
THE HURRICANE
SEPTEMBER 1970 NUMBER THIRTY-FIVE
A PUBLICATION OF II FIELD FORCE VIETNAM
Cambodia Special
U. S. Forces on the Move in Cambodia
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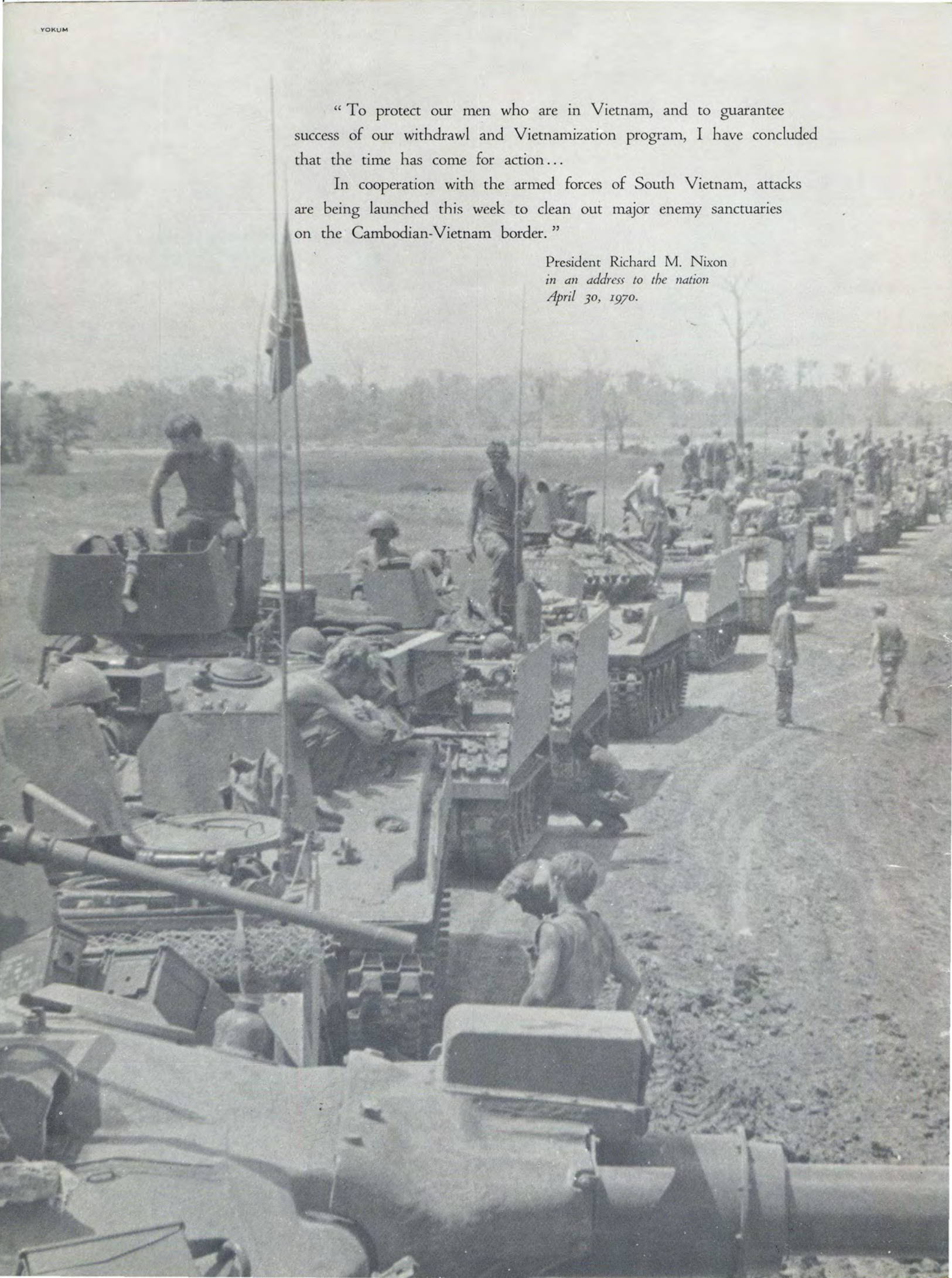
"To protect our men who are in Vietnam, and to guarantee success of our withdrawl and Vietnamization program, I have concluded that the time has come for action...

In cooperation with the armed forces of South Vietnam, attacks are being launched this week to clean out major enemy sanctuaries on the Cambodian-Vietnam border."

President Richard M. Nixon
in an address to the nation
April 30, 1970.



THE HURRICANE

SEPTEMBER 1970 NO 35

A PUBLICATION OF II FIELD FORCE VIETNAM

On the first day of May 1970, American forces in Vietnam moved across the Cambodian border to attack and eliminate known Communist base areas and cache sites along the western and northern boundaries of the III Corps Tactical Zone (CTZ). In perhaps the most significant action since the 1968 Tet Offensive, U.S. and Vietnamese units operated on Cambodian soil, attacking enemy sanctuaries and troop concentrations in that nation.

This month, *The Hurricane* devotes an entire issue to the Cambodian incursion and looks at the sixty-day campaign and the personalities involved from several points of view.

In an exclusive interview, LTG Michael S. Davison, commanding general of II Field Force Vietnam, speaks of his role in the Cambodian Operation and offers candid viewpoints on its overall effect on the war in Vietnam.

The Hurricane also travels with LTG Do Cao Tri, commanding general of III Corps, as he directs Vietnamese troops through Cambodia. This report, combined with an off-duty sidelight, focuses sharply on this dynamic and unique field commander.

Also in this issue: battle summaries of U.S. and Vietnamese operations, reports on refugee relief, close-ups of American troops in the field and a ten-page color photo feature.

Specialist John Skiffington shot the front cover photo while accompanying troops of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment near Snoul. Specialist Dave Massey photographed a cache at Rock Island East to make the rear cover.

The Editor

The Hurricane is an authorized monthly publication of II Field Force Vietnam. It is published by the 16th Public Information Detachment and the Information Office, II FFORCEV APO San Francisco 96266. Views and opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Department of the Army. Feature stories, photographs and art work of general interest to II Field Force personnel are invited.

This is the last monthly issue of The Hurricane. Recent reductions in printing funds have forced The Hurricane to cease publication at this time. The staff of The Hurricane wishes to thank the readership for the many suggestions and compliments received and the continual acceptance of the magazine through its three years of publication.

The Editor

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A Perspective on Cambodia

An Interview with LTG Michael S. Davison

Lieutenant General Michael S. Davison had been in command of II Field Force Vietnam just over a week when General Creighton W. Abrams flew to Plantation and gave him verbal instructions assigning him the major role in planning and conducting the Cambodia Operation.

In the following interview with "The Hurricane" the day after the last U.S. troops had been withdrawn from Cambodia, General Davison discusses the results of the operation and what it portends for the future.

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General Davison visiting 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) troops on operations in Cambodia.

HURRICANE: *Judging from recent months, the situation in Southeast Asia could change considerably between now and when this appears in print. But whatever happens, the Cambodia Operation will still be considered one of the most consequential events of the war. As we talk, that operation has just ended for U.S. troops. Without the advantage of much time for hindsight, how would you assess the results in terms of damage to the enemy?*

DAVISON: I think you have to look at several areas in making an assessment. First of all, you can make a quantitative assessment based on the number of individual and crew-served weapons that we captured, on the tons of ammunition, on the tons of rice, on the number of vehicles, and on all the other war impedimenta that our people uncovered over there and have taken away from the enemy's control. And then you can do all kinds of calculations —equipping so many battalions of NVA or enough ammunition to last for x number of months and all that sort of thing. And that's, I think, all very interesting, but it's not to me the real significance in a quantitative assessment.

What's really significant in a quantitative assessment is what is it going to cost the enemy in terms of resources, in terms of people, in terms of energy expended—indeed, in terms of money and time—to replace everything that he's lost? And during the time that it takes him to replace it, what does it mean in terms of his own operations inside of III Corps Tactical Zone?

And I think as a minimum you've got to say that there's going to be a hiatus of some degree in his operations in III Corps Tactical Zone. There's got to be, because he's now lost his major supply areas and base

areas and, for some time, will have great difficulty sustaining his people inside III CTZ.

Next, there's an assessment that should be made in terms of the disruptive effect of our operations in Cambodia. We've inflicted severe strain on his command and control system; we've caused his headquarters to displace; we've preempted his base areas and training areas; and we've severely disrupted his commo-liaison routes. He's very much dependent on commo-liaison

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"It would seem to me that finally, down at the lowest ranks of the Communist organization, there might perhaps be implanted seeds of doubt that the 'inevitable Communist victory' really is possible."

routes as a means of moving his replacements, as a means of moving his carrying parties that take the supplies down inside of Vietnam and as a means of moving his important staff officers and couriers who have to go to meetings and pass instructions. So these commo-liaison routes have been seriously disrupted now and it's going to pose quite a problem to him to reestablish them.

The third area in which I think an assessment should properly be made—and it's the most difficult area of all—is what you might call the psychological area. I think it's safe to say that there has been some sort of psychological trauma inflicted on the enemy, although I can't say in definitive terms how severe it's been. He's certainly inhibited from ever again moving back into his close-in base areas for fear the ARVN will jump across the border and get him.

Clear evidence of the psychological impact has been the increased number of Hoi Chanh. About 1,300 Hoi Chanh have come in as a result of our Cambodian operations. Interestingly enough, many of these are political cadre—the deputy commander of Sub-Region 2, for example, and political cadre at the staff section chief level, the VC district level, and the VC village level. We also have reports of NVA units refusing to fight and being sent to the rear. It would seem to me that finally, down at the lowest ranks of the Communist organization, there might perhaps be implanted seeds of doubt that the "inevitable Communist victory" really is possible.

Now this psychological assessment cuts two ways. It impacts on the enemy and it impacts on the Allied side as well. The Government of Vietnam has gained stature as a viable national force. The RVNAF have demonstrated that they are capable of very effective military operations on their own without U.S. advisors, without the direct U.S. support that they've had in the past.

There is an effect also at the level of the territorial forces, the RF and PF. During the Cambodian Operation, we took 71 per cent of the U.S. battalions out of III Corps Tactical Zone and we took out, at the height, about 44 per cent of the ARVN battalions. The net result of this, of course, was that the territorial forces were the ones who really had to assume the burden of responsibility for security within the provinces and the districts. By and large, they rose to the challenge and they did pretty darn well. Now there are some cases where they didn't. But it was heartening to see how most of them accepted the responsibility and how they moved out and did something about it and in fact engaged in some very successful operations.

Then there's the last area, right down at the rice roots level in the hamlets. This is very difficult to assess and it's probably going to take some time before we see the full effect of it. It will probably be most evident in the border provinces like Long An or Hau Nghia or Tay Ninh where the families living down in the hamlets for years now have had intimate exposure to the VC movement. They probably have relatives who are in the VC movement; they know what Ba Tu means as a long standing VC base area, or Bo Ba Tay. Now they know that these places are destroyed. And they know that, for example, SR-2 and SR-3 suffered rather severe damage. So, as this thought begins to permeate the people at the hamlet level, perhaps there may be generated a certain degree of support for the central government or at least a recognition that the VC are in very deep trouble and that the government continues to grow stronger. I don't know. We'll have to wait to see.

HURRICANE: *So there are a lot of positive effects on the Allies as well as negative effects on the enemy?*

DAVISON: That's right. Now, I don't want to seem too rosy and optimistic about all of this because we've got to recognize that the Communist is a very tough foe. He's persistent, he endures, and you can rest assured that he'll work very, very hard to overcome the psychological as well as the quantitative impact of the Cambodian Operations.

