

August 24, 1968

HILL 54, LZ BRONCO HIT *also called Duc Pho*

Early Friday morning, the VC-NVA launched an offensive against a number of base camps and fire bases in the area. Those hit containing 4/3 personnel were Hill 54 and LZ Bronco. Neither of them were hit too badly, nor took serious casualties.

D COMPANY HITS HOT LZ

On Friday, August 16, Delta Company had a combat assault from Chu Lai to a position several miles to the northwest. The First Platoon, which was on the first lift, hit a hot LZ.

Just as it was landing the fifth chopper in the formation came under heavy automatic weapons fire. The pilot gave it full throttle and got out of the area in a hurry. SGT Robert Van Tholen, who was already on the ground, had to hustle to catch the chopper as it was taking off. As a result SGT Van Tholen had an extremely wild ride (see SPT LIGHT QN). The disabled chopper flew 600 meters to the area where the rest of the Platoon was. Once back on the ground the men hurried to the helicopter which had landed behind them.

The chopper was in bad shape when it landed. The windshield was shot out and the engine was on fire. It was later towed away by another chopper.

Three men of Delta Company: PFC Pat Kelly, PFC Sam Pierce, and SGT Van Tholen received minor fragment wounds. The pilot also received minor wounds.

Hill 54, which was manned mainly by Delta Company, was hit at about 2:20 AM with about 12 incoming mortars and some small arms fire. The heaviest hit bunker was the bunker guarding the main gate. Four men of Delta Company; SGT Bill Gress, SP4 John Furegeson, PFC Doc Jones, and PFC Willie Epps, were caught on top of the bunker for about five minutes while the rounds hit to the right and front of them. All of the received minor fragment wounds. SP4 Dan Rodriguez, SP4 Mathew Smith, and PFC Wayne Westives were also slightly wounded. No other damage or casualties were reported from Hill 54.

About 3 AM, LZ Bronco also received a number of incoming mortar rounds. None dropped near the Battalion area for they all hit over by the airstrip. Not much damage was done to the base camp; however, the Village of Duc Pho had a number of buildings destroyed by enemy fire.

As was reported earlier, the attacks on Hill 54 and LZ Bronco were part of an offensive against most fire bases, and base camps in the area. LZ Dottio, the principle LZ in the old Battalion AO, and LZ Bowman, the LZ Delta Company came off just two days earlier, were hit quite hard.

WHAT A WAY TO TRAVEL

On Wednesday, August 21, Third Platoon, Delta Company took a non planned ~~trip~~ to Chu Lai, almost making an unscheduled stop in the South China Sea.

The Platoon eventually arrived at its original destination, Hill 54, but not before it had gone through a rather hectic experience.

The Platoon Leader 1LT Walter McDonnell (cont'd pg 2)

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SPOT LIGHT

ON

SGT BOB VAN THOLEN

SGT Bob Van Tholen from Oak Park, Ill., is a squad leader for First Platoon, Delta Company. On Friday, August 16, SGT Van Tholen took a rather hectic and unusual ride.

The First Platoon was on the first lift of the combat assault the men of D Company took last week. SGT Van Tholen was in the fifth chopper, the one that was shot down. He was the first one out of the chopper and already on the ground when the chopper came under heavy enemy automatic weapons fire. The chopper began to take extensive damage so the pilot decided to get out of the area in a hurry and called for everyone to get back on. SGT Van Tholen only had time enough to grab hold of a skid as the chopper took off. The chopper flew about 600 meters with SGT Van Tholen holding on to the skid. He was upside down with both feet and arms wrapped around the skid. As the chopper began to land, SGT Van Tholen let go of the skid and scurried to a safe position away from the chopper.

Fortunately, nobody aboard the helicopter was injured seriously. In retrospect, the situation, which could have been much more serious, seemed somewhat humorous. Even SGT Van Tholen had to agree that he probably looked a little silly flying around holding on to the helicopter skid, upside down.

Old Guard

LTC Albert L. Russell, CO

CPT John A. Gonzalez, S1

PFC Herbert Horton, Reporter

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(TRAVEL COND'T)

old "hitched" a ride with a Chinook with the intention of going to Hill 54 from LZ Bowman. The pilot told them that they were low on gas but that they would refuel at a little fire base on the way. They stopped at the little fire base, but no fuel. The pilot decided not to try and make Hill 54, but rather, go right on to Chu Lai.

Some of the men were a little puzzled as to why they were flying so low. More of the men sensed something was not right when they looked down and saw nothing but the South China Sea. Every one started getting worried when they saw the door gunners stripping off their gear, boots, jackets, etc. in anticipation of a ditch landing.

Somewhere over the South China Sea the rear propeller stopped. This made landing difficult for the Chinook did not have enough power to slowly hover to a landing. The big chopper had to land like a jet plane, under full power letting the wheels gently touch, then coasting to a stop.

