

ADDRESS BY
HIS EXCELLENCY MAJOR GENERAL MICHAEL JEFFERY AC CVO MC
GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
ON THE OCCASION OF
PRESENTATION OF UNIT GUIDON TO THE 1ST AVIATION REGIMENT
ROBERTSON BARRACKS, DARWIN, NT
4 JULY 2008

As Commander-in-Chief it is a great pleasure to make the presentation of the first unit guidon to 1 Aviation Regiment. It is also pleasing to see the Regiment established so well here at Robertson Barracks in Darwin following your relocation in 2006.

I'd like to commend all those on Parade, including the band, for your performance today. Your standard of drill, dress and bearing was first class.

1 Aviation Regiment has a short but proud history, commencing with the establishment of the 16th Army Light Aircraft Squadron in Amberley in December 1960. At the time the unit remained under command of the RAAF, but in 1964 command of the squadron was transferred to Army.

On the 26 April 1966 the Squadron was renamed the 1st Divisional Aviation Regiment and it is on this date that the unit's official birthday is celebrated. Eleven months later, on 31 March 1967, the Regiment was officially retitled the 1st Aviation Regiment.

Since that time the aircraft types flown by the Regiment have been many. But the roles of reconnaissance, surveillance, command and liaison, operational and general support have remained constant throughout. During 2006 the Regiment relocated to Robertson Barracks in Darwin and organised into four Squadrons: 161, 162, Technical Support and Logistic Support.

Throughout its history 1 Aviation Regiment has demonstrated exemplary performance on operations.

For example, today we celebrate the 17th Anniversary of the presentation of the United States Army Meritorious Unit Commendation to 161 Reconnaissance Squadron in recognition of the service of 161 Reconnaissance Flight when supporting the 1 RAR Battle Group in South Vietnam.

Having served with 8 RAR in Vietnam I can attest to the significant contribution made by Army Aviation during the conflict. 161 Reconnaissance Flight in particular was delivering a flying rate of 1200 hours a month; an effort that required significant skill and dedication from the aircrew, maintenance and support personnel.

I can well remember directing Centurion tank movement in heavy jungle, helicopter insertions and artillery strikes for my infantry company from a small Bell Sioux helicopter. 161 provided an essential capability in an extremely hostile and dangerous environment.

Nor should we forget that during that tour of duty three pilots, MAJ George Constable, CAPT Barry Donald and 2LT Alan Jellie were killed in action. Although the success of the Regiment did come at a cost, it was the dedication and commitment of its members during those formative years that would pave the way for the Regiment's future achievements.

In recent years the Regiment has continued to serve with distinction on operations both at home and overseas. These include Bougainville, Solomon Islands, Christmas Island, East Timor and in the provision of cyclone and flood relief within Australia.

During 2000 1 Aviation Regiment was in the rare situation of having all its sub units deployed at the same time with the flying Squadrons supporting operations in East Timor, Bougainville and the Sydney Olympic Games. During this period the maintainers were looking after three different aircraft types and displayed exceptional dedication and technical maintenance skills in the process.

This long history of commitment by members of 1 Aviation Regiment has brought great credit to it and prepared the unit very well to meet future challenges.

And these will be many, in an increasingly uncertain and volatile region and globe. Military operations will continue to be complex, dynamic and conducted at short notice, with competition for dwindling resources, including fossil fuels, food and water being powerful contributors to destabilisation. Terrorism will also remain on the agenda for the foreseeable future.

But Army Aviation's role of continuing to contribute to Army's capacity for mobility, manoeuvre and firepower will remain constant.

The Regiment's challenge will be to think and fight smarter and more responsively 24/7.

Your combat capability is being greatly enhanced with the introduction into service of the Tiger Armed Reconnaissance Helicopter. This modern, powerful and agile aircraft will enhance the Regiment's ability to achieve its mission of providing aerial reconnaissance and firepower in support of combat operations in a joint, combined or interagency environment world wide. It will enhance a commander's ability to see over the horizon and provide accurate and potent fire support when required.

These are capability enhancements that I am sure you will welcome and utilize to the utmost.

Today we recognise not only the members of the Regiment, but very importantly the families, former members and defence community organisations that form the essential network that has enabled 1 Aviation Regiment to achieve such success. Thank you for your continued support.

It has been a tremendous pleasure to present 1 Aviation Regiment with its guidon.

To LTCOL Dwyer, his officers, NCOs and soldiers I congratulate you all on your outstanding achievements and I wish you every success as you face the challenges and opportunities of the future with skill, confidence and good humour.

Thank you.