



Binh Ba. Also, 6RAR had several company patrols and ambushes in the field (See also End Note 4 regarding additional notes on the assessment of the enemy threat in August 1966).

At first light on 17 August, B Company 6RAR (Maj NE Ford) commenced to patrol to locate the enemy's firing positions and by 8am had located the mortar firing position for five mortars (Map 11 "3"). There was no evidence of damage or casualties to the crews from artillery counter-bombardment (CB) fire. Patrolling by elements of all 6RAR companies (except D Company) continued into 18 August and at 1030am B Company found a dug-in position for 20 men, 22 x 75mm RCL rounds, carrying tubes and tracks which suggested the position was the initial RV point for the mortar and RCL crews (Map 11 "4"). Shortly after a section-strength patrol (Cpl RW Jones) located the 75mm recoilless rifle firing position for three weapons (Map 11 "5") and evidence that substantial damage had been inflicted on the crews by artillery CB fire.

D Company (Maj HA Smith) was then tasked to replace B Company in the hunt for the mortar and recoilless rifle crews on what was called Operation Vendetta. By this time, the B Company patrol had been reduced to a skeleton Company Headquarters and a composite platoon (2Lt JP O'Halloran) comprising two sections from 5 Platoon (Cpls RW Jones and AE Smith) and one section from 4 Platoon (Cpl PP Buttigieg). Earlier some 52 men had returned to Nui Dat for Rest and Convalescence (R&C) leave at Vung Tau coinciding with a Concert Party scheduled

that afternoon at Nui Dat. (See End Note 4).

At about 1pm on 18 August, D Company rendezvoused with the depleted B Company group of 32 men (see Map 12 "1"). After exchanging information and lunch, the B Company group left for Nui Dat from where the sounds of the concert party could be heard (Map 12 "2").

*John O'Halloran recalls the last words he heard from Gordon Sharp were "... the B Company group was about to hear the music while D Company was about to face the music!"*

After examining the information provided by earlier patrols on enemy tracks, at 3pm D Company began a cautious advance (Map 12 "3"), initially in "arrowhead formation" with 10 Platoon (2Lt GM Kendall) leading, 12 Platoon (2Lt DR Sabben) left rear and 11 Platoon (2Lt GC Sharp) right rear. After about 300 metres the formation was changed to two platoons up (Map 12 "4"). The company was then advancing on a wide front (about 500 metres) which, as the battle unfolded, was a distinct advantage because later it would confuse the enemy as to the size and exact location of the Australian force.