HURRICANE: *Among all the various supplies that were captured and the fortifications destroyed, and the enemy forces eliminated, what do you consider the single most important thing that the Allies accomplished in these two months?*

DAVISON: From the U.S. point of view, probably the most important result of all of this is that we have written what you might call an insurance policy for the success of the

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"There's clear evidence that, prior to the time we moved into Cambodia, he (Communist forces) had already embarked on wider operations in that country."

Vietnamization program and the withdrawal of U.S. forces in accordance with the President's schedule.

HURRICANE: *But isn't it true that we've spread the ARVN somewhat thinner? Where before they were strictly in Vietnam, they're now engaged in Cambodia. Is this in any way endangering the chances of replacing U.S. troops?*

DAVISON: No, I don't think so. For example, considerable damage

has been inflicted on SR-2 and SR-3. This, in turn, is going to alter the security situation in Hau Nghia and Long An and make it possible for fewer Allied forces in those two provinces to provide the same level of security for the population. So, to the extent that the Allies have diminished the enemy's operational capability, then it's possible for forces to be moved to other tasks.

HURRICANE: *Did you anticipate when this whole thing was started that the results would be as great as they have turned out to be or did you think they would be greater?*

DAVISON: I really didn't spend any time at all thinking about that because we planned this thing on such short notice and we had no sooner gotten into the Fish Hook than I was told that we could go into the other base areas. Planning the operation and directing the activities and getting out and working with the commanders in the field were so all consuming that I really didn't have much chance to think about, "Well now, what's going to be the total effect of all this?"

I think, in retrospect, that for the most part, we have achieved just about everything that we might have anticipated in going into the base areas.

HURRICANE: *There were reports that the NVA and VC in the sanctuaries knew as much as 48 hours in advance than ARVN forces would invade the Parrot's Beak. Yet word of U.S. participation seems to have remained a secret. How was such a major operation prepared for and launched without compromise?*

DAVISON: Well, in the first place, we didn't tell very many people about it. The planning was done on an extremely close-hold basis between Lieutenant General Do Cao Tri and myself and Major General Du Quoc Dong who commands the ARVN Airborne Division and Major General Elvy V. Roberts, who was then the commanding general of the 1st Cavalry Division.

That was the first thing. The second thing was that the planning period was very short. We planned the operation in just a matter of days. The third thing was that, for the most part, our troops were already in position. The ARVN Airborne battalions were engaged up in War Zone C and so was the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment. Substantially only two battalions had to be moved up into the area in order to get ready for the attack. So I think all of these things combined together served to enhance our chances for tactical surprise in the Fish Hook area when we went in there.

HURRICANE: *On the same point of tactical surprise, President Nixon's announcement of the operation only hours after it started shocked many people, not only those who opposed it, but also those who are used to troop movements and new operations being kept from the public sometimes for days for the safety of our forces. Did this public announcement in any way endanger our forces and could we have made more of an impact initially had the President waited for a few days?*

DAVISON: I don't think it endangered our forces in the slightest. The enemy was so taken by surprise that first day that he was able to put up very little effective resistance and he was obviously disorganized for a number of days afterward in the Fish Hook area. It took him quite a while to pull his people together and start making some sort of an organized effort to resist. Now as far as the President's speech giving away anything we might do in areas other than the Fish Hook, with the length of the border that exists in the III Corps Tactical Zone and the initiative resting with us, it would hardly be possible for the enemy to anticipate where we were going to move next.

HURRICANE: *So once we were in there, it didn't make any difference?*

DAVISON: No, it really didn't. And in our subsequent operations, each time we made a new move, for the most part, the moves initially were unopposed. When the enemy did react as, for example, he reacted at Fire Support Base Brown, he got clobbered. At Snoul he anticipated our approach, but Snoul was the center of a road net and it was important to him as well as to us. We had to go there and he had to defend it.

HURRICANE: *The ARVN role in Cambodia started before ours and has since been more widespread than ours, ranging farther into Cambodia. Has their performance been satisfactory?*

DAVISON: I should say so. I think the only judgment you can make is that they have conducted highly effective military operations. And I would point out particularly that beyond the 30 kilometer limit they've done so without U.S. advisors and without U.S. support as has been the case since 30 June anywhere across the border. This is a great tribute to them. I think General Tri has clearly shown himself to be a very dynamic, decisive and

courageous battlefield commander. I'm very much impressed by what I see of General Tri in the conduct of his operations in Cambodia.

HURRICANE: *Looking to the future, what effects will the Cambodian incursion have on operations inside III Corps, say, during the wet season we're in right now?*

DAVISON: I would think that it poses some real problems for the enemy. He can no longer depend upon a nearby and safe resupply activity to provide him with the weapons and ammunition that he needs to conduct his operations. He'll be forced to take a very conservative posture. I think that he'll work in very small groups and emphasize acts of terror. I think that he'll direct his attacks at the pacification effort by attacking the People's Self-Defense Force and National Police, trying to isolate territorial force units, ambush them—this type of effort, highly selective and carefully planned.

To the extent that we are now successful in locating his supply caches that exist within III Corps Tactical Zone, we can further exacerbate his logistic difficulties and, as a result, minimize the attacks by fire that he can conduct against our own installations. Hopefully this will serve to reduce American casualties.

I don't mean to imply by all this that the fighting is going to cease entirely for U.S. forces. The Communist is still a wily and tough enemy and whenever we get him cornered, he's going to fight back.

HURRICANE: *Was the timing of this whole operation just about ideal? Did we catch him at the point where he would have had the most supplies, for instance?*

DAVISON: That's difficult to say. Out of all of the documents that we've captured, and all of the intelligence that we've acquired, we've never found anything that told us how much he had, what the totality of his supplies was in the base areas. But in the sense that we moved at a time that he had probably just delivered the last of the supplies that came in through Sihanoukville and Phnom Penh, it was very timely. Now he has to seek other ways, other means, of moving his supplies.

HURRICANE: *Could we have accomplished enough additional results to have made it worthwhile if we had conducted, say, a three or four month operation beginning in March or April?*

DAVISON: This is a very difficult judgment to make. First of all, as I say, we as yet have no way of knowing what was the total amount that he had stored up there. I had the tonnage of various types of supplies that we've captured plotted out against time and when you look at that, you find that in the past couple of weeks our "rate-of-finding-stuff" curve had decreased considerably and was beginning to flatten out. Presumably, then, we got out at the less productive end of our effort.

HURRICANE: *Was that strictly because there were fewer things to find or were we running into logistics problems or weather problems?*

DAVISON: No, we weren't having any difficulties. Even though the monsoon started at the end of May, the weather has been relatively very favorable towards us and we've had no logistics problems. I think what it amounts to is that we had just about searched out all of the most probable areas.

HURRICANE: *If we had continued beyond now, would we have gotten less than acceptable results?*

DAVISON: I think we would have become less and less productive.

HURRICANE: *As far as security and casualties in III Corps are concerned, what difference would it have made if President Nixon had decided against going into Cambodia, or, say, against Americans going into Cambodia?*

DAVISON: I think logically you can only conclude that if we hadn't gone into Cambodia, there just would have been one hell of a lot of bullets and mortar shells that could have been shot at our troops and consequently would have made the course of Vietnamization more difficult than should now be the case.

HURRICANE: *Whatever happened to COSVN?*

DAVISON: Well, I think you have to understand this about COSVN: it's a field location. The North Vietnamese "Pentagon" is in Hanoi. COSVN is a field headquarters. It's a collection of people and a collection of records. We put in a five-battalion assault on the area that we know was the alternate COSVN headquarters location. Unfortunately, they began to move out the afternoon before we went in there.

Nevertheless, we did do considerable damage to COSVN headquarters because they had not completed the move. Quite a few COSVN people were killed in that action and, perhaps most importantly, we uncovered a substantial number of documents and records that gave us a lot of very, very valuable intelligence.

HURRICANE: *It's been said that the North Vietnamese rather*

"They (U.S. troops) couldn't understand why the newspapers and magazines at home didn't take a more sympathetic approach...to the danger and the damn hard work and the sacrifice that they were making out there in the jungles of Cambodia..."

than being brought to their knees by the bombing of the North were, as the Londoners in World War II, hardened in their resolve to win the war. This is sometimes answered with the argument that the restrictions on where to bomb hampered the military from accomplishing the desired objective. Time and geographic limits were also stringently imposed on the Cambodia Operation. Is it possible that because of these restrictions, the enemy, while suffering heavy damages, was in the end more strengthened by the propaganda hay made out of the U.S. "invasion" of Cambodia?

DAVISON: The Communist is a highly political animal and he always resolves things in political terms and will attempt through propaganda to turn even the most severe sort of military defeat to his advantage. I think the Tet '68 defeat suffered by the Communists—a military defeat of considerable proportion—was very adroitly converted by him through the use of propaganda into a victory insofar as our people at home were concerned.

And I think he'll try to do the same thing out of our Cambodian Operation. For example, right now his propaganda theme—and this is being played all over the Western world by people who cater to the Communist movement—is that the Allied incursions into Cambodia broadened the war and forced the Communists into wider operations in Cambodia designed to overthrow the Lon Nol government.

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"I think...that if we hadn't gone into Cambodia, there just would have been one hell of a lot of bullets and mortar shells that would have been shot at our troops..."

Well, I just don't believe that. There's clear evidence that, prior to the time we moved into Cambodia, he had already embarked on wider operations in that country. But what's happening is that he's very cleverly and adeptly trying to score a propaganda victory out of what has clearly been a military defeat.

HURRICANE: *This next question goes back to when you were meeting the press when you first got here. You at that time characterized the war as "on a different track than it was six months ago." You also said, "the enemy seems to be more difficult to come to grips with because he's been ground down to the point where he's pretty damn skittish." You went on to say this situation meant "we've got to be more innovative, more creative in our approaches to making sure there can't be any resurgence of enemy activity and being sure that the past progress in pacification and Vietnamization will continue into the future." It would seem the enemy today is even more "ground down" than at the time you said that, chiefly because of the giant innovative move into Cambodia. What creative approaches are next?*

DAVISON: Well, I think that if one assumes the enemy is going to continue along the lines set forth in COSVN Resolutions Number 9 and Number 14, but with the additional burdens that are now imposed upon him because of his losses in Cambodia, then it's a challenge to our U.S. commanders to devise ways and means of countering the strategy that's set forward in those two resolutions. I have some ideas on just how to go about this and I plan, starting tomorrow, to go around and talk to all our maneuver battalion commanders and their command sergeants major in II Field Force to explain to them what our strategy is going to be during the wet season and to suggest areas to them in which, through their study and application of sound tactics and technique, they can exploit the situation that's been created. They can counter the Communist plan that's embodied in COSVN 9 and 14 and I am confident they will do so. I really can't tell you any more than that for publication because I reckon the VC read *"The Hurricane"* also.

HURRICANE: *Earlier you mentioned that you foresee a "hiatus of some degree" in III Corps although the war's not over. And there have been articles recently comparing the situation in III Corps to the situation in IV Corps where it was possible to remove all the U.S. troops. Are we now approaching the point where the bulk of U.S. ground troops can be withdrawn from III Corps without endangering security?*

DAVISON: No, I think there are still a number of tasks yet to be done and I think that the withdrawal schedule as set forth by the President is probably just about right. Whether there could be any acceleration in that, I don't know, but it is possible in time. The assessment that I was talking about earlier can't be made overnight. We have to allow this situation to cook along for awhile and we have to start setting our hands to the remaining tasks. Then I would say, along about October—as we get well into the withdrawal of the 50,000 that's been announced by the President—is the time to make a judgment as to whether we've made sufficient progress to perhaps accelerate the withdrawal. It's just too soon to tell right now. It's too early to make any cause and effect judgments and I think that any comparison with the situation down in IV Corps is not valid because there are too many differences between the political, economic and social situation in IV Corps and that which pertains in III Corps.

