

DASPO Covers 9th Inf Div in Plain of Reeds

In the spring of 1967, the 9th Infantry Division began a combat operation in the Delta Region of Vietnam. To cover the operation, DASPO drove the two man team to the units headquarters at Bear Cat some 20 miles Northeast of Saigon. There the division's PIO (Public Affairs Officer) briefed the pair on the goals and objectives of the combat operation. We then boarded a helicopter heading to the brigade HQS near Can Tho, where we would be assigned a unit to travel with.

Somehow things got twisted around in Can Tho and we were assigned to go with a unit of armored personnel carriers about to conduct a reconnaissance patrol into the Plain of Reeds, scheduled to last only several hours.

The first several hours out of base camp the APCs rode over flooded rice paddies, paddy dikes and passed grazing water buffalo OK. Then the unit entered a vast area of open grass lands with no civilization, only grass and swamp. Then one track got stuck. Two others also got stuck attempting to free the first one stuck. All afternoon a see-saw battle to free and getting re-struck in the muck took place.

By night fall, I believe only three out of the dozen APCs that started out on the reconnaissance patrol were still mobile. The unit flew out to the stranded unit C-rations, water cans and extra ammo, in case we were attacked at night, since we were out of range of 105 howlitzers

Sleep was only a word, not reality. Lay on the swampy ground and get wet plus the bugs. Laying on one inch thick steel plates with many large nuts, bolts and rivets sticking up made a very hard lumpy bed.

The next morning the base camp flew in lumber, sand bags and other supplies to the stranded group. One by one all nine stuck APCs were freed and by noon the unit headed back to base camp., with mostly bruised egos.

Being a photographer, having never been in this region of the country before, and not being armored qualified, I still thought the idea of taking 13 ton track vehicles into a swamp was dumb.

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