



Sold by Order of the Recipient

'In 1963, Australian Army Captain Barry Petersen was sent to Vietnam. It was one of the most tightly held secrets of the Vietnam War: long before combat troops set foot there and under the command of the C.I.A., Petersen was ordered to train and lead guerilla squads of Montagnard tribesmen against the Viet Cong in the remote Central Highlands.

Petersen successfully formed a fearsome militia, named the 'Tiger Men'. A canny leader, he was courageous in battle, and his bravery saw him awarded the coveted Military Cross and worshipped by the hill tribes.

But his success created enemies, not just within the Viet Cong. Like Marlon Brando's character in *Apocalypse Now*, some in the C.I.A. saw Petersen as having gone native. His refusal, when asked, to turn his Tiger Men into assassins as part of the notorious C.I.A. Phoenix Program only strengthened that belief. The C.I.A. strongly resented anyone who stood in their way. Some in U.S. Intelligence were determined Petersen had to go. He was lucky to make it out of the mountains alive.'

The Tiger Man of Vietnam, by Frank Walker (Hachette, Australia, 2009), refers.

The highly important and incredible Vietnam M.C. group of thirteen awarded to Lieutenant-Colonel A. B. "Barry" Petersen, a guerilla warfare expert and member of the Australian Special Forces "Army Training Team Vietnam", who was dubbed by the media as "Lawrence of the Highlands" following his extraordinary leadership of a highly motivated force of Montagnard tribesmen - respectfully known by the Viet Cong as "Tiger Men" - in numerous hit and run missions in Darlac Province, a role originally sponsored by the C.I.A. but subsequently abandoned amidst claims of him having developed a 'personality cult' in a scenario reminiscent of the fictional character Colonel Kurtz in *Apocalypse Now*: but as recounted by Petersen in his compelling memoir, *Tiger Men, An Australian Soldier's Secret War in Vietnam*, the Montagnard remained loyal to him to the end, bestowing on him the title Dam San, after a legendary warrior, and making him a Paramount Tribal Chief

MILITARY CROSS, E.II.R., the reverse officially dated '1965'; AUSTRALIAN ACTIVE SERVICE MEDAL, 3 clasps, Vietnam, Malaysia, Malaya (13668 A. B. Petersen); GENERAL SERVICE 1918-62, 1 clasp, Malaya, E.II.R. (1/3668 A. B. Petersen); CAMPAIGN SERVICE 1962, 2 clasps, South Vietnam, Borneo (13668 A. B. Petersen); VIETNAM MEDAL 1964-73, with M.I.D. oak leaf (13668 A. B. Petersen); AUSTRALIAN SERVICE MEDAL 1945-75, 1 clasp, Thai-Malay (13668 A. B. Petersen); AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE SERVICE MEDAL, clasp, E.II.R. (13668 A. B. Petersen); AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL MEDAL, with Bar (13668 A. B. Petersen); AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE MEDAL (13668 A. B. Petersen); AUSTRALIAN ANNIVERSARY OF NATIONAL SERVICE 1951-72 (1708727 A. B. Petersen); SOUTH VIETNAM CROSS OF GALLANTRY, with two Silver Stars; SOUTH VIETNAM MEDAL 1964, with '1960' clasp (13668 A. B. Petersen); PINGAT JASA MALAYSIA MEDAL (13668 A. B. Petersen), mounted as worn, together with unit commendation riband bar, Infantry Combat Badge and "Tiger Men" beret badge, generally good very fine (16) £60000-80000

M.C. *London Gazette* 29 October 1965:

'Captain Petersen graduated from the Officer Cadet School at Portsea on 17 December 1954. Since his graduation, Captain Petersen has served as a Platoon Commander with National Service Trainees and as a Platoon Commander with the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment. Captain Petersen's service with the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment included three years service in Malaya from 1959 to 1961. Captain Petersen was a Company Second-in-Command with the First Recruit Training Battalion at Kapooka until his assignment to the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam in August 1963.

Captain Petersen's assignment as a member of the Australian Training Team Vietnam involves advice on the administration, training and operational employment of Montagnard personnel in Darlac Province. He was so occupied when the Montagnard Revolt of September 1964 broke out.