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"Probably the most important result of all of this is that we have written what you might call an insurance policy for the success of the Vietnamization program and the withdrawal of U.S. forces..."

HURRICANE: *How would you characterize some of these things? Would the strategic situation of Saigon being in III Corps be a major factor?*

DAVISON: That's certainly a point not without weight when you're trying to strike a balance on these things.

HURRICANE: *As chief of staff of the Army's Pacific Command and then of the U.S. Joint Pacific Com-*

mand, you must have dealt with Vietnam all day long every day. This is your first tour here. Is it different from what you expected?

DAVISON: No, not really, except I had absolutely no idea how damn busy I was going to be after I got here. In those two previous assignments, I made a number of trips out here. I guess I was out here about every four to five months and so I had a pretty fair working knowledge of what was going on. I certainly didn't have the sort of detailed knowledge that I have now acquired and am still acquiring and will continue to acquire. But I think that I had a pretty fair background against which to start working into my responsibilities as II Field Force commander.

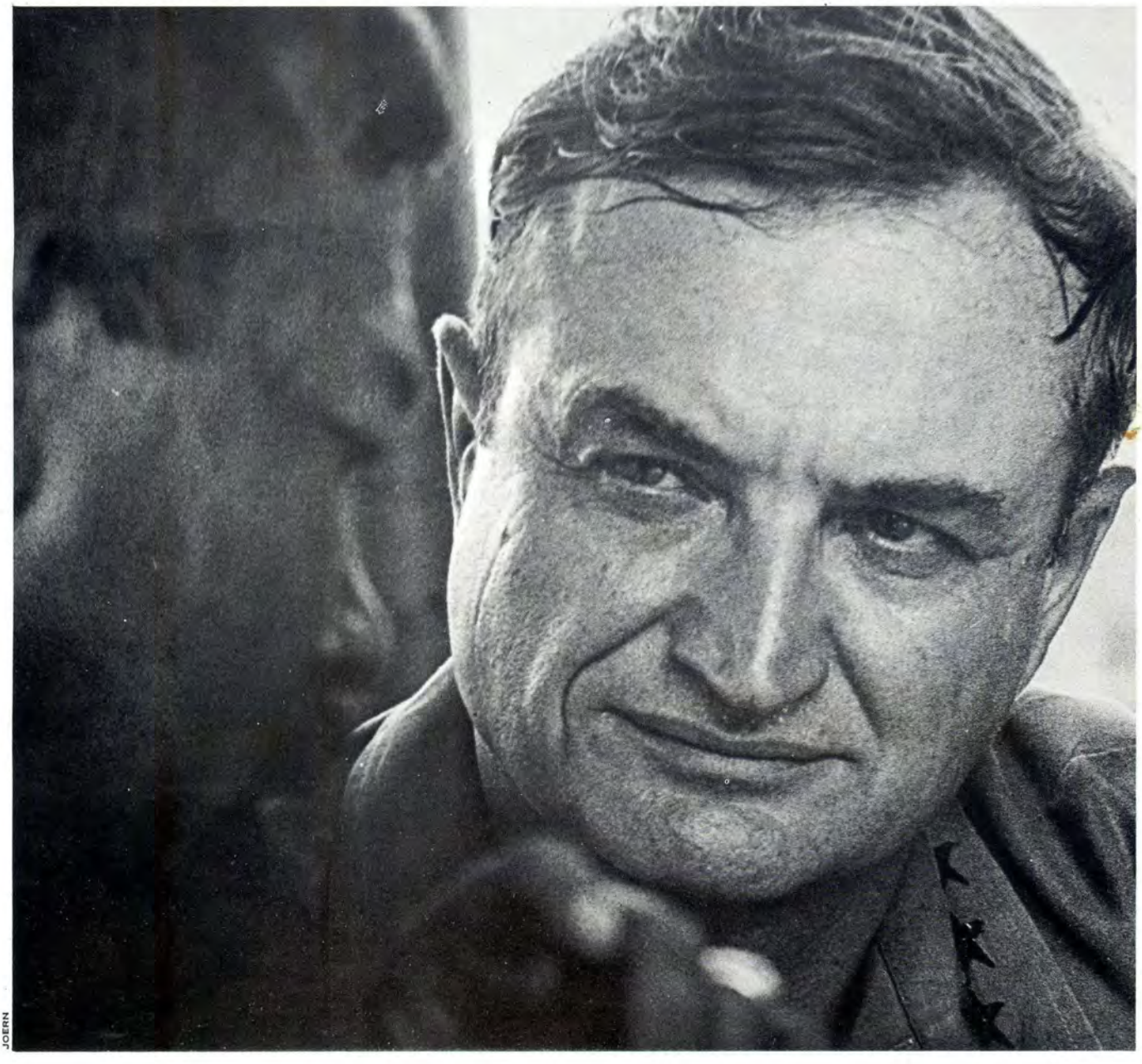
HURRICANE: *How do you find the American GI as a soldier in Vietnam?*

DAVISON: Well, I find him a pretty great guy by and large. During our Cambodia Operation, I spent almost every day in Cambodia and spent a lot of time talking to our men up there and it was inspirational to me. I always came away from it, number one, having learned something from the grunts because they can point out things to a general that are good for a general to know, and, secondly, I always came away from talking to them determined that I was going to work even harder in my responsibilities because they deserve every bit of support that we can give them.

HURRICANE: *Do they feel that they're getting the support they deserve from the folks back home?*

DAVISON: No, not really. I guess there are three questions that I got the most from talking to them. One was at the beginning of the operation. Almost universally they wanted to know why we hadn't done this sooner. And the second question came up as the operation went on. They couldn't understand why the newspapers and magazines at home didn't take a more sympathetic approach or a more appreciative approach to the danger and the damn hard work and the sacrifice that they were making out there in the jungles of Cambodia to scarf up all the enemy's supplies. And then the third thing they always asked me was: "What's the policy going to be on drops?"

"The only judgment you can make is that they (Vietnamese troops) have conducted highly effective military operations."



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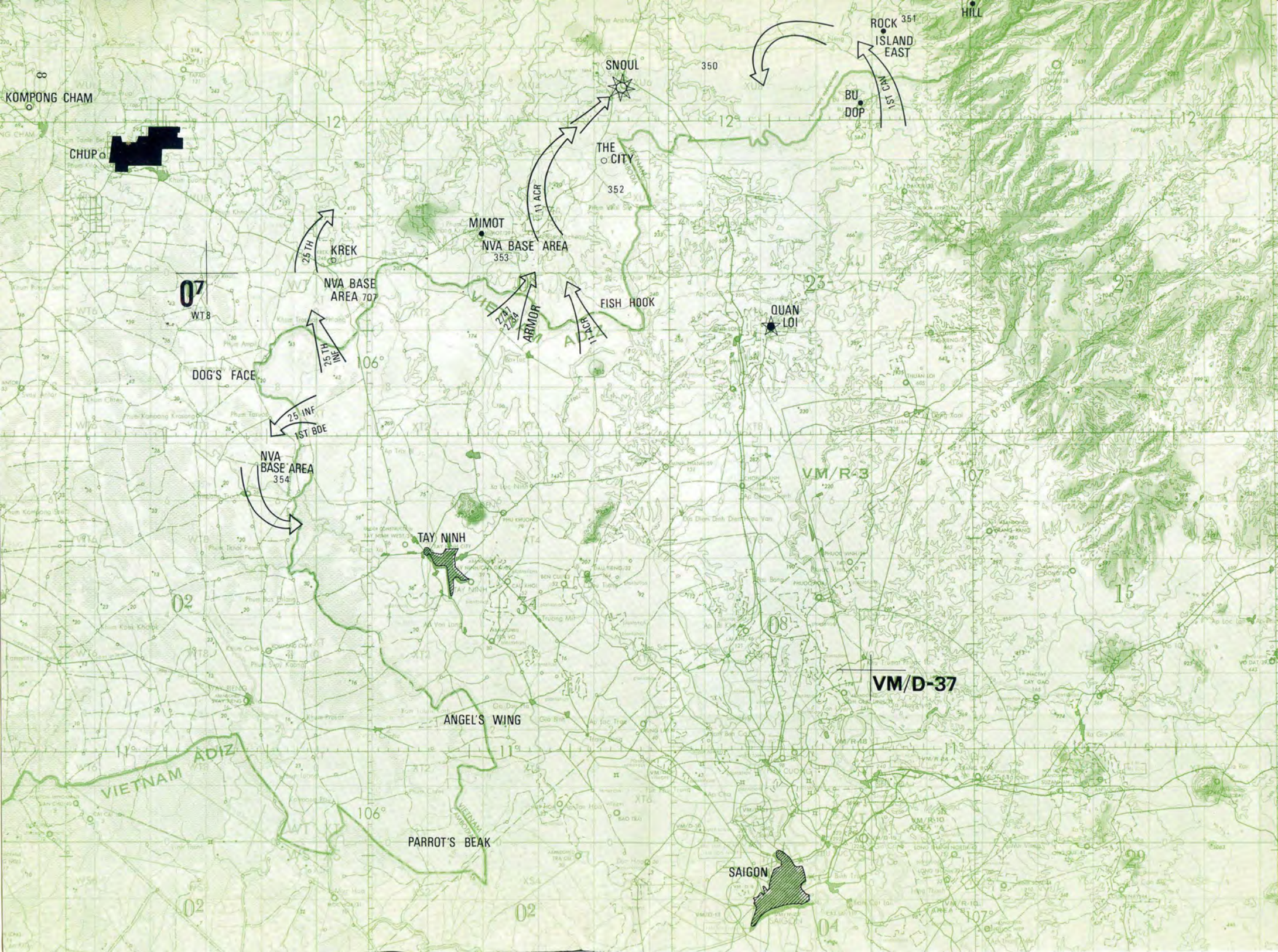
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U.S. Forces in Cambodia

1 May–30 June 1970

by Specialist 4 Ray Smietanka

SLOWLY, THE SUN ROSE ON A NEW MONTH AND A NEW CAMBODIA.

Once inviolable, broad expanses of Cambodian jungle now stretched open in the cool dawn while thousands of American soldiers prepared, in President Nixon's words, "to get at the heart of the trouble."

In the wispy glow of early daylight, just where Vietnamese jungle ended and Cambodian jungle began in the Fish Hook was a matter for cartographers. All the average GI knew from months of experience was that there was an invisible line from which the enemy could assail but behind which he was himself unassailable. Until May 1, 1970.

Throughout the Vietnam War, the U. S. had strictly adhered to a policy that Cambodian soil was off-limits. However, the enemy had maintained a more self-serving course, using the untouchable Cambodian jungle as a vast sanctuary for troops and supplies. Geography was half the Communists' advantage.

The western border of the III Corps Tactical Zone (CTZ) is marked by two massive Cambodian salients, the Parrot's Beak to the south and the Fish Hook farther north, each thrusting deep into Vietnam.

These geographical tumors had for years allowed the enemy to safely collect men and supplies in areas as close to Saigon, according to President Nixon, "as Baltimore is to Washington." They were used, for example, as staging points for the Communist offensive against the capital during Tet of 1968.

