



## RAAF IN VIETNAM

RAAF SUPPORT of Australian operations in Vietnam, and those of her allies, has been largely overshadowed by the flying operations of the USAF; but the fact remains that, not only in South Vietnam, but in long-range transport flights between Vietnam and Australia, these operations greatly exceed in extent and significance RAAF action in any air operations since the Second World War.

In the four years during which they have been operating in Vietnam, RAAF Caribou have transported more than 48 million pounds of freight, four million pounds of mail and 250,000 passengers. Their tasks also include medical evacuation, supply and paratroop dropping, and the movement of Vietnamese families who are being relocated.

The RAAF Canberra bomber squadron which has been based at Phan Rang in South Vietnam since April 1967 provides four day and four night bombing sorties daily, each aircraft carrying six 1,000lb and two 500lb bombs. The squadron also provides pilots as forward air controllers, flying light observation aircraft at low altitudes to guide strike aircraft on to their targets.

Recently, a communiqué issued from RAAF headquarters in Canberra told how a Canberra crew had killed an estimated 35 Viet Cong in a bombing raid on an enemy camp. It dropped four 500lb bombs on the target, accounting for another 20 wounded, and destroying 15 buildings and nine sampans.

RAAF HQ said that this was the most significant bomb strike yet by No 2 Sqn. The previous highest death toll in any bombing raid was 20 enemy killed. Latest strike in the Delta region brought the total enemy killed by 2 Sqn to 432.

The Canberras have an enviable record of accuracy against enemy installations throughout South Vietnam. Canberra crews often fly more than 100 missions during their tour. In that time they drop thousands of tons of bombs on enemy targets.

The RAAF has lost no aircraft through enemy action, but two Caribou transports and an Iroquois helicopter have been lost in flying accidents.

More than 700 RAAF personnel are now serving in Vietnam. They are in Nos 35 (Caribou) Sqn, No 9 (Iroquois) Sqn at Vung Tau and No 2 (Canberra) bomber squadron at Phan Rang, 165 miles north-east of Saigon. There is also an administrative unit at Vung Tau, a command headquarters at Allied Headquarters in Saigon, and a number of small elements scattered through the Republic on a variety of tasks.



Iroquois of 9 Sqn, RAAF, with three Centurion tanks of the 1st Armoured Regt, Australian Army, during tactical manoeuvres in Phuoc Tuy Province, South Vietnam. The helicopters are based at Vung Tau (see map below)

Map showing location of RAAF units based in South Vietnam

Since they were first deployed to Vietnam on August 8, 1964, the Caribou aircraft have flown many thousands of miles in all kinds of weather on their varied transport tasks.

In a typical day the Caribou crew may land at as many as nine or ten airstrips—ranging from heavily defended air bases to temporary dirt strips. One mission could be to evacuate Vietnamese families, complete with household goods and livestock. Next on the list could be the supply drop of cows to a village.

The beasts are crated up and parachuted gently to the ground, ready for the morning's milking.

The aircraft of 35 Sqn perform a wide variety of functions throughout South Vietnam. Under the direction of the US 7th Air Force they operate as a troop transport. They carry vital supplies of rations and ammunition. To the small special forces camps dotting the central highlands of South Vietnam, they are a most welcome sight with their bags of mail. Responsibility for the delivery of