

A VERY RARE VIETNAM WAR NEW ZEALAND MEMORIAL CROSS GROUP TO A GUNNER/ DRIVER 161 BATTERY, ROYAL NEW ZEALAND ARTILLERY, WHO AFTER TAKING PART IN THE BATTLES OF CORAL AND BALMORAL IN VIETNAM, TOOK HIS OWN LIFE. HE HAD PREVIOUSLY SERVED WITH THE 1ST ROYAL NEW ZEALAND INFANTRY REGIMENT IN BORNEO AND THE MALAY PENINSULAR.



NEW ZEALAND MEMORIAL CROSS EII '41243 GNR NSG LYES RNZA', NEW ZEALAND OPERATIONAL SERVICE MEDAL '41243 GNR NSG LYES RNZA', GENERAL SERVICE 1962, 2 CLASPS BORNEO, MALAY PENINSULAR '41243 PTE NSG LYES RNZIR', VIETNAM 1964 '41243 PTE NSG LYES RNZIR', NEW ZEALAND GENERAL SERVICE MEDAL 1992 (WARLIKE), CLASP VIETNAM '41243 PTE NSG LYES RNZIR', PINGAT JASA MALAYSIA MEDAL, SOUTH VIETNAM CAMPAIGN MEDAL WITH 1960 CLASP '41243 NSG LYES', REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM CROSS OF GALLANTRY. Along with AUSTRALIA UNIT CITATION FOR GALLANTRY, REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM CROSS OF GALLANTRY UNIT CITATION WITH PALM AND US ARMY MERITORIOUS UNIT CITATION

Noel Stanley George 'Yogi' Lyes was born on 20 November 1939 and served in the Malay Peninsula and Borneo with the 1st Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment. Whilst serving in Vietnam in 1967, he transferred to the Royal New Zealand Artillery as a Gunner and then Driver Operator with 161 Battery. He took part in the Battles of Coral and Balmoral in Vietnam between 12 May and 6 June 1968 but took his own life (reason unknown) on 23 June that year whilst still on active service. He is buried in Hokitika, Westland on 20 July 1968

"161 Battery, Royal New Zealand Artillery initially deployed to Vietnam near Bien Hoa in July 1965. They moved to Nui Dat in the neighbouring Phuoc Tuy province as part of the newly formed 1st Australian Task Force on 23 May 1966, and provided continuous fire support to successive Australian and New Zealand battalions from that date until withdrawn in May 1971.

One of the first major operations for the 1st Australian Task Force was to deploy 120 kilometres from their Nui Dat base to an area in Bien Hoa Province designated “Area of Operation Surfers”. This was an area important to the North Vietnamese Army offensive operations being conducted against Saigon in 1968. The Task Force established Fire Support Bases named Coral and Balmoral.



The battles that followed were among the largest and most protracted fought by the Australian Task Force in the Vietnam War. The gunners of 161 Battery received high praise for the accuracy and volume of fire support they provided at critical stages of attacks on the Australian battalion positions.”

In 2018 the New Zealand Government agreed that Royal New Zealand Artillery personnel who served in the Vietnam War will be awarded the Australian Unit Citation for Gallantry.

“The award affects around 120 members of 161 Battery, Royal New Zealand Artillery, who participated in the Battles of Coral and Balmoral in Vietnam between 12 May and 6 June 1968, as well as other New Zealand Armed Forces personnel directly involved in one or both battles.

“The Battles of Coral and Balmoral were among the largest and most protracted fought by the Australian Task Force in the Vietnam War. The 161 Battery gunners received high praise for the accuracy and volume of fire support they provided at critical stages of attacks on the Australian battalion positions,” says Ron Mark.

“The Australian Government last year awarded the Australian Unit Citation for Gallantry in recognition of the ‘extraordinary gallantry’ the Australian units provided during the battles at Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral between 12 May and 6 June 1968. The award was also offered by the Australian Government to 161 Battery Royal New Zealand Artillery.

“The Australian Unit Citation for Gallantry is awarded to a unit for ‘extraordinary gallantry’ as a team in warlike operations. It is not awarded for acts of gallantry performed by an individual or by small groups of personnel.

This was the first Australian Unit Citation for Gallantry offered to a New Zealand military unit.”

161 Battery lost 4 Officers/men killed and 23 wounded during the Vietnam war. Gunner Lyes is one of 37 New Zealand fatal casualties in Vietnam 1963–75

<https://www.vietnamwar.govt.nz/roll-honour>



Details from the online cenotaph:

“Posted to Vietnam in 161 Battery 15 September 1967. Employed initially as gun number, then changed to driver. Died on active service at Nui Dat base. Also served in Borneo with 1RNZIR. NZ Memorial Cross awarded to family. He was initially RNZIR and completed a Corps change to RNZA while in Vietnam. Qualified for the Australian Unit Citation for Gallantry for his service in FSB Coral and Balmoral as a Driver Operator. Buried in Hokitika, Westland on 20 July 1968.”

<https://www.aucklandmuseum.com/war-memorial/online-cenotaph/record/C17086>



New Zealand Operational Service Medal presented to his next of kin in 2003:

<https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/medal-presentation-next-kin-0>

Approximately 140 New Zealand Memorial Cross have been awarded to next of kin of members of the armed forces who have died on active service or of wounds since 1945.





Condition GVF, court mounted. Sold with Original photographs of the recipient, badges, shoulder patches etc.