

Australian Army Training Team
Vietnam (AATTV)

Narrative, Annexes
1 - 31 October 1963

Series: AWM95 - Australian Army
commanders' diaries

Item: 1/2/17

COMMANDERS DIARY NARRATIVE

This form will be enclosed with the annexes in AF C 2119. If this is not available the cover will be prepared in manuscript.

UNIT/FORMATION AATTVMONTH AND YEAR October 1963COMMANDING OFFICER Col F. P. Serong, OBE

Place and grid reference	Day of Month	Hour	Event or information	Annex letter and enclosure number
	1		Talked Delta situation with W. Bundy of Sec Def party, who commented that we were badly over-extended. Reminded him that I had forecast that development in his own Washington office in May.	
	2		Advice of visit by Lt Col Grant for 29 Oct - 9 Nov. Letter from CGS expressing regret at being unable to make visit.	
	3		Completed officers confidential reports. The reporting officer had done a disappointing job on these, and much correction was necessary to do justice to the fine efforts of some very good men. Party from Hiep Khanh advise that rains have started, and that water shortage troubles are over. Now suffering from electrical troubles caused by too much water. This effects communications.	
	4		Prepared September report, asking for increased allowances (with particular reference to rise of US Army pay) and permission to form an "A" team for Kontum/Pleiku. This latter is highly desirable to provide experience for all AATTV personnel in Special Force type operations, and topographical, etc., knowledge of an area in which we have an interest. Replied to General Harkins, thanking him for his message of goodwill. Canberra Committee meeting.	
	5		Bonze burning at Central Market. Weather still overcast, with occasional rain.	
	6		Town quiet.	

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	7		Times of Vietnam reports freezing of USOM funds. This is an exaggeration. Some funds have been frozen. Main aim is to stop indiscriminate spread of SH programme. Graphical representation of selected vital statistics of war as at the end of September shows a set against us.	
	8		VNAF defection by an AIH and pilot - to Cambodia. Letter from AHQ asking our views on putting Armed Corps personnel at Thu Duc. Am opposed to this, as it would begin fragmentation of AATTV, and loses sight of the aim of our existence. Discussed AATTV accommodation policy with J-1, on the basis that I have a need for concentration of the Saigon component to enable me to give proper expression to my responsibility for security. Arrange programme for Lt-col Grant with CSD.	
	9		Captain Clark arrived. Advice from Embassy on tools available for distribution to SH's. We will begin a plan similar to the very successful grain distribution programme.	
	10		Chinese National Day. Very quiet, even in Cholon. Departure of WO Mills on compassionate return to Australia. Briefed Captains Moyle and Clark of Phu Bai. Reception at Chinese Embassy. Dinner with DGI for Australian journalist James Kelleher.	
	11		---	

COMMANDERS DIARY NARRATIVE

UNIT/FORMATION AATTV

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MONTH AND YEAR October 1963

Place and grid reference	Day of Month	Hour	Event or information	Annex letter and enclosure number
	12		Visited SH's in Bien Hoa area. Observed a clearing operation by Combat Police just outside town.	
	13		—	
	14		Briefed the Ambassador on significance of new Corps boundaries with III Corps to move down to Mekong river, and thereby surround Saigon. Visit by Australian novelist Morris West. Briefed him, and arranged interviews with General Harkins and others. He is writing a book on the "cultural confrontation between East and West in S.E. Asia. Some good men have tried that, and got no further than Kipling.	
	15		Conference with General Timmes.	
	16		Conference with BRIAM. Capt Petersen arrived to report on his programme at Ban Me Thout. Evidence of trouble-making by French among Montagnard. Dinner at home for Rodulfo. His programme has ground to a halt in the face of GVN opposition, and the present distraction of Malaysia.	
	17		Report from West on conversation with Nhu: "I am the Master Strategist. I alone understand how this war is to be run. We have been betrayed by the Americans." Etc. Briefed Ambassador Lodge on conduct of war.	
	18		Reception by General Harkins for Ambassador Lodge. A few VN officers (Minh, Dinh, Don, Quyen, Hien) present, plus Thuan. All except Thuan looking extremely uncomfortable. General Harkins had a "wheels-up" landing in Caribou today. No casualties.	