But, the situation was reaching a dangerous level. American troops were withdrawing, another 150,000 promised by next spring, while North Vietnamese troops continued to pour south through Laos and into the Cambodian sanctuaries.

Allowing the enemy to continue glutting these border depots posed a critical problem for the safety of U. S. forces scheduled to stay behind. Wouldn't it be logical for the enemy to launch a large scale offensive, on the order of Tet 1968, when U. S. forces had been considerably reduced? According to intelligence, this seemed to be exactly the Communists' strategy.

Tanks of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment rumble down a side road near Memot, Cambodia.

In the meantime, the Communists had become embroiled in problems of their own. A now-hostile Cambodian government had shut off their main supply port of Sihanoukville and promised to at least make life difficult for Cambodian-based VC/NVA forces. The overthrow of the Cambodian government now became a Communist objective.

With the enemy thus distracted, the time might never again be more propitious for the U. S. and South Vietnamese to wipe out the sanctuaries.

Now May was dawning in Vietnam. In Washington it was still April 30th and President Nixon was preparing to lay before the nation the alternatives America faced:

"First, we can do nothing," he would say, adding however: "Americans remaining in Vietnam after our next withdrawal would be gravely threatened.

"Our second option is to provide massive military assistance to Cambodia...Our third is to go to the heart of the trouble. That means cleaning out major North Vietnamese and Viet Cong occupied sanctuaries."

Final plans for the implementation of that "third alternative" were coordinated the day before at Quan Loi near the Cambodian border by LTG Michael Davison, II Field Force commander, and staff officers from the participating units. Toan Than (Total Victory) 43 was scheduled for 7 a.m. the next morning, two hours before the President's address.

In appearance, the initial U. S. thrust resembled a giant pincer, whose prongs would jab northward several miles apart into the underside of the Fish Hook. The objectives—NVA Base Areas (BA) 352 and 353—had been softened in the pre-dawn hours by six B-52 strikes, heavy tactical air raids and artillery fire. Participating in the thrust were heliborne troops of the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) and mechanized and armor units of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, as well as elements of the ARVN Airborne Division.

Before the units moved out, psychological operations aircraft dropped millions of leaflets alerting Cambodian

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civilians to possible danger and instructing them on how to avoid injury.

As the operation continued beyond the border through the Fish Hook and towards Cambodian Highway 7, U.S. troops were pleasantly surprised at the lack of resistance.

"Beforehand, we were all psyched up for quite a bit of trouble," says Specialist 4 Dexter Steven, a Sheridan tank gunner with I Troop, 3rd Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry. "But when we crossed over the border there just wasn't any."

Apparently uneasy after South Vietnamese moves into the Parrot's Beak earlier, enemy units had decided the Fish Hook was no longer as secure an area as they once thought it to be.

Colonel Donn A. Starry, commander of the 11th ACR, described the initial thrust as "classic tank warfare," explaining that,"airmobile troops were inserted deep and we linked up with them with cavalry."

Streaking through the Fish Hook, the 11th reached Cambodian highway 7 north of BA 353 and then literally raced up the well-kept road northeast to Snoul where on May 4 it overwhelmed the first significant enemy resistance, killing 138 VC and NVA in the process.

Meanwhile, to the east of the Snoul column, the 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry was locating the first large enemy supply cache. Known later as The City, its population consisted of more than 1300 individual weapons, 136 heavy machine guns and mortar tubes, as well as more than two million rounds of various caliber ammunition.

On May 6 , two new initiatives were launched into Cambodia by U. S. forces—Toan Than (TT) 44 and 45.

TT 44 consisted of a move by the 1st Brigade of the 25th Infantry Division into NVA BA 354 along the western border of Tay Ninh Province. This operation would last 8 days.

TT 45 was initiated by elements of the 1st Cavalry Division into enemy BA 351 northeast of the Fish Hook and the results over the next seven weeks were some of the most spectacular cache finds of the entire Cambodian incursion, among them Shakey's Hill and Rock Island East.

After the drive of May 1st into the Fish Hook and the subsequent charge to Snoul, the operation "settled down" to the tedious task of hunting out enemy storage areas.

The Cambodian campaign was unlike large-scale land offensives of other American wars. It was not a Normandy or a Meuse-Argonne. Where possible, infantry land movement was avoided in favor of airmobile transportation. Instead of a vast American front sweeping into Cambodia, the dense jungle terrain dictated that objective areas be peppered with fire support bases, each used as a center of operations by exploring infantry units, supported by artillery.

"Perhaps it would be better to consider this as merely an extension of the existing search and seize area of operations," said Colonel Elmer Pendleton, assistant chief of staff for operations, II Field Force.

"We established a network of fire support bases in areas of suspected enemy supply caches," he said. "After a fire support base was established, infantry units would be airlifted in."

From there, Private First Class Michael Combs, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry explained that, "we'd just go out and do our thing."

The infantry's "thing" consisted of plodding through countryside often so dense that constant contact had to be maintained with an overhead helicopter just so a unit could find out where it was going.

The discovery of The City was probably typical of the manner in which many of the cache finds were made.

First sighted by a helicopter observer, The City was so well covered by thick jungle that it was detected only because the pilot was flying at nearly tree top level. The next day the 1/5th Cav was airlifted into the nearest fire support base, Terri Lynn, five miles to the north of what was then just a "suspected cache site."

Arriving at the fire support base, elements of the unit deployed to the south and, after breaking through jungle, located the mammoth cache the next day.

However, it wasn't always that difficult.

"In some instances, an enemy unit might use an identical process to hide all the caches in its area—a sort of standard operating procedure," said Colonel Pendleton. "All we had to do then was find one cache and we'd know how the rest would be hidden."

For example, Colonel Pendleton says that one enemy unit used to hide its supplies under burned out houses, in the belief that no one would check there.

1ST AIR CAV

A 1st Air Cav soldier inspects a Communist bunker in Base Area 352 while fellow Skytroopers keep a wary lookout for enemy snipers.

"Many times they'd even burn out the house themselves just to hide supplies underneath," he says.

As the days passed, it became apparent through intelligence and refugee reports that one of the most fertile hunting areas for enemy supplies might be NVA BA's 350 and 351 northeast of the Fish Hook, north of Bu Dop. The discovery of Rock Island East and Shakey's Hill were to drive this point home dramatically.

Rock Island East, uncovered in the early part of May, yielded nearly a thousand weapons and four million rounds of ammunition, as well as 2,200 tons of rice and tons of other ordnance and mechanical supplies.

Shakey's Hill, discovered in latter May, produced a harvest of 170 tons of weapons and munitions, including 63 flamethrowers, 32 mortars, and 100 machine guns.

Prior intelligence was invaluable in directing operations into areas at least close to sites.

"I mean they didn't tell us: 'You'll find 300 rifles behind the green rock left of the purple rubber tree," as one II Field Force operations officer put it. "But the intelligence people at least got us into general areas."

During the middle of May, the 25th Infantry Division moved troops into two areas west of the Fish Hook, BA 707 on May 9 and BA 353 on May 15.

In these initiatives, elements of the 25th located what is considered to have probably been the site of the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN), the Communist command post for the entire war. When Tropic Lightning troops moved into the area, southwest of the town of Memot, it found an awesome amount of records and documents, although apparently higher ranking members of COSVN had fled shortly before.

Battles and sometimes wars have hinged on the capture of just a single document. The capture of what amounted to more than six and a half tons of enemy documents is considered to have been a prize achievement of the entire Cambodian operation.

"The potential for intelligence here is gigantic," said Colonel C. F. McKee, assistant chief of staff for intelligence, II Field Force.

"Just one of these documents could contain the key for the main points in the enemy's entire strategy.

"We found rice receipts and payroll records going back years. These alone, for example, have helped us determine how many casualties have been inflicted."

As the June 30 deadline for American withdrawal approached, cache hunting progressed at a feverish

plows were requested. We put the plows out front, went in and cleared the area.

"On May 29, the 199th made contact again while investigating several caches east of Myron. They lost two men before pulling back. Again S-3 requested the plows and we went in and secured the area."

After 20 days in the cache laden Fish Hook region, military officials estimated that only 30 percent of the sanctuary areas had been uncovered. There was doubt all the areas could be searched before President Nixon's June 30 deadline for the withdrawal of American troops in Cambodia. Realizing this, it was then decided to send land clearing units into the Fish Hook area.

According to Major Thomas J. Kerver, assistant G-3, Plans, II Field Force, there was only speculation as to what the results of the operation would be, but in his words, "We didn't know what to expect, but we knew it would be something big."

"Our objective in this operation was to gain entry into active areas of the Fish Hook where enemy contact was heavy," Major Kerver added. "We felt that by going in there we would run into heavy enemy activity," he said.

The 60th Land Clearing Company, in tactical support of C Company, 1st Squadron, 11th ACR was then sent south of Snoul in the Fish Hook region. Cutting began June 4. The 984th joined them June 15 after completing their cut out at Binh Son.

According to Major Kerver, the initial plan was for the two units to start several miles inside Cambodia and cut, in a Y pattern, toward the border, but due to the weather and the numerous amounts of supplies uncovered, the plan had to be altered.

"We started in the areas we knew would be hot and then planned to work south near the border, but we ran into so much stuff, and the weather bogged down our tracks to the point where our progress was very slow," Major Kerver said. "But of course in an operation like this, we measure our success on what we find."

During the first several days of cutting resistance was light, but after the enemy had a chance to regroup, every day meant contact. During the operation, 56 separate contacts were reported.

As the withdrawal date loomed closer and the mechanized units continued to plow into Communist territory, a series of constant ambushes plagued the operation. On one morn-

A column of Rome plows moves out of a night defensive position to a new area along the Cambodian border.

"I figured we'd be coming sooner or later..."

by Lieutenant Rusty Brown

THE FIRST DAY OUT you could see the differences. In some ways it was the same on both sides—the red dirt that looked like the clay hinterlands of Georgia. ("Looks like Forsyth County back home.") But the checkerboard landscape so familiar to the armored cavalrymen stopped at the border. Looking across a field for three or four hundred yards without seeing a crater or a tank trail—that too was different. The farms, low, wet and untrammeled, were surrounded by miles of grey, split-rail fence dividing cattle from rice crop. Little farm houses stood in clumps of bamboo shaded by tall palms, their upturned eaves a testament that this was the other side of the map's thick, black line...Tay Ninh, Viet Nam/Memot, Cambodia.

When the column of tracks passed the villagers, their upturned faces were as much an indication as the upturned eaves. Fear and curiosity. The old were cautious and the eyes of the young were wide with wonder. Some things are learned quickly. As the tracks rumbled past, some of the bystanders raised a hand, two fingers forming a "V" (Victory? Peace? Hello, friend?). The gesture was always returned, and the silent communication made a poignant picture—a gritty twenty-one-year-old behind a machine gun trading a symbol with a five-year-old on his mother's hip.

The column moved off the road at a right angle, rolling easily over the low brush. First the land sloped downward and then rose as they snaked through the undergrowth and the open stretches. One personnel carrier became mired in a low spot and the column stopped in the late morning sun.

"This your first day here?"

"Yeah, I figured we'd be coming sooner or later, everybody else is here. We moved five times in the last six days so we knew something was up. Guys were taking bets on it. Some money changed hands when we crossed that border. I'm betting we move again...guess it depends on what we find here."

The engine died and the driver popped out of his hatch and asked for a light.

"This sun is wicked."

"What do you think about Cambodia?"

