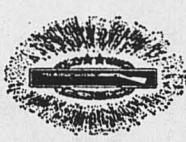


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Foot
Soldier,
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TROPIC LIGHTNING NEWS



Ready To Strike.... Anywhere. Anytime.

Vol. 3, No. 4

25TH INFANTRY DIVISION, VIETNAM

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Resurface
Route 19,
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January 22, 1968

3RD BRIGADE KILLS 382 VC IN BATTLE NEAR SOUI CUT

Four battalions of Main Force Viet Cong attempted to overrun a 25th Inf Div fire support base on Jan. 1 and 2, and lost 382 men in the abortive attack. The battle took place at Soui Cut, some 90 kms from Saigon. The enemy launched their attack on the afternoon of Jan. 1, hours before the termination of their announced New Year's truce period. The Div's fire support base had been set up only three days earlier.

"Wolfhounds" Kill 191 VC In Two Separate Actions

Five-hour Battle

2ND BDE — A battalion of North Vietnamese regulars, under cover of a heavy mortar and RPG rocket barrage, attempted to overrun the night location base of the 1st Bn, 27th Inf "Wolfhounds," shortly after

The attack, which took place 9 kms northwest of Cu Chi, left 103 communist soldiers dead. U.S. losses were five killed and 28 wounded.

During the five-hour battle, the Wolfhounds and a battery of howitzers from the 1st Bn, 8th Arty, were supported by helicopter light fire teams, additional artillery from Cu Chi and an Air Force "Spooky" flare ship.

The defenders poured thousands of small arms, automatic weapons rounds, grenades and direct howitzer fire into the enemy. Several bodies were found within the perimeter.

The list of captured weapons included 5 RPG rocket launchers with 36 rounds, 160 hand grenades, 5,000 rounds of small arms ammunition, 14 other individual and 2 crew served weapons, and 50 complete sets of web gear.

From captured documents, 2nd Bde officials learned that the enemy force was from the K-18 NVA Battalion, who report-

edly entered South Vietnam early last May. It is the same unit that clashed with the Wolfhounds in the HoBo Woods early in December.

Two-day Operation

2ND BDE — In two days of hard fighting Operation Saratoga infantrymen killed 88 Viet Cong and captured five individual weapons and a number of small arms ammunition and hand grenades.

Both battalions of the 2nd Bde's 27th Inf "Wolfhounds," struck enemy positions in a multi-prong attack near the western banks of the Saigon River in Binh Duong Province, 27 kms north-northwest of Saigon.

According to captured documents, the slain enemy were part of the hard core 2nd Go Mon and the 1st MR-4 Battalions.

Terrorist activities in and around the Saigon Area have been attributed to those two units said a military intelligence official.

Heavy fighting broke out several times during the two-day operation in which the Wolfhounds were supported by a battery of howitzers from the 1st Bn, 8th Arty, and gunships from the 116th Aslt Hel Co. Numerous Air Force tactical airstrikes were flown in support of the ground troops.

At one point infantrymen uncovered a company-size base camp which contained what one officer called "the best built bunkers ever seen in this area."

The now dry lowlands were dotted with thick hedgerows which completely concealed dozens of heavily reinforced enemy bunkers, tied together by tunnels and trench lines.

This "Break" Becomes Extremely Lucky Break

2ND BDE — A company of U.S. infantrymen searching for Viet Cong in the HoBo Woods, 54 kms north-northwest of Saigon, took what they termed as the luckiest break they ever got.

A company of the 2nd Bn, 27th Inf "Wolfhounds," had been on the move for an hour, when CPT Peter M. Elson of Mount Vernon, Ohio, called for a break.

As the words "BREAK" were passed back through the ranks, automatic weapons fire suddenly tore through the heavy undergrowth. Two men were wounded by the enemy bullets which came from what was later found to be an enemy company-sized base camp with heavily reinforced and well hidden bunkers.

Elson reporting on the action, said that the Viet Cong apparently misunderstood the word "BREAK" and opened fire prematurely. He also stated that the Wolfhound casualties would have been a lot heavier had they been closer to the bunkers.

Two companies of Wolfhounds were brought in to reinforce

Elson's unit while artillery and Air Force tactical airstrikes hit the enemy's base camp.

After the Viet Cong withdrew, a check of the area disclosed 42 Viet Cong bodies. The Wolfhounds had four men killed and 16 wounded.

