

WEST OF WEST



3 August 1969

4 TH BATTALION : 31ST INFANTRY

VOL 1 No 4

BATTALION COMMANDER

LTC Cecil M. Henry assumed command of the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry, during a recent ceremony on LZ West. LTC Henry accepted the command from LTC Robert B. Longino who had commanded 4/31st since mid-January.

LTC Henry, a native of Rome, Georgia, served as a member of the faculty and staff of the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, prior to taking command of the "Polar Bears".

LTC Longino (Atlanta, Ga) will be assigned to the Office of the Comptroller of the Army in Washington D.C.

Among those in attendance were Major General Lloyd P. Ramsey, Commanding General of the Americal Division and Brigadier General Wallace L. Clement, Deputy Americal Division Commander. Also present were Colonel Thomas H. Tackaberry, Commanding Officer of the 196th Infantry Brigade.

CO'S ADVICE

There are many occasions when a unit or a small group of individuals on the ground need to fix their position for an aircraft. Some of these occasions would be for resupply, C & C helicopter or gunships providing direct support. In order for the pilot to fix your

(CON'T PG 5)

POLAR BEARS HAMMER NVA IN AK VALLEY

Polar Bear troops killed 58 NVA soldiers and captured ten individual weapons during recent heavy fighting south of LZ West. In addition, the 4/31 Infantrymen destroyed in excess of 300 enemy structures in the course of ten days of contact with the 31st Regiment of the second NVA Division.

Elements of the 4th Bn., 31st Inf. entered AK Valley located some 15 miles due West of Tam Ky. Three companies (A,B,D) as well as the recon platoon took part in the sweep which was conducted as a part of Operation Frederick Hill.

Delta company, commanded by CPT Norman Mekkelson, was the first element to make contact. The Polar Bear Infantrymen received automatic weapons fire as they moved to search the area. It is believed that D Co. was in contact with an anti-aircraft company of the 31st NVA Regiment. This was substantiated by the fact that several, fresh .51 caliber machine gun emplacements were found in the vicinity.

For the most part, Delta company encountered the NVA in small groups of from three to five individuals. In all cases, the enemy was armed; and usually, he was carrying a pack and other NVA equipment.

D Co. discovered more than 200 enemy structures as they conducted a detailed search of the area. These structures ranged from large, ten man bunkers with heavy camouflaged and overhead coverage to oneman spider holes. In most cases, the enemy positions were connected by tunnels or trench lines.

D Co. accounted for 12 NVA killed and six weapons captured during the early phases of the operation. They also captured a quantity of rice, documents, numerous chicom grenades, and several rounds for an 82 mm recoilless rifle.

Bravo Company, commanded by CPT William Gayler, and the Recon Platoon, under 1st LT Barry Brandon, were the next elements to enter the operation. Moving into the area, they immediately came under heavy fire from automatic weapons and rocket propelled grenades. Periodically, the NVA mortared the advancing Infantrymen.

(CON'T PG 2)

AK VALLEY (cont'd. P61)

"They opened up on us with mortars while we were in the middle of a wide rice paddy," declared SP4 George Gianaris. "We could see them firing at us, but there was no place to take cover!" "We ran 400 meters to get out of the open, and we fired at them the whole time we were running."

B Co. was forced to assault several small hills to knock out enemy positions. The Recon Platoon like wise met with stiff enemy resistance. SP4 Mic Crouch and SP4 John Kin ignored heavy automatic weapons fire to evacuate a wounded Polar Bear NCO.

Alpha Company, commanded by CPT Stanley Yates, was dispatched to AK Valley to help crush enemy resistance. A Co. was to fight side-by-side with B Co. for the next four days. At one point, a platoon from Alpha walked into an enemy bunker complex after a CA into a LZ. "We were right on top of the bunkers before we knew what they were," explained Plt. Sgt. Ronald Wilder. "They opened up with machine guns, RPG's AK's!" PFC Paul Sweetman crawled to aid a wounded buddy. Sweetman volunteered to stay with the wounded man until he could be evacuated.

