

From: Lieutenant General D.L. Morrison, AO
Chief of Army



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OCA/OUT/2012/R11944295

10 August 2012

Major James Taylor
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James

It is my great pleasure to formally announce that 17 Construction Squadron has been awarded the Honour Distinction, Namibia 1989-1990. This Honour recognises 17 Construction Squadron's work in Namibia in support of the United Nations Transition Assistance Group in 1989-90.

The Australian Army has a system of theatre and battle honours to recognise exemplary service by Arms Corps Units in combat and combat-related roles. Until recently, there was no provision for such recognition of outstanding service in dangerous operations short of war. The Army Battle Honours Committee, recognising that the Army now fights in ways different from the past, has amended the battle and theatre honours system to provide for the recognition of outstanding service in operations in other than declared theatres of war. An Honour Distinction is a public commemoration of creditable performance in an operation which, by the nature of the operation, does not attract a Theatre Honour, a Battle Honour or an Honour Title. Honour Distinctions are intended to recognise service under operational conditions in security-related, peace keeping and peace enforcement and similar operations.

After careful review, the Battle Honours Committee determined that 17 Construction Squadron had performed a role well beyond that for which they were deployed. The Squadron's performance brought great credit on the Unit, the Australian Army and Australia and I approved the recommendation for an Honour Distinction. The citation for the Honour Distinction reads:

17 Construction Squadron is awarded the Honour Distinction, Namibia 1989-1990, in recognition of its creditable performance in support of the United Nations Transition Assistance Group operation to manage the transition of Namibia to independence in 1990. Despite being deployed to provide engineering support, when the ceasefire broke down at the start of the mission, members of the Squadron helped establish Assembly Points, which enabled the mission to continue. This activity was conducted in the face of hostility from elements of the former colonial power and personal danger arising from the breakdown of the

cease fire. Later, 17 Construction Squadron became involved in the election process itself, providing security, transport and logistic support to election officials, monitors, other UN personnel, voters and polling stations. Members of 17 Construction Squadron ensured that, as much as possible, the election was able to proceed without interruption or interference and ensured that all parties were free from intimidation or duress. With the selfless support of individuals from other units of the Australian Defence Force, 17 Construction Squadron played a key role in the smooth and effective transition of Namibia from colonial rule to independence. The Squadron performed a role well beyond what was expected and brought great credit on itself, the Australian Army and Australia.

This is a significant occasion for the Australian Army and it is a public acknowledgement of outstanding performance. For this reason, and because this type of award is so important to the morale and esprit-de-corps of Army, it is envisaged that the Honour Distinction be presented by the Governor-General. I understand that you have already provided dates to the Office of the Governor-General for May 2013 and that a confirmed date will be provided in early 2013 once her program has been finalised. Upon the confirmation of a date, please liaise with the Ceremonial Cell - Army to confirm the correct procedure for organising the presentation of the certificate.

Once again, congratulations on this momentous award. It is the first Honour to be awarded since the end of the Vietnam War, and the very first Honour Distinction. The current and former members of 17 Construction Squadron should rightly be proud of their Unit's distinguished service.

Warm Regards
David M. Slater

Copy to:

Major General M. Slater, AO, DSC, CSC
Commander Forces Command