

MAC-V Cover 25th Firing Enemy Rockets At VC

In an unusual twist of events in May 1968, the 25th Infantry Division located at Cu Chi, turned tables on the Viet Cong. The U.S. Military uses the term; "FRIENDLY FIRE CAUSALITIES." when friendly forces accidentally fire on other allied troops by mistake. The 25th Tropic Lightning Div took friendly fire one step further..

After years of amassing quantities of captured enemy 122mm rockets, fuses and rocket launchers from various combat operation the Tropic Lightning troops, turned the communist made rockets on suspected enemy positions in the Iron Triangle.

MAC-V Army Team "A" was assigned the mission., upon arriving, I nearly pulled out, without covering the event, because the press was there; several T.V. news crews, AP and UPI wire service and several free lance journalist. Being the NCOIC of MAC-V Army Team "A", I was no better than a plow horse in a thoroughbred race, with no way to compete with the established press, and win. For various reason, I stuck it out and filmed the short duration event.

Each television network had different arrangements for handling their film. Generally they wanted war zone footage on stateside TV in about 36 hours or less. At first it was air expressed to the West Coast for processing and editing, then it was sent by satellite to the East Coast. The time was shortened by having Hawaii, then Japan or Hong Kong perform the processing and editing tasks

The print media would go to their office in Saigon or the PTT (Postal, Telephone & Telegraph) building and have their stories distributed worldwide in an hour. A military photo team, we had to type captions and take the film and paperwork to MAC-C where it would be shipped out 1st class mail to Washington. A week might pass until the film was processed. No way could I compete.

The division artillery personnel showed the press the 5 inch diameter, nearly six foot long rocket. They demonstrated where and how the fuse was attached to the rockets nose. Provided technical data, such as range of the rocket, communist country of origin, explosive charge etc. Then they fired about a half dozen of the rockets toward suspected VC locations providing them with friendly fire.

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Another element of the story was rapport with all units in Vietnam. The Army Team "A"s utility in filming the event was limited to nil, maintaining good open two way communication with support units, behooved us to photograph the missile firing.

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