Tactical air strikes used to pound the enemy positions. More well-fortified enemy bunkers and camouflaged fighting positions were discovered by the Infantrymen. "We pushed forward a little at a time," explained CPT Gayler. "Several of my men distinguished themselves as we knocked out pockets of enemy resistance."

SP4 Henry Vance was credited with knocking out an enemy sniper position. "When we assaulted Hill 100," continued CPT Gayler. "A sniper opened fire down a trail and wounded one man." "I saw the muzzle flash, and I pointed out the spot to Vance." The young soldier proceeded to maneuver a machine gun into position and opened fire on the sniper. Vance then crawled close to the enemy spiderhole and lobbed hand grenades inside. A dead NVA was discovered along with an AK-47 rifle and a number of Chicom grenades.

SP4 Willard Williams grenade another spider hole, killing an NVA soldier, who was carrying an AK-47 rifle. B Co. successfully assaulted Hill 100.

PERSONNEL ACTIONS

My job is to help you with your personnel and financial problems. If your Record of Emergency DATA (DA Form 41) is not correct "Buddy you have a problem." The Record of Emergency Data is equivalent in value, meaning and effect to a last will and testament. It provides for the settlement of your military estate. If you've had a recent change in personal status (change of address of next-of-kin, marriage, divorce, additions to the family, change of insurance) let your CO know so he can inform me and I'll send a copy to you.

PSNCO



"Now don't think because I'm a woman you can fool me about your pay!"



"THAT'S WHAT I CALL A STANDOFF!"

POINT MAN

Chaplain David Lovelace can be certain of having at least one soldier who will pay strict attention to his sermons after a recent operation near LZ West.

CPT Lovelace conducted a service in the field with Delta Company. The title of his sermon for the day was "God Is My Point Man." One of the men attending this service was SP4 Charles Chaconas.

Shortly after the conclusion of the service, Delta Company was moving down a winding trail through dense, jungle terrain. Chaconas' squad was walking point. "All of a sudden I heard a loud crack that sounded like a shot," declared Chaconas. "I thought somebody was shooting at us; so I hit the ground!"

It was at that moment that the "Polar Bear" Infantryman noticed a fine wire tangled around his foot. He followed the wire into some bushes near the trail and found a booby-trapped 82mm mortar round. The loud noise had been the detonation device, but the shell itself had failed to explode.

"All I could think about was the chaplain's sermon," said Chaconas. "Somebody mighty special was looking out for me that day!"

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Whether a soldier has been with a combat unit for several months or has just recently arrived in country, the situation impresses upon him his need for and dependence upon his faith. This I have observed and experienced during the past year while serving as the "Polar Bears" Chaplain.

A day never passes without overhearing some GI griping or complaining about something. But, it never fails, when there's a job to be done he accepts this assigned mission and fulfills it with the skill of a professional.

He takes the risks, bears the hardships, and faces the uncertainties with a display of outstanding courage and faith.

The psalmist writes "In thee O Lord, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness." Psalm 31:1. This passage is meaningful to the soldier serving under hardship conditions. He absorbs the meaning of trust and faith in his family, friends, country, and God. He has a deeper understanding of what it means to be proud and to stand tall as he develops a greater appreciation

for his home and the exercise of freedom in his home country.

It's been a real privilege to serve with the men of 4/31. I leave with a feeling of confidence and hope. Knowing that beneath the often rough and rugged appearance of the combat soldier is a deep seeded faith in God.

May God's blessing and protection be with each of you.

Chaplain (CPT) David H. Lovelace

3 REENLISTMENTS

The month of July, 1969 has shown a significant improvement in the reenlistment rate for this Battalion.

During the period of 1-23 July, a total of 12 have reenlisted, with 1 more awaiting assignment.

