

Series: AWM95
Australian Army commanders' diaries
[Vietnam]

Army Aviation units

Item number: 8/1/63

Item: 161 [Independent]

Reconnaissance Flight

Narrative

[1-30 Nov 1971]

COVERING LETTER

Reference No. 243

To: OIC, Military History Section, AHQ.

1. I enclose Commanders Diary (AF C 2118) (Adapted) as indicated at Part 2.

2. Please return receipt below.

(Signature) [Signature] Maj

Appointment OC 161 (Indep) Recce Flt (OC Unit or senior staff officer)

SECRET

ORIGINAL
DUPLICATE

Strike out where not applicable

COMMANDERS DIARY

OF

Unit or Formation 161 (Indep) Recce Flt

From 1 Nov 71 To 30 Nov 71

INDEX

Narrative (AF C 2118)

ANNEXES

- * A Duty officer's log
* B Messages connected with log
C Operation orders and instructions issued
D Operation orders and instructions received
* E Sitreps issued
F Orders of battle and location reports issued
G Intelligence reports and summaries issued; appreciations made
H Administrative orders and instructions issued
I Administrative orders and instructions received
J Administrative reports and bulletins; ammunition returns; field strength returns
* K Standing orders issued
L Commander's policy and demi-official letters
M Action reports (if required)
N Other papers, eg, maps and diagrams, air photos, reports from sub units
O Periodical summaries of operations
Z Top Secret Supplementary Diary

Enclosure Numbers

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† NIL
† RETAINED
† Despatched to

* Only to be included during operations.
† Cross out whichever is not applicable.

on.....

COMMANDERS DIARIES INSTRUCTIONS

AIM

1. The aim of a Commanders Diary is to provide data on which to base future improvements in Army training, equipment, organization and administration, and to furnish historians with a record of the activities of units and formations in operational and non-operational periods in peace and in war.

GENERAL

2. *Entries are to be made daily on AF C 2118 (Adapted) each entry being initialled by the officer detailed to keep it.*
3. Commanders Diaries will conform with the rules for drafting orders given in "Staff Duties (Australia)", Chapter 2, Section 12.

RESPONSIBILITY

During Non-operational Periods

4. A Commanders Diary is to be compiled by commanders of all formations.

During Operational Periods (1)

5. A Commanders Diary is to be compiled in duplicate by:
 - a. Commanders of all formations.
 - b. Each branch of the staff at formation headquarters commanded by a brigadier or above.
 - c. Heads of services not below the rank of lieutenant colonel.
 - d. Personal staffs and officers holding special appointments.
 - e. Unit commanders.
 - f. Commanders of a detachment of a unit when so ordered.

COMPILATION

6. Both original and duplicate copies are to consist of:
 - a. Cover (AF C 2119) (Adapted).
 - b. Index as printed on cover.
 - c. Narrative (AF C 2118) (Adapted).
 - d. Annexes as shown in the Index.
7. All details of the unit or formation (if a detachment is concerned, the name of the parent unit), period covered and enclosure numbers of the annexes are to be shown on the cover. If there has been a change of command since the last report, the date of assumption by the new commanding officer is to be included.
8. The annexes are to be assembled in the groups shown on the cover. If there are no enclosures for an annex NIL will be entered on the cover. If additional annexes are convenient for a particular headquarters, they are to be numbered as annexes starting at B.

for operations form Annex "Z", "TOP SECRET" the document. It is to be prepared and disposed of as

TENTS

es as well as map references), establishment, equipment

d orders given.

he day's fighting, including company movements.

mander with regard to equipment, tactics, organization

tential importance.

o officers, men and equipment.

oment captured.

employed in the time not accounted for. The type of

and to save work as much information as possible is to
ments issued and received, routine returns, etc. All
and the time of receipt or despatch is to be given.

ie annexes, but need not give a precis of any of them.

(continued on back cover)

DISPOSAL

13. **Original Commander's Diary.** This is to be forwarded monthly, unless otherwise ordered, by the seventh day of the succeeding month direct to AHQ.

14. **Duplicate Commander's Diary.** This must be clearly marked as a duplicate. It is to be sent separately from the original to AHQ one month after the original has been despatched but not before the former has been acknowledged.

15. When overseas, both copies of diaries are to be sent through the Army Records organization in the overseas theatre but at different times.

