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AWARD OF UNITED STATES PRESIDENTIAL UNIT
CITATION

Statement by the Acting Prime Minister, Mr John McEwen

The Acting Prime Minister announced this morning that the United States Presidential Unit Citation has been awarded to "D" Company, 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, by the President of the United States.

President Johnson presented the Citation to the Prime Minister (Mr Gorton) at the President's Ranch in Texas on Thursday.

The Citation which is the highest United States award that can be given to a military unit, has been conferred on "D" Company for extraordinary heroism in the action fought at Long Tan on 18 August, 1966.

During the battle, "D" Company was attacked on all sides by an enemy force of regimental size, supported by accurate and intense mortar and recoil-less rifle fire. The leading platoon of the Company was cut off. Numerous enemy attacks were halted and later the Company with the support of artillery batteries and a squadron of armoured cavalry forced the enemy to withdraw leaving behind 245 dead.

Australian casualties were 18 dead and 25 wounded.

This is only the second occasion on which this high American honour has been conferred on an Australian Unit; the first being to the 3rd Battalion Royal Australian Regiment for outstanding gallantry at Kapyong, South Korea on 24-25 April 1951.

The Acting Prime Minister said :

"I congratulate the Officer Commanding and all members of 'D' Company. We are proud of them. The Citation adds fresh lustre to Australia's military tradition."

The citation reads:

"By virtue of the authority vested in me as President of the United States and as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the United States, I have today awarded the Presidential Unit Citation (Army) for extraordinary heroism to "D" Company Sixth Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment, the Australian Army. "D" Company, Sixth Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, distinguished itself by extraordinary heroism while engaged in military operations against an opposing armed force in Viet Nam on 18 August 1966. While searching for Viet Cong in a rubber plantation northeast of Ba Ria, Phuoc Tuy Province, Republic of Viet Nam, "D" Company met and immediately became engaged in heavy contact. As the battle developed, it became apparent that the men of "D" Company were facing a numerically superior force. The platoons of "D" Company were surrounded and attacked on all sides by an estimated

reinforced enemy battalion using automatic weapons, small arms and mortars. Fighting courageously against a well-armed and determined foe, the men of "D" Company maintained their formations in a common perimeter defence and inflicted heavy casualties upon the Viet Cong. The enemy maintained a continuous, intense volume of fire and attacked repeatedly from all directions. Each successive assault was repulsed by the courageous Australians. Heavy rainfall and a low ceiling prevented any friendly close air support during the battle. After three hours of savage attacks, having failed to penetrate the Australian lines, the enemy withdrew from the battlefield carrying many dead and wounded, and leaving 245 Viet Cong dead forward of the defence position of "D" Company. The conspicuous gallantry, intrepidity and indomitable courage of "D" Company were in the highest tradition of military valour and reflect great credit upon "D" Company, Sixth Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment and the Australian Army. "

A number of British awards for gallantry in the Long Tan action have already been announced. Members of "D" Company won a Military Cross, a Distinguished Conduct Medal and three Military Medals. Four members were Mentioned-in-Despatches.

CANBERRA,
31 May 1968