

RAAF Transport Flight Vietnam and 35 Squadron experienced in your deployment to the Vietnam War. We are evolving not just with the aircraft and technologies we fly, but also in our operational philosophy.

So what does my reflection of the new generation of Air Force capability have to do with us all today?

The answer lies in the legacy that you established within the Royal Australian Air Force during your time in Vietnam - the steadfast foundations of exceptional military aviation service, that we, the RAAF, today proudly stand on, and build on, to provide the 'best small Air Force in the world'.

The list of achievements by the RAAF Transport Flight Vietnam and No. 35 Squadron are exceptional, and even after four decades it is acknowledged worldwide that the RAAF Caribous punched well above their weight, both in the amount of cargo and passengers carried, and your operational, affect during your years in Vietnam.

That you managed to do so without loss of life — even in spite of accidents and attacks by enemy forces — is truly remarkable. Your achievements, beyond doubt, reflect your incredible dedication to service and have specifically influenced and shaped the future generations of Air Lift Group and in the broader sense, the Royal Australian Air Force.

And so as we reflect upon the RAAF Transport Flight Vietnam and 35 Squadron's achievements today, I leave you with this practical example of what you have enabled us in Air Lift Group to do.

February 2012 marks the ninth anniversary of our C-130 Hercules being continuously deployed to the Middle East Area of Operations. Originally sent there to support Coalition forces that were to operate in Iraq, today they are a vital part of the international effort to rebuild the nation of Afghanistan.

While the physical conditions that our C-130 Hercules face in the Middle East are quite different from what the Caribous experienced in Vietnam, our people continue to display that resilient 'can do' approach to getting the job done through their professionalism, ingenuity and selfless service.