For those qualified, reenlistment may be accomplished for reassignment to another location in Vietnam, retraining for another MOS, and entitlement to a reenlistment Bonus, and 30 day leave to CONUS, which does not effect DEROS date.

Reenlistment and Reassignment for July.

1. Tunnel, Larry K.-HHC-67th Medical Group, Da Nang
2. Mainous, Gregory D.-HHC-537th P.S.C., Bien Hoa
3. Fairchild, Ronnie L.-B Co-HHC, 743rd Maint Bn
4. May, William A.-A Co-527th P.S.C., Qui Nhon
5. Drouillard, Charles J.-A Co-1st AVN BDE, Long Binh
6. Brock, James H.-D Co-537th P.S.C., Bien Hoa
7. Rayburn, Elmer J.-A Co-1st AVN BDE, Long Binh
8. Cook, Lonnig D.-A Co-1st AVN BDE, Long Binh
9. Edgar, John A.-A Co-1st AVN BDE, Long Binh
10. Dailey, Raymond C.-D Co-516th P.S.C., Da Nang
11. Mitchell, Charles T.-D Co-1st AVN BDE, Long Binh
12. Freeman, Charles.-HHC-44th Med Bde, Long Binh
13. Stott, Franklin L.-A Co-Awaiting Assignment

For information contact
SFC Raymond G. Stice
Bn Reenl NCO,
Sl, LZ Baldy
Call Baldy Loco #1

WEST OF WEST

LTC Cecil M. Henry CO
SP4 William Crawford Reporter

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ARMY EMERGENCY RELIEF helps the Americal Division live up to the motto "The Army Takes Care of its Own." Last year over \$4,500.00 was provided to personnel of the division in the form of loans and grants and the current loan volume indicates that Army Emergency Relief will provide more assistance in 1969 than ever before. Army Emergency Relief is the Army's way of assisting active and retired army personnel and their families when a financial problem arises. Assistance is provided to deserving Army personnel in time of an emergency for privatization of dependents, emergency travel, medical and dental expenses, or other emergencies which cause the soldier or his family hardship.

The 1969 Joint Army Emergency Relief and Army Relief Society Fund Raising Campaign is presently being conducted within the Americal Division and will end on 15 August 1969. See your unit AER project officer to make contributions. When you give to AER, remember that your contribution is merged with AER funds from all units in the Army for your use in the Army for your use in case of need. It also enables AER to cover disbursements for assistance world wide. You are asked to make generous contributions to help your fellow soldiers and their families.

Army Emergency Relief can help you by an outright grant or by a non-interest bearing loan which may be repaid in small monthly installments. To apply, contact CPT Bratt, the Division AER Officer, who is located in the rear of the AG Personnel Services Division Butler building, AG Personnel Actions Branch.

"Polar Bear" Infantrymen received some unexpected assistance from a dog which led to the discovery of a VC base camp and feeding station. The complex was discovered recently in the foothills at the base of Nui Chom Mountain by an element of Charlie Company.

A platoon-size patrol from C Co. 4th Bn, 31st Inf., led by 2nd LT James Simms, had moved to a fork in a winding, mountain trail. As the "Polar Bear" Infantrymen paused to decide which branch of the trail to take, they detected a dog barking some distance down the left fork. Moving forward to investigate, they encountered a VC with an SKS rifle walking down the trail. He raised his rifle to fire, but before he could get off a shot, he came under a hail of fire from the 196th Bde. soldiers. The wounded VC dropped his weapon and evaded.

"I thought he might have been an OP for a large force," declared SP4 Bob Herrmann, the pointman for the patrol. "It started just like this in November when we hit an NVA regiment on Nui Chom."

A detailed search of the surrounding area revealed a VC basecamp some distance off the trail. There were several hootches covered with plastic which provided sleeping positions for about twenty people. Twenty-five foxholes with connecting tunnels were also located as well as SKS and .30 caliber ammunition, NVA equipment, and a barber's kit.

