

The Battle Of Soui Cut Is Over

3RD BDE—It was just getting dark when the Viet Cong started mortaring Fire Support Base Burt. The Viet Cong had been doing the same thing at the same time for the past few nights, so it wasn't anything new to the men of the 3rd Bde who were defending the forward base camp at Soui Cut.

As the hours started to slip by, the defenders knew that this was more than their nightly mortar attack. They started receiving RPG rounds and small arms fire along with the mortar rounds. The ambush patrols were reporting heavy movement around their positions. As the contact became heavier the patrols were being pulled back into the perimeter. At 11:30 p.m. the perimeter was under very heavy ground attack. All patrols that had not returned to the perimeter at this time were reporting that their positions were in danger of being overrun by the enemy. One patrol led by SGT Mark Ridey of C Co, 2nd Bn (Mech), 22nd Inf, was calling in concentrated artillery fire on his position. His patrol which stayed in its position all night accounted for 16 of the Viet Cong killed.

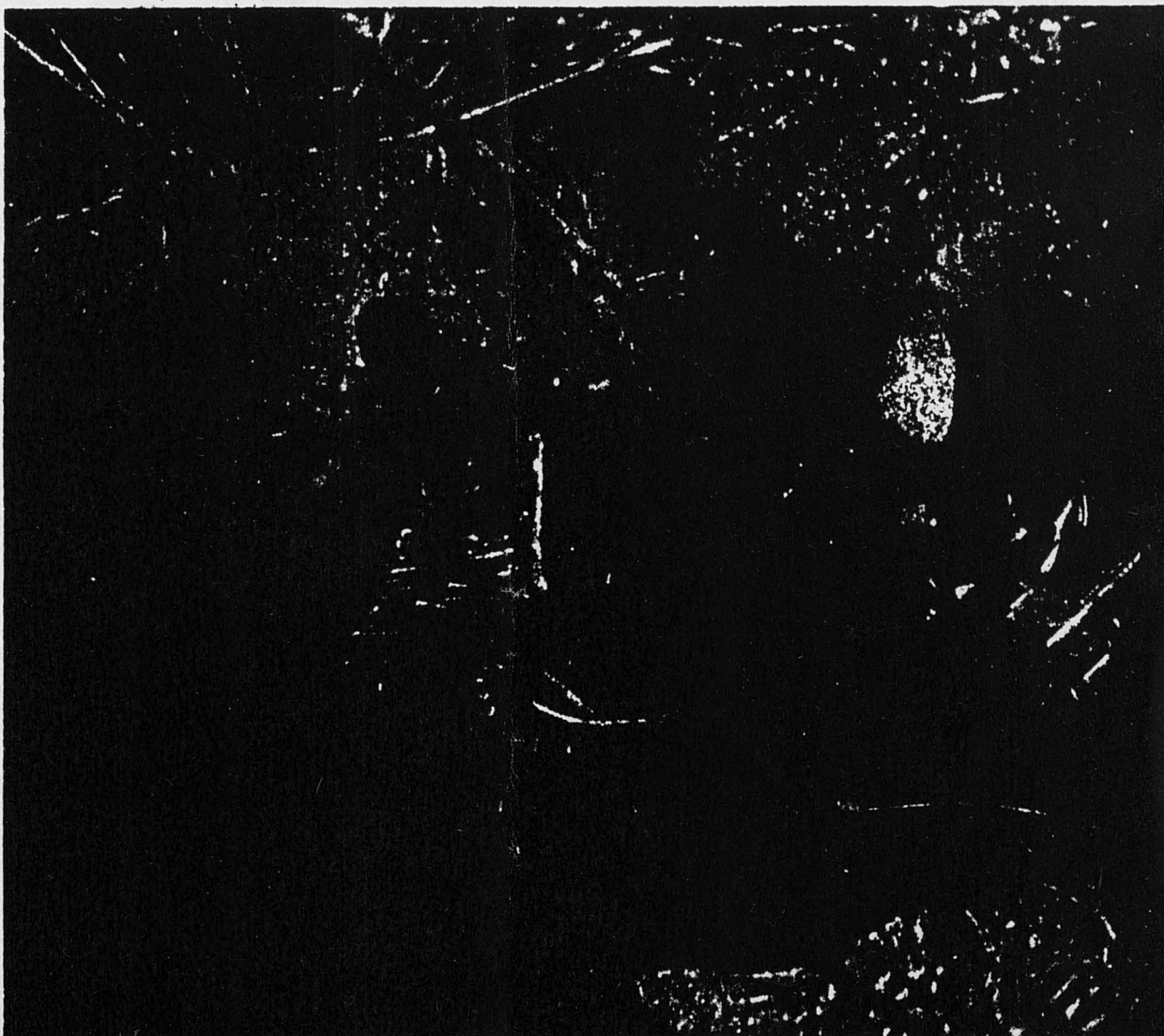
At 1:30 a.m. the main Viet Cong effort had shifted to the sector of C Co, 2nd Bn (Mech), 22nd Inf. The Viet Cong elements had succeeded in reaching the bunker line but their progress was thwarted when the guns of the light artillery started firing and the heavy artillery started firing direct fire into their positions. The attack at this point was broken and contact slackened.