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MONTH AND YEAR October 1963

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Place and grid reference	Day of Month	Hour	Event or information	Annex letter and enclosure number
			Aircraft destroyed. Shook him a bit.	
	19		Serious signs of Haemorrhagic Fever in Saigon (Dengue 5). Mosquito borne. No prophylactic. So far 400 cases, 100 deaths. W/Comd Brinsley (AA Embassy) advises RAAF have finally defaulted on C47 and have simply used it as an excuse for placing another C47 at Butterworth. MACV Field Day. Party, field sports and games for all including dependents. Weather patchy, but good enough. Well organised. Mrs. Hill (wife of Ambassador) taken seriously ill yesterday with amoebic ulcer (burst) on liver. Serious but hopeful.	
	20		—	
	21		Lt Clarke of Phu Bai departed for Portsea. He has done well; and has made remarkable progress with self taught Vietnamese. Battalion in training Phu Bai has been withdrawn for operations before completing its final exercise. A pity.	
	22		Took off 0730, L-23, for Nha Trang with Capt Irvine. Visited Duc My (Otter). Accommodation much improved. Work load about 1,000. Proceeded to Phu Bai. Overcast, much flooding. Ration situation now corrected with a new delivery system. Work load about 2,000. New bar in Mess is a thing of rare artistic beauty - the achievement of Lt Clarke! There is a local rise of incident rate, particularly attacks on Strategic Hamlets.	

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COMMANDERS DIARY
NARRATIVE

Army Form C2118

UNIT/FORMATION... AATTV

COMMANDING OFFICER Col F. P. Serong, OBE

MONTH AND YEAR... October 1963

Place and grid reference	Day of Month	Hour	Event or Information	Annex letter enclosure and number
	23		Raining. Blanket needed at night. Briefed on situation in 1 Div area by Col Mackey's staff. To Hiep Khanh with Major Da Costa. Conferred with Major Murphy.	
			Relations with new CG Comd still not good. Electricity bad. Water and rations good. Briefed Da Costa and Murphy on proposal to place a reduced "A" team at Kontum/Pleiku; interchange of personnel; parachuting. The team is in good shape.	
			In the afternoon, proceeded by jeep from Phu Bai to Da Nang. A wet journey. Capt Clark accompanied. Stayed overnight with Capt Boileau at CSD accommodation.	
	24		CSD situation mixed, due to partial freezing of funds for Special Forces, and our insistence that we see what we are paying for. This is striking at the heart of a very lucrative programme which pays for non-existent forces. Took Corps briefing at Da Nang. Position heating up. Returned to Saigon in L23 with party from Phu Bai.	
			On arrival, informed that Mrs. Hill had died this afternoon, with heart failure as a result of the operation of last week (which in other respects was successful.) A most tragic event.	
	25		Cancelled AATTV party, on account of death of Mrs. Hill. Talked to Cols Layton and Strickler on AATTV "A" Team. They are extremely pleased at the prospect. Layton very depressed over internal situation; and says he has lately very little contact	

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COMMANDERS DIARY
NARRATIVE

Army Form C2118

UNIT/FORMATION... AATV.....

COMMANDING OFFICER Col. F. P. Serong, OBE

MONTH AND YEAR..... October 1963.....

Place and grid reference	Day of Month	Hour	Event or Information	Annex letter enclosure and number
			with Col Tung of Special Forces.	
	26		National Day. March was smaller and less spectacular than last year; but well conducted.	
	27		Bonze burning in front of Basilica, for benefit of visiting UN Team investigating Buddhist situation. They failed to see the burning.	
	28		Col Farrior (J2 MACV) produced some very interesting data on VC HQ astride Cambodian border in NW Tay Minh.	
	29		Discussed effect of rising price of rice on troop morale with Stilwell. He agrees situation is a gigantic poker game, with Lodge and Diem setting each other out. Nothing to do but wait. Grant (Defence) arrived. Also Lt col Fitchett, DMI NZ. Conferred with Thompson (BRIAM). Checked his new appreciation, which contains guidance on how to live with the Diem regime. Agreed with it.	
	30		Briefing for Grant at MACV (J2/J3), followed by talk with Farrior. Both very useful. Briefing for Grant at CSD by Layton, then to Psy war for briefing by Stratherns' people. Dinner for Grant with Dave Smith - present Manfull, Strathern, Stilwell, Layton. John Richardson's former house is now empty. It is to be taken over by Ambassador Lodge. No replacement for Richardson named yet.	