16. **TOP SECRET Supplementary Diaries.**

a. The documents referred to in Paragraph 9 together with a list of them made out on AF C 2118 (Adapted) must be placed in separate cover (AF C 2119) (Adapted). All details must be filled in and the cover clearly marked in red: "ANNEX Z — OFFICER ONLY". It may be convenient to group the papers by appendices.

b. Supplementary diaries must be forwarded under the normal rules for TOP SECRET correspondence, to AHQ. The inner envelope must be plainly marked:

TOP SECRET
ANNEX Z to

Commanders Diary of.....(Formation or Unit)

From.....to..... (Dates)

c. The duplicate supplementary diaries must be despatched as shown in Paragraph 14 as soon as receipt of the original has been acknowledged.

This form is to be enclosed with the annexes in AF-C2119 (Adapted)

AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES

AF - C2118 (Adapted)
Revised Apr 69

COMMANDER'S DIARY NARRATIVE

UNIT/FORMATION 161 (INDEP) RECCE FLT

MONTH and YEAR Nov 71

REFERENCE MAP

COMMANDING OFFICER Maj N.H. Harden

Serial	Place and Grid reference	Date	Time	Event or Information	Reference to annex letter and/or enclosure
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)
				<u>SUMMARY.</u>	
				With the withdrawal of all Australian Forces from Nui Dat on 7 Nov 71	
				the unit has experienced a considerable drop in flying hours, particularly on the Rotary Wing side. The Task Force is now only concerning itself with areas immediately to the North and North-West of Vung Tau and concentrated Visual Reconnaissance in these areas are continuing. Lt Steel received heavy ground fire while on a VR to the north of Long Son and made a successful forced landing with no injury to pilot or passenger. The aircraft took 13 hits and has had to undergo major repair back in the United States. This aircraft was not replaced and we now have only seven OH-58A's remaining in the Flight. There has been a marked increase in the number of liaison flights done to the Saigon-Long Binh areas.	
				The documents runs which has been done by RW aircraft for many years, has now ceased with the LO's being brought back in and the First Light Road Recce is now done by the RW aircraft and only covers the road from Vung Tau to Baria.	

This form is to be enclosed with annexes in AF - C2119 (Adapted)

AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES

COMMANDERS DIARY NARRATIVE

AF - C2118 (Adapted)
Revised Apr 69

UNIT FORMATION 161 (INDEP) RECCE FLT

MONTH AND YEAR Nov 71

REFERENCE MAP PHOU TUY PROVINCE

COMMANDING OFFICER Maj N.H. HARDEN

Serial	Place and grid reference	Date	Time	Events or information	Reference to annex letter and or enclosure No (f)
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	
				Porter A14-692 completed an 'E' Service during the month and was away with Air America from 3 Nov 71 to 21 Nov 71.	
				Plans for 4 Kiowas to remain behind until March 72 are now complete and Capt H. Matheson will command the small detachment left behind.	
				Accommodation for this element will be at Vung Tau airfield with the RAAF, using the space vacated by 9 Sqn which leaves early in December.	
				Preparation for the move home is now well under way with a large percentage of unit stores already crated and packed in containers. One Porter has already been withdrawn from service and has been prepared for the trip home by ship in early January.	
				Unit strength at the end of November was 13 Officers and 65 Other Ranks.	

This form is to be enclosed with annexes in AF - C2119 (Adapted)

(AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES)

AF - C2118 (Adapted)

Revised Apr 69

COMMANDERS DIARY NARRATIVE

UNIT FORMATION 161 (INDEP) RECCE FLT

MONTH AND YEAR Nov 71

REFERENCE MAP PHOU TUY PROVINCE

COMMANDING OFFICER Maj N.H. HARDEN

Serial	Place and grid reference	Date	Time	Events or information	Reference to annex letter and/or enclosure No (f)
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)
		1 Nov		VR's reported nothing of significance.	
			1645	Lt Steel took ground fire over Long Son Island but with no hit on the aircraft.	
				Capt Monteith departed on R&R.	
		2 Nov		VR's reported nothing of significance.	
		3 Nov		VR's reported nothing of significance.	
		4 Nov	0800	2lt Triplett sent to search for seaman missing in Vung Tau harbour.	
			1000	2lt Meham replaced P23 in the search but no sign of the man.	
			1200	Special VR's put on in the Long Son area but nothing sighted.	
	YS 388753	5 Nov	1100	Lt Reynolds sighted one bunker and weapon pits all with overhead protection.	
				A well was also in the area and appeared to have been used recently.	
		6 Nov		Quiet day with VR's revealing nothing of importance.	
		7 Nov		Heavy aircraft tasking as a result of the withdrawal from Nui Dat.	
			0630	Maj Harden, Lt Reynolds and 2lt Meham provided continuous top cover for convoys from Nui Dat to Vung Tau. Mission completed at 1415 and Nui Dat is REMOVED vacated.	
				Lt Steel flew the last DS aircraft for 4 RAR/NZ and this was to be the last	

