



From Fort Bliss, Texas, where it was first organized in 1916, to the Philippines and Korea, and back to Hawaii, the 1st Battalion, 8th Artillery, has always adhered to its motto "Daring and Tenacious." In World War I, it fought through the hedgerows of France with the 7th Infantry Division, and in World War II through the island hopping campaigns of the 25th Tropic Lightning.

In Korea, the Automatic Eighth fired nearly half a million rounds of 105mm ammunition, earned two Distinguished Unit Citations and won the nickname. A group of Prisoners of War, passing through the Battalion's firing positions stopped and watched the howitzers firing. The guards asked the interpreter what the POW's were talking about. "They wanted to see the new automatic artillery that had been shooting at them."

The Automatic Eighth was alerted for movement to Southeast Asia in December 1965. After two weeks of intensive training and preparation, the Battalion sailed as part of the 2nd Brigade Task Force on January 5, 1966. On January 23, C Battery fired the Eighth's first round in the war from a position near Bien Hoa in support of the Republic of Vietnam Forces operating in War Zone D. The Battalion has participated in 14 campaigns since World War I.

The Automatic Eighth has been involved in numerous Tropic Lightning actions and operations since 1966. Some of the war's fiercest battles involved 1st of the 8th artillerymen at Patrol Bases Diamond I, II and III in the Spring of 1969.

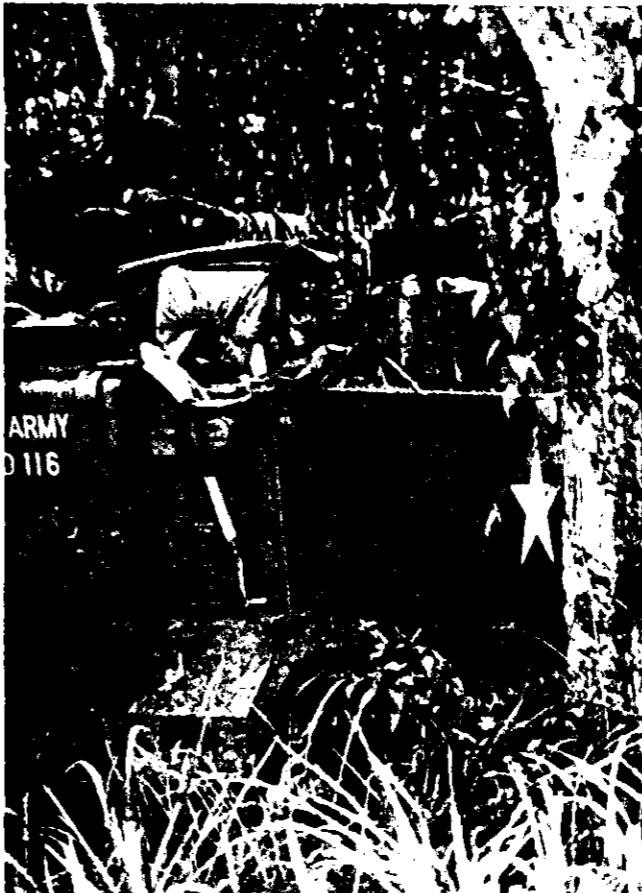


The Battle of Tay Ninh

Through the summer of 1968, the mauled enemy withdrew across the Cambodian border and into the triple canopy jungle north of Tay Ninh City. Intelligence reports showed that he was massing again for another attack. But when, and where?

August 18; Tay Ninh Base Camp came under thunderous rocket and mortar barrage. At the direction of Major General Ellis W. Williamson, who had taken command of the Division days before, the forces of Tropic Lightning had been prepared for retaliation. The Division's First Brigade smashed down on the enemy force, at Tay Ninh, at Fire Support Base Buell, in the Ben Cui Rubber Plantation and on the summit of Nui Ba Den, anticipating the enemy's moves and countering with massive firepower. Again and again in the Ben Cui near Dau Tieng NVA soldiers were decimated by a division strike force. A fierce ground assault on Fire Support Base Buell was repelled at point-blank range on four nights of grim battle.

On September 20, the remains of eight NVA regiments staggered back from the line of contact, leaving more than 2,200 dead behind. Tay Ninh and Dau Tieng belonged to Tropic Lightning.



The U.S. 25th Infantry Division: Oct. 1968- Dec. 1969.

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The 25th Infantry Division

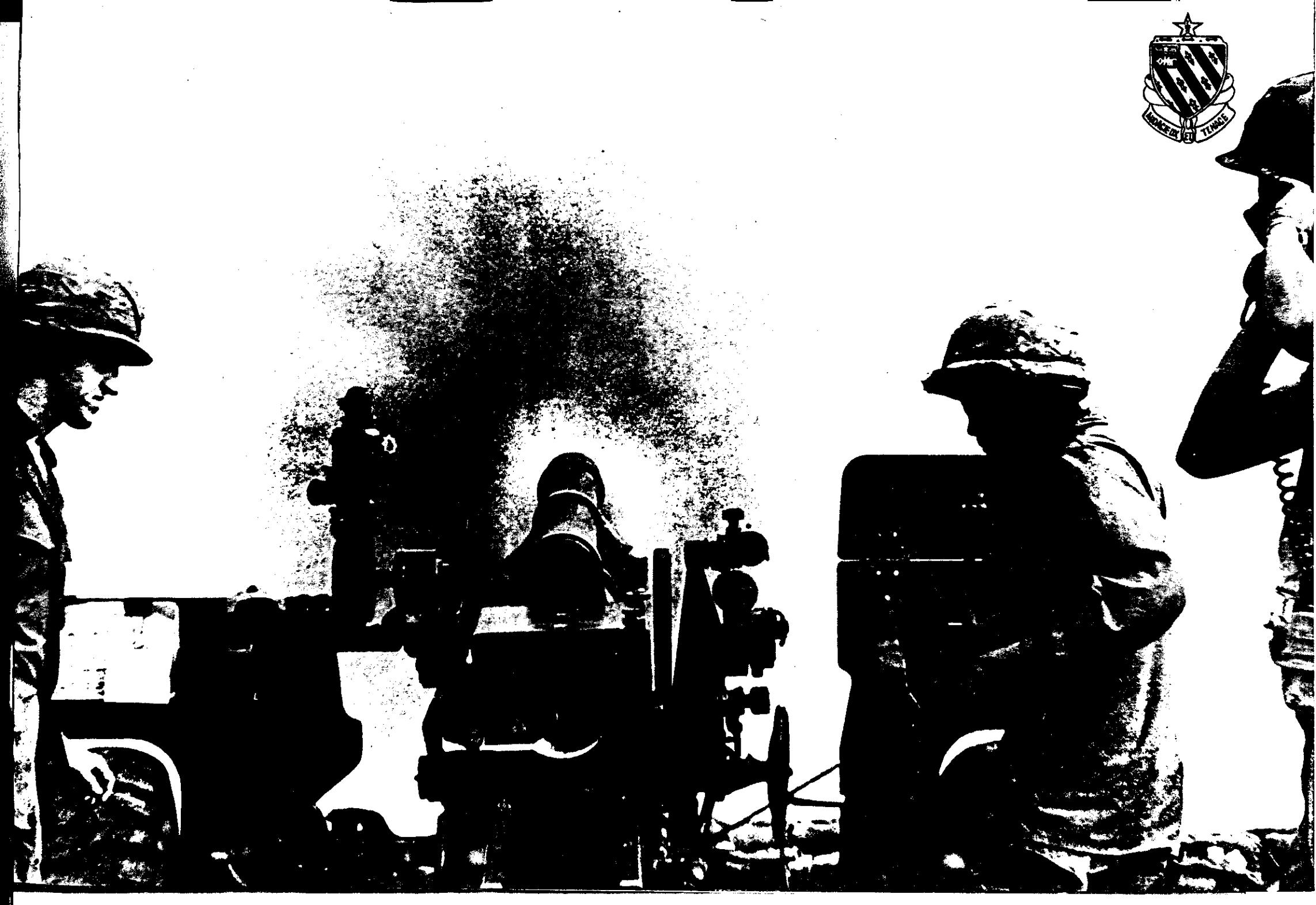
Cpl. Michael H. Clark Editor.

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Pacific Stars + Stripes : 13 July 1969

Tropic Lightning News May 19, 1969

" " " Vol. 4, No. 17 April 28, 1969.



Headlines of th

October 1st	Tropic Lightning directs land clearing operation, 13,000 acres of Ho Bo Woods to be levelled by Rome plows.
November 1st-8th	1st Brigade moves headquarters to Tay Ninh.
December 3rd	Medal of Honor awarded posthumously to CPT Joseph X. Grant for action while assigned to Tropic Lightning's 14th Infantry.
January 1st	Division infantry and artillerymen stop human wave attack, kill 382 in six-hour Battle of Soui Cut.
January 8th	White Warriors turn up 231-ton rice cache near Cambodian border.
January 26th	Tomahawks liberate 271 RPG2 rocket launchers from Ho Bo Woods cache.
January 31st	Viet Cong break Tet truce; 3d Squadron, 4th Cavalry races to defense of Tan Son Nhut.
February 4th	Three-Quarter Horsemen and Wolfhound battalions fight house-to-house in Saigon suburbs.
February 16th	Third Regulars prevent Cong from cutting Highway 1.
February 18th	Golden Dragons foil VC push on Tay Ninh City, kill 137.
March 24th-26th	2d Brigade and Free World forces team to kill 470 enemy in three-day battle near Trang Bang.

of the 27th year

April 14th

Third Regulars repulse pre-dawn, Good Friday attack on night defensive position in War Zone C, kill 124.

May 1st

President awards Medals of Honor to CPT Robert F. Foley and SP4 John F. Baker, Jr., for heroics while assigned to Second Wolfhounds.

May 3rd-6th

Division task force pins enemy unit against swamp, kills 285 in four days.

May 27th

Tomahawks halt enemy's do-or-die, last push on Saigon, kill 218 and blunt May Offensive.

June 5th

Medal of Honor awarded posthumously to SP4 Donald W. Evans, Jr., for action while assigned to 2d Battalion, 12th Infantry.

July 4th

Dau Tieng Base Camp absorbs over 500 mortar and rocket rounds as support troops spearhead successful defense.

August 3rd

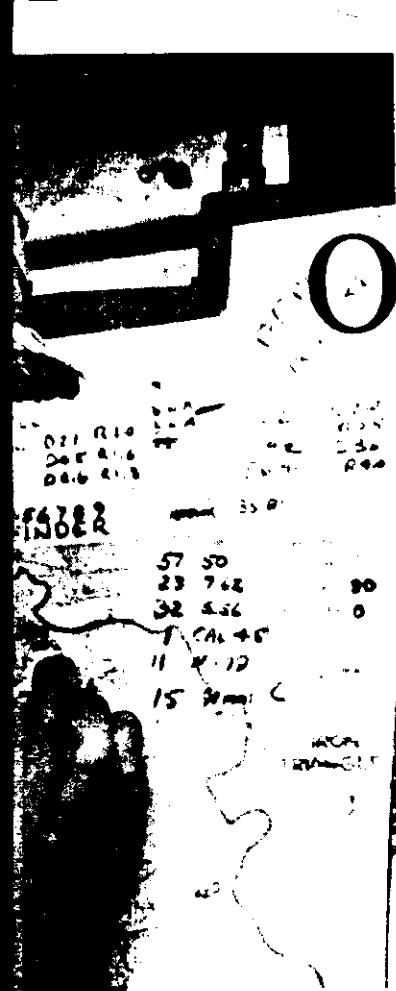
MG Ellis W. Williamson takes command of Tropic Lightning Division; MG F. K. Mearns departs for Capital Military Assistance Command at Saigon.