The men didn't even get a chance to spend a free night in Chu Lai. Another chopper brought the men from Chu Lai to Hill 54. It was about 9 o'clock that night when the men finally reached the original destination. Two jeeps from the mess hall improvised as landing lights.

C COMPANY MAKES CONTACT

Last week Charlie Company made contact with the enemy on several different occasions. On Friday, August 16, the Company was hit three different times by enemy sniper fire.

On Thursday, August 15, the Third Platoon was out on a patrol when SGT Jose Alamo spotted 5 VC setting up a hasty ambush. The men opened up on them and the VC took off leaving a Chi Com grenade behind. The grenade was found by PFC Mike Finduro.

The following day, the Company made contact on three different times. In each case the Company was hit by auto-

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(Charlie cond't),

omatic weapons fire. Early in the morning a squad of the Third Platoon was hit just as they were getting up from their ambush position. They returned fire but the snipers had left. The squad linked up with the rest of the Company and they moved on. The Company moved about 200 meters before they were again hit with sniper fire. After a short exchange of fire, the Company moved again. They went only about 100 meters before snipers once again opened up on them. One man, PFC Ricard Woods, the Company Commander's RTO, was wounded (he is recovering quite well). Artillery and gun ships were called in. The area was then thoroughly searched but no enemy kills could be confirmed.

AROUND the BATTALION

Terry "ID" Reid of Bravo Company is leaving Viet Nam just like he entered it...forgetting and losing things. He came over from Hawaii with the Battalion and the first day he was in Viet Nam he realized that he had lost his steel pot on the boat. The other day "ID" showed he hasn't improved his absent mindness much in eight months. He left his overnight bag containing his khakis and partially completed clearance papers on the plane up from Duc Pho.

Alpha Company didn't go on stand down on August 17, as it was reported last week. The men had to wait until Tuesday, August 20, to go in for stand down. The stand down had to be shortened, because of the recent enemy offensive. The men did get to see a live show on Wednesday night, so the stand down, although short, was still successful.

Congratulations to SGT Michael Vandre of Charlie Company on becoming a father last week.

If you need a haircut make sure you don't go to PFC Tom Harris of B Company. PFC Wesley Steinbrenner made the mistake of trusting Tom's barbering talents and walked away bald as a bowling ball.

PFC Leonard Borbendy of Delta Company is recuperating quite well after his bout with a 55 gallon drum on LZ Karen. When a Chinook flies over, watch out for flying objects. Leonard will be the first one to second that.

PFC Dennis Van Duijn of First Platoon, Delta Company, was on the chopper that was shot during the combat assault that Delta Company took on August, 16. Dennis had this to say about the chopper, which was his first, "I hope they all aren't like that."

LESSONS LEARNED

Last week a man, not of the 4/3 but working on Hill 54, went into the village below Hill 54 and had himself a real Vietnamese meal. It was the last meal he will ever eat. Because of the swiftness of death and his rapid discoloration, it was deduced that he was poisoned.

This clear cut example of the danger of eating village food should be enough to discourage most people from getting extra "chop-chop". Even if you aren't poisoned you might become very sick. Remember that Vietnamese health standards are often very low. You are taking a chance eating or drinking anything in the village that doesn't come in a pre-sealed can.

While Bravo Company was on LZ Bowman, they had a man injured unnecessarily. SPC Ernesto Espinoza was injured when something in his bunker exploded. It is still not certain what exploded but it is assumed that Ernesto had accidentally set off either a hand grenade or a Claymore mine.

Remember that explosives are made to destroy... handle them carefully.

THE LAAMSITE

More than half of an Infantryman's time is spent on fire bases. Of all the fire bases the Battalion is currently manning, none is more popular than the Laamsite.

The Laamsite is on the tip of a big Island just north of Chu Lai. It has a commanding view of Chu Lai Harbor and thus it is of great strategic value to our coastal defense. The LZ was built and is manned mostly by Marines, but, depends on a contingent of Army personnel to supplement manpower.

The Laamsite has more than its share of details including KP, but few would argue that it is not worth it. The food,

supplied by the Navy, is excellent and there is plenty of it. Ice cream is served just about everyday and cold milk dispensers allow the men to drink all the cold milk they want.

Besides excellent food, the LZ also has a number of assets. Below the hill there is a village that is covered by tall palm trees. The village gets a breeze off the bay and is always quite cool. The village is on limits all day. In addition to the village, there is a number of clubs on the LZ. The LZ supports; an EM, Ech-5, NCO, and Officers Club. The clubs always have cold beer and soda for sale during the afternoon and early evening.

Like other fire bases, The Laamsite was established for defense not relaxation. Bunker guard is pulled and ambushes run every night.

CHAIN OF COMMAND

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SECRETARY OF DEFENSE	- HON. CLARK M. CLIFFORD
SECRETARY OF THE ARMY	- HON. STANLEY P. REED
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ADC-A	- BG. JAMES V. ALLWAY
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*the guy
in war to
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