

VIETNAM BASES



This map shows the locations in Vietnam of RAAF squadrons. No 2 Sqn is based at Phan Rang, 150 miles north-west of Saigon. Nos 9 and 35 Sqns are at Vung Tau, south-east of Saigon.

Helicopters In Action

VUNG TAU (South Vietnam).—Three RAAF Iroquois helicopters of No 9 Sqn ran the gauntlet of enemy fire to evacuate casualties from the Regional Forces compound at Xuyen Moc, a small town, 10 miles east of Nui Dat, which was attacked by the Viet Cong.

The compound had been hit by enemy mortars.

The helicopters, captained by Flt Lt Laddie Hindley, of Goulburn, Flt Lt Bill Shepherd, of Canberra, and Flt Lt Les Morris, of Canberra, came under heavy automatic weapons fire as they came in low.

The helicopter crewmen, Sgt Jim Roche, of Numurkah, Vic, Cpl Dennis Olsen, of Brisbane, Qld, LAC Brian Taylor, of Rockhampton, Qld, LAC Paul Covington, of Dookie, Vic, LAC Fred Monahan, of Geraldton, WA, and LAC Dave Spalding, of Southport, Qld, manned their M60 machine guns to return the fire.

When the helicopters landed, US Army advisors organized the loading of the badly wounded South Vietnamese troops. With the wounded on board, the RAAF helicopters again ran the gauntlet of enemy fire as they skimmed the treetops in the darkness.

The wounded South Viet-

namese were taken to hospital at Vung Tau.

In another action a few days earlier, Flt Lt Shepherd and his crew fought with 12 Viet Cong near Bin Gio. The chopper held the guerrillas in the area until USAF aircraft arrived.

With Flt Lt Shepherd were Flt Lt Dave Champion, of Canberra, and Sgt Gordon Buttriss, of Sefton, Sydney, and LAC David Darcy, of Perth.

Sgt Buttriss was recently awarded the George Medal for gallantry.



Pilots and navigators of No 2 Sqn photographed at Butterworth, Malaysia, before moving to their new base at Phan Rang, South Vietnam. They are (from left): Wg Cdr Rolf Arsen, of Canberra, CO; Sqn Ldr D. Ingall, of Balgowlah, NSW; Flt Lt Len O'Neill, of Brisbane; Flt Lt Hugh McIndoe, of Brisbane; Sqn Ldr T. Kilian, of Mt Lawley, WA; Flt Off Robert O'Hanlon, of Gympie, Qld; Flt Off J. McKernan, of Brisbane, Qld; Flt Off B. Griddle, of Swanbourne, WA; Flt Lt Charles Reif, of Mt Morgan, Qld; Flt Off F. Burt, of Brisbane, Qld; and Flt Lt Barry Squires, of West Ryde, NSW.

3 SQUADRONS IN VIETNAM AIR OPERATIONS

(By PETER HOWSON, Minister for Air)

THREE squadrons of the Royal Australian Air Force are now supporting the Australian military effort in South Vietnam. This is the greatest number of RAAF squadrons and personnel to be directly engaged in air combat operations since World War II.

In addition to No 9 Sqn equipped with Iroquois helicopters and No 35 Transport Sqn equipped with Caribou, the RAAF has now deployed to Vietnam one of its most famous units. This is No 2 Sqn, equipped with Canberra bombers.

No 2 Sqn, which has already made a major contribution to the safety and security of South-East Asia during the past seven-and-a-half years will operate in Vietnam in support of Australian Army forces. The RAAF Canberras may also be employed as part of the Allied combat air contribution in support of other Allied ground forces and against enemy movements and concentrations.

CANBERRAS

The deployment of No 2 Sqn to South Vietnam gives the RAAF the opportunity of employing Canberras in day-to-day bombing operations for the first time since the RAAF re-equipped its bomber squadrons with this Australian-built twin jet aircraft in 1954.

While the Canberra has been in squadron service with the RAAF for 12 years, it will be eminently suitable for the particular tasks it will be called on to carry out in South Vietnam, where, as was the case in Korea, air power is making an important contribution to the Allied operations.

The United States and South Vietnamese Air Forces operating against the Viet Cong have made successful use of the equivalent aircraft to the Australian Canberra bomber during the past two years. This is the American Martin B-57, which was returned to bomber duty with the USAF in Vietnam because of its bomb-carrying capacity, its range and its

capability of remaining for many hours in the combat zone.

Not only the Canberras, but the Caribou transports and Iroquois helicopters of the RAAF already operating in South Vietnam, are similar to aircraft used by United States Forces. The use of similar aircraft and equipment in a zone of operations greatly assists the attainment of operational compatibility between air forces.

In addition to the three squadrons engaged in tactical operations in support of the Australian effort in Vietnam, the RAAF has the task of providing air transport and medical air evacuation between Australia and Vietnam not only for its own personnel but also for the Australian Army forces in Vietnam whose strength will shortly rise to a total of 5,700.

This increased transport load will, however, create no great problem for the RAAF because the service has just taken delivery of a whole new squadron of Hercules transports, more than doubling uplift capacity in this type of aircraft.

The Hercules air and ground crews of the new squadron (named No 37) to continue the tradition of a World War II transport squadron are now undergoing intensive training in Australia and the squadron will shortly be fully operational.

All its 12 Hercules are C130Es which have a much greater payload and capacity than the C130A Hercules already in RAAF service.

At the time of the announcement of No 2 Sqn's withdrawal from Malaysia it was also announced that No 3 Sabre Fighter Sqn would be withdrawn and replaced with No 75 Mirage Fighter Sqn as part of the continuing Australian commitment to security and stability in South-East Asia.



● Cpt H. D. Marsh, newly appointed Task Force Air Support Officer, Task Force, Vietnam.

No 3 Sqn returned to Australia via Singapore and Bull in February and at Williams-town it is in process of converting to Mirage aircraft, making the RAAF's third squadron to be equipped with this highly effective aircraft for air defence, for ground attack and for the support of the Army in the land battle.

STRIKE AIRCRAFT

In the United States, development and testing of the new variable-sweep-wing strike aircraft is proceeding on schedule.

It will be the core of the deterrent power of the RAAF.

This new and truly revolutionary aircraft is now known as the F-111C. The USAF decided on this method of distinguishing the RAAF aircraft from aircraft on order to the Strategic Air Command, the Tactical Air Command and the Royal Air Force.

The RAAF version of the aircraft will have extended wing tips and the strengthened undercarriage of the F-111 version destined for the Strategic Air Command. These features will significantly increase the range and payload characteristics of the aircraft.

Because the F-111 was the centre of so much controversy last year I decided to give it a personal going over. I test-flew it at Fort Worth, Texas, and my performance exceeded all my expectations. It is undoubtedly a magnificent aircraft. The terrain following radar system of the F-111 was particularly impressive.

By early February this year, a total of 1,449 flights had been made by the various versions of the F-111 and of these 509 have been at supersonic speeds. The variable-sweep-wing aircraft's most revolutionary feature which I tested in flight, is an established success.

When the F-111Cs are delivered together with the new Orion maritime reconnaissance aircraft and Macchi trainers (both due next year on schedule), the RAAF will have advanced aircraft in every flying department (fighter, bomber, maritime reconnaissance, transport and trainer).

Although naturally enough the RAAF will not have as many aircraft or as much equipment as many air forces, no air force in the world will have a better range of modern aircraft to carry out a wide variety of operational tasks.