



HONOURS AND AWARDS

21ST AUGUST 1969

AWARDED THE VICTORIA CROSS

WARRANT OFFICER CLASS TWO RAYENE STEWART SIMPSON, D.C.M.

C I T A T I O N

On 6th May 1969 Warrant Officer Simpson was serving as commander of 232nd Mobile Strike Force Company of 5 Special Forces Group on a search and clear operation in Kontum Province, near the Laotian border. When one of his platoons became heavily engaged with the enemy, he led the remainder of his company to its assistance. Disregarding the dangers involved, he placed himself at the front of his troops, thus becoming a focal point of enemy fire, and personally led the assault on the left flank of the enemy position. As the company moved forward, an Australian warrant officer commanding one of the platoons was seriously wounded, and the assault began to falter. Warrant Officer Simpson, at great personal risk and under heavy enemy fire, moved across open ground, reached the wounded warrant officer, and carried him to a position of safety. He then returned to his company where, with complete disregard for his safety, he crawled forward to within 10 metres of the enemy and threw grenades into their position. As darkness fell, and being unable to break into the enemy position, Warrant Officer Simpson ordered his company to withdraw. He then threw smoke grenades and, carrying a wounded platoon leader, covered the withdrawal of the company, together with five indigenous soldiers. His leadership and personal bravery in this action were outstanding.

On 11th May 1969, in the same operation, Warrant Officer Simpson's battalion commander was killed and an Australian warrant officer and several indigenous soldiers were wounded. In addition, one other Australian warrant officer who had been separated from the majority of his troops was contained in the area by enemy fire. Warrant Officer Simpson quickly organised two platoons of indigenous soldiers and several advisers and led them to the position of the contact. On reaching the position the element with Warrant Officer Simpson came under heavy fire and all but a few of the soldiers with him fell back. Disregarding his own safety, he moved forward in the face of accurate enemy machine gun fire, in order to cover the initial evacuation of the casualties. The wounded were eventually moved out of the line of enemy fire, which all this time was directed at Warrant Officer Simpson from close range. At the risk of almost certain death he made several attempts to move further forward towards his battalion commander's body, but on each occasion he was stopped by enemy fire. Realising the position was becoming untenable, and that priority should be given to extricating other casualties as quickly as possible, Warrant Officer Simpson, alone and still under enemy fire, covered the withdrawal of the wounded by personally placing himself between the wounded and the enemy. From this position he fought on and by outstanding courage and valour was able to prevent the enemy advance until the wounded were removed from the immediate vicinity. Warrant Officer Simpson's gallant and individual action and his coolness under fire were exceptional and were instrumental in achieving the successful evacuation of the wounded to the helicopter evacuation pad.

Warrant Officer Simpson's repeated acts of personal bravery in this operation were an inspiration to all Vietnamese, United States and Australian soldiers who served with him. His conspicuous gallantry was in the highest tradition of the Australian Army.

TEXT OF CITATION

AWARD OF DCM

TO

SERGEANT RAYENE STEWART SIMPSON

Warrant Officer SIMPSON served with the Australian Imperial Forces from March 1944 to January 1947. He re-enlisted in January 1951, serving with the Royal Australian Regiment during 1951 and in MALAYA during the emergency.

Warrant Officer SIMPSON was assigned to the first Australian Army Training Team VIETNAM in August 1962 and returned to AUSTRALIA in August 1963. He volunteered for a second tour with the Australian Army Training Team VIETNAM and was assigned to the training team on the thirteenth of July 1964, from the First Special Air Service Company.

He was immediately posted to the advisory group with United States and Vietnamese Special Forces in the mountainous jungles of the North West. Shortly after his arrival, he took a major part in the establishment of a new patrol base at TAKO, designed to control border infiltration; and thereafter his task was to provide advice in the training and operations of Vietnamese patrols from that base. On one such patrol, led by a Vietnamese Special Forces Officer the platoon size group was intercepted by a superior Viet Cong Force. The Vietnamese leader was an early casualty. Warrant Officer SIMPSON was severely wounded by rifle fire in the right leg. Despite his wound, he rallied the platoon, formed a defensive position, contacted base by radio, and, by personal example and inspiring leadership held off repeated assaults by the Viet Cong force, until, with ammunition almost exhausted, and himself weak from loss of blood, the relief force he had alerted arrived at the scene. Even then, not until he was satisfied that the position was secure and the troops of his patrol adequately cared for did he permit himself to be evacuated.