During this revolt, in which several thousand heavily armed Montagnard soldiers were deployed against the provincial capital of Ban Me Thuot, Captain Petersen was required to prepare for the initial contact with the rebel tribesmen. On the afternoon of 20 September 1964, the first day of the revolt, he conducted a small party of intermediaries to the hamlet of Boun Enao. This involved passing through a prepared ambush. Having detected this, he dismounted from his vehicle, located the ambush commander, and persuaded him to permit the party's onward movement. He was then required to approach the rebel stronghold and obtain admittance for the party. This he did, in gathering darkness and under conditions of extreme sensitivity involving a high degree of personal risk. Having gained admittance, by his own powers of persuasion he brought together the local leaders for talks with the intermediaries.

The talks were successful, and paved the way for the eventual peaceful return of the Montagnard personnel to their proper duties. This most fortunate outcome is substantially attributable to the personal influence of Captain Petersen, and to the high degree of courage displayed by him in effecting the necessary contacts.'

Citation for the South Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Silver Star:

'Captain Petersen served as Senior Advisor to the Darlac Sector Truong Son Force in the period August 1963 to August 1965. During this period Captain Petersen rendered an outstanding service to the Government of Vietnam by giving sound advice on the organisation, training and operations of the Truong Son Force. The outstanding success which the Truong Son Force has attained in combat actions against the Viet Cong is attributed to his vast knowledge of military operations and his wealth of military experience. Captain Petersen has on numerous occasions accompanied the Truong Son Force on combat operations and, without exception, the influence of his presence, advice and leadership, ensured complete and total success of these operations. The Truong Son Force has attained one of the best combat records in Vietnam by inflicting heavy casualties and equipment losses on the Viet Cong while sustaining minimum of friendly losses. Captain Petersen's great contribution has been and will continue to be an inspiration to the people of Vietnam in their struggle to remain a free nation. In view of his outstanding service to the Republic of South Vietnam, Captain Petersen is awarded the Cross of Gallantry, with Silver Star.'

Citation for the Second Silver Star to the South Vietnam Cross of Gallantry:

'Major Petersen arrived in Vietnam on 29 April 1970 as Officer Commanding, 'C' Company, 2nd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment. Since his arrival in this country, Major Petersen has commanded 'C' Company continuously on operations. During its service so far in Phuoc Tuy Province, 'C' Company has killed 21 Viet Cong and captured four prisoners. In October 1970, 'C' Company located the tracks of 120 men of the Viet Cong Chau Duc District Headquarters and the Chi (Local Force) Company which were followed for 15,000 metres through difficult secondary jungle until contact was made. In the ensuing actions, the enemy were scattered and prevented from re-organising. Major Petersen's aggressive leadership and skilful handling of his Company were largely responsible for the disruption and withdrawal of the enemy force for re-organisation and re-training from the area normally used by it. His knowledge of the enemy's methods, and his own tactical knowledge, have contributed greatly to the success of his Company in operations.'



Arthur Barry Petersen joined the Australian Army in July 1954, graduating from the Officer Cadet School at Portsea at the end of the same year. Having then witnessed active service in Malaya with 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, in 1959-61, where he gained valuable experience working alongside the Jahai and Temiar Tribes of the indigenous Orang Asli in the mountains and jungles south of Malaya's border with Thailand, he returned to Australia to take up an appointment at the Recruit Training Battalion at Kapooka, New South Wales, in the rank of Captain.

And it was here, in October 1962, largely on the back of his experiences in Malaya, that he was contacted by Army H.Q. Canberra with a view to him volunteering for liaison duties with guerillas in the event of 'any future war ... [since] the employment of guerillas to assist and augment the efforts of regular ground forces will undoubtedly be as necessary in future conflicts as it was during World War Two ... I have selected you as a member of a small panel of Royal Australian Infantry Officers to be nominated for this training. You are, of course, also a reserve for appointment to the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam, and this course would also serve as very useful background knowledge.' Petersen replied, 'I definitely will volunteer for the course and subsequent possible duty in war', thereby setting in motion one of the most remarkable chapters to emerge from the Vietnam War.

His extremely demanding "Code of Conduct" training course completed, care of the Australian Army Intelligence Centre at Middle Head in Sydney (a.k.a. "The School of Torture"), and as a newly recruited member of the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam, Petersen was sent out to south of the country on loan to the American Central Intelligence Agency (C.I.A.), in which capacity he was assigned as a Case Officer to work alongside the Montagnard Tribe in Darlac Province on the border with Cambodia - financially and logistically supported by the C.I.A., his role was to recruit, train and operate a Montagnard guerilla-type force against the communists, in order to protect their villages.