August 18th-25th

Tropic Lightning soldiers thwart massive enemy attacks in Tay Ninh Province, kill more than 900 in bitter week of fighting.

September 11th-17th

Enemy renews Tay Ninh fighting; Division soldiers rebuff all VC-NVA efforts.



The 25th Infantry Division's 27th year was also its 13th year in combat. It was the year of Tet, Trang Bang, Soui Cut and

Operations

Tay Ninh. It was a year Tropic Lightning soldiers successfully conducted 11 of the boldest combat operations in its history. It was a year in which the men with the Lightning patch were determined to live up to their reputation and not on it. It was a year to be remembered . . . a year our enemies will be unable to forget.

This book contains 208 pages. This is not nearly sufficient to tell the complete story of the year now past. In this space we cannot capture all of the tears, sweat, blood and occasional joys which made it so memorable. Yet we try because we are proud and because we think others should know.



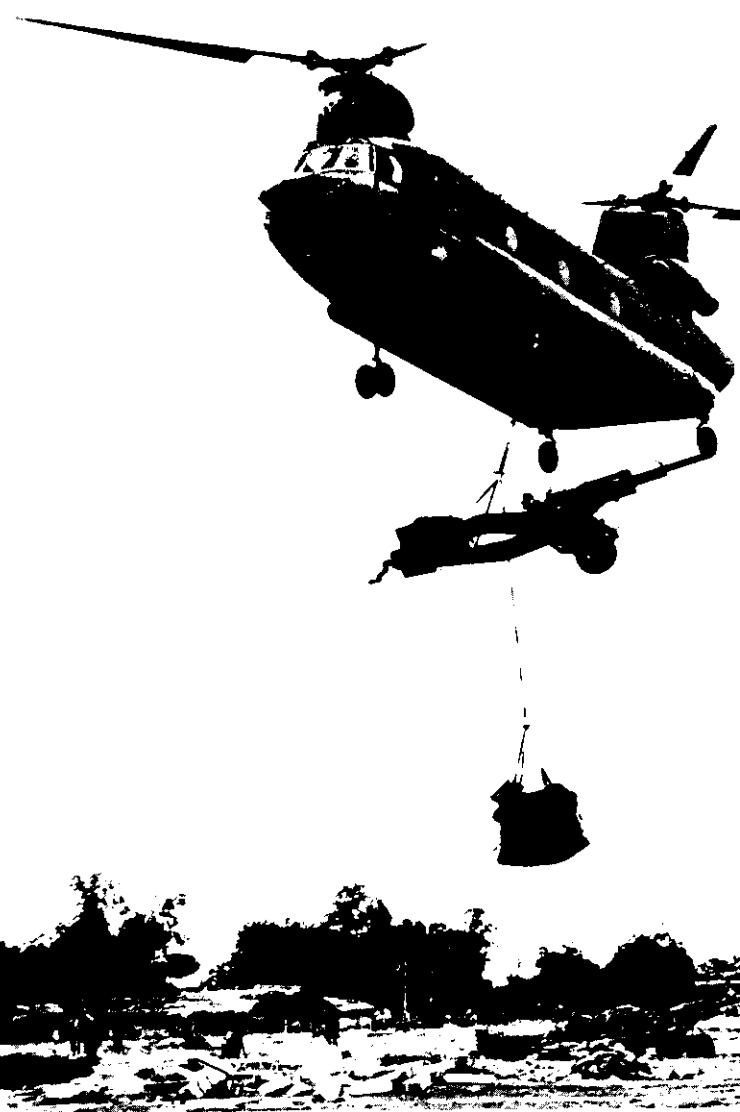
Barking Sands

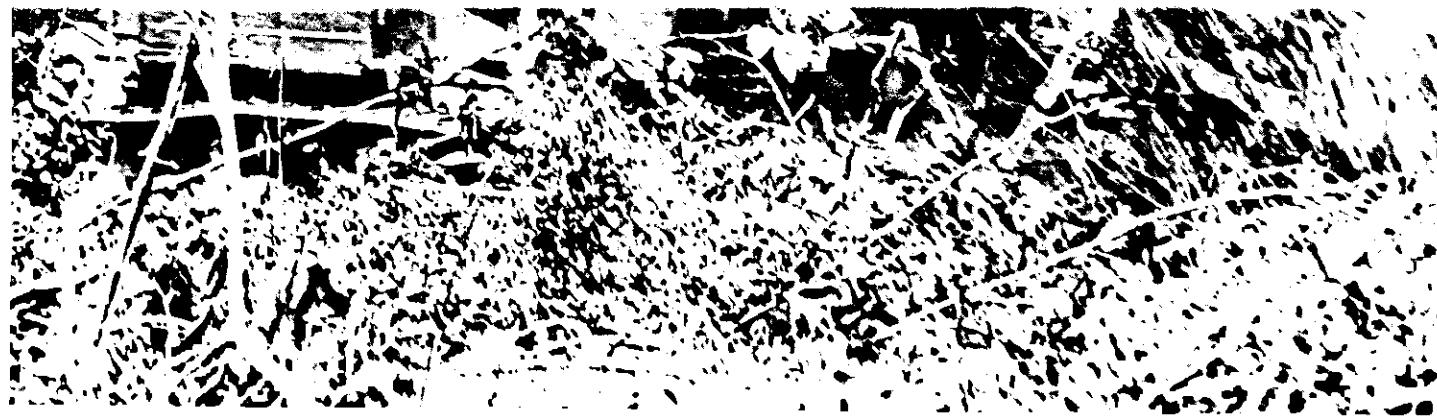
When the Tropic Lightning Division's 27th year began, anniversary celebrations had to take a back seat to the business of war. The 25th Division pressed four operations simultaneously as its birthday passed.

Each of the operations—Barking Sands, Kolekole, Diamond Head and Atlanta—increased the pressure on Charlie and added lustre to the arms of the division.

Reaching furthest back into the old year was Operation Barking Sands. Begun on May 18th, it proved to be a highly successful test of airlifting batteries of light artillery to exploit intelligence targets. Operation Barking Sands included four sub-operations, one of which—Operation Kunia—began and ended during the division's 27th year.

Operation Kunia was the phase of the Operation Barking Sands assigned to deal with long-time Communist sanctuaries in the Ho Bo Woods and destroy Viet Cong and North Vietnamese units in the area.





Preparing to blow another VC tunnel.



Beginning the operation the 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Manchus and the 2d Battalion, 14th Infantry Golden Dragons swept through the dense woods without making much contact. Meanwhile Rome plows from the 27th Land Clearing Team, secured by the 4th Battalion (Mechanized), 23d Infantry Tomahawks, downed more than 90 percent of the 13,000-acre Viet Cong jungle sanctuary in 56 days.

Helicopters finished off the secondary growth with defoliating chemical spray.

Extensively booby-trapped, the area was honey-combed with trenches, bunkers and tunnels. One multi-level underground complex covered 2,000 meters and yielded cameras, film, printing presses and type in addition to the usual caches of weapons and ammunition.

When the final score was in on Operations Barking Sands to include Kunia, 480 enemy were known dead and 463 individual weapons and 29 crew-served weapons captured. Food caches had yielded 196 tons of rice.



Lightning soldiers use available "wheels" to remove



Kolekole

One of the more important functions of Operation Kolekole was to help secure polling places during the South Vietnamese general elections. Kolekole was the longest running, most significant operation undertaken by a single Tropic Lightning brigade during the year.

Behind the shield provided by 2d Brigade soldiers conducting Operation Kolekole, civic actions projects were pushed forward with greater energy and results than previously possible. And, in the final accounting by war, the brigade's soldiers killed 797 Viet Cong and took 150 prisoners.

Most of the operation took place during the rainy season, adding to the difficulties but not subtracting from the effectiveness of the brigade.

Beginning in May, south of the Oriental River in Long An Province, Operation Kolekole expanded into Tay Ninh Province with fighting along the Cambodian border before it ended in December.





Anxious moments before pick up.

The pattern for firefights with the enemy was established May 16th when the 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Wolfhounds made an eagle flight to assist a CIDG unit in contact with a Viet Cong company. The Wolfhounds handled the enemy roughly killing 14.

The next day the 2d Battalion, 27th Infantry Wolfhounds went one up on their brother outfit when they killed 15 members of a Viet Cong company and captured five weapons during an assault. Throughout the operation, Charlie preferred to run rather than fight, and he was never contacted in groups larger than company size.

In the area of civic actions no less than 10 projects were completed with the 2d Brigade's help during Kolekole. Among them were: Improving the appearance and sanitary conditions of the Hoc Mon ma-





ternity ward, renovation of two buildings to the Bao Trai hospital and aiding in the construction of the Bao Trai High School dedicated December 16th.

Toward the end of the operation, the First Wolfhounds were protecting polling places by keeping Charlie busy outside of town with a series of combat assaults. Eight miles south of Tay Ninh they had a chance to show their spirit. Following an exchange of gunfire, 17 Wolfhounds chased 15 Viet Cong 400 meters and killed them all. Wolfhound casualties were only two wounded.

The First Wolfhound's commander seized a chance to cut off a Viet Cong platoon of 20 as it tried to reach the Cambodian border. With two Alpha Company platoons converging on the enemy, LTC David R. Hughes and his staff debarked from helicopter to personally direct the assault.

One captain was dispatched to make sure an incoming platoon got started in the



Checking a hidden bunker.



right direction, and then the colonel, his S-3, an artillery observer and an IO camera man left their chopper and set out on foot after Charlie.

The Viet Cong tried to scatter; five escaped the main assault, but another platoon accounted for them.

During Operation Kolekole 34 Hois Chanh rallied and more than 50,000 rounds of small arms ammunition were captured. Other indications of success were the capture of 202 tons of rice and the destruction of 577 tunnels.



Diamond Head

Operation Diamond Head was mounted by the 3d Brigade as part of the Tropic Lightning's 1967 monsoon campaign from May 14th to December 7th. Contact during this period was minimal, but the pressure of Diamond Head kept the enemy off balance, forced him to disperse still further and prevented him from taking large scale offensive action.

From May through September the Brigade carried out security and reinforcement missions in the Tay Ninh area, once combining with eight companies of Vietnamese Popular and Regional Forces for search and destroy missions west of the Oriental River.



As a security measure villages in and around the Michelin Rubber Plantation were cordoned off and searched several times. Several families were moved to areas of greater security in order to cut off Viet Cong who may have pressured them for supplies.

During Operation Diamond Head the enemy lost 269 killed and 33 captured. Allied forces also captured 34,000 pounds of rice, 1,500 pounds of salt, 10 AK-47's, 32 pounds of documents, and a small Ford tractor that the Viet Cong had diverted from its task of nation building.

Destroyed during the operation were 30,000 pounds of rice, 1,900 bunkers and 929 meters of trench.

