

By JB/mg NARA, Date 9/92

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(Pathfinder's cont)

just outside the Boi Loi woods this courageous trio began preparations to make themselves at home until their move-out at 0530 hrs the following morning. They dug their 4 by 6 by 2 feet deep holes so they could spend the night well protected. The APC was then placed over the top of these holes for added protection.

At 1000 hrs (10:00 P.M. for our civilian readers) when our 3 brave pathfinders were having a BS session beside the APC, "Charlie" began to serenade them with a bugle. Two minutes later 2 mortar rounds went off just outside the company perimeter. No one saw our trio until the next morning. Sp4 J. Brook if he found his hole large enough beneath the APC. He stated "Believe me in a matter of 2 seconds we had our flack jackets, steel pots on and our weapons in hand and we still had room for 20 more".

Our third team which secured LZ 3 consisted of Lt. Hatcher, Sp4 Blessing and Sp4 Bodin. They also moved out the day prior to D-day to link-up with the 1/5 Mech. Inf. Their whole trip got off to a poor start when they ran into rain enroute to the Mech's base camp on the edge of the Boi Loi woods. The situation was compounded when the aircraft's FM radio went out and they couldn't contact the unit to ask for smoke. In a flash Lt. Hatcher had a PRC-25 set up and had contact with the ground element. They threw smoke but the rain had increased in intensity so much that no one could see the ground. After several frantic moments the tracks were sighted and our trio was safely on the ground. They spent a rather uneventful night with the Mech. unit and moved out at 0630hrs. the following morning to secure LZ 3.

Enroute to this LZ the track in front of Lt. Hatcher struck an anti-tank mine wounding 3 members of the 1/5 Mech. Immediate contact was made with Dust-off and the Pathfinders set up a hasty landing site for the Med-evac. After the wounded had been evacuated, the column moved on to complete its mission of securing and cleaning LZ 3.

Upon arrival at the LZ the unit found that the artillery boys were still dropping 155 and 8" shells in the area to soften up and resistance. The unit was to wait about 10-15 minutes for the arty to lift. The Mech unit then moved on line and began its sweep of the landing zone to insure a clear path for the incoming aircraft. Just as the tracks were about half way thru the area the track to the left of Sp4 Bodin and to the right of Lt Hatcher hit another anti-tank mine. This time it ruptured the fuel tanks and sent flames shooting into the sky. Sp4 Bodin assisted in the evacuation of the dead and wounded from the damaged track and helped them to safety to await the arrival of more Dust-off's. Shortly thereafter, the LZ was secured and the first load of troops was brought in. The Hornets were in the lead, followed by the Top Tigers from Bien Hoa and the third flight of 12 aircraft was the Blackhawks. This same process was repeated, until over 800 troops had been airlifted into LZ 3, to include the 34th ARVN Rangers from Duc Hoa.

Our trio returned to Cu Chi aboard Hornet 6 and were real happy to have completed another successful operation.