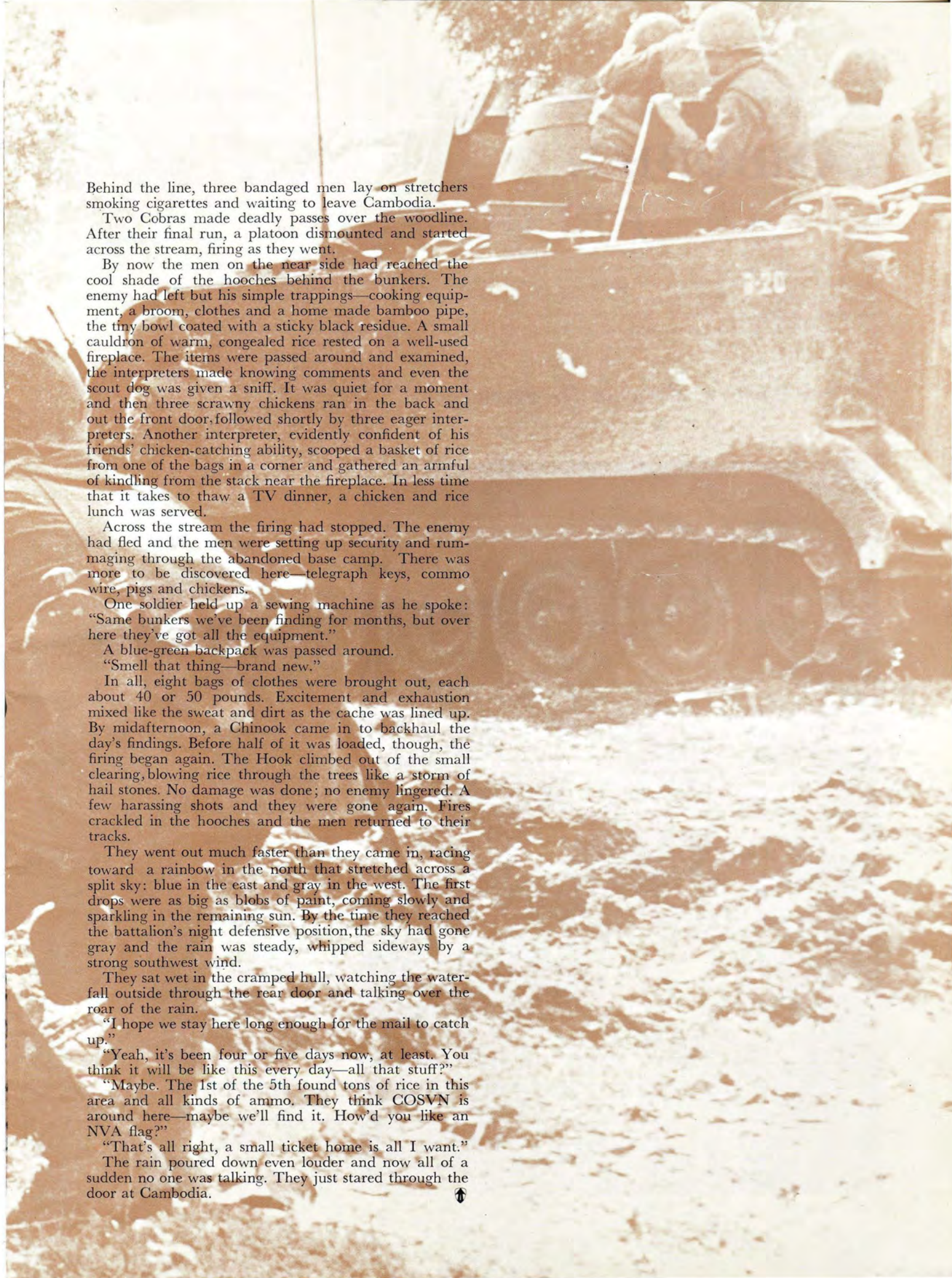
"I don't know, I've got a buddy in the third platoon that has nine days to go; ask him what he thinks. I'd just as soon fight them here, I suppose. Nui Ba Den, where we've been, is a bitch. Rocks and caves...they hide all over...this is a lot more open." Others nodded agreement.

The column began to move again and the still air became a pleasant breeze. As they paralleled one of the long gray fences, a panorama of rice paddies, grazing cattle and tall stately trees passed by for ten minutes. They left the farm land behind, turning for higher ground, barren laterite and thick, ugly shrubs. A LOH flew just above the tree tops.

The track commander pulled one earphone away from his head and turned to the others.

"They're in contact up front."

It wasn't far up front. As the track rolled toward the apex of the hill, firing could be heard: first the rattle of M-60's and then the thin overhead crack of return fire. Eight tracks were on line facing a woodline 200 yards away across low brush and a small stream. To the right of the line, soldiers were firing into two bunkers 20 yards apart. Off to the left and not far ahead were four enemy, three dead and one wounded.



Behind the line, three bandaged men lay on stretchers smoking cigarettes and waiting to leave Cambodia.

Two Cobras made deadly passes over the woodline. After their final run, a platoon dismounted and started across the stream, firing as they went.

By now the men on the near side had reached the cool shade of the hooches behind the bunkers. The enemy had left but his simple trappings—cooking equipment, a broom, clothes and a home made bamboo pipe, the tiny bowl coated with a sticky black residue. A small cauldron of warm, congealed rice rested on a well-used fireplace. The items were passed around and examined, the interpreters made knowing comments and even the scout dog was given a sniff. It was quiet for a moment and then three scrawny chickens ran in the back and out the front door, followed shortly by three eager interpreters. Another interpreter, evidently confident of his friends' chicken-catching ability, scooped a basket of rice from one of the bags in a corner and gathered an armful of kindling from the stack near the fireplace. In less time that it takes to thaw a TV dinner, a chicken and rice lunch was served.

Across the stream the firing had stopped. The enemy had fled and the men were setting up security and rummaging through the abandoned base camp. There was more to be discovered here—telegraph keys, commo wire, pigs and chickens.

One soldier held up a sewing machine as he spoke: "Same bunkers we've been finding for months, but over here they've got all the equipment."

A blue-green backpack was passed around.

"Smell that thing—brand new."

In all, eight bags of clothes were brought out, each about 40 or 50 pounds. Excitement and exhaustion mixed like the sweat and dirt as the cache was lined up. By midafternoon, a Chinook came in to backhaul the day's findings. Before half of it was loaded, though, the firing began again. The Hook climbed out of the small clearing, blowing rice through the trees like a storm of hail stones. No damage was done; no enemy lingered. A few harassing shots and they were gone again. Fires crackled in the hooches and the men returned to their tracks.

They went out much faster than they came in, racing toward a rainbow in the north that stretched across a split sky: blue in the east and gray in the west. The first drops were as big as blobs of paint, coming slowly and sparkling in the remaining sun. By the time they reached the battalion's night defensive position, the sky had gone gray and the rain was steady, whipped sideways by a strong southwest wind.

They sat wet in the cramped hull, watching the waterfall outside through the rear door and talking over the roar of the rain.

"I hope we stay here long enough for the mail to catch up."

"Yeah, it's been four or five days now, at least. You think it will be like this every day—all that stuff?"

"Maybe. The 1st of the 5th found tons of rice in this area and all kinds of ammo. They think COSVN is around here—maybe we'll find it. How'd you like an NVA flag?"

"That's all right, a small ticket home is all I want."

The rain poured down even louder and now all of a sudden no one was talking. They just stared through the door at Cambodia.

by Specialist 5 Ray Anderson

CAMBODIAN REFUGEES

Without a Home in the Homeland

GINDER

THE DESIRED RESULT OF WAR, as in chess, is the calculated destruction of an opposing force. Instead of the contrasting squares of the chessboard there is the topography of the battle area. Instead of playing pieces and their corresponding moves, the manpower and firepower of the battleground: a rational progression of moves and strikes designed to produce war's checkmate.

But the battlefield is not an absolute of 64 squares where the casualties are bits of ivory and the only loss is mental anguish. Battles, unlike chess matches, involve human lives and are seldom fought in areas free of noncombatants.

Allied intervention of Communist sanctuaries in Cambodia was no exception. Cambodian noncombatants required protection.

Allied air and artillery strikes had prepared the area for troop insertion, but inadvertently left many people homeless. Memot, a pastoral area in Cambodia's Fish Hook region surrounded by rubber trees and clusters of yellowing French buildings, became the move's focal point. Palm-lined roads coverging as its center brought hundreds of forlorn sarong-clad Cambodians. Those that couldn't be moved by Chinook, slick, Caribou, or truck had to walk, carrying precious burdens of children and utilitarian goods.

Immediate action was necessary, and men in the 16 platoons of the 2nd Civil Affairs Company were charged with the responsibility for the care and control of the dislocated. Lieutenant Colonel Harold Madden, 2nd CA Company Commander, explained, "Our original objective was to leave the Cambodians where they were, and bring the needed food and other supplies to them."

The combined problems of tactical operations and refugee movement eliminated that possibility, and, as Colonel Madden quickly added, "Our primary mission became help for those affected one way or another by our military operations."

Special teams were created and attached to tactical units—1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, and 25th Infantry Division—near the Cambodian border. From these rear areas more than 50 company members went forward to locate and treat

For the young and old alike—a long wait to return home in Cambodia.

MANCUSI

With their meager possessions, Cambodian refugees wait for processing at a roadside checkpoint. Displaced persons were often injured moving through formerly secure areas.

injured civilians, assist with interpretation, coordinate the efforts of local military units and the Government of Vietnam's ministry of Social Welfare, and also coordinate the distribution of captured rice.

First Lieutenant Dennis A. Levesque was one of those fifty. The Amesbury, Mass., native was attached to the 3rd Brigade, 1st Cav, and worked out of Fire Support Base Terry Lynn, where Allied airstrikes and operations had terrified many of the local people.

In the village of Xa Nua a few miles down Highway 7, Lieutenant Levesque said, "They left everything behind them, with the probable exception of food to last them a few days. It was like entering a ghost town!" The most frightening aspect of this evacuation to many was the possibility of killing innocent civilians wandering aimlessly about Cambodia's previously serene forests.

Life came to a complete standstill: no market, school, or institution associated with a viable community was operating. Therefore, team members like Lieutenant Levesque spent most of their time going to villages for MEDCAPs, checking for future sites, planning future operations, and demonstrating to the confused, frightened Cambodians that the military might they were witnessing was not directed at them. The task was made considerably easier by the infantrymen of the 3rd Brigade, who, Lieutenant Levesque said, "Have really taken this program to heart. It's been a real asset having them play with children, smile at old people, and pass out candy."

But smiles and candy won't repair physical damage. Approximately 100 meters south of the fire support base on Highway 7, a cluster of thatched-roof huts illustrated another problem. Six charred pillars were all that remained of one house, a poignant reminder of a passing gunship.

Captain Sam Short of the 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry, Lieutenant Levesque and Cambodian interpreters brought relief to the occupants of the charred homes. The young widow and mother of three greeted everyone with a shy grin and gratefully accepted bags of rice, vegetables, chickens, and a confiscated bicycle. Her apparent cheer typified the attitudes of the many natives who have overcome fright when shown a little kindness.

The daily MEDCAP provided another step in the right direction. By noon the same day, the previously deserted asphalt Highway 7 was filled with bikes, oxcarts, and conventional leg power—people on their way to a magical cure for a variety of ailments: boils, infected cuts, a case of tuberculosis. Some of the curious were simply waiting to get a clean band-aid to show admiring neighbors. The psychology of mutual trust was working. The morning's solemn, wary looks were replaced by grins and occasional laughter. An elderly man bared his betel-covered teeth in unabashed joy after receiving a box of licorice for enduring the discomfort of a shot.

