Australian troops received unsolicited high praise from Vietnamese villagers in Phuoc Tuy Province last week.

A formal report compiled through Vietnamese and American civilian agency sources gives a new insight to villagers' feelings on the Australian Task Force — its presence and the job it is doing to assist the Vietnamese.

A barbed wire fence running south-east across the province and designed to restrict movement of Viet Cong and sympathisers has "stirred the interest and admiration of local residents".

"It is remarkable to note," says the report, "that the Vietnamese talk highly of the Australians and praise them profusely."

"The reasons attributed to the respect given the Australians are:

- They are a hard working lot.
- They are always fair, well behaved and courteous with the people of the Province.
- Their civic action programme is realistic and coincides with the people's needs."

"Normally," the report states, "the people of the villages are quick to find fault and criticise programmes and projects."

"But with the way the Australians go about implementing their projects on civic action and anti-guerilla warfare, they are proving exceptions to the general rule, in every Vietnamese mind and attitude.

"The friendly frame of mind of the Vietnamese for the Australians is based on the following factors:

- The Australians are crafty fighters, killing many Viet Cong in jungle battles, pursuing the enemy relentlessly;
- The Australian civic action programme is very effective in that they fill the immediate needs of the people, and in the process of giving exact no promises from the people or make them feel under obligation;"
The Australians have promoted friendship with the Vietnamese in general by their good behaviour and unpretentious courtesy.

The attitudes of the people of Phuoc Tuy Province shown in the report this week were gathered from a series of discussions and interviews with villagers by Vietnamese specialists.

Known as a weekly attitude report the views of the people of the villagers are sought regularly to assist in solving their problems and meeting their needs.

Through such surveys and reports the efforts of the Vietnamese Government and allied agencies can do much to raise the level of contentment among the people and by meeting the immediate needs help reduce Viet Cong influence.

Lists: A, B and C

Further information:

CANBERRA: Major Allan S. Hinds (65-4061) (49-6030)

OTHER STATES: APOE AT COMMAND HEADQUARTERS

26 April 1967