

Jeb Stuart

Just prior to the TET Offensive, the units of the 2nd Brigade deployed north to I Corps to join the 1st Air Cavalry Division in Operation Jeb Stuart. Initially landing and setting up at the Phu Bai airfield, the 2nd Brigade troopers started search operations immediately and soon moved north to LZ Sally. At the outbreak of the TET Offensive, 2nd Brigade troopers under the operational control of the 1st Cav, shared the fighting in the battle of Quang Tri and Hue, killing 94 enemy who had tried to penetrate Screaming Eagle defenses.

During the following weeks the score of enemy killed and captured mounted as 2nd Brigade troopers cleaned out resistance in numerous villages between Hue and Quang Tri. The 1st Bn., 502nd Abn. Inf. launched a road clearing operation along Highway 1 south of Quang Tri. Villagers pinpointed an NVA battalion in an ambush site for the troopers.

Calling in artillery and gunships, the "First Strike" paratroopers blocked escape routes. As the NVA fled the bombardment, the infantrymen ripped into the enemy with withering fire. When the battle ended, 72 enemy bodies lay in front of the paratroopers' positions.

With the offensive blunted near Saigon, the 1st Brigade was airlifted to I Corps. In two weeks, the troopers had cleared the route following Highway 547 to the A Shau Valley. A firebase, Birmingham, was established 16 km from the NVA stronghold, to support the driving paratroopers, who continued to push westward through the mountains. Enemy supply routes were cut, troop movements were interrupted, and arms caches were uncovered by the onrushing troopers.

Operation Jeb Stuart ended with the TET lunar offensive nullified. In 40 days of bitter fighting over 1000 of the infiltrating NVA and VC were killed. Battles along Highway 1 and the "Street without Joy" became mourning grounds for the 812th NVA Regiment and the 324th NVA Division.

LRRP_s

The greenclad figures flit from the trembling Huey, then quickly dissolve into the foliage. For five days the men and the jungle are one, and there is opposition to the enemy in the triple-canopied tangles that protect the communist mountain sanctuaries.

Probably no screaming Eagles are more hated by the NVA and VC than the LRRP infantrymen. The silent searchers spring quick, lethal ambushes on small enemy forces, and when confronted by larger enemy groups, simply sit quiet, or call in artillery and air strikes, or the giant guns of the New Jersey. They pinpoint communist base camps, supply depots, infiltration routes, and troop movements. And most galling to the NVA and VC, they have become masters of the quiet, shadow war pioneered by the enemy.

The small LRRP teams are elite units, with much more freedom and responsibility than the infantrymen of company size units. But because they are essentially recon, they are almost always outnumbered, and they know that if they are detected and surrounded, their lives are no more than candles in a gale.

Yet the LRRP team is not alone. The PRC25 strapped on the radioman's back contains howitzer batteries, Phantom jets, cobra gunships and quick reaction troops waiting in reserve.

And because they are few and well-trained, they have another ally—a friend that is usually considered by others to be the most hostile of enemies—the jungle.

Brothers In Battle

Throughout history, the United States fighting man has served side by side with soldiers of many countries.

The conflict in the Republic of Vietnam finds yet another ally at our side. . . The Vietnamese soldier.

Since the start of the war, our men have conducted all major operations with the Vietnamese. Today, nearly all major operations are joint operations. So successful have these combined forces been that major American field commanders have praised their Vietnamese counterparts as combat equals.

The 1st Division of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam has compiled an especially impressive record, combining with this Division to kill more than 18,000 enemy since February, 1968. The pacification programs of the two Divisions have resulted in more than 30 secure hamlets.

They have pacified Thua Thien province to the extent the Hue-Phu Bai railroad line has become operative after months of labor, providing a large boost to the economy of the area.

Maj. Gen. Ngo Quang Truong, commander of the 1st ARVN Division has worked hand-in-hand with Maj. Gen. O. M. Barsanti and Maj. Gen. Melvin Zais in pursuit of the enemy and pacification of Thua Thien province. With this cooperation among the two Divisions and its leaders, Thua Thien province is now a better place for the Vietnamese families to grow and prosper.