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Thomas Richardson  
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DESTROY AND BUILD  
PACIFICATION IN PHUOC TUY, 1966–72

In 2002, Governor-General Michael Jeffery stated that ‘we Australians had everything under control in Phuoc Tuy Province’. This referred not only to military control but also to the policy of ‘pacification’ employed by the Republic of Vietnam and external Free World allies such as the United States and Australia. In the hopes of stemming the tide of communism, pacification aimed to win the allegiance of the populace through political, economic and social reform.

In this new work, Thomas Richardson explores the 1st Australian Task Force’s implementation of this policy in Phuoc Tuy between 1966 and 1972. He argues that pacification remains a subject discussed only in the context of its impact on the Australian force rather than on its own merits.

Using material from US and Australian archives, as well as newly translated Vietnamese histories, *Destroy and Build: Pacification in Phuoc Tuy, 1966–72* challenges the accepted historiography of the Western forces’ fight against insurgency in Vietnam.

**Thomas Richardson** is an Adjunct Lecturer in History at the University of New South Wales, Canberra, and a researcher for the Official History of Australian Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and Australian Peacekeeping Operations in East Timor.

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# DESTROY AND BUILD

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1966–72

THOMAS RICHARDSON



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To John and Bob

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## PREFACE

The Australian Army has a long and admirable record of fostering serious research and publication about its history. For more than a century the Army has seen the value of history to its future. From its outset ‘military history’ was part of the formal education of officers at the Royal Military College, Duntroon, and for a time officers’ promotion depended upon candidates being able to give in promotion exams a coherent analysis of ‘Stonewall’ Jackson’s Shenandoah Valley campaigns. An understanding of the Army’s history and traditions remains central to its *esprit de corps*, in its most literal meaning.

From the 1970s (as a consequence of educating officers at university level), the Army has produced generations of educated soldiers, several of whom became historians of note, including Robert O’Neill, David Horner, Peter Pedersen, John Mordike, Bob Hall, Jean Bou, Bob Stevenson and Craig Stockings. The creation of an Army History Unit in the late 1990s demonstrated the Army’s commitment to encouraging and facilitating serious history. Under Dr Roger Lee it had a profound influence in managing the Army’s eighteen museums, in supporting research on army history and in publishing its history.

One of the most impressive demonstrations of the Army’s commitment to history has been its long association with several major publishers, and notably with Cambridge University Press. This has been a productive relationship, brokered by Roger Lee and the former long-standing general editor of the Army History Series, Professor David Horner.

The Australian Army History Series brings to an academic and popular readership historical work of importance across the range of the Army's interests and across the span of its history. The series, which I now have the honour to edit, seeks to publish research and writing of the highest quality relating to the Army's operational experience and to its existence as an organisation, as a part of its contribution to the national narrative.

The Army History Unit has created a community of writers and readers (including soldiers in both roles), the product of whose questions, research, debate and writing informs the Army's understanding of itself and its part in Australia's history. It is a history to be proud of in every sense.

Tom Richardson's *Destroy and Build: Pacification in Phuoc Tuy, 1966–1972*, on 1ATF's experience of 'pacification' operations in South Vietnam fifty years ago, deals with a subject of continuing interest to the Army, especially in that it explores its relations with allies and a host population amid a complex war. Dr Richardson's narrative and analysis suggests that in counter-insurgency operations success – much less 'victory' – is often elusive and ambiguous.

Professor Peter Stanley  
General Editor, Australian Army History Series  
*UNSW Canberra*

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It is a cliché, but the completion of this book was made possible only by the help and support of the people around me. The first group that needs thanks are the people at UNSW Canberra who got me through my dissertation. Particular thanks go to my supervisors Dr Bob Hall, Dr John Connor and Professor Craig Stockings. To my other colleagues at UNSW, warm thanks for the assistance and generosity I experienced during my time as a student and staff member.

This book naturally would not have been possible without the team at Cambridge. Thank you to Vilija Stephens, Olivia Tolich, Cathryn Game and all those behind the scenes for helping me to realise the dream. Thanks also to series editor Peter Stanley for his unstinting support throughout the project. Finally, thanks to those at the Australian Army History Unit – particularly Dr Andrew Richardson and Catherine McCulloch – who helped with images and maps respectively. Although they had no formal responsibility for me, I have to extend similar thanks to Emeritus Professor Peter Dennis and the late Professor Jeffrey Grey. Professor Dennis opened both his office and his home to me, for which I am very grateful. His candid advice is always welcome. Professor Grey gave me employment, experience and invaluable insight into Vietnam and the profession of history. As he often remarked, postgraduate programs in Australian universities teach only some of the skills necessary to survive in academia. I am extremely grateful for the effort he put into trying to make me a more well-rounded scholar, and I find it hard to express how much I will miss him and the support he offered.

