

ABSTRACT – BATTLE OF CORAL - BALMORAL

The Battle of CORAL-BALMORAL is not publically recognised as a major battle fought by Australian troops in the Vietnam War. It is however recognised in The Official History volume 'On the Offensive' by McNeill and Ekins page 349 where it states that The Battle of CORAL-BALMORAL was Australia's "... *largest, most hazardous and most sustained battles of the war.*" In terms of casualties it was Australia's most costly battle of the Vietnam War and the gallantry and heroism deserves due recognition.

The veterans of the Battle of CORAL-BALMORAL have questioned why **Australia's largest, longest, bloodiest and most costly battle of the Vietnam War was never awarded a United States or South Vietnamese Unit Award for Gallantry**

Following the recent awarding of belated Unit Citations to other units, a sub-committee of veterans have recently presented a submission to Defence Honours and Awards (DHA) on behalf of all units, sub-units, detachments and individuals for the awarding of the current Unit Commendation for Gallantry (UCG) to all who served in the battle

In compiling this submission it was necessary to follow DHA guidelines and requirements as well as the expressed decisions, criteria and conditions contained in reports by the DHAAT on the recent submissions for belated awards

Consequently the FOCUS of this belated submission is that the extraordinary gallantry displayed by individuals, units and sub-units in the Battle of CORAL-BALMORAL meets the highest standard displayed by the ANZACs and warrants proper recognition with the approval of a Unit Citation for Gallantry.

In order to achieve this the submission drew upon resources considered most relevant as they were either published at a time when events were still fresh in the memory of those who were involved or are considered 'Primary Source' material as they are historical records of the time, such as The War Diaries.

- The original book by Lex McAulay. 'THE BATTLE OF CORAL' (Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral May 1968) (1988)
- The Paper by Captain Tony Jensen (FSPB CORAL. Australian Infantry No. 2 Vol xix May-Jun 1973))
- Ahern, Ian (2012) *First Battle of CORAL, 12-13 May 1968 The Real Story*, Cannonball, Journal of the Royal Historical Company.
- Personal Accounts by individuals involved.
- The War Diaries (Vietnam) On-line. Australian War Museum
- The Official History volume 'On the Offensive' by McNeill and Ekins
- 'FSB Coral Oral History Project 2007-2008' by Leonie Jones

It was necessary to limit the size of the submission document and this has been kept to 49 pages. The supporting documentation is contained in annexes which totals 224 pages. The main body of the submission is a narrative of events which are described in a way that presents an argument to support the FOCUS stated above

The submission presents new information mostly gleaned from the sources above that was not available at the time of the battle. The War Diaries the Radio Logs, Commanders Diaries, After Action Reports, Intelligence Reports, Operational Situations and the like have been analysed in a variety of different ways so as to present a comprehensive understanding of events that occurred during the battle. Likewise excerpts from the literature and other sources are used to reinforce the FOCUS statement.

The Narrative provides detailed information and analysis of the four major ground assaults on Fire Support Bases CORAL and BALMORAL as well as the three major Bunker Battles. Consequently it focuses on the involvement of Infantry, Artillery, Armour and Engineers. The authors were very mindful of the role played by the Supporting Arms and where possible this has been included in the Narrative. Information has been presented as to the role and involvement of the various units, sub-units and detachments that were at FSPB's CORAL and BALMORAL which has had little previous attention of researchers and authors.

Further information on the involvement of the Supporting Arms obtained from a variety of sources and from personal contributions has been included in the Annexes.

The research conducted revealed that a significant number of visits were made to the FSPB's by a range of high ranking Australian and US Officers. Some evidence was found to support the notion that an offer was made to BRIG Hughes by a senior US Officer for a US Unit Citation to be awarded for the action. This offer was not acted on and followed up and the reason for this remains unknown.

A collection of Australian press clippings of the time is used to provide substantial evidence of the nature of the fighting and the enemy forces encountered as well as information on the battle casualties. These are used in a manner to support the focal argument of the submission. The clippings are included as an Annex as well as throughout the submission.

A compiled summary and concluding statements together with new evidence and analysis provide a comprehensive reassessment of the scope and intensity of the Battle of CORAL – BALMORAL. This in turn adds strength and rigor to the submission and its core argument.

Finally it is stressed that this submission has been prepared by a small group of dedicated Veterans on behalf of ALL who served in AO Surfers from 12 May to 6 June 1968. The submission clearly states that ALL these personnel contributed to the success of the operation and as such should be eligible for the award when it becomes successful. This has been an enduring process taking well over 12 months.