

**SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE FOR VIETNAM VETERANS' DAY 2024**  
**ADDRESS BY**  
**HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC**  
**GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA**  
**HOBART CENOTAPH, SUNDAY 18 AUGUST 2024**

Good morning, everyone. Thank you for being here to commemorate Vietnam Veterans' Day 2024. Today, we take time to remember all the men and women who served in Vietnam. We also acknowledge all family and friends who supported them and continue to support them.

May I also pay my respects to all the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women who have contributed to the defence of Australia, in times of peace and war.

Today, I have been asked to address the actions of the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam (AATTV), one of the elite Australian units in the Vietnam War.<sup>1</sup>

Australia's commitment to this war began on the 31 July 1962 with the arrival of the AATTV. Commander Colonel Ted Serong was joined by 15 officers and 15 senior Non-Commissioned Officers (warrant officers and sergeants) who made up "The Team" and arrived in Saigon a few days later, on 3 August 1962.

Of the more than 60,000 Australians deployed during the war, they were not only the first Australian soldiers to deploy, but they were also amongst the last to leave in December 1972. "The Team" served in South Vietnam for a continuous period longer than any unit — more than 10 years.<sup>2</sup>

The AATTV was sent to Vietnam in a training and advisory capacity, as part of the US Military Assistance Command Vietnam. Members served 12 to 18-month tours of duty. The unit only existed in Vietnam, as members were sent individually or in small groups from across our Army to Vietnam.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/blog/Australian-army-training-team-Vietnam>, accessed 30/7/2024.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

“The Team” was the most highly decorated unit of the Vietnam war. “The Team” was awarded four Victoria Crosses, two Distinguished Service Orders, three Orders of the British Empire, six Members of the British Empire, six Military Crosses, twenty Distinguished Conduct Medals, fifteen Military Medals, four British Empire Medals, four Queen’s Commendation Medals and forty-nine Mentioned in Dispatches. These were all awarded over the ten years “The Team” operated in theatre.<sup>3</sup>

That so many awards were earned is attributable to their mission. The AATTV operated with local units from the South Vietnamese Army, Montagnards and Territorial forces. They were also attached to units as trainers, advisors and leaders. Their work included deployment with US Special Forces Command and the CIA, throughout South Vietnam.

Members of “The Team” usually operated on their own or in pairs, without the opportunity to draw support in down time with fellow Australians. Members of “The Team” were rarely together as a single unit. One of the team, Peter Jarratt, said, “...when you’re involved in a fire situation where people are actually shooting at you and you can’t speak the language, you feel pretty vulnerable, which is why we always sent advisors out in pairs, so that one man could watch the other’s back. You look after each other.”<sup>4</sup>

This situation led to the development and implementation of counter-insurgency strategies that had been adopted during the Malayan Emergency and subsequent confrontation.

“Team” members worked closely with the civilian populations building trust, providing, where possible, assistance with medical aid, infrastructure support, and education initiatives. Because of these relationships, “Team” members were able to coordinate relief efforts, support development projects, and provide advice on governance and administration. This fostered stability in areas where they operated. “The Team” also focused on humanitarian activities, and distributed food and supplies.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/U53430f> accessed 28 June 24

<sup>4</sup> <https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/resources/peter-jarratt-australian-armt-training-team-Vietnam>, page 2, accessed 30/7/2024.

Our AATTV was often in the thick of the fighting. Of the more than a thousand personnel who served in the unit over the decade, 33 personnel died during service in Vietnam, and 122 were wounded in action.<sup>5</sup>

As mentioned, four members of the AATTV were awarded the Victoria Cross, the highest award, for gallantry in the face of enemy action and in support of comrades.

These four Victoria Cross recipients are:

Warrant Officer Class II Kevin Conway, who demonstrated unwavering bravery during an enemy attack in April 1964 and saved the lives of many of his comrades and inspired all who served alongside him.

Warrant Officer Class II Keith Payne, who in the face of overwhelming odds and amidst fierce enemy fire, repeatedly braved danger to rescue wounded soldiers during a battle in May 1969, displaying unparalleled courage and selflessness.

Warrant Officer Class II Ray Simpson, who was fearless in his leadership and steadfast in his resolve under fire in August 1969, when he rallied his men to repel a determined enemy assault, ensuring the safety of his team and the success of their mission.

Fourthly, Captain Peter Badcoe, who paid the ultimate price for his acts of conspicuous gallantry and exceptional leadership under fire in March 1967. He epitomised the spirit of our AATTV and was awarded posthumously the Victoria Cross.

These four, through their actions and sacrifice, not only exemplified the highest ideals of courage and dedication, but also the enduring bond of mateship and service that defines our Australian spirit. Their names and deeds are a testament to the will and commitment of those who serve our country.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid pages 2-3.

As we reflect on the heroism of these four and the contributions of all who served in Vietnam, let us ensure that their stories continue to inspire future generations. May their sacrifices never be forgotten. May we pledge to uphold their legacy.

To the members of our Australian Army Training Team Vietnam, and to all who served in Vietnam, we extend our gratitude and deepest respect.

To those who remained at home during that war, and who continue to support our returned veterans, we express our gratitude.

Lest we forget.