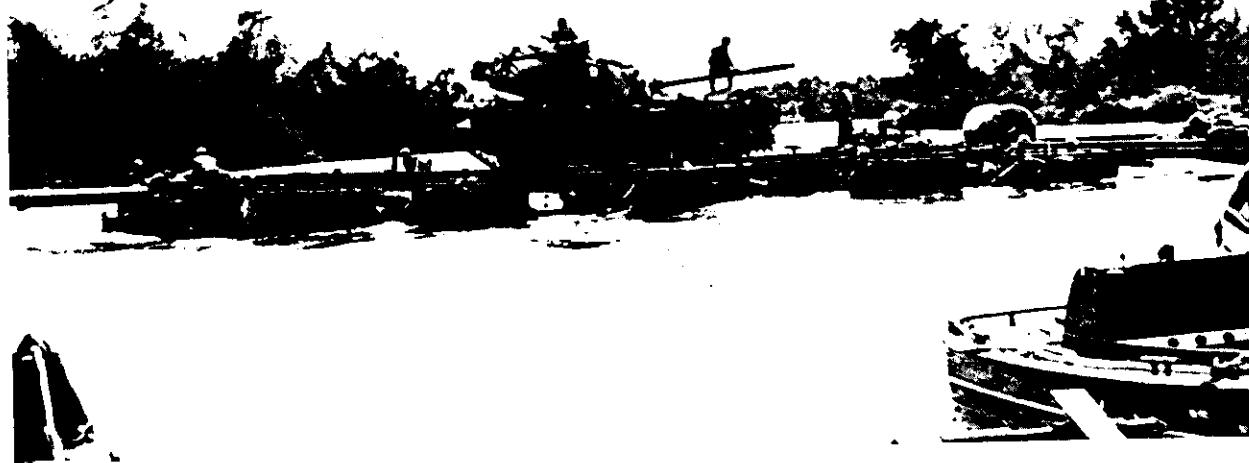
Sniper and booby-trap incidents, which had increased during Vietnam's elections, tapered off during the last 38 days of the operation. Largest single incident in this period occurred when an ambush patrol from the 2d Battalion, 22d Infantry Regulars killed eight Viet Cong on November 24th.

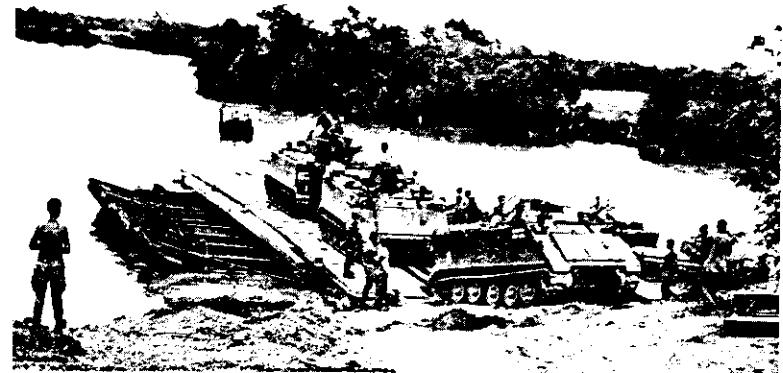
Atlanta

From November 18th to December 23d the division mounted Operation Atlanta. Atlanta's primary objective was to uproot the enemy in the Iron Triangle and deny him sanctuary.

This turned into a major project for the 65th Engineer Battalion who rafted vehicles into and out of action, and, after some experimentation, destroyed nearly two miles of enemy tunnels.

Atlanta proved as expensive for the Viet Cong as it was rewarding for Tropic Lightning. A body count of 1,467 was amassed during the operation, but no big fire fights took place. One-hundred-twenty-three enemy small arms were captured and more than 350,000 pounds of rice were taken.





Enemy cleverness in the construction and concealment of tunnels proved to be a step or so behind the ability of the engineers who destroyed the subterranean refuges.

Some were demolished by cratering charges placed every 40 meters, and when this method, though effective, proved burdensome, it was decided to try flooding the tunnels in hopes they would collapse.

First jungle had to be cleared from the water source to the mouth of the tunnel to be flooded. When a shortage of pipe devel-

oped, the engineers simply ditched the water source closer to the tunnel. Flooding, however, did not completely destroy the tunnels, and the engineers floated explosive charges into the passage to finish it off.

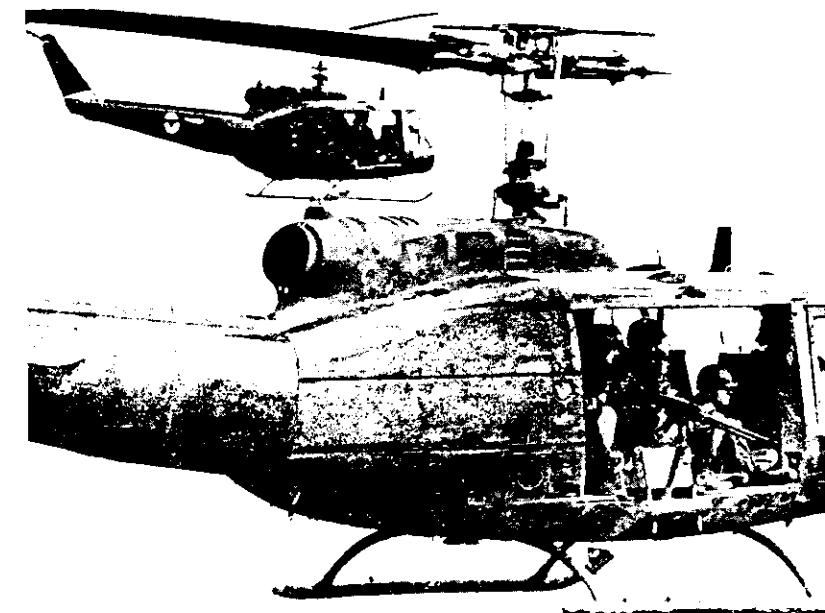
The final incident of Atlanta was also an engineering feat. A tank boarding a raft was damaged by a mine and went down like a U-boat. The engineers waited until low tide, pulled it out, and wrote finis to Atlanta.

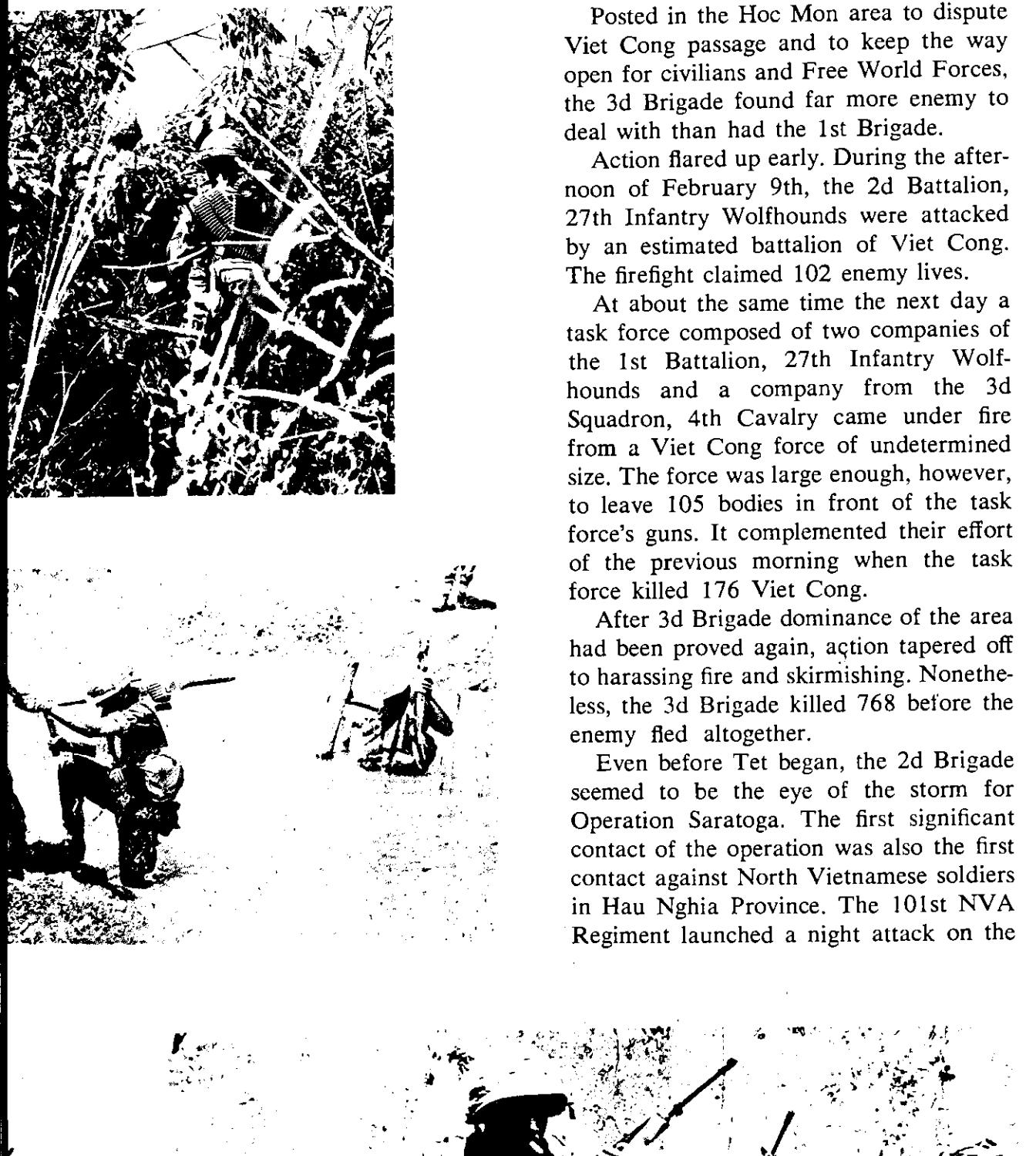


Saratoga

Under way nearly two months before the Tet Offensive, Operation Saratoga increased pressure on the enemy and then foiled his plan to isolate and interdict Saigon. One of the widest ranging operations yet undertaken, Saratoga saw Tropic Lightning soldiers engaged from the Cambodian border to Saigon itself.

In Tay Ninh and Binh Duong provinces stood the 1st Brigade. Their participation lasted from February 25th to March 24th. In spite of alert and aggressive combat sweeps, the brigade made little contact. Charlie's battle plans had drawn him to the south where Saigon loomed as a glittering prize. By March 24th, the body count for the 1st Brigade was 58. Three enemy soldiers had been captured.





Posted in the Hoc Mon area to dispute Viet Cong passage and to keep the way open for civilians and Free World Forces, the 3d Brigade found far more enemy to deal with than had the 1st Brigade.

Action flared up early. During the afternoon of February 9th, the 2d Battalion, 27th Infantry Wolfhounds were attacked by an estimated battalion of Viet Cong. The firefight claimed 102 enemy lives.

At about the same time the next day a task force composed of two companies of the 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Wolfhounds and a company from the 3d Squadron, 4th Cavalry came under fire from a Viet Cong force of undetermined size. The force was large enough, however, to leave 105 bodies in front of the task force's guns. It complemented their effort of the previous morning when the task force killed 176 Viet Cong.

After 3d Brigade dominance of the area had been proved again, action tapered off to harassing fire and skirmishing. Nonetheless, the 3d Brigade killed 768 before the enemy fled altogether.

Even before Tet began, the 2d Brigade seemed to be the eye of the storm for Operation Saratoga. The first significant contact of the operation was also the first contact against North Vietnamese soldiers in Hau Nghia Province. The 101st NVA Regiment launched a night attack on the



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1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Wolfhounds. In this encounter 39 North Vietnamese were killed and the remainder of the force withdrew into the Ho Bo Woods.

The NVA force was next run aground by the Second Wolfhounds on December 21st when one of their base camps was discovered. In a day-long action the Wolfhounds killed 43 but found the NVA somewhat tougher customers than the VC counterparts.

Tougher or not, the First and Second Wolfhounds found more NVA members

of the 2d Go Mon Battalion, in base camps on the western bank of the Saigon River near Trung An and killed 89.

