

CHAPTER VII: SECOND TOUR OF VIETNAM 1969-1970



Bath time for Pte Garry Veale with Pte Geoffrey Bell standing. (Courtesy of Greg Carter)



Dog Trajan in his role as a "Grenadier" sans camouflage paint. (Courtesy John Neervoort)



We will defend Diggers Rest down to the last two men and their dogs - Pte BA Williams, Dog Milo, 106mm RCL, Pte RJ McDonald and Dog Trajan at FSPB Diggers Rest. (Courtesy of John Neervoort)

was being observed, a VC soldier appeared and was engaged and during a sweep of the area the Platoon was fired upon by an enemy platoon with two men being wounded (Pte DR Muir and Pte RA Penney) (Map 59 "7"). The Platoon was withdrawn, and artillery, mortars and airstrikes used against the enemy position overnight. Not with much effect, as it happened, because when the company attempted to enter the system next morning it received heavy fire. The position was finally cleared that afternoon after more artillery and airstrikes were skilfully directed by the Company Commander (Maj LG Williams) as he had also done the previous day. A total of seven airstrikes were made against the position.

On 28 September, A Company moved to a new NDP (Apache) prior to it being relieved by D Company 9RAR (Maj IJC Hearn) on 29 September. A Company returned to Nui Dat followed shortly after by W Company. On 30 September Battalion Headquarters left FSPB Diggers Rest for Nui Dat together with V Company, followed by B Company that afternoon.

The following awards were made for Operation Burnham and in some cases in conjunction with other operations:

- Military Cross: Maj LG Williams, RNZIR, OC W Company (see 25/26 Sep).
- Military Medal: Cpl RD Brown, Sect Comd 10 Pl (see 9 Sep); Pte RJ Fitzpatrick, Forward Scout 6 Pl (see 25 Sep).
- Mentioned in Despatches: Pte WG Doherty, RNZIR, Machine Gunner 2 Pl V Coy (see 24 Sep).

By giving 6RAR/NZ the task of training ARVN soldiers at the Horseshoe as occurred during Operation Burnham, HQ 1ATF effectively reduced the number of the Battalion's rifle companies from five to four. The task was ongoing and continued to the end of the tour.

Of course, if the task had been given to either of the other two battalions it would have reduced the companies from four to three which is the number of rifle companies in a US Army battalion. Indeed, it is also currently (2020) the case for Australian battalions.

One of the long-term impacts of this reduction in rifle companies meant that C Company 6RAR, one of the original companies and one of the best