Again after regrouping their forces the Viet Cong attacked the same sector. Their fires increased and all areas of the perimeter were engaged. As the Viet Cong directed their fire to one concentrated area all tactical air, along with artillery, direct and indirect fire, gun and flare ships were being employed to stop the attack.

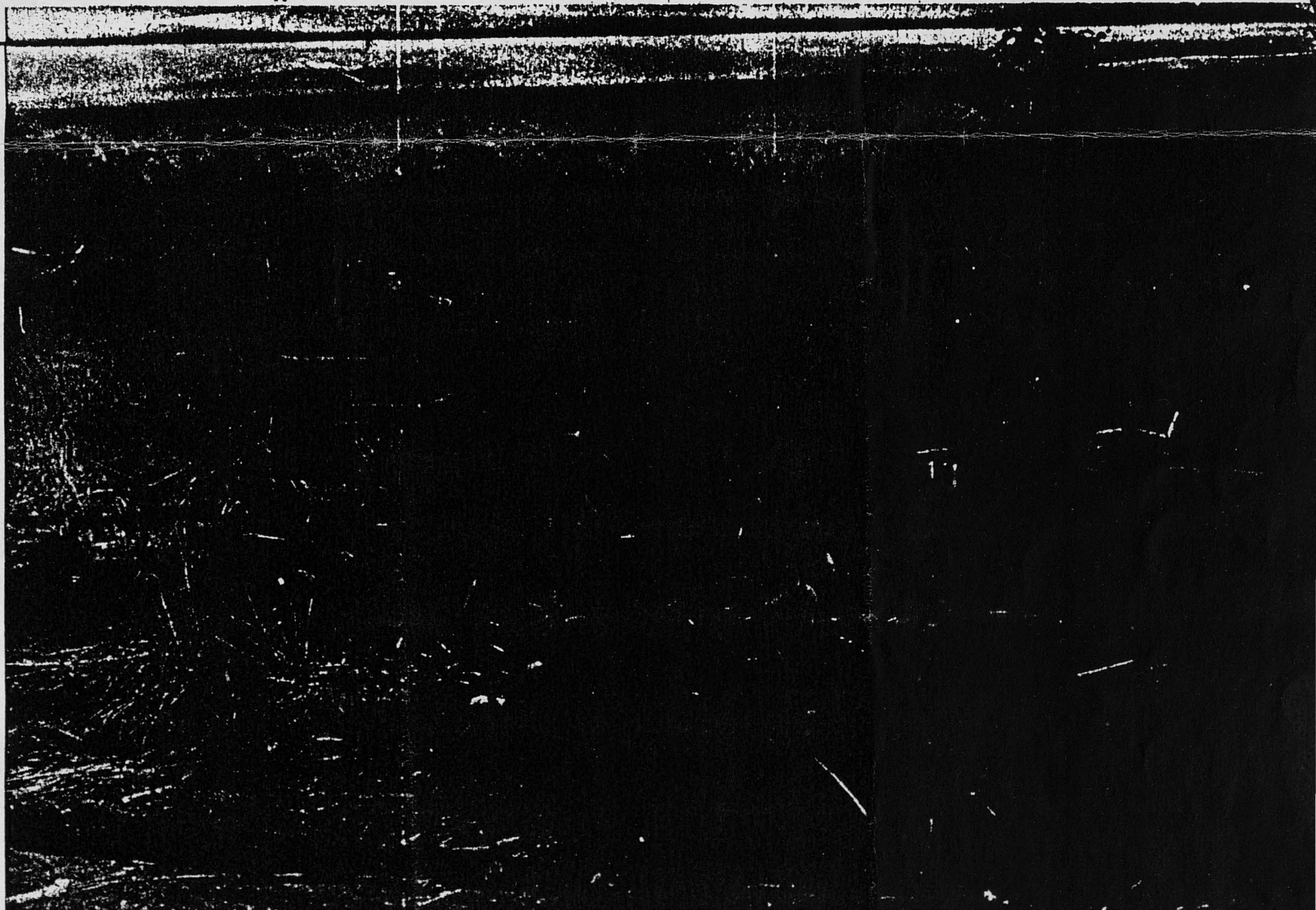
When it started getting daylight the Viet Cong started to withdraw leaving blocking forces to screen their movement. All available fire continued to interdict their withdrawal routes.