The moment's laughter did little, however, to mollify many of the distraught peasants. An interpreter indicated that although the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong frequently used the highway and purchased rice, they had not bothered the natives.

One particular hamlet chief was so upset he had his people pack enough food and belongings for a lengthy trip to their former hamlet some 100 miles south. Said one civil affairs officer: "There is nothing we

can do but explain that it is to their advantage to stay where they are. Once they move we are in no position to assist them or protect them from airstrikes and enemy terrorism."

Others overcame their initial fright and returned home after a little coaxing from friends and relatives or aid from the Americans. Lieutenant Levesque explained, "Everything with no military significance is returned to the Cambodians."

Those people near Fire Support Base Terry Lynn were relatively happy, secure, and well-supplied. Those near Memot, Snoul and Svay Rieng weren't as lucky.

An Loc, a small hamlet 70 miles north of Saigon, became home for more than 1,000 of these unfortunates. On the evening of May 2, Captain Peter C. Dinklage, Commander of the 10th Platoon, 2nd Civil Affairs Company in An Loc was told to expect a "couple hundred refugees."

Preparations were hurriedly made in coordination with the Vietnamese Social Welfare Ministry and Binh Long Province Refugee Advisor Jerry Roebuck to house the displaced Cambodians in An Loc's Montagnard Boarding School. Unit B33 of the 5th Special Forces Group provided medical assistance and sanitary facilities for the two-and-a-half-acre compound near the hamlet's center.

Everyone was more or less prepared for the refugees' arrival. Captain Dinklage waited at Hon Quan's small airstrip that evening to guide the in-bound Chinooks. When the dust had settled shortly after midnight, a grand total of 506 people had disembarked from the eight cargo helicopters. So began the refugee center's brief but exciting history. In less than one week the population had swollen to over 800, and promised to reach 1,000 as more Cambodians were brought from camps near Tay Ninh and Go Dau Ha, where most of the refugees were Vietnamese.

The crowded camp residents were taking the confusion with a great deal of composure and Oriental patience. Although somewhat bewildered by the sudden environmental change they appeared quite happy. People were sleeping in and beneath the long white clapboard buildings. The whitewash, long decayed, bore the fingerprints of countless children who had previously used the structures as classrooms. Soot clung to the rafters and seeped through the loose floor planking as they built cooking fires from scraps of wood and ammunition boxes, their affable expressions rarely changing. Additional living space was created from three large Army tents donated by one of the nearby units. People with rakes, picks, and shovels did their best to make the three tents liveable. The facilities they were living in were temporary as best, and there were increasing signs of unrest among both the Cambodians and the An Loc natives. Lieutenant Don Ellen of the 10th Platoon summarily answered, "We don't know how long they are going to be here." Finding the solution didn't take too long. The camp had been operating for approximately four weeks when its operators were told to begin moving the refugees back. "It's a real switcher," Major Robert Wolff, 2nd CA executive officer, said.

Many of the camp's tenants were wandering around one of the whitewashed classrooms where interpreters and civil affairs people were attempting to coordinate Cambodians with paperwork. They were waiting for final processing instructions before returning to their home deep within the Fish Hook. The required three interpreters made the job more difficult as each family was photographed, fingerprinted, and issued a safe conduct pass.

Colonel Madden explained the magnitude of the problem. "We have to make them understand that they could run into automatic ambushes or worse during the hours of darkness." Therefore, the only restriction imposed on the returnees was a mandatory sunset to sunrise curfew. Coordinating with military units operating in Cambodia, especially ARVN, proved to be another problem. "We can't drop them into an area without the cooperation of the military unit because that would endanger their lives," he continued.

Gathering their worldly belongings and food supplements of rice, rolled oats, fish, oil, and a high protein substance donated by the people of the United States, the refugees boarded two-and-a-half-ton trucks waiting to bring them to the airport.

Otters from the" Big Daddy" Utility Airplane Company rested on the red dust and gravel surface like giant drab sparrows as their crews packed the innards with food, cooking utensils, mats, and weary people. The five Otters, making a total of 20 sorties that first day, returned 182 Cambodians. During the following days, a total of 777 were returned to the lush green airstrip at Memot. Some had been taken from hamlets 16 kilometers from the runway, but these had relatives aware of their return who had come in oxcarts to bring them back. The occasion became rather festive as the refugees were greeted by neighbors and relatives in the manner of long-lost friends.

Those still remaining in An Loc were speedily processed. The 51 that had come from the refugee camp at Tay Ninh were returned to the Cambodian border near Highway 1.

MANCUSI

Transportation expenses were paid by the Cambodian government while security was provided by the Vietnamese National Police.

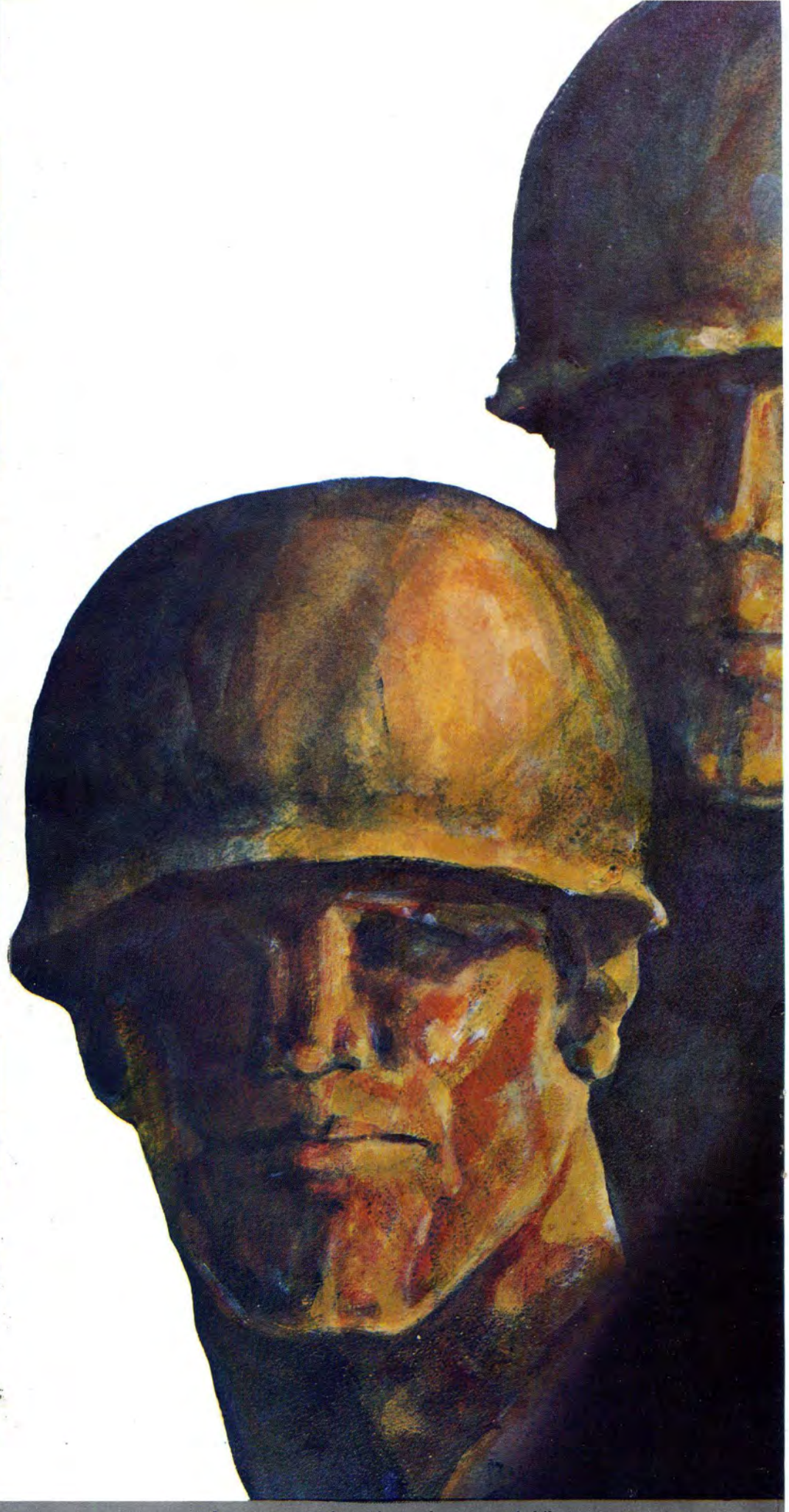
The Binh Long Province Chief invited 10 Cambodians to remain in Vietnam where they will be given jobs. The camp's remaining 163 people were identified as ethnic Vietnamese, and remained in Vietnam at their own request. They will be resettled in III and IV Corps.

One month after the action began, over 1,000 Cambodians had been resettled with little or no harm. It was the first chance many members of the 2nd Civil Affairs Company had to breath a sign of relief. Now "all" they had to do was make sure those resettled around Memot were in good health and adequately cared for, a job which was not completed for many months.

CAVANAUGH

As contested areas of Cambodia reverted to government control, refugees returned to their homes. Flights were arranged for those traveling long distances (above), others chose to return to close-by areas on foot.

CAMBODIA



Accompanying American and Vietnamese troops as they swept into Communist sanctuaries in Cambodia was a corps of combat correspon-

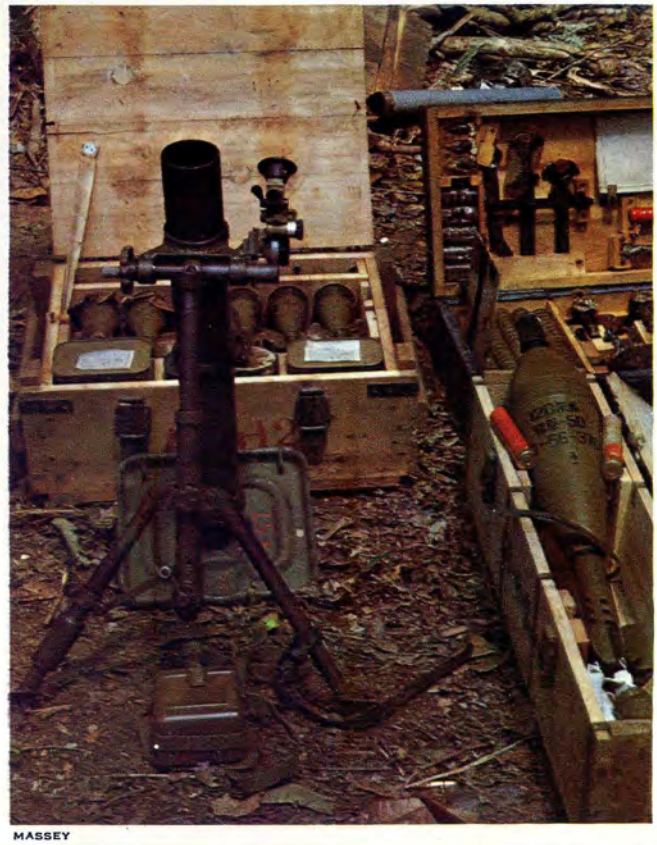
dents and photographers. Often traveling with spearhead units, these men recorded the events of the sixty-day incursion into the previously unassailable borderlands. Presented here, through the efforts of a few of these reporters, is a photo-journal of those eventful two months . . .

1

SWEET

2

CAVANAUGH



3

MASSEY

1. A tank of the ARVN 5th Cavalry Regiment operating with III Corps Task Force 333 pulls into a night defensive position near Svay Rieng.

