

## SEARCH GOES ON FOR AUSTRALIANS MIA IN VIETNAM

(Posted 4 September 2007)

**Hanoi – 21 August 2007.** Today the members of the Australian Government, Department of Defence, MIA forensic team met with officials of the Vietnamese Government in the continuing Australian Government programme to fully account for the remaining two soldiers and two airmen lost during the Vietnam War.



Members of the Vietnamese and Australian Government MIA search teams in Hanoi. L-R: Mr Tuyen, Mr Mau, Mr Vinh, Ms Lan Phuong, Mr Tuan, Mr Brian Manns, CAPT John Griffith RAN, Mr Hung and Mr Le Tu Binh. The VN Team consists of members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Public Security Branch and MIA Agency. The AS Team is from AHU. (supported by AUSTEMB Hanoi)

The process has been supported and driven by the Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence and Minister for Veteran Affairs, The Honourable Mr Bruce Billson MP. The Minister sought approval from the Prime Minister of Vietnam, Mr Nguyen Tan Dung to officially accredit officials from the Australian Government to enter Vietnam and work with their Ministry of Foreign Affairs and MIA Agency to locate and bring home the first two of the missing six Australian servicemen in June this year. On the 6 June 2006 LCPL Parker and Private Gillson were returned to Australian soil. The Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs senior representative expressed to the meeting his Governments sincere appreciation on the receipt of personal letters from the families of LCPL Parker and PTE Gillson thanking them for the part they played in 'bringing their loved ones home'. They were deeply touched and moved by the gesture.

The meeting focussed initially on the process required for the two Governments to work together. It then switched to the specifics of the cases involved during which the Australian Government team presented the Vietnamese Government with a number of prepared documents. Those documents concentrated on: a list of persons who were former members of their Defence Force who had participated or were present in/during the actions when the Australian soldiers were lost; a second list of persons who are known to have visited the sites subsequent to the actions; and an abbreviated history of the circumstances surrounding the loss of the AS soldiers. It is believed that these persons may be able to significantly add to the investigative process already in train in locating the remains of our servicemen.

A timetable and administrative programme was then agreed in order to progress the search to the next level in the first week of September 2007. Both teams left the meeting after having made a pledge to work together in a spirit of joint cooperation to hopefully bring this human tragedy to an end.