On January 10th the 7th Cu Chi Battalion, then nearly half NVA, launched a human wave assault on the night position of the First Wolfhounds. It cost them 108 dead.

In the middle of January the 4th Battalion, 23d Infantry Tomahawks came upon an unknown number of Entrenched Cong in the lower Ho Bo Woods. In a two-day action 49 Viet Cong were killed.

Then, came Tet.

In the first major action of the Tet Offensive for the 25th Division troops, 3d Squadron, 4th Cavalry, sent its columns streaming down Highway 1 toward the heavily besieged Tan Son Nhut Air Base. In brutal fighting the cavalrymen, aided by airstrikes and artillery, pried the enemy away from the vital base. More than 300 enemy bodies were counted.

Meanwhile, the 2d Brigade was drawn into the cauldron of fire near Hoc Mon as the enemy approached Saigon. There 2d Battalion, 12th Infantry White Warriors killed 22 Viet Cong in a short, sharp fight. The same day the 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry killed 30 enemy near Ap Cho. The Third Regulars also figured in a 10-day battle to prevent Charlie from cutting Highway 1. The Regulars won and Charlie lost, among other things, 219 of his best fighters.





Contact continued almost daily with well-armed and disciplined Viet Cong and NVA soldiers. But when the operation ended, Tropic Lightning soldiers had claimed more than 3,000 enemy soldiers.

In the course of Operation Saratoga, Tropic Lightning also captured a quarter of a million rounds of small arms ammunition, identified huge enemy tunnel complexes and generally destroyed much of the enemy's combat effectiveness.

A new enemy, the NVA, had appeared on the scene, but the courage and the professional skills of the Tropic Lightning soldiers had again won the day.



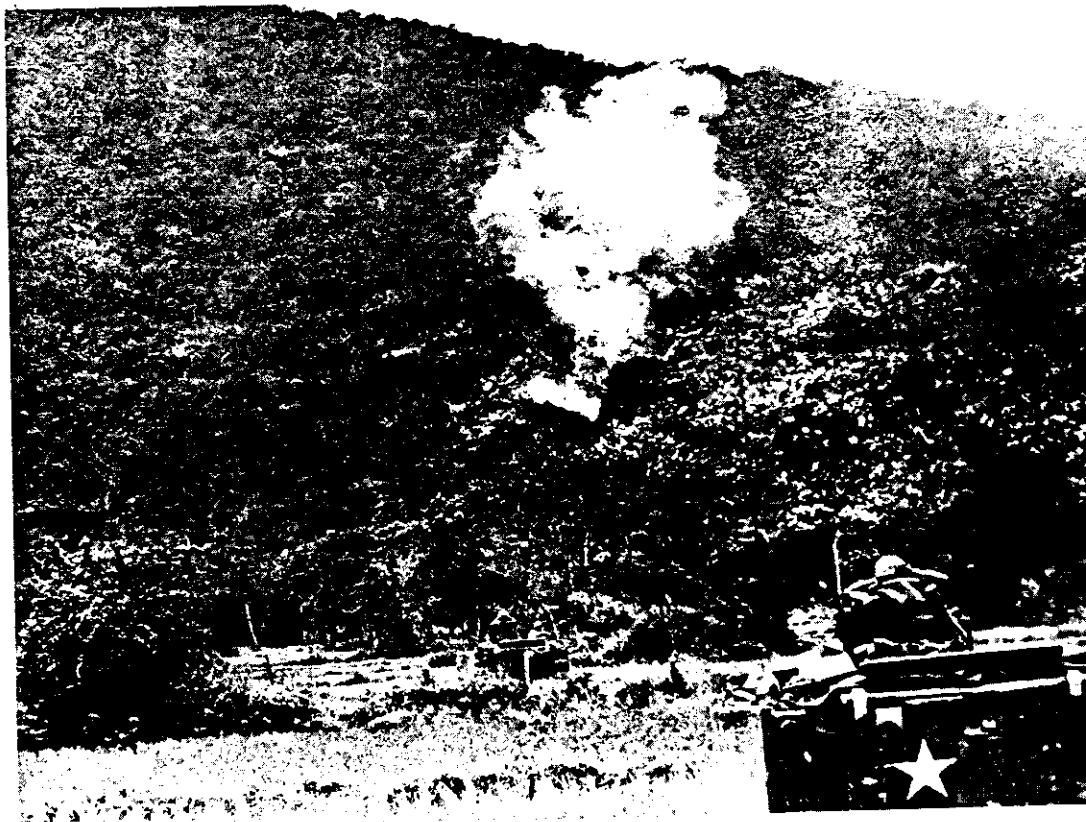
Yellowstone

From early December to late February, Tropic Lightning troopers faced some of their sternest tests at the hands of the Viet Cong and paid them back four fold in Operation Yellowstone.

The Viet Cong were decisively defeated in each of the more than 60 major engagements fought during Operation Yellowstone. One of Yellowstone's engagements, the Battle of Soui Cut at Fire Support Base Burt, went into the books as the biggest single action of the year for a 25th Division unit.

Yellowstone was on a large scale from the beginning. The 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry Regulars found 15,000 Viet Cong grenades buried in 50 gallon oil drums in the dense jungle west of Dau Tieng during the first week.

On December 19th the enemy launched a furious night assault on the night location of the 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Manchus south of the Katum Base Camp.





At dusk the Viet Cong began bombarding the 1st Brigade soldiers. Shortly after midnight two reinforced battalions of Viet Cong hurled themselves on the perimeter. Typical of the hand-to-hand combat which occurred that night was the GI who attacked an enemy with his empty M-16, battered him to the ground and killed him with a blast from the Cong's own AK-47. At dawn the enemy force fled, leaving 40 dead comrades.



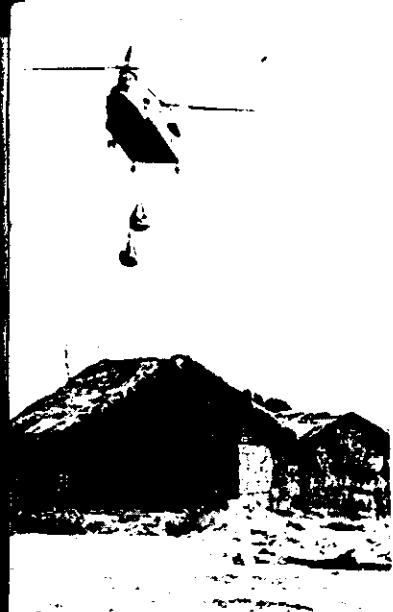
The Viet Cong paid most dearly for violating their own truce to attack Fire Support Base Burt on January 1st. Secured by elements of the 2d and 3d Battalions, 22d Infantry Regulars, the fire support base was only three days old when it became the setting for the Battle of Soui Cut.

At 1:30 a.m. the main enemy force made its move. The main thrust of their attack was absorbed by the Second Regular's Charlie Company. As the fanatical human wave surged closer to the perimeter, the base's cannoneers from 3d Battalion, 13th Artillery and 2d Battalion, 66th Artillery fired round after round of beehive ammunition into the attackers.

After a brief lull, the Viet Cong renewed their assault all along the perimeter. Again the artillerymen fired over open sights. Airstrikes pounded the enemy within 100 meters of the embattled Lightning soldiers as the volume of fire reached a crescendo. Suddenly all remaining Viet Cong were going the other way.

As dawn broke, the weary, tested and alert defenders of Burt gazed over blasted





landscape to a treeline that had been all but leveled by their fire. Strewn around the base were 382 Viet Cong bodies.

Though battered and beaten, the enemy was still not close to paying the bill Yellowstone presented him. Slashing through jungle north of Tay Ninh, the 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Manchus killed 70 Viet Cong as they overran and destroyed several large base camps.

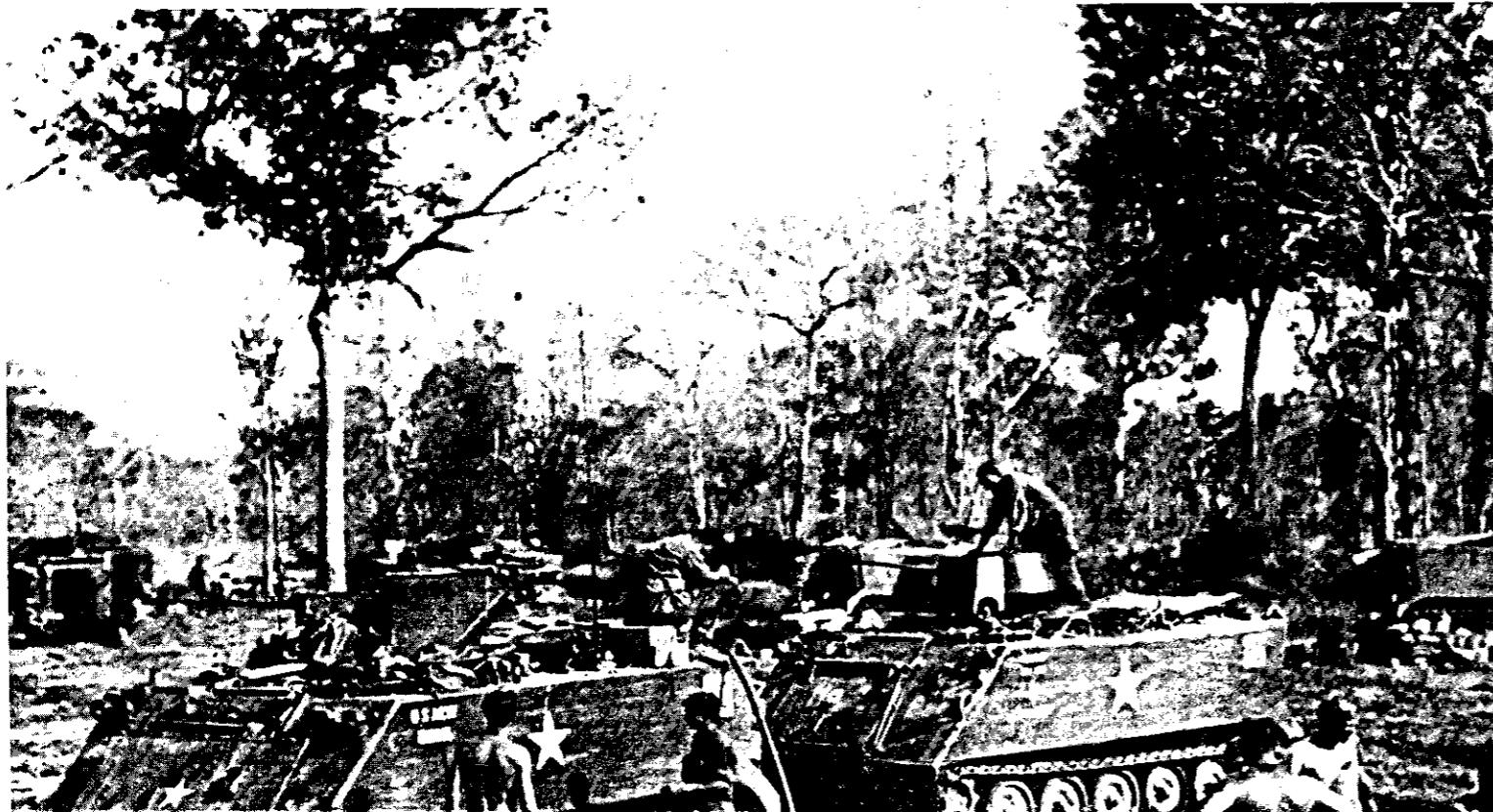
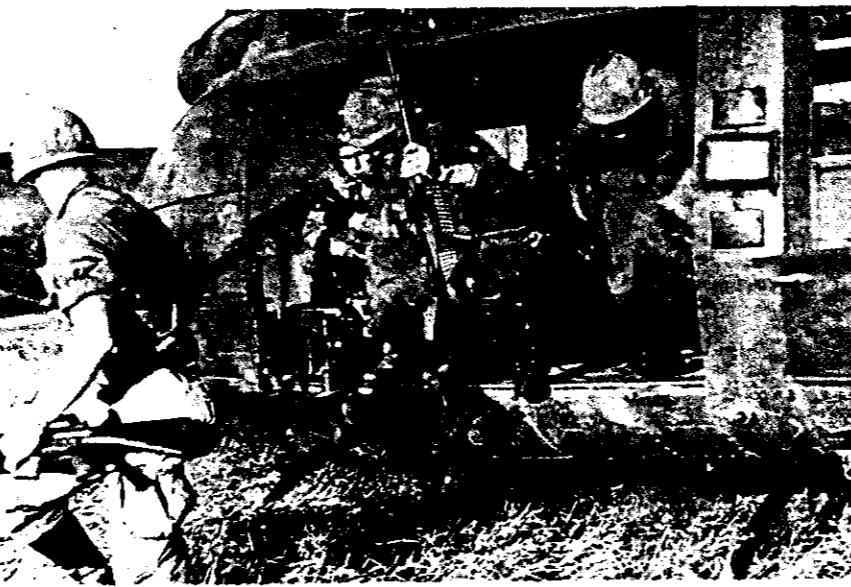
Back at Fire Support Base Burt, 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry Regulars came upon an ammunition cache just 1,500 meters from their perimeter, liberating 156 60mm mortar rounds, 13,000 rounds of



