

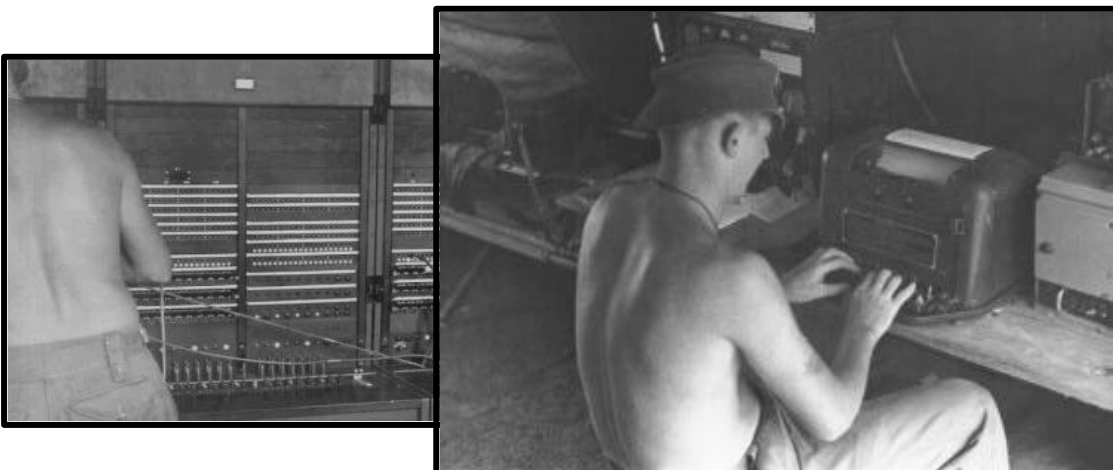
104 SIGNAL SQUADRON

South Vietnam 1967 - 1971

104 Signal Squadron (104 Sig Sqn) was part of the 1st Australian Task Force (1ATF) at Nui Dat in Phuoc Tuy Province. The unit deployed to South Vietnam in April 1967 and returned to Australia in November 1971. Over 800 soldiers served in 104 Signal Squadron during its 5 years war service. Three members were lost on active service during the period.



At the 1ATF base at Nui Dat, the 1ATF Communications Centre (COMCEN), manned and owned by 104 Signal Squadron, played the key role in keeping Australian and Allied units in contact with each other. More than 1,000 telephone and telegraph circuits feed into the COMCEN, including 70 microwave channels from bases outside Nui Dat. Staffing the COMCEN was 50 men, working two shifts to keep communications operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In the telegraph area, the soldiers handled over 700 messages on some days. Next door, the 200-line switchboard averaged 4,300 connections each day. In peak hours, two switchboard operators handled 3 calls every 10 seconds. Messages received in the COMCEN were registered, and prepared for dispatch by clerks. Depending on the priority of the message, it was either delivered by special delivery or the more usual Dispatch Rider (DR). Regularly during the day, the Signals Delivery Service (SDS) would visit the major units of the Task Force delivering and picking up messages, packets and other correspondence. The route covered about six miles and took the signalman DR one hour to complete the task. The COMCEN also controlled an Aerial Delivery Service (ADS), which used helicopters and fixed wing aircraft to deliver correspondence to outlying units and bases. Working behind the scenes in adverse conditions, maintaining and repairing the telephone lines plus electronic communication equipment, was a team of linesmen and technicians. In addition, clerks, drivers, cooks, storemen and other soldiers played a vital role keeping the unit fully operational.



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The COMCEN was not the only means of communication between units, however. 104 Sig Sqn had a Radio Troop as well. These men controlled and manned radio (voice, telegraph and morse code) links into and out of the Task Force and were found in all the major units of the 1ATF and with the liaison Officers (LO) attached to Allied units. The Squadron also planned, issued and managed the callsigns and frequencies required by all the Task Force units.



When the Task Force HQ moved forward from Nui Dat the COMCEN and key radio links at Nui Dat were reproduced in the field. After the Battle of Coral in 1968, an ACV was specially fitted out to carry the actual COMCEN and on all following deployments, the ACV COMCEN was ready to transmit messages between the forward HQ and the rear HQ, within 20 minutes of arriving on the site.



As well as running the Task Force communication system the unit was responsible for its own area defense and for conducting Tactical Area of Responsibility (TAOR) Patrols.

An Army in an operational theatre requires an efficient, rapid communications system.

The men of the 104 Signal Squadron provided it!