2. An 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment personnel carrier serves as a command post directing units moving on Communist bases in the area.

3. New weapons and ammunition caches were uncovered throughout the border base areas

4

SKIFFINGTON

5

FINNEGAN

along the III Corps Tactical Zone (CTZ) boundaries.

4. U. S. mechanized forces moved rapidly in the initial days of the Cambodian Operation, maintaining pressure on Communist units.

5. Detainees were often able to provide significant intelligence concerning Communist plans throughout the Cambodian campaign.

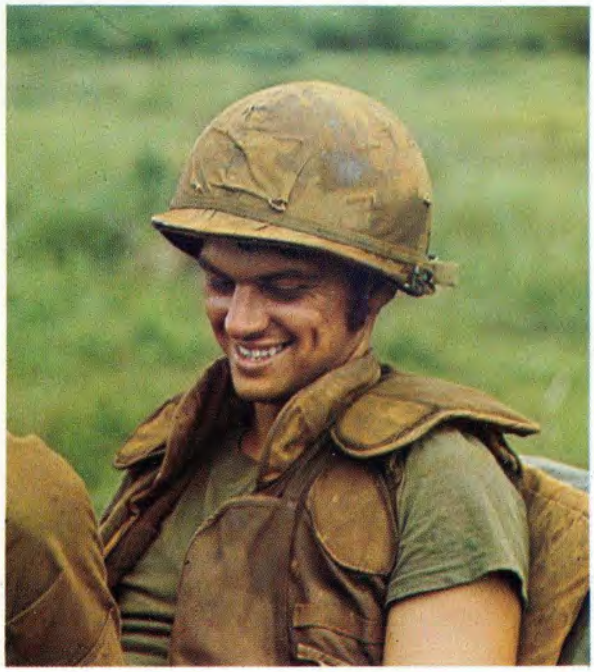
Civilians welcome U. S. mechanized units as they move into Cambodia.

1

1. While successful, the Cambodian Operation was not without cost. Many soldiers, Vietnamese and American alike, bore the anguish of combat injuries or paid the full measure of service to their respective countries.

FINNEGAN

2



3

SKIFFINGTON

2. The tension of moving into the unknown is reflected on the face of a Kit Carson Scout accompanying American troops in Cambodia.

3. Completing operations, soldiers felt a welcome relief as U. S. forces moved back to South Vietnam.

SKIFFINGTON

Returning troops of the U. S. 25th Infantry Division "pop smoke" as they pass a border marker designating the boundary between Cambodia and Vietnam.

Flight from Oppression

The Search for a New Life in Vietnam

by Specialist 4 Tim McGovern

MOST OF US HERE IN VIETNAM think often of returning home. But how pleasant would going home be if there were no home waiting? This was the question which plagued tens of thousands of ethnic Vietnamese who opted to return to the uncertainty of life in Vietnam rather than face the terrors of flaring war in Cambodia.

Ever since Vietnamese villages and hamlets became the focal point of the conflict in Vietnam, thousands of Vietnamese families have abandoned their homes in contested areas and sought refuge in camps set up by the Government of Vietnam for that purpose. Many Vietnamese simply gathered their possessions and fled to Cambodia to wait out the struggle. Other ethnic Vietnamese lived in the fertile ricelands west of Vietnam's III and IV Corps for generations before the 1954 Geneva Accords designated that area as Cambodia.

Recently, however, due to increased Communist activity in Cambodia and the resultant fear of all Vietnamese by the Cambodians and subsequent intimidation of some ethnic Vietnamese, they sought refuge in South Vietnam.

The May-June Allied incursion into Cambodia opened the door into South Vietnam for the refugees and the exodus began.

The great influx of refugees presented a prodigious challenge to the refugee program of the Republic of Vietnam. Upwards of 80,000 people have sought refuge in their homeland. The homeland has responded splendidly.

In III Corps, Tay Ninh Province, which shares more of the Cambodian border than any other South Vietnamese province, absorbed the greatest portion of the refugees.

The central figure of the effort, however, was Tay Ninh Province Chief Lieutenant Colonel Le Van Thien who, as observers noted, played a major role in the direction and execution of the relief effort. The colonel displayed deep concern for the welfare of the refugees at Phuoc Dien and became personally involved in the conduct of the operation. He was a frequent visitor to the camp.

From the first days, Phuoc Dien refugee camp, located just southwest of Tay Ninh, was a bustle of activity with refugees pouring in at the rate of more than 800 some days. During the first week of May, a total of 1,130 families (5,642 people) flooded into Phuoc Dien, most arriving with ARVN convoys returning from Svay Rieng, 30 miles inside Cambodia. The ARVN trucks

MCGOVERN

had taken troops and supplies into the city and found the multitude of Vietnamese there desiring repatriation.

Until that time, most of the refugees were those who had fled from rural areas in the Parrot's Beak, for the most part individuals who had lived in Cambodia only in recent years. ARVN operations in Cambodia during April were responsible for this early exodus. Of 1,417 refugees received at An Thanh between March 28 and May 2, only 135 were males, indicating to province officials that much of the male population in Cambodia was working with Communist elements, either willingly or unwillingly. Refugee women said later that their husbands and sons had been taken from them and were forced to assist in transporting materials for the Viet Cong.

By May 23, the total at Phuoc Dien had swollen to 17,340. And on May 26 another 198 families (1,040 people) arrived from the Chup Rubber Plantation in Cambodia. By May 30, 18,405 refugees had been received, including 3,460 men, 4,749 women and 10,196 children. The total rose above 20,000 by the first week in June and topped 24,000 by Independence Day.

In the province, the first reports of refugees crossing the border were received on March 25 when 30 refugees were reported to be at the border station on Highway 1. On March 27, Lieutenant Colonel Thien, called a meeting to discuss the Cambodian situation and named a delegation to visit the proposed reception sites in Hieu Thien District. As a result of this inspection, the first processing station was established March 28 at An Thanh in Hieu Thien District with a total of 51 people in camp the first day of operation, under control of the National Police.

From this beginning, the province mounted one of the smoothest and most effectively run relief operations ever

Processing centers were quickly established in Tay Ninh Province to coordinate the tremendous influx of ethnic Vietnamese who fled a growing Communist menace in Cambodia.

MCGOVERN

Carrying their homes with them, Vietnamese refugees from Cambodia wait in temporary shelters for relocation in South Vietnam.

seen in Vietnam, and one completely organized and directed by the Vietnamese province officials.

The committees appointed by the province chief to operate first the reception camp at An Thanh and later another camp at Phuoc Dien, brought to bear a coordinated effort of major provincial services: social welfare, health, and Rural Development Cadre; Vietnamese Information Service, National Police, public works, Phoenix program, ARVN and Regional Force personnel. All provided the support and services necessary to conduct a systematic relief effort of a magnitude hitherto unknown.

Further support was received from a wide range of private organizations including Saigon University student groups; the Vietnamese Red Cross, Saigon and Tay Ninh chapters; the Boy Scouts; various local high school student groups; and Cao Dai, Catholic and Buddhist relief associations. These volunteer groups contributed labor, money and foodstuffs.

The organization and execution of the relief effort by Vietnamese officials and organizations was nothing short of monumental. And a Vietnamese effort it was. American assistance was necessary only in limited amounts.

John C. Burmahln, Civil Operations and Rural Development Support (CORDS) refugee adviser for Tay Ninh Province, and ubiquitous visitor to Phuoc Dien, lauded the relief effort:

"The Vietnamese have responded with a great deal of initiative and organization and, under the leadership of the province chief, have appointed very capable committees to handle the reception of refugees. U. S. involvement has included only limited transportation, emergency water supply points, water trailers and donations of captured rice."

Johannes Hoeber, director of the refugee division of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), echoed Burmahln's praise of the effort.

"I've seen over 200 refugee camps in Vietnam and I'll have to say this looks like a model operation. It's most encouraging to see the work being done by the Vietnamese themselves."

III Corps Refugee Representative Charles W. Browne Jr. also extolled the conduct of the operation:

"It's outstanding. No question about that. I'm always amazed at how competent the Vietnamese officials are."

The seven committees established at Phuoc Dien handled every phase of the processing, care, feeding and protection of the multitude of refugees.

The receiving committee greeted the incoming refugees, administered to their immediate needs, logged them on record sheets, began administrative procedures and, through Rural Development Cadre, secured living accommodations for them. These consisted mainly of 179 empty rooms in shacks and 202 impromptu tents hastily erected.

The relief committee provided food: four kilograms of rice per individual, three to five dried fish per family each day and milk when available. Thirty-gallon water cans, sleeping mats and blankets also were distributed by the relief committee.

The health committee was responsible for medical assistance to sick or injured refugees. A major project was innoculating all of them against cholera and plague. Seriously injured or ill refugees were treated at Tay Ninh East Hospital.

The security section, comprised of National Police and Regional and Popular Forces, provided 24-hour security around the camp.

A psycological operations team, including Vietnamese Information Service personnel and Rural Development Cadre, accomplished a number of services for the refugees including locating friends and relatives in Vietnam and sponsoring entertainment at the camp.

Donations from private organizations and religious denominations were distributed to the refugees by the receiving committee.

The most notable committee was the clearance section. The National Police conducted a comprehensive investigation of all persons admitted to Phuoc Dien. Police clearance had to be obtained before a refugee could leave the camp. Everyone 15 years of age and older was required to complete a certified biography. After fingerprints were taken, an ID card and certificate were issued each individual.

Early in May, the police were processing 600 to 800 refugees every day.

According to Burmahln, "The National Police have done an exceptionally fine job in processing these people. And we in the province realize that the relief effort is helped greatly when the people are kept in the camp the shortest period of time possible."

Once police clearance was obtained, refugees could leave the camp by military vehicle, with the assistance of a religious group, with relatives or on their own.

Many of the refugees, however, had nowhere to go and remained at Phuoc Dien. But at least they have found a brief respite from terror, a period of safety, a day-to-day existence free from the fear that the war will engulf them at any moment. This was all most of them asked.

This is easily understood having heard the harrowing tales of life in Cambodia and daily harassment by Viet Cong and NVA troops.

One mother of seven said her husband and three sons were taken by the VC and forced to assist in the transportation of war materials. She and her four daughters arrived at Phuoc Dien with little hope of seeing the father and brothers again.

The Cambodians, with an ethnic dislike for all Vietnamese and under the pressure of recent warfare, also were responsible for some acts against non-combatants. Not able to distinguish Vietnamese nationals from Viet Cong, the Cambodians intimidated all Vietnamese in the early days of conflict in Cambodia.

At Phuoc Dien, work continued even beyond the major two-month Allied thrust. Refugees arrived daily, though in much smaller numbers. But they were leaving Phuoc Dien in greater numbers. Leaving to uncertain futures, true, but also leaving with renewed hope of finding a place to call their own. This was a hope which had been cultivated at Phuoc Dien by the Vietnamese workers. It certainly wasn't in the refugees' tired, desperate eyes when they came there.

THE SIGHT OF A WAR REFUGEE with everything he owns strapped to his back hurriedly escaping a combat region is a sad one. The sight of a wounded refugee lying near death in a Vietnamese hospital is sadder. Especially when the refugee is a three year old girl, totally unfamiliar with the ideological differences which lead men to war, but who abruptly becomes a victim of its most savage aspect.

The less seriously injured or ill of the refugees had been cared for at refugee centers. The seriously wounded or ill were delivered into the capable, if overworked, hands of the 10th Philippine Contingent Team at Tay Ninh Hospital. During May, 171 refugees were admitted to the hospital from the war-ravaged Cambodian theatre. Of those, 112 were ethnic Cambodians.