AK-47 ammunition, 41 cases of TNT, 24 cases of C-4 and 14,000 non-electric blasting caps.

Having lost much ammunition, Charlie could look forward to shorter rations, too. The 2d Battalion, 12th Infantry White Warriors uncovered a 231-ton rice cache four kilometers from the Cambodian border in Tay Ninh Province.

The biggest find of the operation came when PFC Donald Wadlington literally stumbled over the door of another Viet Cong cache. The tunnel yielded 220 82mm mortar rounds, 75 fuses, 101 75mm recoilless rounds and 11,000 small arms rounds.



Operation Yellowstone still had almost a month to run when another first occurred. During January 30th and 31st, Camp Rainer temporary home of the 3d Brigade, was hit by eight 107mm rockets, one of the first times these munitions had been used in South Vietnam.

February continued action in Operation Yellowstone, but the engagements were on a gradually smaller scale. By the time Yellowstone closed, the units of the Tropic Lightning had reasserted their mastery over the Viet Cong in even the most desperate situations.

More than 1,400 Viet Cong had been killed and 400 tons of rice captured from their stunned and shattered units.



Camden

During the last half of December 1967, Operation Camden was mounted by the Tropic Lightning's 2d and 3d Brigades plus 3d Squadron, 4th Cavalry in Tay Ninh Province, the Trapezoid and Ho Bo and Boi Loi woods. Before it was all over, Camden's firefights yielded 136 enemy by body count to the combat power of Tropic Lightning.

Skirmishing began early and continued throughout the operation for the two Wolfhound battalions, but no significant engagements developed during Camden. December 18th could be taken as a typical day. The Wolfhounds twice received sniper fire during the daylight hours and 25-30 rounds of mortar fire during the night.

On December 21st the Second Wolfhounds got into the most excitement the 2d Brigade produced during Operation Camden when an unknown number of Viet Cong took them under fire shortly after 9 a.m. It proved to be the last mistake 29 of the Viet Cong ever made.

For the 3d Brigade the story was much the same; Charlie would harass on a small

scale and fade into the foliage. On some occasions he didn't fade fast enough, and the 3d Brigade ran up a body count of 10 and captured two.

The Three-Quarter Horsemen meanwhile killed 27 Viet Cong on numerous sweeps, none of which provided a major engagement.





Wilderness

Operation Wilderness was a month-long effort in which the 1st Brigade soldiers went hunting an enemy who seemed to prefer hiding to fighting.

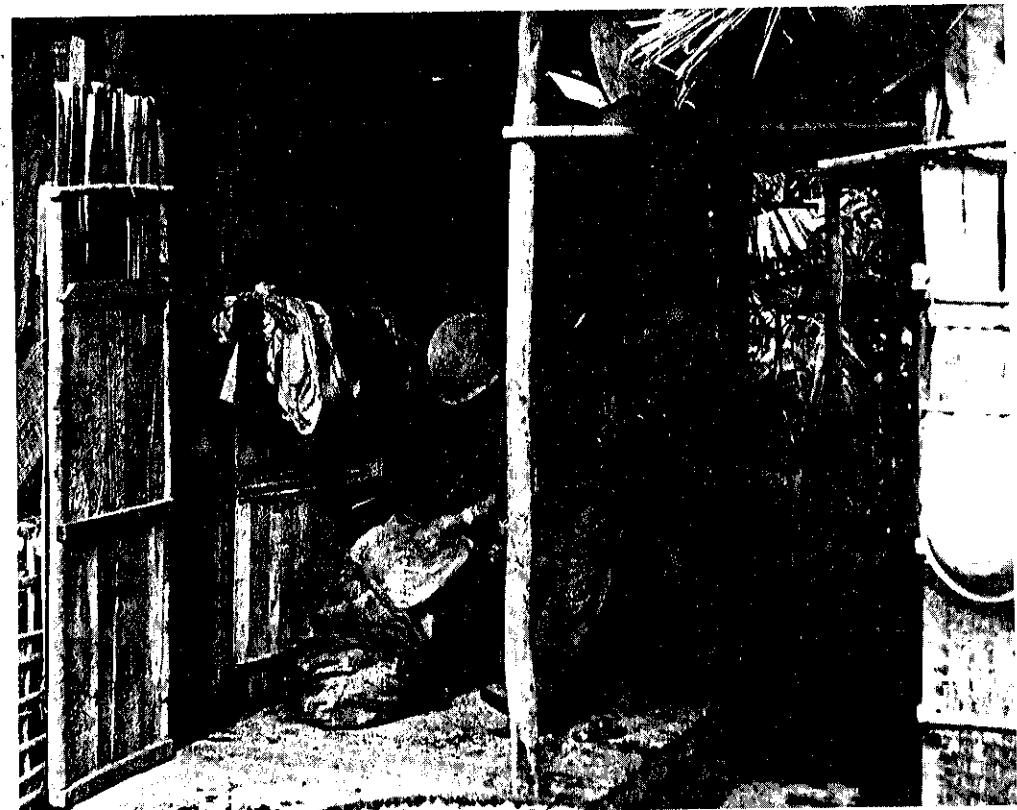
Nonetheless, a month of scattered engagements in Tay Ninh Province and along the Cambodian border produced a body count of 280 Viet Cong.

The operation got underway on March 11th, and the next day the 2d Battalion, 22d Infantry captured 5,000 pounds of unpolished rice. This established the pattern of the operation; caches, bunkers and base camps were found in abundance, but Charlie kept himself hid.



One of the highlights of Operation Camden was that it cost the enemy much in food and ordinance. Over 65,000 pounds of rice and 100 pounds of soybean oil were taken from scattered enemy caches.

Camden forces captured more than 1,500 rounds of small arms ammunition and 20 weapons. Approximately 500 bunkers were destroyed. When the operation ended on December 28th, Charlie was a little hungrier, a little less sheltered and fewer in number than he was before.





Among the items too big to hide were two three-quarter ton trucks discovered by supporting helicopter crewmen of Charlie Troop, 3d Squadron, 17th Air Cavalry when they followed fresh tracks leading from Cambodia toward Dau Tieng. Charlie Troop marked the trucks, which were the first found in South Vietnam, and called in airstrikes and artillery to destroy the vehicles and their cargoes of ammunition. The target practice produced a 150-foot high pillar of smoke and flame.

On March 16th the 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Manchus apprehended a woman with no ID card but carrying 6,000 pi-



asters. After deciding that she was carrying the payroll of a Viet Cong unit, the Manchus detained the suspect and confiscated the money. It is not known which Viet Cong near Ap Hiep Thuan skipped a payday to help resolve an inflated Vietnamese economy.

All told the enemy lost 13,000 rounds of small arms ammunition, four tons of rice, 3,825 meters of tunnels and 725 pounds of documents to the sweeps of Operation Wilderness.



Quyet

After losing the initiative with the failure of the Tet Offensive, about 10 enemy units attempted to withdraw through the 25th Infantry Division's tactical area for reinforcement and resupply. To keep Charlie on the move and deny him rest, Operation Quyet Thang (Resolve to Win) was drawn up, and on March 11th Tropic Lightning's infantry, armor and artillery under the 2d and 3d Brigades pounced upon the "exfiltrating" Cong. Billed as the largest combined operation of Free World forces since the war began, Quyet Thang

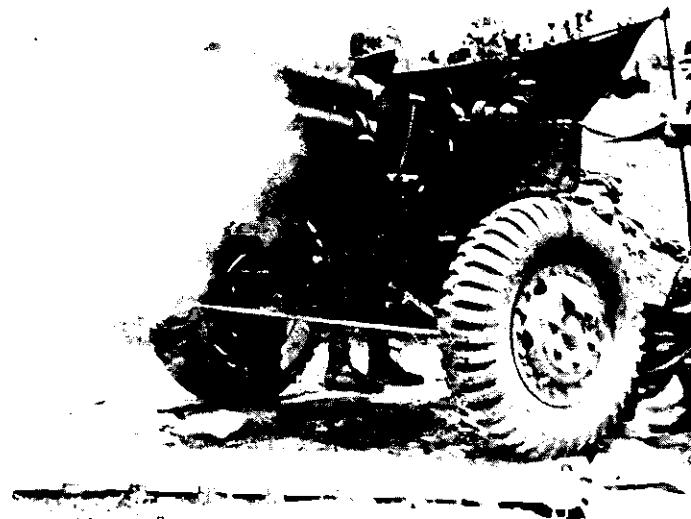


Thang

covered all of the III Corps tactical zone.

Second Brigade was first into headlines with the 2d Battalion, 14th Infantry Golden Dragons who, on March 14th, uncovered a major cache of small arms in the lower Ho Bo Woods. Two days later they found another cache, this one including 120 82mm mortar rounds and 12 complete 122mm rockets. And, in another eight days, on March 24th, they found Charlie himself.

Spilling out of their helicopters at 8:15 a.m., two companies of the Golden Drag-





ons came under automatic weapons fire from an enemy force entrenched in hedgerows near Sa Nho village, eight miles northwest of Cu Chi. The Golden Dragons returned fire, called in airstrikes and gunships, and then assaulted the enemy out, killing 66 and capturing two. The enemy turned out to be the 7th Cu Chi Viet Cong Infantry Battalion. When questioned, villagers said there had been as many as 400 VC soldiers in the village.

Next day it was the turn of the Tomahawks of the 4th Battalion (Mechanized), 23d Infantry. Shortly after 10 a.m. near Trang Bang the Tomahawks brushed up against a well-equipped but green enemy force, newly infiltrated into the south. While the Tomahawks were administering severe on-the-job training to the new arrivals, the 2d Battalion, 34th Armor Dreadnoughts were moving to the sound of Tomahawk guns to get a piece of the action.

