

Another very long wait. Medal for Gallantry Awarded to Vietnam Veteran

John O'Halloran

After nearly six decades, Second Lieutenant John Patrick O'Halloran has received formal recognition for his extraordinary leadership and courage during one of the most intense engagements of the Vietnam War. On 8 August 2025, the Governor-General of Australia awarded him the Medal for Gallantry—an honour that replaces the Mention in Despatches he received in 1967 under the British Imperial system.

The decision follows a detailed submission by retired Warrant Officer Henry Chisholm, who served alongside O'Halloran in 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (6 RAR). Chisholm's account of Operation Bribie, fought on 17 February 1967 near Lang Phuoc Hai, South Vietnam, paints a vivid picture of a young officer whose command under fire helped save lives and shape the outcome of the battle.

O'Halloran, conscripted in 1965 and trained at Scheyville's Officer Training Unit, was posted to 6 RAR and soon found himself leading 5 Platoon, Bravo Company. On that February morning, his unit was called to support Alpha Company, which had come under heavy enemy fire. What followed was a prolonged and ferocious engagement with a well-armed Viet Cong force.

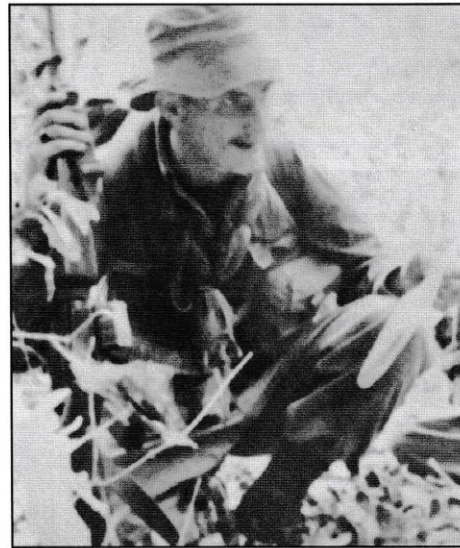
As Bravo Company advanced, O'Halloran's platoon was ordered to outflank enemy machine guns that had pinned down the left assault element. Despite facing automatic fire and grenades at close range, he led a direct assault that inflicted significant casualties. When additional enemy guns opened fire from just 30 metres ahead, catching the platoon in a deadly crossfire, O'Halloran coordinated artillery support close to his own position and reorganised his men—some wounded, others sent in from other platoons—to hold their ground and evacuate the injured.

The battle continued until dusk, when armoured support arrived. One vehicle was destroyed by a rocket-propelled grenade, killing its driver. By nightfall, eight Australians had been killed and 27 wounded. Operation Bribie became one of the most decorated actions of the war, with multiple soldiers receiving honours for bravery.

O'Halloran's leadership was described as "aggressive, inspirational and unwavering." The official citation praises his "individual gallantry and inspirational leadership".

For O'Halloran, now retired, the recognition is more than a personal honour—it is a tribute to the men he led, the lives lost, and the enduring legacy of those who served.

A true son of ANZAC.



2Lt John O'Halloran just prior to the battle during Operation Bribie Island South Vietnam 1967.