The attack began with mortar and rocket grenade attacks in the afternoon and evening. Then shortly before midnight, still well before

Documents, Base Camps Discovered

1ST BDE — Soldiers of the 4th Bn, 8th Inf "Manchus," slashing through a Viet Cong stronghold 40 kms northwest of Tay Ninh in conjunction with Operation Yellowstone, have killed 70 enemy troops and destroyed five of their base camps.

The camps, all battalion size, were heavily secured by numerous networks of wires leading to CHICOM command detonated mines.

On searching the camps the Manchus discovered secret documents, 25 pounds of hand painted propaganda posters, and 52 tons of rice—an amount estimated to spell the difference between prosperity or starvation for an enemy regimental force for three months.

COL John Henchmann, Manchu battalion commander, said, "This area is literally swarming with Viet Cong, and we're smack in the middle. The fact that our casualties are practically nil is a tribute to the ability of these fine young soldiers."

Thus far in Operation Yellowstone, the enemy has continuously harassed Manchu positions with day and night mortar attacks.

See Map Page 8

tubes of the 105mm howitzers were lowered and fired directly into the Viet Cong attackers.

(It was only last March that men of the 3rd Bde (then the 3rd Bde, 4th Inf Div) had killed 647 communists of these same Viet Cong Regiments in the battle of Soui Tre. That battle is still the biggest one-day victory of the war.)

Additional fire support for the battle at Soui Cut was provided by Army helicopter gunships and Air

(Continued on Back Page)

Div Commander Presents Awards To "Manchus"

1ST BDE — The 25th Inf Div Commander, MG F. K. Mearns, recently visited the 1st Bde's forward support headquarters at Katum, to present awards for heroism in actions against hostile forces to personnel of the 4th Bn, 9th Inf "Manchus."

The medal winners were 1LT Ronald Beedy, who received the Bronze Star with "V" device for action in August at the Battle of Phu Hoa Dong, and SSG Edward Henderson, who was awarded the Silver Star for heroism against Viet Cong forces in September in the HoBo Woods, during Operation Barking Sands.

Enemy Mortar Crew Slain

CU CHI — Courage and a pair of sharp eyes are credited with breaking up a possible attack on the Cu Chi base camp of the 25th Inf Div.

When smoke cleared from the ensuing action, the 3rd Sqdn, 4th Cav's D Trp counted five enemy dead and captured a mortar.

Discarded bloody clothing and web gear led squadron officers to believe enemy losses were higher.

The initial sighting of the enemy position was made by WO Jeffrey Halliday, an aircraft commander, while he and a sec-

ond helicopter were flying a late afternoon perimeter patrol.

Halliday, reporting on the encounter, said he was informed by squadron operations that a team was not available to apprehend and question the men who up to that time were only suspects.

Rather than wait, Halliday's crew volunteered to do the checking while the second aircraft orbited overhead.

As Halliday hovered over the area, SP5 Thomas Lange, the crew chief, grabbed his M-16 and jumped to the ground.

According to Halliday, as the crew chief moved toward one of the hidden suspects, the man jumped up and threw a grenade which exploded.

The aircraft commander swung the chopper around and sprayed the area with mini-gun fire, then dropped down and picked up Lange who was also firing.

The second gunship remained overhead, firing rockets and machine guns into the enemy's position. A short time later an Aero Rifle Plt arrived and swept through the area, finding the five bodies and bloody clothing.

Enemy Kept On The Move During 1967

by SFC Roy Doupe

CU CHI — The 25th (Tropic Lightning) Inf Div ranged far and wide over the four provinces west and northwest of Saigon to the Cambodian border in its continuous search to find and destroy the elusive Viet Cong during 1967.

From its home base in Hau Nghia Province the division staged operations, ranging from company-size search and destroy missions to multi-division operations throughout the adjoining provinces of Long An, Tay Ninh and Binh Duong. And, as the year drew to a close,

combat-hardened elements of the 2nd and 3rd Bdes were deployed north in Phuoc Long Province to counteract a flare-up of communist activity in that area.