The Dreadnoughts, however, found another infiltration group and pitched into them. At the end of the day, the two units had the field, two prisoners, 33 weapons





and a body count of 111 Viet Cong. Two of the dead were women who had been armed with RPG2 launchers.

On March 26th the Golden Dragons and the Dreadnoughts pursued the remnants of the infiltration units, and, by early afternoon, were again engaging the enemy. After artillery, air and infantry assaults routed the Viet Cong with practiced professionalism, all the enemy who weren't dead on the ground—and 108 were—were rapidly going somewhere else.

Operation Quyet Thang continued another 12 days to April 7th, but Charlie had had enough of 2d Brigade; there were no more significant contacts.

Meanwhile the 3d Brigade had experienced less contact, but had not been idle by any means. On March 11th the 2d Battalion, 12th Infantry White Warriors, the 1st Battalion (Mechanized), 5th Infantry Bobcats and the 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry Regulars began pushing into the hedgerows and paddies around Hoc Mon and Tan Binh. Over the next few days other units joined the sweep.

In addition to rooting Charlie out of the area, one of their objectives was to neutralize part of the "rocket belt" around Saigon and ease the 122mm threat to Tan Son Nhut Air Base.





Even though the Viet Cong tried to keep well clear of the 3d Brigade units, 153 bodies were counted and 10 prisoners taken after 35 engagements. However, the chief blow landed by the 3d Brigade hurt the Viet Cong in matters of food, ammunition and shelter.

As the operation began, a task force from the 3d Battalion, 4th Cavalry found a cache containing 1,500 lbs. of rice.

On March 13th a company of the 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry found 12 122mm rockets buried in a dike, and the next day a task force headed by 3d Squadron, 4th Cavalry drove about 20 Viet Cong from an entrenched position in a small but hot fire-fight.

Found in small caches, the totals of material taken from the enemy began to mount. After the operation Charlie had 11,000 fewer pounds of peanuts, 12,000 fewer pounds of peas, 16,000 pounds less rice, and 10,000 pounds less salt. He was even short 100 pounds of canned tuna fish, and every shelter and bunker in the path of the 3d Brigade's thrust was destroyed.

Toan Thang I



No Vietnam campaign has more dramatically demonstrated how Tropic Lightning has taken the war into the enemy's backyard than has operation Toan Thang I. This multi-division operation took them to the very edges of the 25th Infantry Division's area of operations.

One moment they probed the triple-canopied fringes of War Zone C. The next they drew a tight cordon about the gigantic Tan Son Nhut Air Base. Then the men with the Lightning patch firmly stood their ground in the face of a withering enemy assault several miles north of the extensive Michelin Rubber Plantation. And moments later, they fought their way across hedgerows and rice paddies a mere five miles south of Camp Cu Chi where a desperate enemy was pinned against an impassable swamp.



During the course of the 54-day operation, 3,542 enemy soldiers fell dead before Tropic Lightning's fury. This fact in itself should prove that the 25th's soldiers left little to chance as they tracked their foe the length and breadth of their operational zone.

Running its course from April 12th to May 31st, Operation Toan Thang I was a coordinated campaign involving US, Vietnamese, Australian and Thailand armed forces. Up to then, it was the largest operation in terms of participating troops which the Vietnam conflict had known.

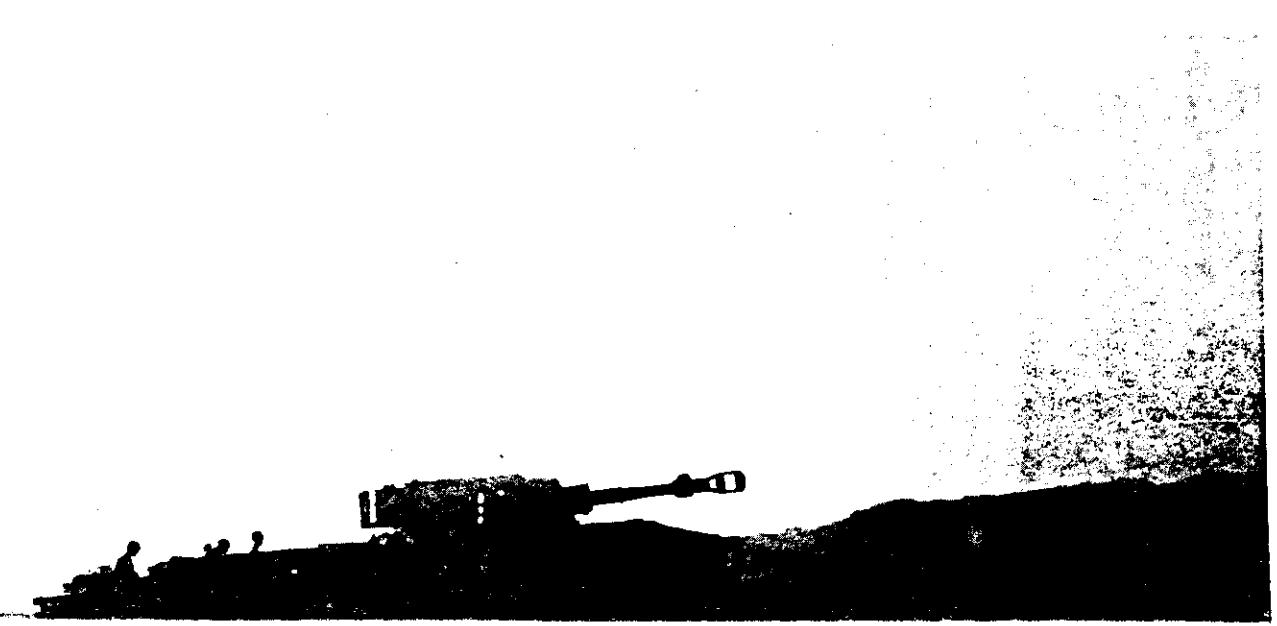




At 20 minutes past 4 o'clock on a dark, silent Good Friday morning, April 11th, all hell broke loose for 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry Regulars manning a night defensive position in jungle 13 miles north of Dau Tieng Base Camp. An unknown number of mortar rounds rained down on the Regulars. As the intensity of incoming rounds increased, a multi-battalion force of NVA and VC soldiers swarmed toward the perimeter in a virtual human wave.

The Bravo Company sector of the perimeter bore the brunt of the assault. Company Commander 1LT Richard J. Prairie later said it looked pretty bad for his men in the early going. The intensity of the attack caused many of his men to pull back from their original positions.

"I pulled what men I could muster back to my CP area," Prairie said, "and with the support of the recon platoon, as the night progressed, we retook all our bunkers."



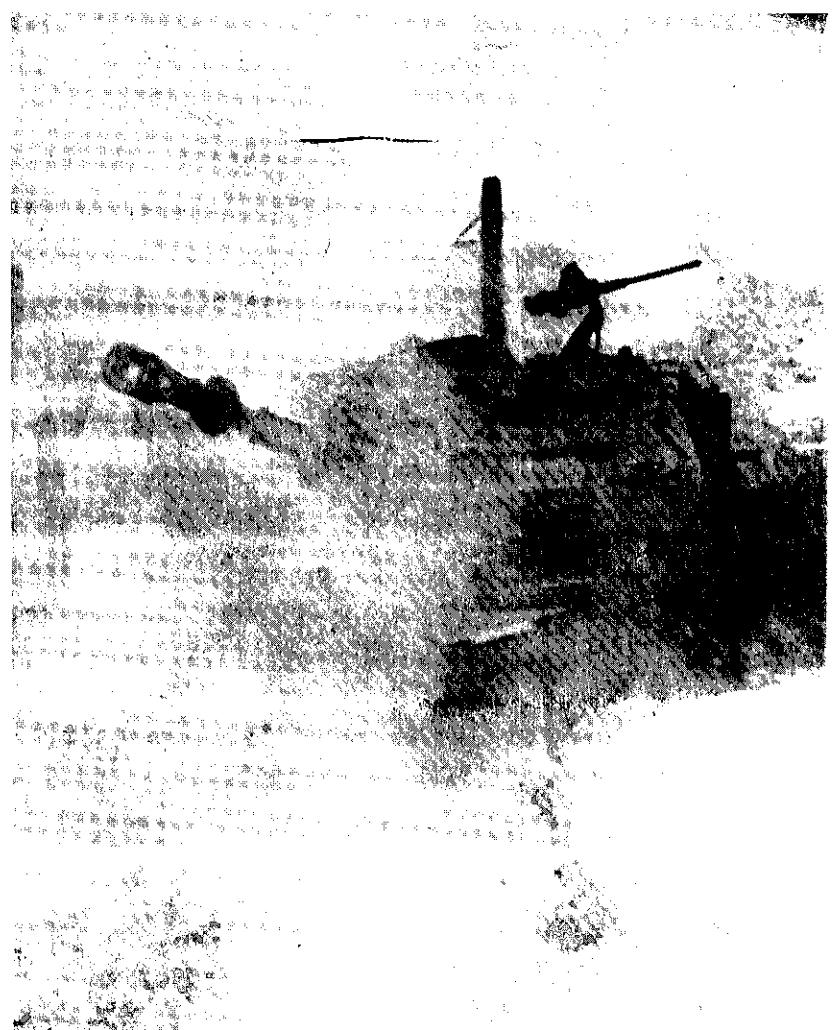
Tropic Lightning soldiers were determined to stand their ground. Aided by artillery, helicopter light fire teams and USAF tactical air strikes, they did just that.

Before the fighting ended, the 2d Battalion, 22d Infantry had worked its way through six kilometers of jungle to reinforce their sister battalion.

When the fighting finally subsided, the enemy had fled leaving 155 dead comrades behind. Sixteen US infantrymen died in the attack and 47 were wounded.

Tropic Lightning soldiers weren't fighting the enemy alone. The little-hailed artilleryman did his bit as well. Tropic Lightning's big guns slammed a whopping 85,000 rounds into the enemy from April 29th to May 12th. Whether supporting troops in contact, destroying enemy positions and fortifications or harrassing and interdicting, Tropic Lightning's redlegs were also taking the war to Charlie.

A multi-battalion task force of Tropic Lightning soldiers was formed on May 3rd and moved before dark into a semi-circular blocking position pinning an estimated 400 to 500 enemy soldiers against a large, open swamp five miles south of Camp Cu Chi.





