

## Viet Nam - VC Recipients

Australia's four Viet Nam Victoria Cross recipients are well known. What is not well known is the Foreign Decorations and Awards bestowed upon these four members of the AATTV. The subject of Foreign Decorations and Awards presented to Australian personnel during the Viet Nam war was partly solved in 1999, when permission to wear such Decorations and Awards was approved by the Australian Government

The wearing of these Decorations and Awards was subjected to the presentation of Official Documentation from the country the Decoration or Award was made to the Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, for investigation and approval by the Governor General of Australia. There have been further approvals since that date, particularly for the battle of Long Tan where members of D. Coy 6 RAR and others were awarded 22 long overdue Vietnamese Decorations and Awards on 26 June 2004, almost 38 years after the battle. Other Foreign Decorations and Awards for the Viet Nam War are still being approved for general wearing as this document is being written.

During the time of the Viet Nam war there were over 1100 individual awards and several Unit awards presented to members of the Royal Australian Navy; The Australian Army and the Royal Australian Air Force. These awards were presented by; The United States of America ( US ); The Republic of South Viet Nam ( RVN) and the Republic of Khmer ( RKMR ). The End of War list - Viet Nam Panel, chaired by Mr Noel Tanzer AC, concluded in late 1999. The panel did not consider the Foreign Decorations and Awards presented to Australians during the Viet Nam war as it was not part of its brief at the time.

The panel did not have the terms of reference to include the Foreign Awards issue in that review. Thus leaving the issue unsolved, begging the question .... Is an Imperial Award or Decoration higher, equal or lesser than the Award of the US Silver Star or the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry for the action in which it was earned....? Perhaps in time the issue of foreign awards will be addressed and those so decorated will receive the equivalent Imperial / Australian award as in past conflicts.

Using the Imperial system, the most highly decorated Australian to serve in Viet Nam was **Warrant Officer Class Two; 217622 Rayne Stewart Simpson. VC. DCM.** ( Victoria Cross - Distinguished Conduct Medal ) a member of the AATTV. WO2. Simpson also received the following Foreign Decorations and Awards; Silver Star. (US) The Bronze Star for valour.(US) Meritorious Unit Commendation. (US. ) Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry Unit Citation / Palm. (RVN)

**Warrant Officer Class Two; 29890 Kevin A. "DASHER" Wheatley. VC.** A member of the AATTV. Received the following Foreign Decorations and Awards; Silver Star. (US). Knight, National Order of Viet Nam. (RVN). Medal of Military Merit. (RVN). Cross of Gallantry with Palm. (RVN). Meritorious Unit Commendation. (US). Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry Unit Citation / Palm. (RVN).

**Major; 41400 Peter John. Badcoe. VC.** A member of the AATTV. Received the following Foreign Decorations and Awards; Silver Star. (Two awards) (US). Knight, National Order of Viet Nam. (RVN). Cross of Gallantry with Palm. (RVN). Cross of Gallantry with Gold Star.(RVN). Armed Forces Honour Medal. 1St Class.(RVN). Meritorious Unit Commendation. (US). Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry Unit Citation / Palm. (RVN).

**Warrant Officer Class two; 12222 Keith Payne. VC. OAM.** A member of the AATTV. Received the following Foreign Decorations and Awards; Distinguished Service Cross.(US). Silver Star.(US). Cross of Gallantry with Silver Star (RVN). Meritorious Unit Commendation. (US). Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry Unit Citation / Palm. (RVN).

The most Decorated Australian serviceman (ARMY) to serve in Viet Nam, by the number of Decoration and Awards received was; **Major; 242633 Rex Clark**. A member of the AATTV. Maj Clark received the following Foreign Decorations and Awards; Soldiers Medal.(US). Bronze Star for Valour. (Four Awards) (US). Bronze Star Medal for Service.(US). Air Medal for Valour.(Three Awards)(US) . Air Medal for Service. (US) Joint Services Commendation medal.(RVN). Cross of Gallantry with Gold Star.(RVN). Life Saving Medal.(RVN). Armed Forces Honour Medal. 1St Class.(RVN). Staff Services Medal.(RVN). Technical Services Medal.(RVN). Meritorious Unit Commendation. (US). Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry Unit Citation / Palm.(RVN).

This extraordinary feat was completed during Maj Clark's 469 days of active service in Viet Nam. It begs the question; why during his service in Viet Nam was Maj Clark not awarded an Imperial Decoration for such an outstanding record? Maj Clark received an Imperial award from The Most Venerable Order of Saint John (OStJ) for service later in his military career for service to the Order in the area of humanitarian service.

**Note.**

The ratio of Decorations and Awards for Viet Nam has been well below that of other wars and conflicts; the table below will indicate the discrepancies in such awards for such conflicts;

World War One:- Percentage of Decorations and Awards per members on active service = 6.81%

World War Two:- Percentage of Decorations and Awards per members on active service = 2.29%

Korea:- Percentage of Decorations and Awards per members on active service = 2.42%

Viet Nam:- Percentage of Decorations and Awards per members on active service = 1.74%