My family has never hesitated to give me the help I have needed to complete this project. Thank you to the extended clan of aunts, uncles and cousins for your interest. I wish I had seen more of you. Jan, Chris, Max, Lexi and assorted canines let a ragged postgraduate into their life without blinking and have provided encouragement, love and places to sleep. Jim, Jenny and Rachel have followed me between cities, states

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and countries as I chase the dream. They have always given me love, encouragement and prodding where necessary. In particular, thanks to Mum for the contribution she has made at particularly short notice. To my two grandfathers, who passed away while this project was underway, I hope you approve. To my two grandmothers, I hope you do too.

Finally, to Jules and Mathilda, who have sacrificed a lot: I could not have done it without you.

## ABBREVIATIONS

1ACAU	1st Australian Civil Affairs Unit
1ATF	1st Australian Task Force
1RAR	1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment
2RAR	2nd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment
3RAR	3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment
5RAR	5th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment
6RAR	6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment
7RAR	7th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment
8RAR	8th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment
9RAR	9th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment
AAR	after action report
AATTV	Australian Army Training Team Vietnam
ACDC	Anti-Communist Denunciation Campaign
ACR	11th Armoured Cavalry Regiment
AFV	Australian Forces Vietnam
A&L	administration and logistics
ANZAC	Australian and New Zealand Army Corps
APC	(1) Accelerated Pacification Campaign; (2) armoured personnel carriers
ARVN	Army of the Republic of Vietnam
BRIAM	British Advisory Mission
CATG	Chinese Agricultural Technical Group
CDEC	Captured Document Exportation Centre
CG	Commanding General
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
COIN	counter-insurgency
COMAFV	Commander Australian Forces Vietnam
COMUSMACV	Commander US Military Assistance Command Vietnam
CORDS	Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support

## xvi ABBREVIATIONS

COSVN	Central Office for South Vietnam
CRW	counter revolutionary warfare
C&S	cordon and searches
CTZ	Corps Tactical Zone
DEPCORDS	Deputy to COMUSMACV for CORDS
DIOCC	District Intelligence and Operations Coordinating Centre
DMI	Directorate of Military Intelligence
DPSA	Deputy Province Senior Adviser
DRV	Democratic Republic of Vietnam
DSA	District Senior Adviser
DTIC	Defense Technical Information Center
EDCOR	Economic Development Corps
FRUS	Foreign Relations of the United States
FWMAF	Free World Military Assistance Forces
GO-GU	General Offensive – General Uprising
HES	Hamlet Evaluation System
ICEX	Intelligence Collection and Exploitation Staff
ICP	Indochinese Communist Party
IIFV	2nd Field Force Vietnam
IRRI	International Rice Research Institute
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
LTTT	Land to the Tiller
MAAG	Military Assistance Advisory Group
MACV	Military Assistance Command Vietnam
MAT	Mobile Advisory Team
MATT	Mobile Advisory Training Team
MEDCAP	Medical Civil Affairs Program
MIT	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
MSWR	Ministry for Social Welfare and Refugees
NCO	non-commissioned officers
NFLSVN/NLF	National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam/National Liberation Front
NPFF	National Police Field Force
NVA	North Vietnamese Army
OCO	Office of Civil Operations
PAVN	People's Army of Vietnam
PCS	Party Chapter Secretary
PLAF	People's Liberation Armed Forces
PRU	Provincial Reconnaissance Unit

PSA	Province Senior Adviser
PSB	Police Special Branch
PSDF	People's Self-Defence Force
Psy Ops	Psychological Operations
RAE	Royal Australian Engineer
RAR	Royal Australian Regiment
RD	Revolutionary Development
RF/PF	Regional Forces/Popular Forces
RVN/GVN	Republic of Vietnam/Government of Vietnam
RVNAF	Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces
SAS	Special Air Service
SIPH	Société Indochinoise de Plantation d'Hévéas
TAOR	tactical area of responsibility
TOC	Tactical Operations Centre
TVA	Tennessee Valley Authority
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USIS	United States Information Service
USOM	United States Overseas Mission
VC	Viet Cong
VCI	Viet Cong Infrastructure
VIS	Vietnamese Information Service
VSD	Village Self-Development
VWP	Vietnamese Workers Party