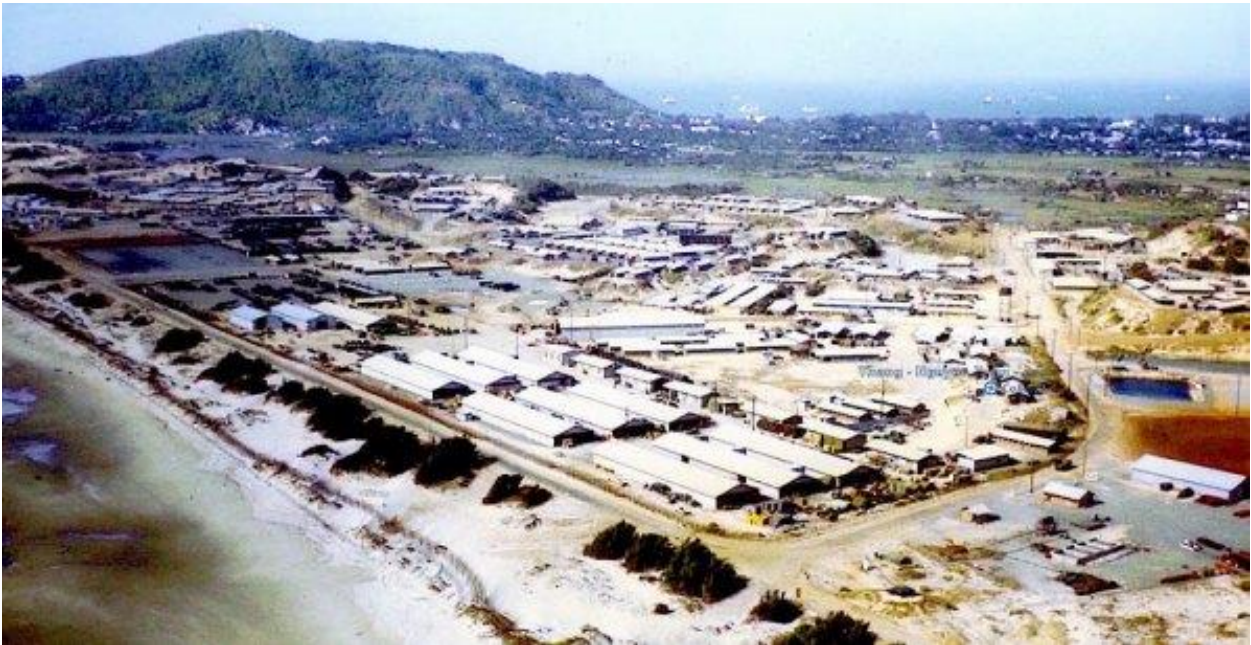


# Two short stories from 1ALSG

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(18 Dec 1967 - 19 Dec 1968)

## Story 1 - Hearing an Ice Cream Van in 1ALSG



### Preamble

This is another story that starts its sandy tracks in the initial briefing of incoming reinforcements/replacements. As can be expected, incoming reinforcement/replacement soldiers get a series of briefings to bring them up to date on the current in-country situation. Somehow there were some items left out - some would say maliciously left out.

The location is the 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Logistic Support Group (1ALSG) base at Vung Tau, South Vietnam. The role of 1ALSG was that of a Forward Maintenance Area (FMA) supporting the Australian combat troops at Nui Dat, about 25km inland from 1ALSG.

## US Army Helicopter FMA



Our American Allies also had FMA functions in Vung Tau at the airfield including the recovery and maintenance of Helicopters from the war zone. One of those helicopters, for frequent maintenance, was tasked with winning *hearts and minds* (propaganda). The theory being that in the initial stages of a combat operation, involving ground troops, artillery, bombing and/or air assault, that the population would be warned by loud speaker announcements and music. This allowed, those that thought of themselves as non-combatants, could relocate to a safe area. Unfortunately the VC to prepare for battle or also relocate from the pending attack!

The Helicopter after receiving maintenance now requires final *sign off* testing. To this end it is flown very high to the point of being invisible, unless you knew where to look. The chosen method of testing the loud speakers was to use a classical piece of music. Better known to us, Australians, as the signature tune of our ice cream vans back home in Australia.

## Ice Cream Van Music

The reinforcement/replacement soldier walks between normal tasks across the sand and in the open, alone, unsuspecting and very visible. The veteran lurks, sniggeringly, in a suitably shady hide, long used for this very task. The new in-country soldier hears music, or thinks he does. In

all cases we know he has heard it because the response is nearly always the same. Walker comes to dead stop, if the face is visible eyes widen then head and face usually turn downwards, as if the make the sound clearer. It won't, the source is almost vertically overhead. Again, almost always, the suspicious bastard sneaks a glance around. To see if somebody is taking the piss, and looking on, for a laugh.

What happened next could follow two directions walks off with uncertain expression on the face; thinks hmm may have got a touch of the sun. The unfortunate individual was probably thinking "I'll ask a friend (veteran?)" in the mess break or at the boozier tonight.

Or looks up and down the road for an Ice Cream Van!!.

At this point, the game is up, because those of us looking on burst into laughter. We mostly put the poor bloke out of misery by explaining what was going on.

## **Story 2 – New Commander takes over 1ALSG**



Aha say the bosses, all will work together and make the place spick and span.

OR's lines will be turned upside down.

Workshops and relay centre will be polished spotless.

Vehicles and transport lines will be cleaned top to bottom.

Kitchen and dining room will gleam.

Recreation Hut and Sandbaggers Inn will be dustless spotless and  
all garbage tins cleaned inside and out.

So say the bosses.

The new boss of bosses arrives in camp lines for inspection.

O JOY THERE IS A FATHER XMAS.

He ignores all we have done and Inspects the Officer's and Sergeants lines.

O JOY O JOY.

Check out the duty rosters - the same names appear in alphabetical order.

**Numerously!**

**O JOY O JOY**

**PJ Brown**  
**2014**