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COMMANDERS DIARY
NARRATIVE

Army Form C2118

MONTH AND YEAR.....October 1963.....

UNIT/FORMATION...AATTV.....

COMMANDING OFFICER Col. F. P. Serong, OBE

Place and grid reference	Day of Month	Hour	Event or Information	Annex letter enclosure and number
	31		To Nha Trang with Grant, C46, for visit to HQ Special Forces and CSD.	
			Satisfactory. Commodity shortage very apparent. Piastre is slipping. Now 140 to \$US - and rising to 200 for large denominations in large quantities. Internal political situation deteriorating steadily. Preparations in hand for redistribution of Corps boundaries tomorrow, giving III Corps a stranglehold on Saigon. Either President Diem has great trust in Dinh (Comd III Corps, a relative) or he's losing his grip. This has interesting possibilities.	
			Monthly report submitted AHQ.	22

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AUSTRALIAN ARMY TRAINING TEAM

VIETNAM

REPORT NO. 15

FOR THE MONTH OF OCTOBER 1963

BY

CCOLONEL F. P. SERONG, OBE, COMMANDING

GENERAL

1. No significant change in US/VN relations is apparent. The pressure of economic sanctions (if one may use the word) on the GVN is forcing down the piastre causing commodity hoardings, raising the price of rice (at present up 50 per cent), and, because of the effect of the latter on the military families, is risking a deterioration of morale in RVNAF.

2. A revision of corps boundaries, bringing III Corps to the Mekong, is to be effected on 1 November. Preparations proceed. This will have the effect of placing the national capital entirely within the zone of III Corps, which is, to say the least, surprising in the present political climate.

HEALTH

3. Major Kennedy of Duc My has had mild conjunctivitis.

MORALE

4. Excellent.

WELL BEING

5. The weather in the north has turned bleak and miserable. It will remain so for several months.

ATTACHMENTS

6. Captain Thompson has completed an attachment with the School of Artillery, Duc My.

7. Captain Gollings has completed an attachment to Ranger Training Centre, Duc My.

8. Captain Hagerty has completed an attachment to 4 Armd Regt.

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9. Sgts Roughley and Mc Court visited forward artillery troop locations in Quang Nam.
10. WO Donkin is currently attached to US Special Forces at Khe Sahn.

CURRENT ACTIVITIES

11. Dong Da (Phu Bai):

One battalion in third week of eight weeks.

CC 1 in fifth week of nine weeks.

CC 2 in sixth week of eleven weeks.

Recruit course in progress

Two replacement groups, one completed, one in progress.

One battalion marched out on 18th Oct, to be replaced on 4 Nov.

4.2 ins Mortar Pl completed training.

Special Intelligence and Reconnaissance Pl, in progress.

12. Hiep Khanh:

Two companies commenced a four week cycle.

One company continues a week cycle.

13. Duc Hy:

Three courses, with a strength of 542 are in progress.

Recruit training continues.

One Ranger battalion, overdue, is awaited.

Special task platoons training is completed.

14. Activities of Note:

I am particularly pleased with the concept and training of the Special Intelligence and Reconnaissance platoon at Phu Bai. The concept visualises the employment of small deep penetration patrols in native clothes, with concealed weapons and a communications capability for target acquisition, resulting in the subsequent employment of air attack, artillery, or heliborne assault. When this project is successfully launched in the I Corps area, it is hoped to find it copied at divisional level throughout the country.

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COLL ENDATION

15. I should invite attention to the outstanding work of Major L. G. Clark while performing the duties of Chief Training Advisor at Ranger Training Centre, Duc My. His work has been directly responsible for the superior performance of the ARVN Ranger battalions.

16. Two further outstanding performances have been registered by Captain R. E. Hagerty, and Captain I. G. Gollings. The work of these two officers at Hiep Khanh Civil Guard Training Centre has been such that it may be truthfully said that the Civil Guard companies handled by them have been brought to a standard at least equal to that of Ranger companies of one year ago.

