

*Out of Sight, Out of Mind: The Royal Australian Navy in Vietnam 1965-1972*

By John R. Carroll

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John Carroll's volume on the Royal Australian Navy's support of Australian troops in Vietnam is welcome as a study of seaborne logistics – an area too frequently neglected for the tracers and blood that fascinates most readers. The author, a naval veteran of the conflict himself, traces the Royal Australian Navy from its initial commitment in 1965 to the last voyages home in March 1972. At the heart of his narrative lies HMAS *Sydney*, a *Majestic*-class carrier modified to serve as a troop transport, and her frequent escorts: the light carrier *Melbourne* and half-a-dozen destroyers and frigates.

An appendix, with line drawings for each vessel, describes the ships, names their captains, and lists the deployments in which each vessel participated. Numerous photographs, many snapped by crew during their tours, enliven the pages. Several good quality maps support the narrative, as do three additional appendices. The bulk of the narrative builds upon frequent primary source quotations that often illustrate the potential danger, especially while unloading in ports, offered by

underwater sappers, shore to river ambushes, and mines. Carroll stresses the difficulty of maintaining both security and alertness, insisting (quite correctly) that, even though the Royal Australian Navy avoided damage or losses, it did operate in a most dangerous environment.

Carroll concludes with lengthy examinations of two issues that outlasted the war itself: herbicide exposure (the Agent Orange issue in the United States) and the Australian government's refusal to allow benefits and entitlements to the crews involved in the Royal Australian Navy sealift. The struggle by veterans to achieve fiscal recognition is worth the study, especially in comparison to similar incidents in American history.

Books dealing with seaborne logistics are in short supply, especially as related to long campaigns or wars. With Australia's small commitment to Vietnam (relative to that of the United States, at any rate), Carroll managed to offer a rather complete examination of naval logistical operations. This makes *Out of Sight, Out of Mind* well worth perusing by those scholars of the maritime world who recall the old saw that amateurs study tactics while professionals study logistics.

Wade G. Dudley  
East Carolina University