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AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES.

The KING has been graciously pleased to approve the award of the VICTORIA CROSS to:—

No. N.454409 Private Frank John PARTRIDGE, 8th Australian Infantry Battalion, Australian Military Forces.

In New Guinea, on 24th July, 1945, two fighting patrols, 8th Australian Infantry Battalion, were given the task of eliminating an enemy outpost in Bougainville which denied any forward movement to our troops.

The preliminary artillery concentration caused the enemy bunkers to be screened by a litter of felled banana plants, and from these well concealed positions to their front and left, one of our Platoons came under extremely fierce machine-gun, grenade and rifle fire.

The forward section at once suffered casualties and was pinned down together with two other sections.

Private Partridge was a rifleman in a section which, in carrying out an encircling movement, immediately came under heavy medium machine-gun fire. He was hit twice in the left arm and again in the left thigh, whilst the Bren gunner was killed and two others seriously wounded, leaving only the section leader unwounded, but another soldier began to move up from another position.

Private Partridge quickly appreciated the extreme gravity of the situation and decided that the only possible solution was personal action by himself.

Despite wounds and with complete disregard to his own safety, Private Partridge rushed forward under a terrific burst of enemy fire and retrieved the Bren gun from alongside the dead gunner, when he challenged the enemy to come out and fight. He handed the Bren gun to the newly arrived man to provide covering fire while he rushed

this bunker, into which he threw a grenade and silenced the medium machine-gun. Under cover of the grenade burst, he dived into the bunker and, in a fierce hand-to-hand fight, he killed the only living occupant with his knife.

Private Partridge then cleared the enemy dead from the entrance to the bunker and attacked another bunker in the rear; but weakness from loss of blood compelled him to halt, when he shouted to his section commander that he was unable to continue.

With the way clear by the silencing of the enemy medium machine-gun by Private Partridge, the Platoon moved forward and established a defence perimeter in the vicinity of the spot where Private Partridge lay wounded.

Heavy enemy medium machine-gun and rifle fire both direct and enfilade from other bunkers soon created an untenable situation for the Platoon, which withdrew under its own covering fire.

Despite his wounds and weakness due to loss of blood, Private Partridge joined in this fight and remained in action until the Platoon had withdrawn after recovering their casualties.

The information gained by both patrols, and particularly from Private Partridge, enabled an attack to be mounted later. This led to the capture of a vital position sited on strong defensive ground and strengthened by 43 bunkers and other dug in positions from which the enemy fled in panic.

The serious situation during the fight of the two patrols was retrieved only by the outstanding gallantry and devotion to duty displayed by Private Partridge, which inspired his comrades to heroic action, leading to a successful withdrawal which saved the small force from complete annihilation. The subsequent successful capture of the position was due entirely to the incentive derived by his comrades from the outstanding heroism and fortitude displayed by Private Partridge.