REPORT OF SEPTEMBER

17. It appears from signals received that this report has not reached Canberra. This is most disturbing to me, as it contained (paras 9 - 13) a proposal for which I am most anxious to secure AHQ approval. A fresh copy of the September report has been forwarded separately.

CONCLUSION

18. Though the events of 1 Nov 63 more properly belong to next month's report, I make no apology for introducing them here. AHQ will have received my message AATTV 8569 of 020915Z Nov. An earlier message was despatched by me from Ban Me Thout, but circumstances in Saigon prevented AATTV HQ from forwarding the relevant portion. Copies of both messages are appended (AHQ only).

19. Ngo Dinh Diem is dead. It now remains to be seen what his successors can achieve.

J. M. Cuamara
for Col
A.O.D. Comd, AATTV
6 Nov 63

DISTRIBUTION:

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Aust Embassy
Austarm Singapore
Ban Me Thout Det
Danang Det
Dong Da Det
Duc My Det
Hiep Khanh Det
Diary (2) ✓
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Annex "A" to
AATTV Report No. 15

ARRIVALS

<u>Number</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Sched date of arrival</u>	<u>Actual date of arrival</u>	<u>Station</u>
47020	Capt	R.J. Moyle	30 Sep 63	4 Oct 63	Dong Da
242633	Capt	R. Clark	8 Oct 63	8 Oct 63	Dong Da
52693	Capt	N.F. de la Hunty	22 Oct 63	22 Oct 63	Hiep Khanh
5288	WO 2	R.A. Bandy	22 Oct 63	22 Oct 63	Dong Da

DEPARTURES

<u>Number</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Sched date of departure</u>	<u>Actual date of departure</u>	<u>Station</u>
28361	Capt	K. E. Sticpewich	7 Oct 63	30 Sep 63	Dong Da
51149	Sgt	J. Cochrane	7 Oct 63	5 Oct 63	Hiep Khanh
1337	WO 2	C. C. Mills		10 Oct 63	Hiep Khanh
29593	Lt	J. R. Clarke	21 Oct 63	21 Oct 63	Dong Da
52396	Capt	R. I. George	4 Nov 63	31 Oct 63	Dong Da

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Annex "B" to
AATTV Report No. 15

CASUALTIES

335080 T/Maj R. G. Kennedy

Mild conjunctivitis

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OPS IMMEDIATE

R-2666 02/2040Z

O 020130Z

FM SA 23 DIV BMT

TO CHMAAG SGN

BT

C O N F I D E N T I A L MAGTN BM C11-11 SERONG SENDS FOR LT COL
MAC NAMARA AATTV.

1. ATTEMPTING RETURN SAIGON TODAY.

2. MAINTAIN CONTACT FAMILY.

3. SEND FOLLOWING OPS/IMMED TO CANBERRA. QUOTE: ARMY COUP IN

PROGRESS FIGHTING IN SAIGON. ELSEWHERE CALM. PRESENT CONDITION

AATTV APPEARS SECURE. CONTINUING TO CHECK. COUP WILL PROBABLY

SUCCEED WITH MINIMAL DISTURBANCE. ADVISORY EFFORT STANDING

ASIDE FROM INVOLVEMENT. VISITOR FROM DEFENCE ACCOMPANIES ME. UNQUOTE

BT

CERTIFIED TRUE COPY

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SERONG SENDS

1. GOVERNMENT OF GENERAL MINH FIRMLY ESTABLISHED. STREET FIGHTING STOPPED. PROVINCES QUIET. NO PRESENT VC REACTION POPULATION IN CARNIVAL MOOD IN SAIGON.
2. PRESIDENT DIEM AND COUNSELLOR NGU DEAD REPORTEDLY SUICIDE EN ROUTE PALACE TO HQ JGS IN ML13.
3. ALL AATTV PERSONNEL SECURE. NO AATTV INVOLVEMENT.
4. SELF AND DEFENCE VISITOR RETURNED TO SAIGON FROM NORTH 1430 TODAY.

FM: COMUSMACV

INFO: AUSTARM SINGAPORE

TO: ARMY CANBERRA

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