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(AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES)

AF - C2118 (Adapted)

Revised Apr 69

COMMANDERS DIARY NARRATIVE

UNIT FORMATION 161 (INDEP) RECCE FLT

MONTH AND YEAR Nov 71

REFERENCE MAP PHUOC TUY PROVINCE

COMMANDING OFFICER Maj N.H. HARDEN

Serial (a)	Place and grid reference (b)	Date (c)	Time (d)	Events or information (e)	Reference to annex letter and or enclosure No (f)
				DS aircraft to be flown in South Vietnam.	
		7 Nov	1540	Nickname "CHEERFUL TROOPS" passed on TF net - all 1 ATF complete in Vung Tau.	
		8 Nov	0930	Lt Howard had an engine failure on finals, landing on runway 30 at Vung Tau.	
				Aircraft landed safely. Suspected contaminated fuel.	
			1000	Date is confirmed for RTA - 23 Dec 71.	
	YS 258588		1100	2lt Mecham sighted a camp for 10 persons used in last 24 hours. Food and supplies found in the camp.	
			1530	161 Recce Flt received an "Air Task Request" from the RAAF???	
		9 Nov		VR's reported nothing of significance.	
				Capt Monteith returned from R&R.	
		10 Nov		Last RW and FW documents runs flown by Lt Steel and Lt McGhie.	
		11 Nov		VR's sighted nothing.	
		12 Nov		VR's sighted nothing.	
		13 Nov		Quiet day - no sightings on the VR's.	
		14 Nov		No VR's, no Sniffer. - no VR's	
	YS 237668	15 Nov	0800	2lt Mecham sighted a camp 100 metres square containing 2 large concrete	

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(AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES)

AF - C2118 (Adapted)

Revised Apr 69

COMMANDERS DIARY NARRATIVE

UNIT FORMATION 161 (INDEP) RECCE FLT

MONTH AND YEAR Nov 71

REFERENCE MAP PHOU TUOY PROVINCE

COMMANDING OFFICER Maj N.H. HARDEN

Serial (a)	Place and grid reference (b)	Date (c)	Time (d)	Events or information (e)	Reference to annex letter and or enclosure No (f)
				bunkers, tables and sleeping platforms - air strike called for.	
			1120	JADE called in that Lt Steel had taken ground fire and was down at 315605, the fire coming from 300595.	
			1145	Bushrangers, arrived get under way, from Vung Tau, for downed aircraft.	
			1150	4 slicks arrived in the area with platoon from D Coy 4 RAR.	
			1150	Pilot and passenger not hurt and pilot reports 13 holes in the aircraft.	
			1250	Helping Hand UH-1H arrived to lift out the downed Kiowa back to Vung Tau.	
			1300	Air strike goes into the area - no BDA.	
		16 Nov		Another great day - no sightings on VR's.	
		17 Nov		VR's cancelled due to Friendly Forces being in the area.	
		18 Nov		Lt Dawson departed the unit on RTA. Lt Reynolds and Lt Howard arrived back from R&R.	
	YS 237659	19 Nov	1200	Lt Wright located an old bunker system with fresh track in the area.	
		20 Nov		VR's reported nothing of significance.	
		21 Nov		VR's reported nothing of significance.	
		22 Nov		VR's reported nothing of significance.	

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(AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES)

AF - C2118 (Adapted)

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COMMANDERS DIARY NARRATIVE

UNIT FORMATION 161 (INDEP) RECCE FLT

MONTH AND YEAR Nov 71

REFERENCE MAP PHUOC TUY PROVINCE

COMMANDING OFFICER Maj N.H. HARDEN

Serial	Place and grid reference	Date	Time	Events or information	Reference to annex letter and or enclosure No (f)
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)
		23 Nov		VR's postponed due to friendlies in the area. IF training began for Kiowa pilots with ADF's and GCA's.	
		24 Nov		Lt Steel had a T/R drive shaft bearing failure while in Long Binh - Bluebell sent to complete repairs.	
			1930	Brig McDonald addressed the unit prior to his departure from country.	
		25 Nov		Quiet day with only two liaison trips to Long Binh.	
		26 Nov	1200	2lt Triplett located 3 bunkers at separate locations - 288584, 286581 and 286578 - 1 ATF would not allow an air strike.	
	YS 256561	27 Nov		2lt Triplett located a large camp - 2 bunkers, 8 sleeping platforms, 100 gal water tank and a canoe.	
		28 Nov		VR's reported nothing of significance.	
		29 Nov		VR's reported nothing of significance.	
		30 Nov		CP at airfield is relocated in the RRAF hangar as air-portable shack has to be returned to the Air Force.	