During operations such as Fairfax, Gadsden, Cedar Falls, Junction City and Manhattan the Tropic Lightning troopers penetrated the Pineapple Patch, the Fil Hol Plantation, the Iron Triangle, the Ho Bo and Boi Loi Woods, the Michelin Plantation and War Zone C where VC influence had reigned supreme for 25 years. They met and defeated the enemy in his own back yard, destroying fortification systems

and base camps that had taken him years to construct and, through continuous and relentless pursuit, denied him the time needed to build new areas where he could rest and recuperate.

The Pineapple Patch, once a prosperous plantation that was reduced to a swamp by the VC and heavily fortified, is now merely a swamp filled with destroyed bunkers.

The Fil Hol Plantation and the Ho Bo and Boi Loi Woods, sanctuaries where the VC formerly mounted their raids on Saigon and retreats where he could lick

his wounds and rest and recuperate for further terrorist activities, are now just names on a map as engineer land clearing teams have laid low the rubber trees and dense undergrowth on approximately 17,000 acres.

In addition to the major operations, each brigade conducted a monsoon offensive, that started in May and ended in November. The 1st Bde's Operation Barking Sands covered the north half of Hau Nghia Province. The 2nd Bde conducted Operation Kolekole in the rest of Hau Nghia and Long An Provinces while the 3rd Bde, during Operation Diamond Head, held its combat assault and Revolutionary Development missions in Tay Ninh Province and northwestern Binh Duong Province.

Since the beginning of the year the 25th Inf Div has destroyed more than 20 VC base camps while killing more than 4,086 Viet Cong. Other figures show that 25,000 fortifications and 1,900 tunnels were found and blown up with an additional 10,700 meters of tunnels destroyed.

Among the myriad items of material that were captured and either destroyed or evacuated were: 3,113 tons of rice, 7,900 mines and booby traps, 2,147 individual weapons and 668,408 rounds of small arms ammunition.

An integral part of the combat operations were the pacification and Revolutionary Development programs aimed at winning the confidence of the people of the provinces. Medical Civic Action Programs (MEDCAPS) were conducted throughout the division's area of operations and 148,000 persons were treated for illnesses ranging from the more serious sicknesses to minor cuts and scratches.

Surveys of villages were made to determine their needs, schools were rebuilt or repaired, dispensaries were opened, wells were dug or cleaned out to insure an adequate water supply. Whenever possible the local villagers supplied the labor but when the project was beyond their capabilities Tropic Lightning troopers stepped in to get the job done. The whole program was designed to demonstrate to the Vietnamese people that the division is here to help them rebuild their country instead of destroy it as VC propaganda had led them to believe.

Two of the most notable accomplishments during the year occurred during Operation Diamond Head, at Dau Tieng in Tay Ninh Province, and Barking Sands, at Phu Hoa Dong in Binh Duong Province.

The VC used three villages

near the Div's 3rd Bde base camp at Dau Tieng as stopping points for supply trains headed for War Zone C. To eliminate these rest stops the 334 residents of the villages were relocated to the resettlement area at Lai Thieu just outside Saigon. Nothing was left behind as they took along oxen, water buffalo, chickens, dogs and all their household goods.

Phu Hoa Dong, a village of 10,000 was estimated to be 80 per cent VC or VC sympathizers and was a vital link in the supply route into Saigon. Following a seal and search of the town every resident was registered and ambitious civic actions program initiated. The town was quite spread out and the inhabitants that lived in the heavily forested north and west sections were relocated to the more open southeast section. The vacated sector was then leveled in a land clearing operation that included part of the Fil Hol Plantation.

As 1968 begins the 25th Inf Div stands ready to strike anywhere, anytime to demonstrate that the VC's terrorist tactics cannot succeed and to show the Vietnamese people that their lives need not be made up of days waiting for the VC tax collectors to come around, or sleepless nights waiting for the next raid.

382 Killed . . .

(Continued from Page 1)
Force tactical aircraft hitting enemy positions from which they launched their assaults, and later enemy escape routes.

When the Viet Cong attempted to flee to the south and west at daybreak on Jan. 2, these aircraft spray-

See Photo This Page

ed the jungle with thousands of rounds of machine gun fire and air-delivered rockets.

The infantrymen found most of the enemy dead around the base camp perimeter.

U.S. casualties were listed as 23 killed and 153 wounded.

In addition to the 382 Viet Cong killed, the enemy lost 87 individual (rifles, carbines and sub-machine guns) and 29 crew-served (machine guns, mortars and recoilless rifles) weapons.

