

BATTLE OF BINH BA

40TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATIONS

THE COMMANDERS

1. Operation HAMMER was fought over three days (6 to 8 June 1969) involving elements of the 1st Australian Task Force (1ATF) based at Nui Dat. Operation HAMMER later became known as the Battle of Binh Ba.
2. Some of the commanders were (with their ranks at the time):
 - a. Brigadier C.M.I. (Sandy) Pearson, OBE, MC, Commander 1st Australian Task Force (Comd 1ATF);
 - b. Lieutenant Colonel C.N. (Colin) Kahn, Commanding Officer (CO) the 5th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (5RAR);
 - c. Lieutenant Colonel D.M. (David) Butler, CO 6RAR;
 - d. Wing Commander R.W. (Roy) Hibben, AFC, QCVSA, Commanding Officer RAAF No. 9 Squadron;
 - e. Major M.P. (Murray) Blake, Officer Commanding (OC) D Company (Coy) 5RAR;
 - f. Major R.E. (Rein) Haring, OC B Coy 5RAR (now deceased);
 - g. Major A.H (Alex) Smith, OC B Squadron (Sqn) 1st Armoured Regiment (1 Armd Regt);
 - h. Major R.E. (Ron) Rooks, OC B Sqn 3rd Cavalry Regiment (3 Cav Regt);
 - i. Major L.A. (Lachie) Thomson, Battery Commander 105 Battery (Bty), 1st Field Regiment;
 - j. Captain T.H. (Tom) Arrowsmith, commanded the Composite Tp, B Sqn 3 Cav;
 - k. Captain R. (Ray) De Vere, commanded 3 Tp B Sqn 3 Cav Regt;
 - l. Captain J.J. (Joffre) Gilchrist, OC 1 Forward Delivery Troop;
 - m. Flight Lieutenant A.B. (Alan) Adamson, RAAF No. 9 Squadron, commanded the bushranger fire team;
 - n. Lieutenant G.J. (Moose) Dunlop, 4 Platoon B Coy 5RAR;
 - o. Lieutenant G.J. (Graham) Locke, Assault Pioneer Platoon, Support (Sp) Coy 5RAR;
 - p. Second Lieutenant B.J. (Brian) Sullivan commanded a composite troop of Centurion tanks from B Sqn 1 Armd Regt (now deceased);

- q. Second Lieutenant D.B. (Dave) Ritchie took over command of the Composite Troop from B Sqn 1 Armd Regt when 2Lt Brian Sullivan was wounded in action (WIA);
 - r. Second Lieutenant C.J. (Chris) Sweeney, commanded 4 Tp B Sqn 1 Armd Regt on 8 June 1969;
 - s. Second Lieutenant R.A. (Bob) Hutchison, 6 Platoon B Coy 5RAR;
 - t. Second Lieutenant J. (John) Russell, 11 Platoon D Coy 5RAR;
 - u. Second Lieutenant B.J. (Barry) Ryan, 5 Platoon B Coy 5RAR;
 - v. Warrant Officer Class 2 G.A. (George) Smith, MM, took over command of 11 Platoon D Coy 5RAR when 2Lt Russell was WIA;
 - w. Sergeant R. (Jock) Browning, commanded 4 Tp B Sqn 1 Armd Regt on 6/7 June 1969 (now deceased);
 - x. Sergeant B.K. (Brian) London, commanded 10 Platoon D Coy 5RAR(now deceased); and
 - y. Corporal J.J. (John) Kennedy commanded 12 Platoon D Coy 5RAR (later killed in action on 15 June 1969).
3. Some of the commanders of units that were involved with the aftermath of the Battle were (with their rank at the time):
- a. Lieutenant Colonel P.C. (Peter) Gration, RAE, Commanding Officer of the 1st Australian Civil Affairs Unit. On 8th June 1969, the 1st Australian Civil Affairs Unit was responsible for the resettling of the Binh Ba villagers whose houses had been destroyed during Operation HAMMER.
 - b. Major R. (Rex) Rowe, RAE, Officer Commanding 1st Field Squadron (1 Fd Sqn).
 - c. Major E.J. (John) Wertheimer, RAE, Officer Commanding 17th Construction Squadron (17 Const Sqn).
 - d. Lieutenant J. (Janis) Atrens, RAE, commanded 2 Tp 1 Fd Sqn.¹
4. Some of the commanders of units that were involved with supporting HQ 1 ATF with communications or intelligence for the Battle are shown below (with their rank at the time):
- a. Major K.P. (Keith) Morel, RA Sigs, Officer Commanding 104th Signals Squadron (104 Sig Sqn).
 - b. Major S.W. (Steve) Hart, RA Sigs, Officer Commanding 547th Signals Troop (547 Sig Tp).

¹ Gary McKay and Graeme Nicholas, *Jungle Tracks: Australian Armour in Vietnam*, Allen & Unwin, 2001, p. 212

² The source for some of the information is: Alexander M. Palmer, **VIETNAM VETERANS: A Record of Service**, A.M. Palmer, Perth, 1995, in particular the Australian Honours (pp. 140 – 141)