As the dawn of the new day broke it was obvious that the men of the 3rd Bde had put out a tremendous amount of fire power. The surrounding wood line had been all but completely leveled. After scanning the immediate area of the fire support base it was obvious that the Viet Cong body count was going to be high. By the end of the day the body count was at 300. With a further search of the adjoining jungle and wood line the count increased to over 400 dead. Of course many more will never be found to add to the official count.

Just as the 3rd Bde proved itself eight months ago at the Battle of Soui Tre, again they gallantly outfought the Viet Cong at the Battle of Soui Cut at Fire Support Base Burt.



A FEW OF THE MANY RPG ROUNDS AND LAUNCHERS FOUND BY THE 3RD BN, 22ND INF, AT



AFTER FIVE-HOURS CONTACT WITH THE VC, MEN OF THE 2ND BN (MECH), 22ND INF, HAVE A JOB OF CLEANING THEIR "QUAD FIFTY."

-For Some The Memory Lingers



THE BATTLE OF SOUI CUT.

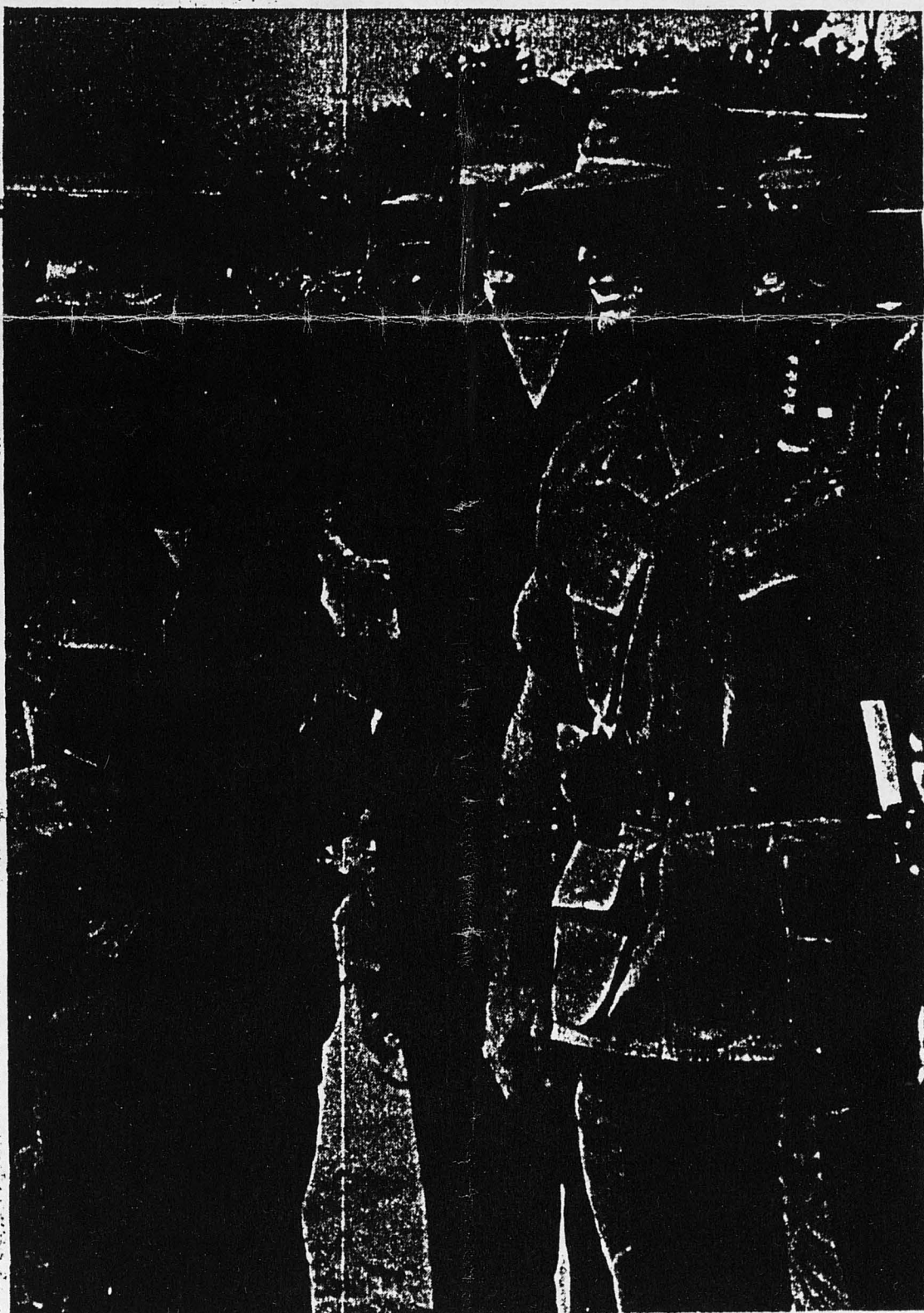


1LT JOHN KEPFERER LOOKS AT VC RPG LAUNCHER.

Photos by
SP4 William Fix



1LT JOE WISE EXAMINES SOME CAPTURED WEAPONS.



COL LEONARD DAEMS, 3RD BDE CO, BRIEFS GEN WILLIAM C. WESTMORELAND.

3RD BDE—Aggressively reacting to key points on the perimeter, the reconnaissance platoon of the 2nd Bn (Mech), 22nd Inf, played a key role in the defense of Fire Support Base Burt during the attack on the night of Jan. 1-2. Several times that night, elements of the recon platoon who were not already on the line, were called to critical portions of the perimeter to provide the additional firepower necessary to drive back the Viet Cong attackers.

