

Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM)

Arohanui Len Ropeta [Ransfield]

40532. Lance Corporal
Royal NZ Infantry Regiment
Victor Three Company

NZ Gazette Number 13 dated 6 March 1969

CITATION

Lance Corporal Ropeta enlisted in the New Zealand Regular Force on the 5th July 1967 and after training in New Zealand was posted for duty with 1st Battalion, The Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment in Malaysia. **On 13th May 1968**, he arrived in South Vietnam with Victor Three Company for duty with 4th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment/New Zealand (ANZAC).

On the 22nd June 1968¹, Lance Corporal Ropeta was Second in Command of a nine-man patrol, which tracked, located and killed three Viet Cong. The patrol immediately came under unexpected and heavy fire from about fifteen automatic weapons from a range of about 10 metres. It later transpired that some seventy to eighty enemy took part in the contact. One of the patrol was killed and four wounded in the early part of the contact, both the patrol commander (Lt M Dodson) and Lance Corporal Ropeta being amongst those wounded. Lance Corporal Ropeta, however, remained at his post which was closest to the enemy, firmly controlling the fire of the riflemen and encouraging them with cheerful comments while his wounded commander was freed to control supporting fire and armed helicopters.

The contact lasted for one hour and forty minutes and included an enemy assault to close range, an enveloping move by another platoon of the enemy and a grenade assault. During this time Lance Corporal Ropeta not only skilfully applied the firepower of the patrol but also collected all available grenades and threw them personally from an exposed and dangerous position; he watched the arrival of enemy grenades and, by warning the riflemen, arranged for each grenade to be kicked away before exploding; he personally treated the wounds of two of the riflemen and, later, when ammunition became low he arranged its redistribution and ordered the fixing of bayonets.

Lance Corporal Ropeta's energetic and cheerful leadership was reassuring to his wounded officer, who was able to concentrate on the control of supporting fire, and to the riflemen who were also inspired by his disregard for his injuries and by his coolness and tactical skill. Throughout the action he showed courage and leadership of the highest order which contributed to the patrol remaining steadfast, thereby turning what could have been a tragic loss into a clear defeat of a superior enemy force.

¹ 22/6/68 Pte Wickham MJ KIA; LCpl Ropeta AL WIA; Pte Keelan C WIA; Pte Williams LJ WIA, Lt Dodson MF WIA.

Note to Citation: *LCpl Ropeta changed his surname by deed poll to Ransfield after returning to New Zealand. [See also M.C. citation for Lt Dodson.]*