



The National Commemoration for Vietnam Veterans' Day

PUKEAHU NATIONAL WAR MEMORIAL PARK
18 AUGUST 2021

New Zealand and the Vietnam War

The Vietnam War was the last, longest and most controversial of the five major wars in which New Zealand was involved in the 20th century.

Between June 1964 and December 1972, more than 3000 New Zealand military personnel served in South Vietnam. Thirty-seven died while on active service and 187 were wounded. About 300 New Zealand civilians also went to help the people of South Vietnam; two lost their lives.

The Vietnam War lasted from about 1960 until 1975. Fought between the communist Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam) and the US-backed Republic of Vietnam in the south, it ended with the defeat of South Vietnam in April 1975 and the establishment of a unified state, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. The human cost was horrendous: more than 1.4 million soldiers and perhaps 2.6 million civilians died.

New Zealand initially limited its assistance to a civilian surgical team which arrived in April 1963. This was followed by a small non-combatant military force in June 1964; combat involvement began a year later. At its peak in 1968, New Zealand's military force totalled 548 men.

Most of New Zealand's forces were involved in artillery offensives, cordon and search patrols, intelligence gathering and reconnaissance missions.

The Kiwi gunners were renowned for their involvement in several intense fire fights, including the Battle of Long Tan on 18 August 1966 when the gunners played a key role in assisting Australian infantry.

As the fighting dragged on, Vietnam became highly controversial at home with thousands of New Zealanders marching against the war. Many returning veterans felt a deep sense of frustration that their service – undertaken with characteristic skill and dedication – was regarded with ambivalence or, in some cases, hostility.

From late 1970 New Zealand gradually began withdrawing its forces from Vietnam. Combat involvement ended 50 years ago this year, in December 1971, and the army training teams followed 12 months later. The civilian surgical team was the last to leave in March 1975.

Vietnam stands apart from New Zealand's other 20th century military experiences. The conflict had a political and cultural impact that surpassed the numbers involved. For a growing number of young New Zealanders, this country's participation triggered a re-examination of our foreign policy and identity.



1 Platoon, Victor 6 Company resupply prior to a second assault on a bunker system during Operation Hermit Park, 26 June 1971. Image courtesy of Norman Fry



WHAKAAHUATIA A KONEI KIA MAU TŌTORONGA MAI I TE
NZ COVID TRACER APP

SCAN HERE TO SIGN-IN WITH THE NZ COVID TRACER APP

PUKEAHU NATIONAL WAR MEMORIAL PARK

Order of Ceremony

KARANGA

Pekaira Rei, Taranaki Whānui

NATIONAL ANTHEM

Anon Vocal Ensemble Trio

OPENING KARAKIA

Peter Jackson, Taranaki Whānui

WELCOME

Bernadette Cavanagh, Chief Executive,
Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture
and Heritage

COMMEMORATIVE ADDRESS

The Honourable Meka Whaitiri,
Minister for Veterans

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Chaplain Class 3 Ken Diekma,
New Zealand Defence Force

LAYING OF WREATHS

The Honourable Meka Whaitiri,
Minister for Veterans
on behalf of the Government and People
of New Zealand

Vince Kerr,
on behalf of the Vietnam War veterans

together with

Air Marshal Kevin Short,
Chief of Defence Force
on behalf of the New Zealand Defence Force

**His Excellency Mr Leasi Papali'i Tommy
Scanlan**,
Dean of the Diplomatic Corps
on behalf of the Diplomatic Corps

together with

The Honourable Gerry Brownlee,
on behalf of the Opposition

Dennis Montgomery,
on behalf of the New Zealand Surgical Team

together with

Sarah Stuart-Black QSO,
Secretary General of the New Zealand
Red Cross

and

John Dyer NZGD,
on behalf of the New Zealand Red Cross

Bob Hill,
National Vice President, Royal New Zealand
Returned and Services' Association
on behalf of the RNZRSA

ROLL OF HONOUR

Ray Marshall,
Vietnam War veteran

THE COMMEMORATION

LAST POST

Uniformed personnel salute

The New Zealand flag is lowered to
half-mast head

THE ODE IN TE REO MĀORI

Lieutenant Jack Rudolph,
RNZN

THE ODE IN ENGLISH

Bob Hill,
National Vice President, RNZRSA

ONE MINUTE OF SILENCE

ROUSE

The New Zealand flag is raised to
full-mast head

CLOSING KARAKIA

Peter Jackson, Taranaki Whānui



Free World Military Forces in Vietnam comprised of troops from various nations, including New Zealand.



INZATTV member, WO2 Bryan Lichtwark, teaches a group of South Vietnamese officers how to use TNT explosives at the National Training Centre at Chi Lang, c1971. Image courtesy of Bryan Lichtwark

This National Commemorative Service was arranged by the Visits and Ceremonial Office, Te Tari Taiwhenua Department of Internal Affairs, in partnership with Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage, Manatū Aorere Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Te Ope Kātua o Aotearoa the New Zealand Defence Force and the Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association.

Cover image: RNZAF Sergeant Gordon Sutherland Watt, 1st New Zealand Services Medical Team, examining a patient as part of a Medical Civic Action Program in South Vietnam, c1970. Sgt Watt was killed in a booby trap explosion on 1 March 1970. Image courtesy of Air Force Museum of New Zealand, Ref: WgG6396-70