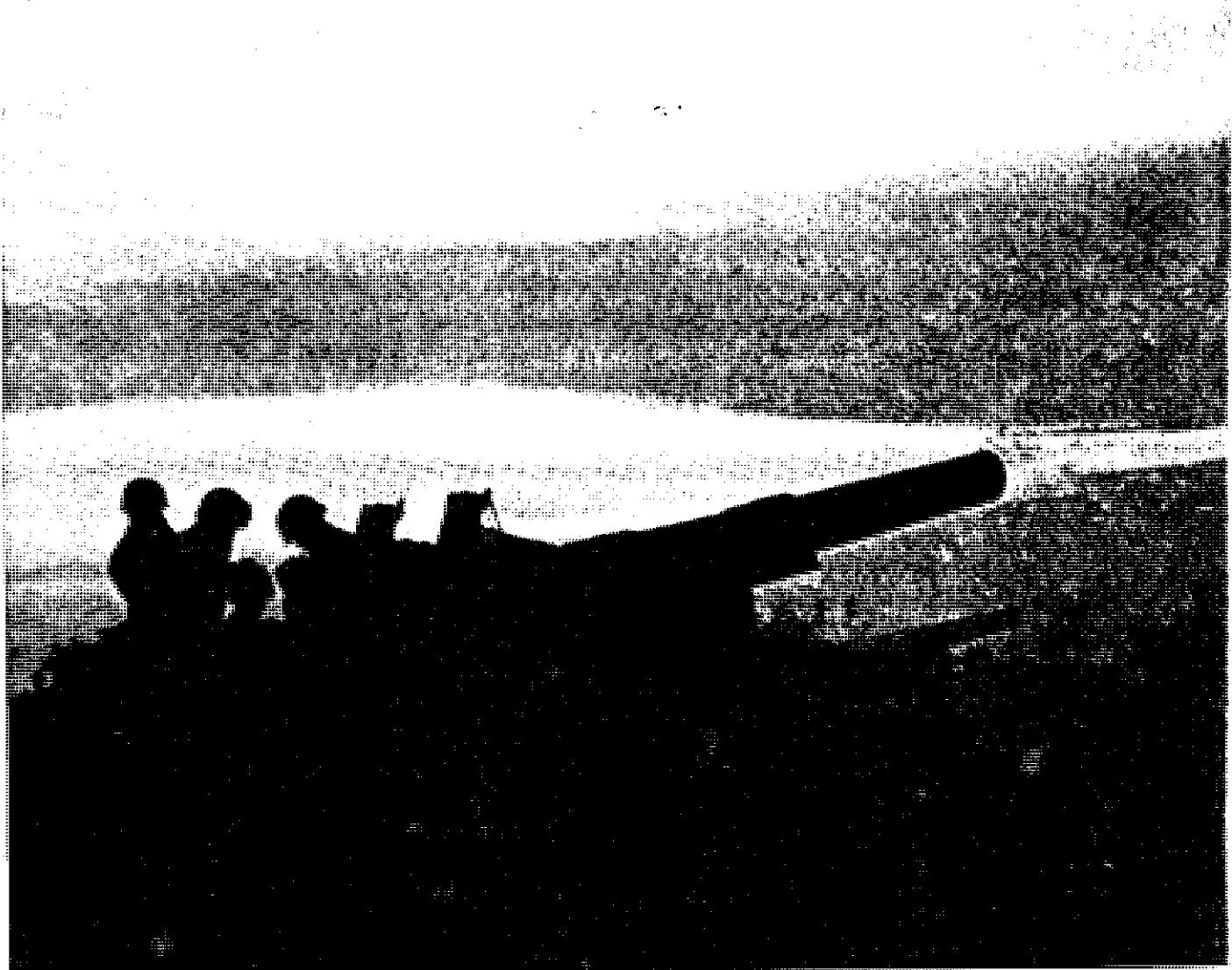
Throughout the night and for the next three days Tropic Lightning soldiers—with substantial support from division artillery, assigned and attached helicopter gunships, and Air Force tactical fighters—kept the pressure on Charlie. By the time they had pushed completely through the enemy position, 285 dead NVA soldiers had been found on the battlefield.

The task force moved on to new and scattered battlefields during the next 19 days, pursuing Viet Cong forces across the division's area of operations past Trang Bang and into the Boi Loi and Ho Bo Woods. It disbanded May 25th after having amassed a total of more than 600 enemy killed in 23 days.

Battalion-sized task force elements included 2d Battalion, 34th Armor; 4th Battalion (Mechanized), 23d Infantry; 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry, and 3d Battalion

22d Infantry. Companies from other battalions of the division were assigned to the task force for portions of the operation.

Meanwhile, the Viet Cong had mounted a long-awaited second offensive on Saigon, meeting much less success than had come their way during Tet. In what was probably their do-or-die final push on the capital city, a VC battalion locked horns with the 4th Battalion, 23d Infantry on May 27th. The infantrymen's night defensive position, a little over a mile west of the city limits, came under attack before midnight. Supported by division artillerymen and gunships and an Air Force "Spooky," they managed to keep the VC pinned down overnight.





In the morning, the 3d Squadron, 4th Cavalry joined the 23d Infantry in an advance which carried through the enemy positions. By late afternoon all resistance had ceased. Two-hundred-eighteen VC lay dead on the battlefield, their second offensive having died with them. American casualties were six dead.

Four days later, Toan Thang I came to a close. The men with the Lightning patch had met the enemy on his ground and had whipped him soundly.



Toan Thang II



Toan Thang II began June 1st and was in full swing when the Tropic Lightning Division closed out its 27th year. It included a large number of Vietnamese and US forces and all of the III Corps tactical zone.

The second and third days of the operation belonged to 3d Squadron, 4th Cavalry gunship crewmen operating along the Saigon River. They turned up an entrenched enemy force and a cache of 27 122mm rockets and 2 122mm rocket launchers. Aided by division artillerymen, the cavalrymen destroyed the rockets, launchers and 38 VC.

Three days later 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Manchus, supported by division cannoneers, turned a hot LZ five miles north of Saigon into a substantial victory, killing 36 NVA soldiers.

The Wolfhounds took over. An estimated NVA battalion bombarded a 2d Battalion, 27th Infantry night location seven miles northwest of Saigon and then launched a savage pre-dawn attack. For 2.5 hours the enemy pressed the attack in the face of withering counterfire which included exploding artillery scant meters before the Second Wolfhounds' emplacements. When they fled, 56 of their comrades were left dead on the battlefield. One of Wolfhounds told MG F. K. Mearns hours later that he couldn't understand how he and his buddies survived the fray. Responded the CG, "You're still here because you were better than they were."

The First Wolfhounds two days later turned up a cache of 32 122mm rocket warheads, 88 82mm mortar rounds, 88 RPG2 rounds and 7 RPG7 launchers. The following day they struggled with an unknown sized VC force in the same Hoc Mon Canal neighborhood where the cache had been found. Infantrymen, artillerymen and chopper and USAF pilots together accounted for 44 enemy dead.

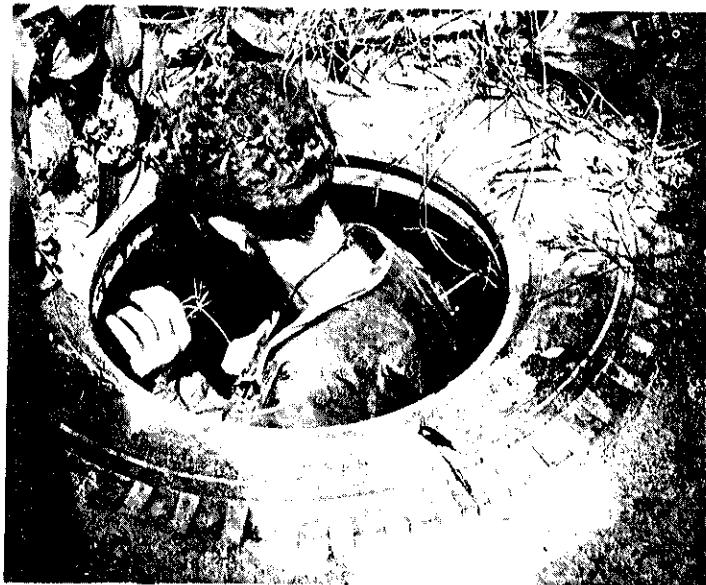
Headlines on June 21-23 concerned the 3d Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, under operational control of the 25th Division to replace the Tropic Lightning's own 3d Brigade, which had been temporarily attached to the Capital Military Assistance Command (CMAC) at Saigon. Fighting near the Cambodian border 9 miles southwest of Trang Bang, the Screaming Eagles and division artillery massed their fires to kill 61 enemy. The following day they uncovered 110 RPG2 rounds and 106 recoilless rifle rounds.

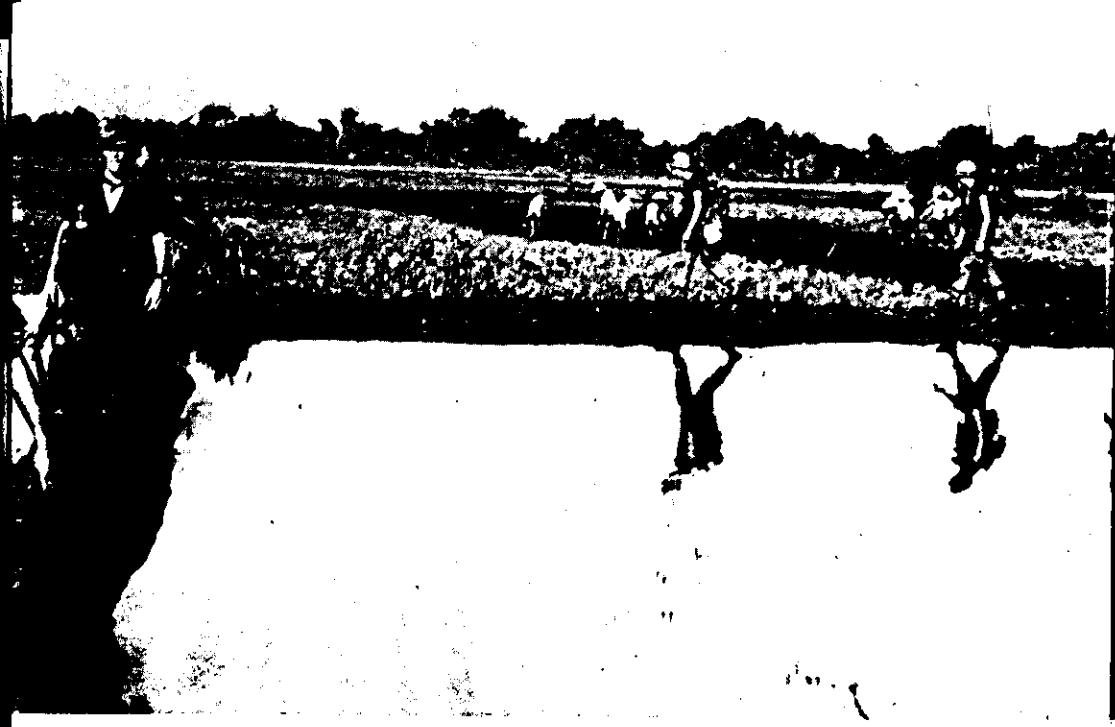
The last day of June and five miles north of Trang Bang, the Screaming Eagles fought off an NVA assault on their night defensive position, killing 38 attackers.

Then came a lull. Lightning soldiers searched diligently for the next month and a half, finding tons of munitions, food and clothing. Occasionally they found the enemy, but rather than fight, he ran.

As a consequence, the only major conflict during July occurred before dawn July 4th when an estimated two reinforced companies took on Dau Tieng Base Camp. They directed 550 mortars and rockets into the compound. During an accompanying ground attack, five members of the mixed NVA-VC force cut the wire entanglement on the western perimeter and were racing toward the bunker-line when they were felled by the defenders.

A second wave descended on the eastern perimeter, slinging more than 400





satchel charges on the base's airstrip. None exploded. When the enemy withdrew he left 10 dead.

The successful defense was a tribute to 3d Brigade support troops who manned the majority of the bunkers. Most of the brigade's tactical units were operating around Saigon at the time, leaving mostly cooks, clerks and truck drivers to keep the home fires burning.

In early August while the fighting lull engulfed South Vietnam, 25th Infantry Division intelligence officers began receiving information indicating a major offensive against Tay Ninh City. Division strategists and ARVN planners drew up de-

tailed defense plans for the provincial capital and surrounding military installations.

Then the game of hide and seek was over!

On August 17th, the 1st Brigade's Tay Ninh Base Camp shook to the sound of exploding mortar and rocket shells. The shelling was apparently aimed at diverting Tropic Lightning's attention from the major NVA-VC objectives.

