

Operation Wandering Souls Debrief on visit to Vietnam Jul/Aug 2013

**The Australian Centre for the Study of Armed Conflict and Society at the
University of New South Wales, Canberra**

In July/August this year, the Operation Wandering Souls project team returned about 150 documents, paintings, photographs and other artefacts to families and to the Vietnam People's Army (VPA). The VPA has an organisation which endeavours to return items of a personal nature collected on the battlefield, to the families of the fallen.

Bob Hall and Derrill de Heer from the Operation Wandering Souls team, delivered the documents. Over a period of three weeks, numerous handover meetings were conducted. Below are a series of photographs showing some of these meetings.

The Operation Wandering Souls team wishes to thank Australian and New Zealand veterans who contributed items to the project for return to Vietnam. We believe that in addition to helping to heal the pain of loss for individual Vietnamese families, the project has enhanced relations between Australia, New Zealand and Vietnam. We also believe that the project has been a fitting reciprocation of Vietnam's assistance to Australia in the recovery of our six MIAs.

On their visit to Vietnam, Bob Hall and Derrill de Heer were accompanied by a TV crew from Channel 7 'Sunday Night' program. The 'Sunday Night' team included Ben Roberts-Smith, VC, who was the Channel 7 presenter. The Channel 7 'Sunday Night' program can be viewed at the following link:

<http://au.news.yahoo.com/sunday-night/features/article/-/18880430/big-ben-in-vietnam/>

Additional links:

<http://vietnambreakingnews.com/tag/operation-wandering-souls/>

<http://www.journeyman.tv/64240/short-films/wandering-souls.html>
Correspondent

ABC Foreign

On behalf of the Operation Wandering Souls project team, I would like to thank Australian and New Zealand veterans for their support of the project.

The project continues to collect additional items for eventual return to Vietnam. If you have such items and would like to return them to Vietnam please feel free to contact the Operation Wandering Souls team.

The Operation Wandering Souls research team

Dr Bob Hall – Team leader and Vietnam veteran (8RAR)
Dr Andrew Ross – Database and analysis guru
Dr Amy Griffin – Geographic Information Systems expert
Derrill de Heer – Field researcher and Vietnam veteran (8RAR, Psyops and 4RAR/NZ)

You can check out Bob Hall and Derrill de Heer at the following URLs:

<http://hass.unsw.adfa.edu.au/staff/profiles/hall.html>

<http://hass.unsw.adfa.edu.au/staff/profiles/de%20Heer.html>

To contact the team:

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Photo album: Return of items in July/August 2013



Le Hang and his son, examining the portrait of his mother, Phan Thi Vu, rescued from a burning building by an Australian adviser. Le Hang was overjoyed to receive the portrait.



Derrill presenting their father's commendation certificate to daughters Ha Thi Tam and Ha Van Loi.



Derrill de Heer consoling the daughters



At Bac Giang Province north east of Hanoi, people attend a meeting to learn how to find information about their family members who are still listed as MIA. It has been estimated that Vietnam has over 300,000 MIAs.



Dr Bob Hall showing the relatives of the People's Army medic where he was killed in action and buried.



Artefacts handover ceremony at Quy Nhon, Binh Dinh province. About 90 letters had been collected from Binh Dinh province by an Australian adviser. We were able to return many to family members. From the left, Ms Ngo Thi Thuy Hang, CEO of the MARIN centre, an NGO specialising in helping Vietnamese families find their MIA soldiers; Le Huu Loc, Province Chief, Binh Dinh Province; Bob Hall and Huyen Siccama, Bob's interpreter.



Handover of letters to family members at Quy Nhon, Binh Dinh Province.



A document handover at Dong Nai Province (formerly Bien Hoa Province). There was a great deal of media interest at each of the handover ceremonies.