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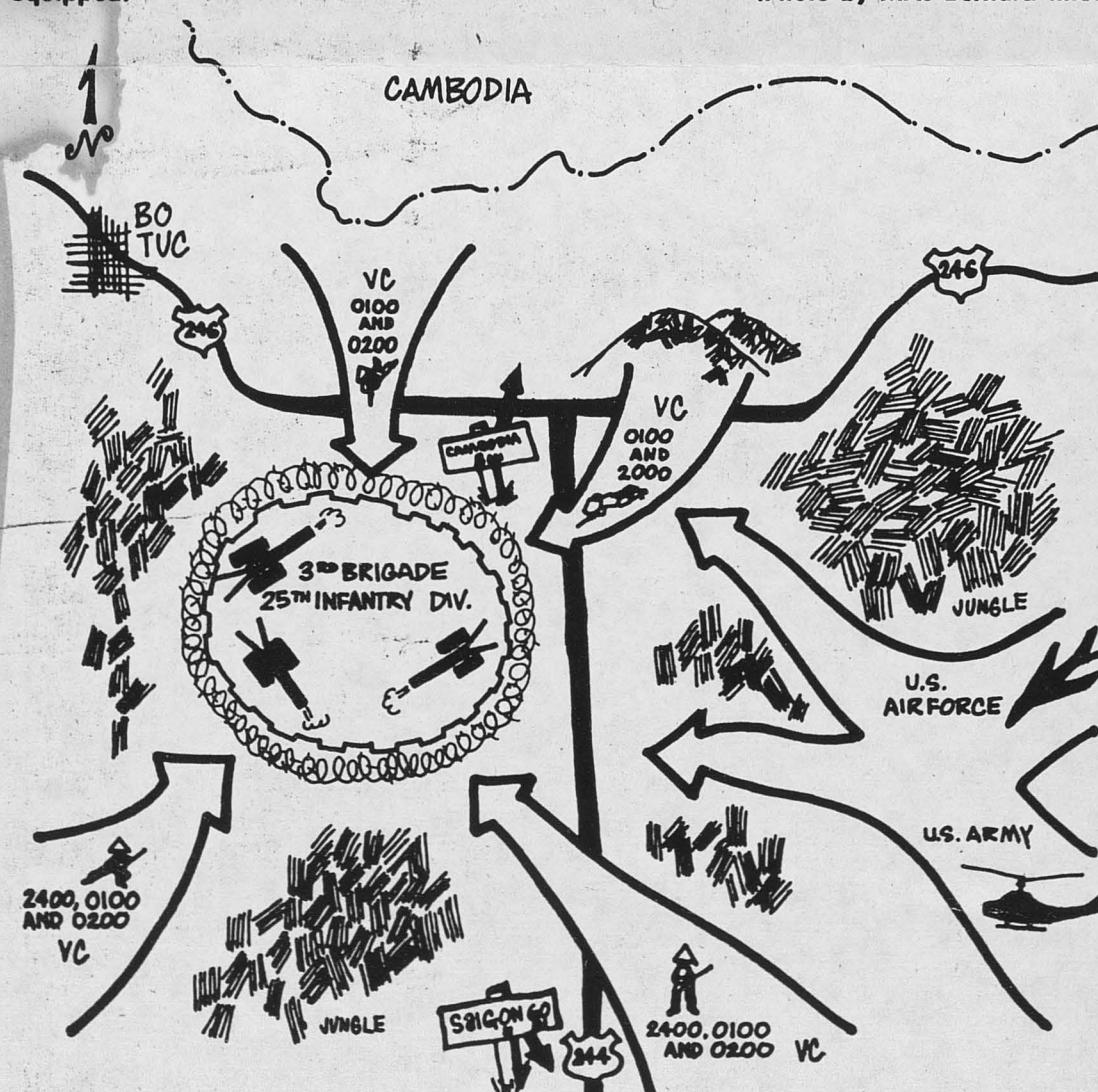
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Just a few of the weapons that were captured after the battle of Soui Cut by the 3rd Bn, 22nd Inf "Regulars." The condition of the weapons shows that the Viet Cong were well equipped. (Photo by MAJ Bernard Rhee)



This is a map of the 10-hour battle of Soui Cut. At least 382 Viet Cong of the 271st and 272nd Main Force VC Regiments were killed in their abortive attempt to overrun the fire support base. (See story Page 1)