Four miles north of Tay Ninh City, Tropic Lightning soldiers at Fire Support Base Buell II were under mortar and rocket fire also. As the intensity of the fire increased, NVA soldiers tried to over-

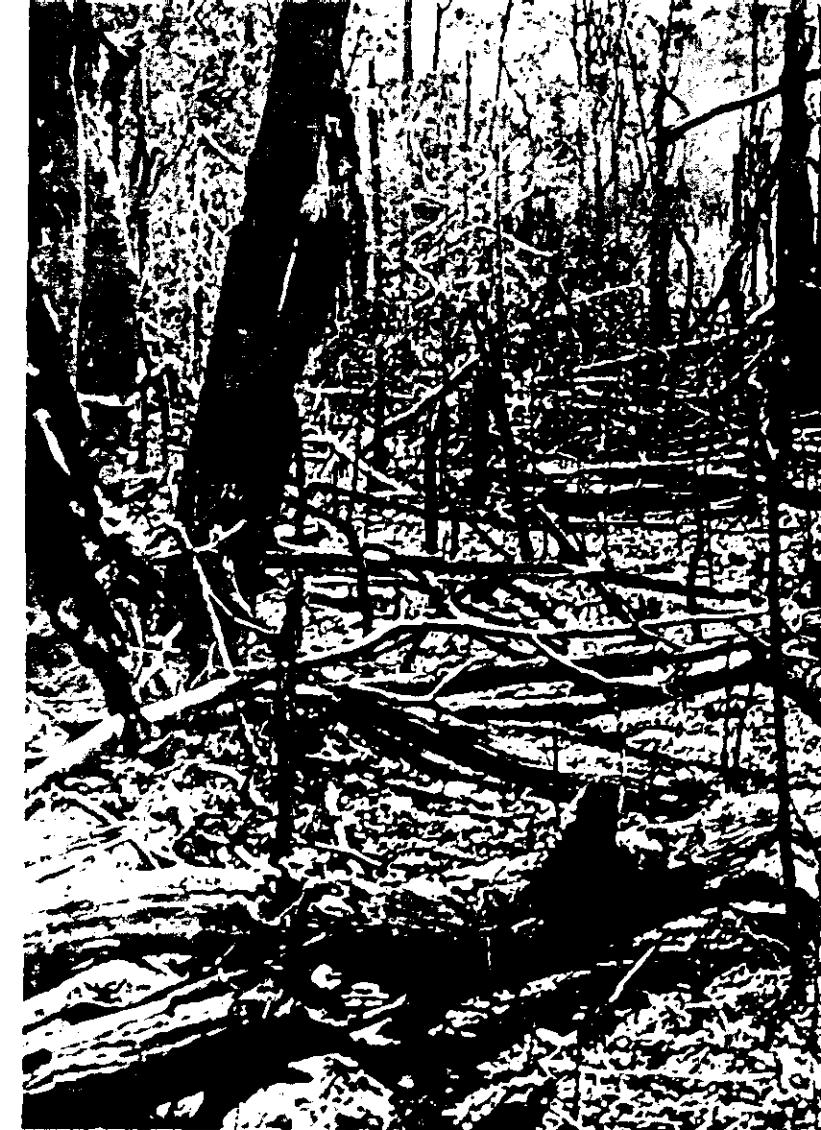


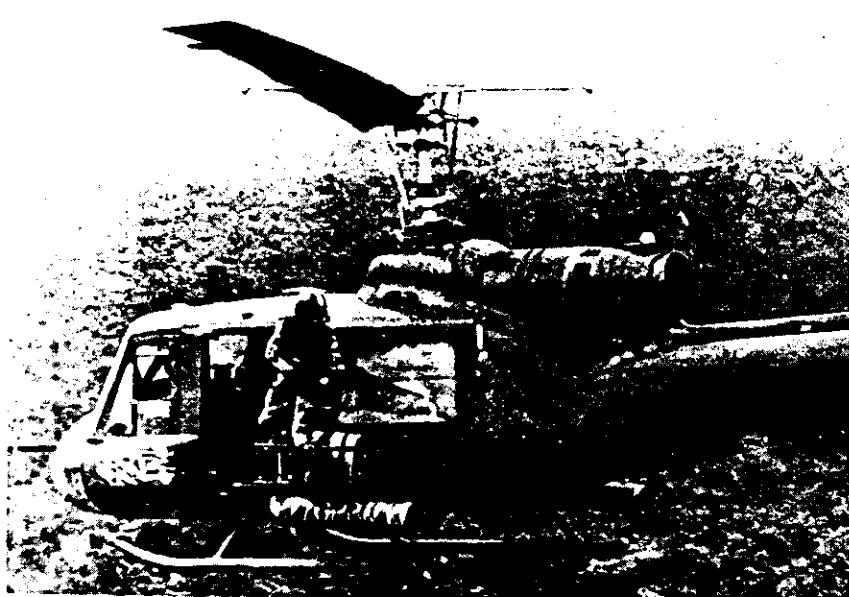
run the American camp.

At 2:34 a.m. more than 3,000 feet above the surrounding lowlands, Tropic Lightning residents of the Nui Ba Den signal facility were also attacked.

Both of these attacks failed. At Buell, 84 NVA attackers perished in three hours and atop Nui Ba Den, 15 enemy soldiers died.

The next morning, an unknown size enemy force was reported in Tay Ninh City, setting several fires in civilian areas.





Tropic Lightning units deployed in blocking positions around the city as Vietnamese forces moved through flushing out the enemy. In the southeastern portion of the city, elements of the 4th Battalion (Mechanized), 23d Infantry and the 3d Squadron, 4th Cavalry killed 12 enemy.

Meanwhile, 1st Battalion (Mechanized), 5th Infantry soldiers departed Dau Tieng Base Camp to clear the road to Tay Ninh. Entering the Ben Cui Rubber Plantation, 2.5 miles southwest of Dau Tieng, the Bobcats encountered an NVA force whose apparent mission was to block any attempt to reinforce Tay Ninh. For six hours the Bobcats clawed the hapless enemy force, killing 42.

The following morning at 9:30 a.m., after an uneventful night, 3d Squadron, 4th Cavalry troops moving east down Highway 26 came under fire from an enemy force entrenched in rice paddies along the road. Thirty-four enemy died in that six-hour clash.

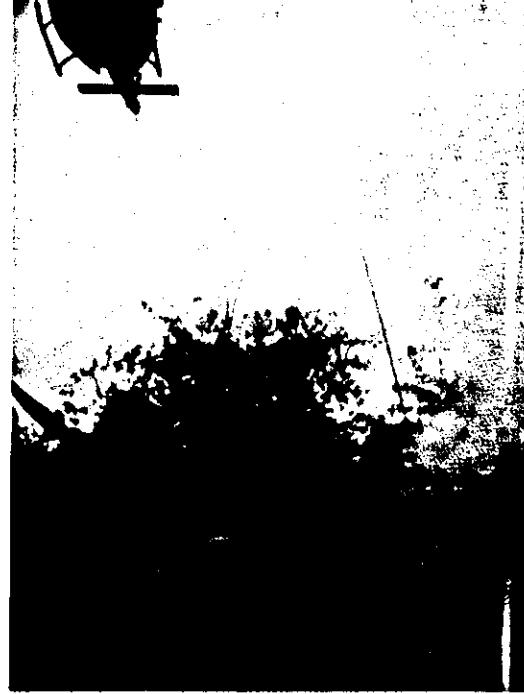
Before Three-Quarter Horsemen could polish off their foe, the Bobcats were again attacked while moving through Ben Cui. With artillery aid, infantrymen mauled the attackers, 67 of whom perished.



Tuesday, August 20th, a platoon-sized patrol stole the show. It started at 1:05 a.m., when the patrol opened up on six VC moving in front of their position six miles northwest of Tay Ninh. Immediately, the platoon was besieged with small arms, automatic weapons and RPG fire from three sides.

When his patrol leader was wounded, Sergeant Paul Lambers took charge. To mark their own position for air support, Lambers directed his men to burn anything they could, including personal clothing and boots. After four hours of intense fighting, the enemy force withdrew. Fifty-seven of their comrades were found dead





immediately after the fighting and 45 more were found during the next three days, bringing the total enemy dead to 102.

Wednesday's activity shifted back to Ben Cui and the 1st Battalion (Mechanized), 5th Infantry. At 12:54 p.m., the Bobcats were advancing through the rubber when an enemy battalion met them head on. For 90 minutes the enemy launched three human wave attacks on the Bobcats. Supported by artillery, gunships and air strikes, the Bobcats made short work of their foe, killing 182.

Two Tropic Lightning fire support bases were attacked shortly after 1 a.m. Thursday. Sixty attackers died at Buell II as they charged into point-blank artillery barrages, and 25 perished at Fire Support Base Rawlings, two miles east of Tay Ninh City.

Friday, Tropic Lightning got a break, but 20 minutes past midnight Saturday and five miles southwest of Dau Tieng, sixty-two NVA soldiers died charging Fire Support Base Schofield.

The week finally came to a close. More than 900 enemy soldiers had tangled with Lightning and died.

The new week opened with a mid-day attack on the Cu Chi to Tay Ninh convoy. Elements of 4th Battalion (Mechanized), 23d Infantry and 3d Squadron, 4th Cavalry snapped back, killing 103.





Scattered contacts involving Fire Support Base Rawlings, the 1st Battalion (Mechanized), 5th Infantry and the attached 3d Brigade, 101st Airborne Division accounted for more than 190 enemy dead in August's final five days.

The first battle of Tay Ninh was history. The victory belonged to Tropic Lightning.

A brief lull in the fighting ended before dawn on September 11th, when the Ben



Cui erupted to exploding mortar shells. The night defensive position of the 1st Battalion (Mechanized), 5th Infantry three miles south of Dau Tieng was the target of an estimated enemy battalion. The Bobcats called in artillery, counter-attacked and in three hours killed 99 enemy.

Two days later the enemy hit Buell II hard. A mortar barrage estimated at more than 50 incoming rounds a minute at peak intensity hit the camp at 1:50 a.m. Waves of attackers flung themselves at the position. More than 1,000 105mm howitzer shells were hurled into their faces from point-blank range by the 2d Battalion, 13th Artillery. Other defenders from the 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry and 2d Bat-

talion, 27th Infantry added firepower. The enemy fled three hours later leaving 76 dead behind.

Another Cu Chi to Tay Ninh convoy was hit on September 12th. The 4th Battalion (Mechanized), 23d Infantry Tomahawks reversed the would-be ambush and killed 60.

On September 17th, the pre-dawn attack routine was re-played against the guns at Fire Support Base Pope, 15 miles northwest of Cu Chi. Screaming Eagles from the 3d Brigade, 101st Airborne Division—still opcon to the 25th Division—conducted the defense. The final count was 131 enemy dead.

The last actions for Tropic Lightning soldiers during their 27th year occurred on September 20th. The day opened with a mortar and ground attack against the Bobcats' night defensive position on the edge of Ben Cui. The attack began at five minutes past midnight, lasted three hours and cost the attackers 37 dead.

Twenty-eight more enemy died the same day in a two-hour battle with 4th Battalion (Mechanized), 23d Infantry and 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry soldiers eight miles southeast of Tay Ninh City.



Charlie gets his 122 back.



The

1ST BATTALION, 8TH ARTILLERY

Nickname: Automatic Eighth
Motto: Daring and Tenacious
Organized July 1916 at Fort Bliss, Texas. Assigned to 25th Infantry Division 1 October 1941. Participated in 14 campaigns during World War I, World War II and Korean War. Has eight battle streamers from World War II and Korean War.