A continued search of the area yielded a four-acre cornfield. A quantity of corn and rice was also discovered in the basecamp itself. The camp was believed to be a feeding station for VC and NVA troops operating in the area.

Late the following afternoon, the same platoon of C Company moved quietly back into the basecamp in the hopes of finding some of the enemy lingering in the area. "As we moved in, we spotted two VC gathering up the frames that were left from the hootches," explained LT. Simms. "They evaded, but we got them both before they got far."



...Since the photo's of our Singapore R and R were published in his home town paper...LT Mac has extended for six months!

ARTILLERY LIAISON SECTION

A little-known but essential member of the "Polar Bear" family is the Artillery Liaison Section located in the BTOC on LZ West. Headed by CPT Spencer Wolfe, the LNO section acts as a "go-between" for artillery and Infantry units operating in this area.

"It is a strange situation," declared CPT Wolfe. "We are assigned to HNB of 3/82 Artillery, and we are not attached to 4/31 officially, but we have to be here!" All infantry battalions in the Americal Division have an LNO section to co-ordinate artillery and infantry operations.

The primary responsibility of the LNO section is to insure the safety of all friendly air-craft and personnel within the

4/31 area of operation. "We have to clear all fire missions no matter where they are being fired in our AO," explained SSG James Beasley, NCOIC of the LNO section.

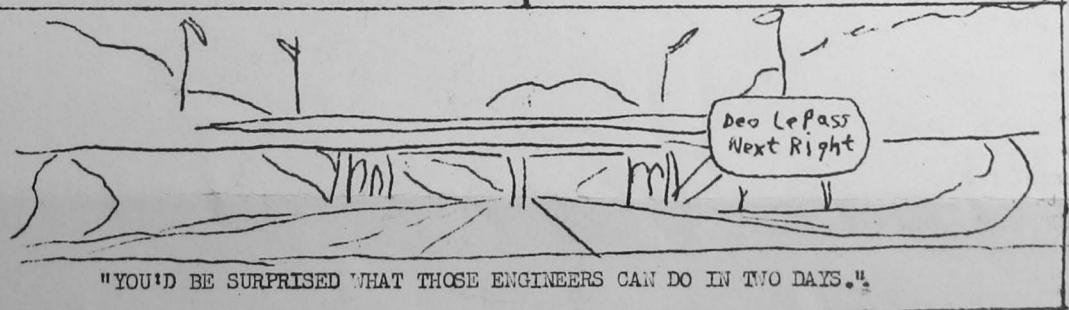
Fire missions impacting near controlled fire zones such as Hiep Duc are especially important because of the proximity of the civilian population within the CPZ. The LNO is responsible for clearing such fire missions with MACV and Vietnamese authorities.

Air-warning data must be posted for the safety of all aircraft flying over the "Polar Bear" AO. This involves maintaining strict radio communication with all air traffic in the area. This as well as an abundance of other radio traffic is handled by

SECTION

the RTO's for the LNO section, SP4 Robert "Pop" Duarte and PFC Albert Ferris. These men work twelve-hour shifts to make certain that the lines of communication so essential to the LNO's function are working properly.

The LNO must relay the exact positions for all friendly troops in the 4/31 AO to 3/82 Artillery. Also, scheduled fire missions are planned each day and are aimed at suspected enemy locations and supply routes. "We're here to provide the best possible fire support for friendly troops operating in our area as well as to make sure that this support is carried out safely," declared SGT Beasley.



GO's Advice (Cont'd from Pg 1) Position quickly and accurately you must guide the craft to your position. This is a very simple matter to do.

Think of the aircraft as a clock with the nose as 12 O'clock and the tail as 6 O'clock. Examples: "I am at 2 O'clock low;" "I am at 8 O'clock 1 click out;" "I am

at 6 O'clock do a 180;" etc. If you give the pilot this type of information he will be able to locate your position quickly and provide you with the desired support in a minimum of time.