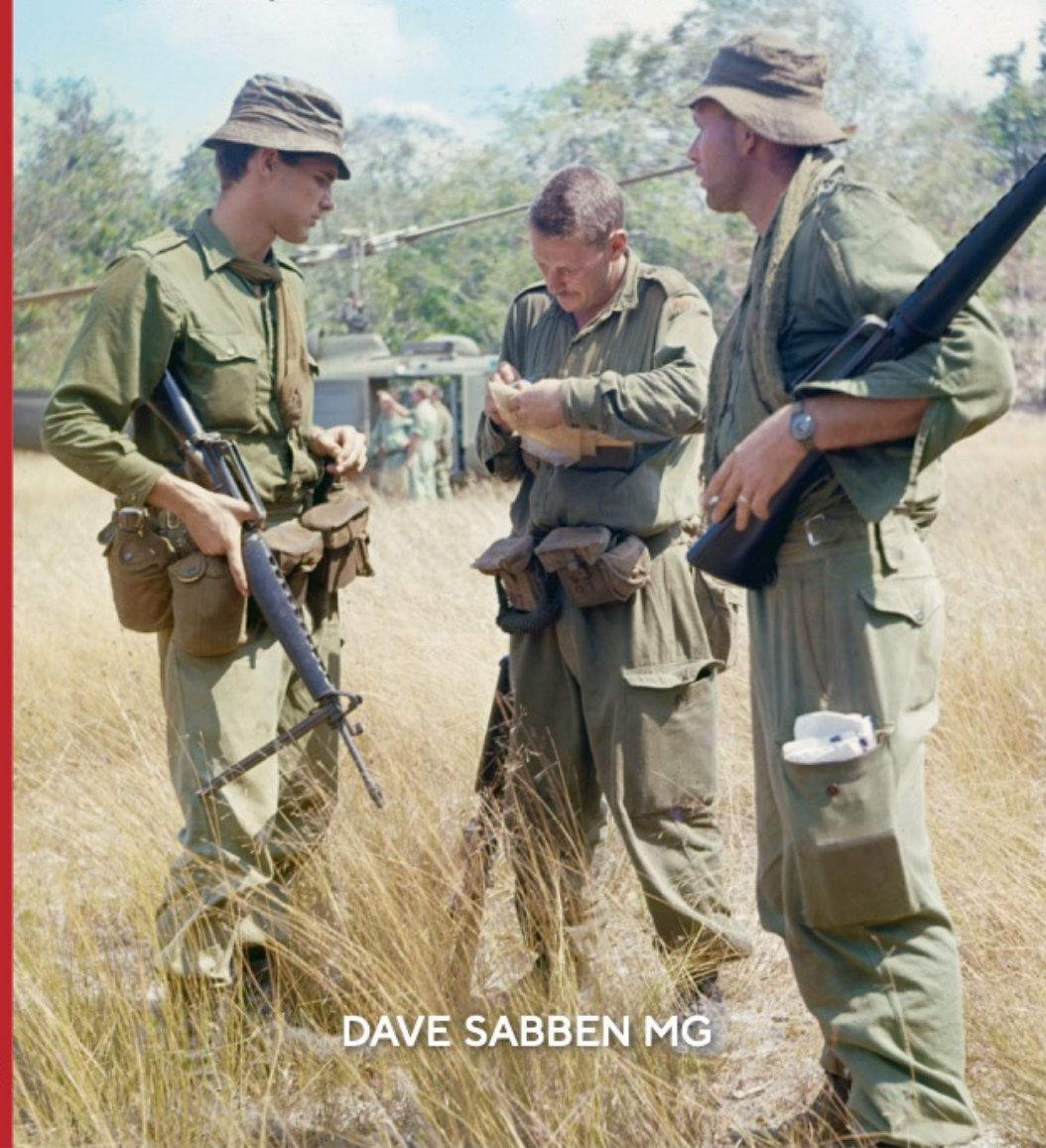


MENTIONS IN DESPATCHES

An Infantry Platoon in Viet Nam, June 1966 – June 1967



DAVE SABBen MG

MENTIONS IN DESPACHES

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Hundreds of soldiers endured getting six two-hour sleeps every three days for weeks on end. In between those sleeps, they patrolled with heavy kit in dust-dry or monsoon-wet (but always-dangerous) conditions to clear the enemy from their own bases. And when not on patrol, they were digging pits, trenches, command posts and latrines. When not on patrol or digging, they were clearing the undergrowth and erecting barbed wire fences.

And when they did sleep, it was on groundsheets under plastic 'hoochies' without lights and always with a weapon within reach. Showers were rare but mildew was everywhere. Food was mostly out of ration cans; feet were rarely out of boots.

It was only later, when the base was a little more secure, that tents and stretcher beds became available. Then the pace did slacken, but only slightly. One- and two-day patrols gave way to one- and two-week operations, as they cleared further out from the Nui Dat base.

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DAVE SABBEN MG

David Sabben was born in Suva, Fiji in 1945 but moved to Australia in 1958 to attend High School in Sydney, where he boarded through to Leaving Certificate in 1962.

Aged 20 in 1965, Dave volunteered for the first intake of Australia's National Service scheme. He applied for officer training and completed the first course of the Scheyville National Service Officer Training Unit (IOTU).

In January 1966 Dave was posted to 6RAR in Brisbane and appointed commander of 12 Platoon. 6RAR was sent to Viet Nam in June 1966. Dave served the full 12 month tour and was a platoon commander at the Battle of Long Tan for which he was recommended for a Military Cross (MC) but that award was downgraded to an MID. In 2008, the award was upgraded to a Medal for Gallantry (MG).

After returning to Australia in 1967, Dave was discharged from his National Service obligation but served a further four years with the CMF, attaining Captain rank. He resumed his civilian career first in Sydney and then Melbourne, finally working as a Project Manager in the computer (IT) industry.

Dave retired in December 2004 and has spent his retirement mostly writing. He lives on the Mornington Peninsula in Victoria with his Melbourne born wife, Di.