



THE HON. DR MIKE KELLY MP Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Support

Wednesday, 28 October 2009

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RELEASE OF INQUIRY INTO UNRESOLVED RECOGNITION ISSUES FOR THE BATTLE OF LONG TAN

The Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Support, the Hon Dr Mike Kelly AM MP, today announced that the Government has accepted the recommendations of the independent Defence Honours and Awards Tribunal Inquiry into Unresolved Recognition Issues for the Battle of Long Tan.

The Report recommended that:

1. Flight Lieutenant Cliff Dohle be awarded the Distinguished Service Medal, the contemporary equivalent award to the Distinguished Flying Cross, the original award for which he was properly recommended in 1966 by all levels of Australian command in Vietnam;
2. No other individual awards be made to participants in the Battle of Long Tan; and
3. Delta Company, 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (RAR), be awarded the Unit Citation for Gallantry for its performance at the Battle of Long Tan in August 1966.

The Battle of Long Tan was fought on 18 August 1966 when Delta Company, 6 RAR came into contact with a much larger enemy force while patrolling outside the 1st Australian Task Force at Nui Dat in Phuoc Tuy Province, South Vietnam. Seventeen members of Delta Company were killed during the battle, and another 21 were wounded.

“The release of the findings fulfils a Rudd Labor Government election commitment. The Government has accepted the Tribunal’s findings, and I have directed Defence to implement the recommendations,” said Dr Kelly.

“I am delighted that the Tribunal has recommended the award of an Australian Unit Citation for Gallantry to the men of Delta Company 6 RAR. This ensures that all are recognised for what was in effect a magnificent team effort. It has only been in recent years that we have come to appreciate the full significance of the battle in the context of the conflict.”

“For the South Vietnamese Government at the time it meant that the Phuoc Tuy Province was effectively neutralised as a concern. For the US it contributed to the overall effort in that it enabled resources to be focused

elsewhere. For Australia it was significant because we now know that this was a planned and determined effort to annihilate the Australian Task Force before it had settled in.”

“The result of the action was not only that the enemy was prevented from achieving this objective but was never able to mount such an effort again in Phuoc Tuy Province for the remainder of the Australian presence.”

“I also commend the Tribunal for upholding the recommendation made in 1966 by RAAF command in Vietnam to award Flight Lieutenant Cliff Dohle the Distinguished Flying Cross,” said Dr Kelly.

“I would also like to thank the Tribunal for its work on this and the other matters it has dealt with or is continuing to deal with. I believe all members of the Tribunal have undertaken their work diligently, fairly and with an open mind. I continue to have complete confidence in the Tribunal.”

“The release of the Tribunal’s report and the acceptance of the recommendations clearly demonstrate the Government’s commitment to the independent review of long-standing Defence honours and awards issues.”

The Tribunal’s full report is available at www.defence-honours-tribunal.gov.au. Further information on Defence honours and awards is available at: www.defence.gov.au/medals/

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