

1ST INDEPENDENT ARMoured SQUADRON WORKSHOP RAEME NUI DAT 1967-1968

This unit was raised in October 1967 in Puckapunyal Victoria to move to South Vietnam in support of an Independent Armoured Squadron equipped with 52 ton centurion battle tanks and a Forward Delivery Troop Detachment in operations in South Vietnam following the Government's unexpected announcement that tanks would form part of Australia's increased commitment to that war.

From the first march-in on 29 October, 1967 the unit formed to a strength of three officers and 93 other ranks. Some 1500 stores indents for vehicles, weapons and equipment were submitted, of which 80 per cent were satisfied prior to the cut off date of 15 December 1967. All vehicles and stores were required to be in Sydney for forwarding to South Vietnam by 1 December 1967, 43 days after notification of the unit's formation.

Personnel administration required most march-ins to be processed through a 21-day battle efficiency course and to be at D14 standard of medical and dental fitness and to proceed on pre embarkation leave.

The unit consisted of RAEME, RAAOC and AACC personnel, with the stores section advance party arriving first in country, closely followed by the workshop advance party during late December 1967. Early in 1968 the Independent Armoured Squadron concept was dropped and the use of the squadrons of the 1st Armoured Regiment in rotation was adopted (with CSQN first to tour), therefore the 'Independent' was deleted from the unit name.

On arrival in NUI DAT unit members had to secure the unit area, build not only living accommodation with defensive positions, but also the tank workshop complex. This activity took place during the TET 68 period, when members were also required to carry out perimeter defence patrols and provide APC support with M113 A1 Fitters Vehicles to 3 RAR in the battle for the provincial capital, BARIA.

On arrival in country extensive superficial modifications had to be carried out to better adapt the tanks to local operational requirements. General maintenance and emergency repairs were undertaken by unit tradesmen, many of whom were national servicemen with no prior exposure to centurion tanks: however skill levels developed quickly with extensive repair tasks successfully undertaken in the field on operations to levels never before attempted outside large static mainland Australia tank repair workshops.

Unit forward repair teams including recovery teams mounted on RAEME armoured special vehicles accompanied the CSQN tanks on all operational deployments until November 1968, including the significant battles for FSB CORAL, and FSB BALMORAL in May 1968.

A change in repair policy resulted in the unit being disbanded in country on 14 November 1968 with personnel from the unit becoming the nucleus of 106 Field Workshop and CSQN LAD, which were formed in country on the disbandment of 1st Armoured Squadron Workshop.