Vietnam

In the early days, Petersen's brief was far from defined, the C.I.A. more or less leaving it up to him to find his way, but with the passage of time he developed an efficient but wide-ranging operational agenda, namely to disseminate overt and covert propaganda; to collect intelligence and establish cells and an informant network among the Montagnard villages; to disrupt Viet Cong infiltration routes and their stations; to conduct small-scale raids, kidnappings, ambushes and assassination of Viet Cong agents and to conduct long-range patrols into Viet Cong safe areas, preventing their concentration, destroying their rice crops and rescuing captured Montagnard used for forced labour.

And so it proved over the next two years, Petersen becoming a seasoned guerilla force commander, leading hit and run operations against the Viet Cong with his indigenous troops, many of whom became close and lifelong friends - on one rare occasion when pressure of work prevented him leading a mission in person, his enthusiastic Montagnard tribesmen returned with 130 captured weapons but no prisoners, the Viet Cong apparently having fought to the end! From then on Petersen was careful not to miss another major mission. Indeed the Truong Son Force, as the Vietnamese were to call them, developed into a highly efficient fighting unit, feared for its merciless brutality by the Viet Cong. And in Petersen, as described by Paul Ham in *Vietnam - The Australian War*, 'the Montagnards found an unusual mentor: a leader, a friend and a self-styled freedom fighter. He empathised with their dream of independence. He fearlessly 'went native'; toured villages; engaged in epic rice wine drinking sessions with tribal elders; and more than once gathered up his boots at the home of a village chief and stumbled, retching, into the night to escape a Viet Cong patrol.'

Paul Ham continues:

'By September 1964 Petersen led several hundred devoted warriors, officially called the Truong Son Force (the name for the Annamite Chain). But the Viet Cong dubbed the unit the "Tiger Men", a nod at its fearsome reputation, and Petersen seized on his troops' notoriety: he ordered tiger-headed beret badges and green berets. The tiger-printed uniforms - duly supplied by the C.I.A. - gave substance to his unit's tiger-like notoriety. Drawn by its mystique and dashing fatigues, hundreds of Montagnard youths, aged barely 20, volunteered to join Petersen's unit ...

Meanwhile, Viet Cong insurgents launched a wave of terror against Ban Me Thout. Popular nightspots were bombed. A tiny orphan boy called Ngoc, well known about town, carried two grenades into a packed bar and detonated himself along with many others. Enemy artillery struck Buon Eno. Many nights, the Viet Cong would haul up a flag outside Petersen's house, and in the morning he would find 'this very salutary reminder from the VC that they ... had his name in the books.'

The Tiger men responded with sudden, bone-shattering attacks. They turned Viet Cong methods on the Viet Cong. The grisly details revealed the merciless quality of Petersen's 'savages', as they were known in C.I.A. salons. In one attack, Petersen wounded a Viet Cong; a Tiger Man finished off the victim, grinning that his Australian captain should have completed the job properly. In another instance, to Petersen's shock, a young mother dropped her child and cried out in terror when she saw the Australian; she believed Viet Cong propaganda that 'Americans' ate babies. And there were surreal moments, such as the cup of Vietnamese tea Petersen shared with an elderly couple who sat shaking with fear in their hut after an attack by Truong Son forces; outside, the village burned and the bodies of communist suspects littered the red earth.'

In addition to a busy agenda of combat operations, Petersen also had to deal with the political machinations of the Central Highlands, antagonism between the Montagnards - the original inhabitants - and the relatively new Vietnamese settlers and overlords running high. Hence his M.C.-winning exploits in quelling the revolt of 1965. No less perilous was dealing with the intrigue between the C.I.A. and the French, the latter still having an active presence in the region, and bordering Cambodia. Yet what emerged was a highly successful concept of warfare, largely the work on one man, so much so that by 1965 the C.I.A. was growing suspicious of Petersen's command of the region, the Chief of the Agency's Covert Action Branch telling him, 'You've developed far too much influence with the Montagnard ... you've developed a personality cult in the Highlands'.