Alerted to react at the start of the main attack, the recon platoon mounted their "tracks" and prepared for action. Shortly after midnight three tracks were dispatched to support Charlie Co, who was in heavy contact with the enemy on the southern portion of the perimeter. The recon elements moved swiftly down the road that bisected FSP Burt directly into the face of the enemy who had already reached the bunker line on the perimeter. Laying down a heavy base of fire with M-60 and .50 cal. machine guns and M-79 grenade launchers, they drove the enemy back into the woodline.

A second time the Viet Cong poured out of the woods against the combined recon-Charlie Co positions firing RPGs and small arms. Although two of the recon vehicles and one of Charlie Co's were put out of action, the men, led by 1LT Erhard Opsahl, set up their automatic weapons and M-79s on a berm behind the destroyed tracks and maintained intense fire on the enemy, pushing them back into the jungle where they were finally destroyed by artillery beehives and air strikes.

Shortly after the first three tracks were sent to Charlie Co, more recon tracks were dispatched to bolster Bravo Co, who was heavily engaged with the enemy on the opposite end of the base from Charlie Co. Recon track 74, commanded by SGT William Storey, assumed a position where it could deliver its firepower directly upon the Viet Cong who were advancing down the road toward the base from the north. The track poured forth a heavy volume of fire against the enemy, despite sustaining two direct RPG hits, until finally the entire crew of the vehicle fell wounded.

Had the recon platoon failed to react quickly enough, part of the southern perimeter might well have been overrun, greatly endangering the guns of the artillery directly behind the line. As it was, the aggressive response of the "Triple Deuces" recon platoon played a great part in the tremendous victory achieved by the 3rd Bde at Fire Support Base Burt in the Battle of Soui Cut.