd Regt, was mentioned in despatches for his command of B Sqn 1 Armd Regt, including the period of Operation HAMMER.¹⁶
- g. Major L.A. (Lachie) Thompson, RAA, Bty Comd 105 Fd Bty, 1 Fd Regt, was mentioned in despatches for his command of 105 Fd Bty 1 Fd Regt in Vietnam, including the period of Operation HAMMER when 105 Bty was in direct support.¹⁷

⁹ Major M.P. Blake was awarded the Military Cross, for his command of D Coy 5RAR in South Vietnam subsequently.

¹⁰ Alexander M Palmer, op. cit., p. 116

¹¹ op. cit., pp. 202 - 203

¹² op. cit., pp. 36

¹³ op. cit., pp. 147

¹⁴ op. cit., pp. 104 - 105

¹⁵ http://www.awm.gov.au/research/people/honours_and_awards/person.asp?p=348993

¹⁶ op. cit., p. 249

¹⁷ op. cit., p. 271

- h. Major R.E. (Ron) Rooks, RAAC, OC B Sqn 3 Cav Regt, was mentioned in despatches for his command of B Sqn 3 Cav Regt, including the period of Operation HAMMER.¹⁸
- i. Major R. (Rex) Rowe, RAE, OC 1 Field Squadron (1 Fd Sqn), was mentioned in despatches for his command of 1 Fd Sqn in Vietnam, including the period of Operation HAMMER.¹⁹
- j. Major K.P. (Keith) Morel, RA Sigs, OC104th Signals Squadron (104 Sig Sqn) was mentioned in despatches for his command of 104 Sig Sqn in Vietnam.²⁰

Other Actions

9. The following personnel, who participated in Operation HAMMER, were mentioned in despatches for other actions in Vietnam:

- a. Captain T.H. (Tom) Arrowsmith, RAAC, B Sqn 3 Cav Regt, commanded the Composite APC Tp which deployed with B Company 5RAR and then provided one of the blocking forces during Operation HAMMER, had been mentioned in despatches for earlier actions on 19 January 1969 and 29 May 1969.²¹ In the End of War List, Tom Arrowsmith was upgraded to the Medal for Gallantry (MG).²²
- b. Flying Officer²³ R.B. (Bob) Treloar, RAAF No. 9 Squadron, was a co-pilot of a Bushranger helicopter at Binh Ba and he was later mentioned in despatches for his actions while conducting a medical evacuation (dustoff) mission under heavy fire on the 21st August 1969.²⁴
- c. Second Lieutenant B.J. (Barry) Ryan, RA Inf, B Coy 5RAR, commanded 4 Platoon during Operation HAMMER, was mentioned in despatches for his actions in April and August 1969.²⁵
- d. Corporal L.W. (Len) Allen, RA Inf, B Coy 5RAR, was mentioned in despatches for his actions as a Section Commander during August 1969.²⁶

¹⁸ Alexander M Palmer, op. cit., p. 227

¹⁹ op. cit., pp. 231 - 232

²⁰ op. cit., pp. 183 - 184

²¹ op. cit., p. 7

²² The Medal for Gallantry (MG) is a military decoration awarded to personnel of the Australian Defence Force. It recognises acts of gallantry in action in hazardous circumstances. The MG was introduced on 15 January 1991 replacing the Imperial equivalent. It is ranked third in the Gallantry Decorations in the Australian Honours System. Recipients of the Medal of Gallantry are entitled to use the post-nominal letters "MG". Since its inception 31 awards have been made to 26-January-2008.

²³ Later Air Vice Marshal (AVM)

²⁴ http://www.awm.gov.au/research/people/honours_and_awards/person.asp?p=348729

²⁵ Alexander M Palmer, op. cit., p. 233

²⁶ op. cit., p. 3