Petersen, who meanwhile had added the South Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Silver Star to his accolades, was extracted from his perilous mission in the Central Highlands shortly afterwards, but not before receiving a memorable send-off from his Tiger Men. Paul Ham continues:

'The sorcerer's chant faded, and Petersen sat up. 'I felt a little foolish lying there like some Eastern potentate while hundreds of eyes were fixed solely upon me.' He laid a bare foot upon a Montagnard axe. 'Blood and rice wine were poured over my foot and a live chicken waved in circles above my head.' Next a procession of his soldiers and their families bearing gifts filed solemnly pass their warrior chief: they clasped more than 200 bracelets around his forearm and then necklaces with amber-like beads around his neck.



The long farewell, Montagnard-style - Petersen, right, in tribal dress, and the remnants of a slaughtered buffalo in the foreground

The sound of gongs and a low boom of buffalo-hide drums reverberated through the village. 'It was time for me to drink the rice wine.' He drank his required portion through a long straw, then joined hours of drunken revelry - the culmination of two weeks of celebrations, during which 400 Tiger Men paid their last respects. It ended in a feast: three buffaloes were tethered, hamstrung, speared through the heart, butchered and roasted. The blood was drunk raw and the meat eaten amid endless speeches regaling the young Australian.'

Next attached to guerilla-type forces operating out of the highlands of Sarawak in Borneo into Indonesian Kalimantan during Sukarno's Indonesian confrontation with Malaysia, Petersen added to his now remarkable knowledge of such warfare. These forces, predominantly Kelabit and Murut tribesmen, were sponsored by the British Secret Intelligence Service, and provided him with a fascinating comparison to his time in South Vietnam.

And in 1970, he returned to the latter country, this time as a Major in command of 'C' Company, 2nd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment, adding, as cited above, a second Silver Star to his South Vietnam Cross of Gallantry, in addition to a mention in despatches in November 1971. He was also sent on an intelligence assignment back to the Central Highlands, and was greatly saddened to find the achievements of his Truong Son Force had faded into oblivion and that many of the Montagnard villages had ceased to exist, their inhabitants having been concentrated in camps ostensibly 'for their own security'.

In 1973, Petersen returned to Malaysia, on loan for two years to the Malaysian Defence Forces, and he finally retired from the Australian Army as a Lieutenant-Colonel in December 1979. Thereafter he settled in north Queensland but, in 1992, on account of business interests, he moved to Thailand, where he lives to this day.



In 1990, Petersen returned to his beloved Central Highlands for a few days, and learnt that many of his close Montagnard comrades had been killed, executed or had died, or suffered lengthy imprisonment post-war. He also discovered that Darlac (now Dak Lak) Province had been heavily settled by Vietnamese peasants, thereby displacing many Montagnard and their villages. In fact, since 1975, hundreds of Montagnard have fled Vietnam through Cambodia, citing maltreatment by the Vietnamese authorities. The plight of the Montagnard minority group in southern Vietnam's highlands has, during recent years, become a world-wide human rights issue. However, external attempts to solve the problem only appear to exacerbate the situation, particularly for the Montagnard still living in Vietnam. Barry Petersen was remembered in Dak Lak Province well into the 1990s, as a father to the people he once led, and he remains deeply concerned at their plight and frustrated with his inability to help.

Note: Only 68 'South Vietnam' clasps were issued, exclusively to members of the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam for service in the period December 1962 to May 1964. The Australian Vietnam Medal 1964 was awarded to Australian and New Zealand forces for services after 29 May 1964. It is believed that only one other member of the A.A.T.T.V. went on to serve in Borneo to qualify for that additional clasp. The striking tiger's head beret badge was specially manufactured for Barry Petersen in Saigon to be worn by members of his Montagnard Truong Son Force.

Sold with a period carbon copy file of Barry Petersen's original post-operations report for Australian Army Headquarters covering his two years attachment to the C.I.A. It contains copies of secret reports which he submitted to the C.I.A. of operations, meetings and conversations with Vietnamese officials, tribal elders and rebel leaders which is, in its own right, is a most important record of early Australian involvement in Vietnam; together with Petersen's tribal dress and related Rhade blankets, as presented to him by the Montagnard on his departure from the Central Highlands in late 1965 (*for illustration of these see this lot on our web site www.dnw.co.uk*); a signed copy of his memoir *Tiger Men*, and a copy of Frank Walker's *The Tiger Man of Vietnam*; a DVD containing just over 150 assorted photographs taken during his period with Truong Son Force in South Vietnam from August 1963 through October 1965; and a large quantity of photocopied documentation, ranging from citations to magazine and newspaper articles, some of the latter reporting on the actor Mel Gibson's interest in making a film based on Petersen's experiences in Vietnam.