

Timeline of an Australian Tragedy in Viet Nam: The minefield. (by Paul Rowe)

Some stories are just so damn sad that it is best to use minimal words. This is one of those stories. Most Australians have never heard of this true tragedy. Even though it happened in Viet Nam, this story is as Australian as Ned Kelly.



	Brigadier Graham arrives. Jan 2	1967
	Graham issues orders to build a barrier minefield.	
	Construction of 'the fence' began. Mar 16	
	Sgt. Nolen demos to Graham how to lift an M16 and anti-lift device BLINDFOLDED! Mar 18 approx.	
28/29 May Hung Manh successfully lifted an M16 <u>plus</u> anti-lift device. He then ran workshops to train others to lift mines from the minefield.	Began laying mines. May 1 Enemy lifting mines from minefield! May 26-29	
	Ox cart tracks through minefield. Jun 5	
"... every sign that ... (the) 'barrier fence and minefield' had been a dreadful mistake." May 31	Enemy uses Australian M16s offensively and defensively at Minh Dam Secret Zone. Aug #	
The first rule of guerilla warfare is to take all weapons left by the enemy. The second rule is to use those weapons against that same enemy.	Graham leaves Vietnam. Oct	
		1968

1968

Minh Dam zone recognized as a major enemy base ###.

Operation Pinnaroo. 14 Australians KIA. 33 wounded.
###month

1969

1969

19 Aussies killed and 80 wounded by Australian mines lifted from an unguarded minefield!!

That was 54 % of total Aussie soldiers killed across that 4 month period!!

Major Rowe requests a minesweeper be devised to destroy the minefield. **Jun**

Sydney Herald "A dangerous Australian-laid minefield." Mine clearing starts. **Jul 31**

Enemy hurriedly lifting mines as clearing operations underway. **Aug**

Major Rowe decides to totally bury the minefield.

Graham promoted to Major General. ###month

While mine clearing was underway, underground caches of mines, and sleeping quarters were discovered inside the minefield!!

1970

Major Rex Rowe's tour finishes. **Jan #**

1970

Black Saturday. Feb 28

"All mine clearance in the barrier minefield was completed today." P.201 **May 28**

1971

1971

New Australian soldiers ignorant of minefield history are sure they can dominate Minh Dam Secret Zone.

This gives the distinct impression that if the Australians stayed any longer, the same mistakes were about to be repeated.

Told they are clearing old French minefield on Long Phuoc Hai beach!

Petersen mentions a mine incident as if mines were new to the area in 71ish.

Australian troops return to Australia.

Old age: "We learn from history."
Apparently not.
Another adage: "Humans learn from their mistakes."
Apparently not.

1972