Under the direction of Doctor Nguyen Cong Ty, the Philippine medical crew, consisting of four doctors, four nurses and six medics, worked around the clock in cramped conditions in a heroic life-saving effort. One-hundred and sixty three refugees survived.

The 10th Philcon Team consisted of Doctors Lazaro R. Cristobal, Hector Garcia, Valentin Ecalnir and Ben Valerosa.

During the team's year in Vietnam, ending last April, a total of 10,835 operations were performed by the team and only 70 patients died in that period.

The hospital has an overall capacity for 316 patients. During the refugee influx peak, two and three patients were sharing some of the beds. Two temporary tents were set up to handle still more patients.

The Philcon team also provided food and some shelter for the families of many of the refugees who maintained a 24-hour vigil at the hospital.

The hospital staff has received little recognition for the outstanding feat they have accomplished. But, then, they haven't had much time for collecting bouquets.

The thanks they get, and most want, are the happy tears of mothers who have seen their children returned from death's door to them by the Philippine doctors.

Anxious mothers await treatment for their children at the 10th Phillipine Contingent Team dispensary in Tay Ninh.

MCGOVERN

Land Clearing Team

Rome Plows on the Border

by Specialist 4 Dave Massey

FOR THE MEN WHO ARE FIGHTING THE WAR IN VIETNAM from the cab of a Rome plow bulldozer, the work day begins at dawn and often ends sometime after midnight. Temperatures inside the cabs reach 130 degrees; red ants, which nest in the trees, sometimes make working almost impossible because of their painful bite; dust clings to their sweaty, unshaven faces and snipers make sudden death a constant companion. But the plow operators of a land clearing company are experts and take pride in their job.

They have been referred to as, "The grubbiest bunch I've ever seen," by First Lieutenant Norman Parker, platoon leader, 60th Land Clearing Company, 62nd Engineer Battalion based at Long Binh. They don't wear shirts because it's murderously hot under the flak jackets they must wear for protection against exploding mines and rocket propelled grenades (RPG's). When they can get away with it, they don't wear boots or socks.

"We don't have time to worry about how we look," said Specialist Richard Davis, plow operator for the 60th. "Sometimes we work 18 to 20 hours a day."

The Rome plow is a custom designed blade built by the Rome Plow Company of Cedartown, Georgia, and used on the powerful D7E bulldozer, organic to engineer units. It is referred to as a blade because it actually has a cutting edge which is sharpened daily. The blade is "canted" to the right and there is a heavy guide bar about three feet above the blade. The diagonal cant and the guide bar cause the trees and brush that are cut to fall off to the right of the dozer.

A land clearing company consists of 30 Rome plows and approximately 100 men, including operators, maintenance men, NCO's and officers. The teams receive rations and security from the tactical units they support. They may be deployed in any number from a single plow to the entire company, depending on the size and priority of the operation.

Before the decision to send troops into Cambodia was made, the 60th Land Clearing Company was operating in the Michelin Rubber region near Minh Than, clearing vast tracts of jungle in an area of repeated enemy activity. By removing the dense cover, they were denying its use to the Communists. The 984th, also a unit of the 62nd Engineer Battalion, was involved in a similar operation at Binh Son in support of the Thai's.

Elements of these Rome plow units moved into Cambodia May 3, two days after the first American troops crossed the border. A platoon of the 60th, led by Lt. Parker, was called in to open roads to the cache sites The City and Rock Island East.

Lieutenant Parker was proud of his men as he explained their mission during May. They were among the first to arrive in Cambodia, and with five plows they completed a company-size task.

"Our job was to make the cache sites accessible by improving or widening any trails or roads we found," Lt. Parker said, "but in several cases when the infantry couldn't go in, the plows would.

"On May 16, B Company, 199th Light Infantry Brigade was pinned down south of Fire Support Base (FSB) Myron. They found a bunker complex but couldn't get in because of heavy enemy contact, so the Rome

plows were requested. We put the plows out front, went in and cleared the area.

"On May 29, the 199th made contact again while investigating several caches east of Myron. They lost two men before pulling back. Again S-3 requested the plows and we went in and secured the area."

After 20 days in the cache laden Fish Hook region, military officials estimated that only 30 percent of the sanctuary areas had been uncovered. There was doubt all the areas could be searched before President Nixon's June 30 deadline for the withdrawal of American troops in Cambodia. Realizing this, it was then decided to send land clearing units into the Fish Hook area.

According to Major Thomas J. Kerver, assistant G-3, Plans, II Field Force, there was only speculation as to what the results of the operation would be, but in his words, "We didn't know what to expect, but we knew it would be something big."

"Our objective in this operation was to gain entry into active areas of the Fish Hook where enemy contact was heavy," Major Kerver added. "We felt that by going in there we would run into heavy enemy activity," he said.

The 60th Land Clearing Company, in tactical support of C Company, 1st Squadron, 11th ACR was then sent south of Snoul in the Fish Hook region. Cutting began June 4. The 984th joined them June 15 after completing their cut out at Binh Son.

According to Major Kerver, the initial plan was for the two units to start several miles inside Cambodia and cut, in a Y pattern, toward the border, but due to the weather and the numerous amounts of supplies uncovered, the plan had to be altered.

"We started in the areas we knew would be hot and then planned to work south near the border, but we ran into so much stuff, and the weather bogged down our tracks to the point where our progress was very slow," Major Kerver said. "But of course in an operation like this, we measure our success on what we find."

During the first several days of cutting resistance was light, but after the enemy had a chance to regroup, every day meant contact. During the operation, 56 separate contacts were reported.

As the withdrawal date loomed closer and the mechanized units continued to plow into Communist territory, a series of constant ambushes plagued the operation. On one morn-

A column of Rome plows moves out of a night defensive position to a new area along the Cambodian border.

ing minutes after the cutting began, the NVA hit five separate elements of the 11th ACR simultaneously—two fire support bases and three units on the road.

Another unit was hit seven times on the same day running escort for the Rome plows. So elusive was the enemy that officers speculated all seven attacks could have been made by the same NVA soldiers.

The operation began June 4 and terminated June 24 after 1,694 acres had been cut. Commenting on the unit's accomplishments, Major Kerver said, "Results of the operation will be measured at a later date. We don't know how much damage we did—we did limit the enemy's capabilities but the extent of damage and destruction is difficult to measure at this point."

The supplies uncovered included X-ray equipment, plasma, antibiotics, surgical equipment and morphine. Also found were water purification and malaria tablets, vitamins, two printing presses, 44 bicycles and 200 pounds of documents.

The cutting also uncovered communications equipment, small arms, automatic weapons, rocket launchers, 10,000 rounds of various caliber small arms ammunition and 500 mortar rounds.

Major Kerver felt the high contact rate was a good indication the operation was headed in the right direction, but there wasn't enough time to complete the job.

If the results of the accumulated documents show the operation was a success, the plow operators will have a right to be proud. Even though the mission was plagued with ambushes and mortar attacks, the men were glad for the chance to rip into the sanctuaries that had been off-limits for so long.

They feel they have a unique job and they like to talk about it. They know their mission is important and the consequences of a second rate job are costly.

"I have been in a lot of bad situations," commented Specialist Michael Bulceco, operator from the 60th, but the worst thing is operating lead plow.

"You can't see where you're going and you have to rely on the light observation helicopter for direction. You're out front by yourself and you know if there's an ambush you'll be the first one hit," Bulceco added. "It's really weird"

Several times when a cache or bunker is found, operators are ordered to go on dismount and assist in checking them out:

"We had been in the Fish Hook about 10 days," Bulceco said. "We found a bunker about 30 meters off the trail. Usually operators aren't ordered to go on dismount but this time I was. Along with a radio man, we went to check out the bunker. When we got there, we ran into a NVA soldier. For a second he just stared at us, and then he raised his rifle. The radio man hit the dirt just as the soldier was aiming. In that split second my whole life flashed in front of me. I thought I was a goner, but his weapon misfired and he ran off. I guess I was just lucky."

SPRIGGS

Sheridan tanks and armored personnel carriers of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment provide security for Rome plow operations.

Another fear the operators must contend with is RPG's. They are launched from a bazooka-like device held by one man. It can go through the cab of a Rome plow.

"They come from the jungle and you never see Charlie," said Specialist Richard Wentworth, a plow mechanic. "You feel helpless. If there is an ambush, we are supposed to drop back so the security can move in, but a lot of times we are blocked by trees or stumps and we're forced to stay in the line of fire."

Not until the men head back to their night defensive position (NDP) do they feel the pressure ease off.

"It's always good get to back to the NDP," said Wentworth, "but we still have a lot of work left. Sometimes we pull maintenance until 3:00 in the morning. We work all day and then we have to work all night to get the dozers ready for the next day."

The men know the plows must be kept in working condition to complete their mission. This means sharpening the blades changing the oil and cleaning the machines daily. According to Major William A. Hokanson, S-3, 62nd Engineer Battalion, each plow requires 60 to 70 gallons of gas and 70 gallons of water daily.

After the men return to the NDP, they can look forward to hot chow, mail and a cold beer. But after several hours of relaxation, it's back to work. If they aren't on the machines or welding a blade that has been destroyed by a land mine, they can be found filling sand bags, cleaning weapons or double checking their defenses. Some have time for writing letters, while others sit and stare blindly into the jungle wondering what Charlie has in mind.

Many times they must fight as infantrymen and not as mechanics or tractor drivers. There's no discipline problem, they look out for each other. Plows have names like "The Living End" or "Hey Jude" and "The Iron Coffin." They don't have to worry about their hair being a inch too long or if they shave every day. They're Jungle Eaters and they're proud of that name. They earned it.

South Vietnamese Forces in Cambodia

Standing Alone and Winning

SKIFFINGTON

by Specialist 4 John Perry

EVEN AS U. S. TROOPS PREPARED TO STRIKE COMMUNIST BASE AREAS and border sanctuaries across the Cambodian border in late April, more than 21,000 soldiers of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam were engaging concentrations of Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army (NVA) troops on the other side of the frontier.

The South Vietnamese push into Cambodia had been conceived as a totally ARVN operation. To be sure, there were aspects of a crusade, with 500,000 Vietnamese civilians inside Cambodia to be secured and repatriated.

American forces were anxious to retaliate against an enemy that had challenged them with hit-and-run tactics from the very beginning of the U. S. involvement in Vietnam and, at the same time, eliminate the base areas along the border from which the operations had been launched.

However, the U. S. troops operating in Cambodia were limited by a second boundary established by presidential order that limited their advance to 21.7 miles across the border.

ARVN troops knew no such boundaries, sweeping through the skies in Al Skyraiders, up the Mekong River with a flotilla of 70 gunships and across the broad Cambodian plains with tanks and armored personnel carriers.

Combat operations were forbidden within three miles of Phnom Penh, but even in the capital itself an ARVN command post had been established in the storied Hotel Royale.

Eventually, the ARVN strength grew to 40,000 while the American force—never more than 30,000—shrank daily as President Nixon's June 30 deadline for total U. S. withdrawal approached.

For the ARVN soldiers there was no immediate end in sight, with President Nguyen Van Thieu forseeing "no fixed deadline" for leaving Cambodia.

By the end of the joint two-month incursion, U. S. and ARVN troops together had killed more than 11,000 of the estimated 40,000 Communist soldiers who had been organizing and training in the border jungle.

In the estimation of most field commanders, however, a more lasting blow was struck the Communists by the capture of supplies: weapons, ammunition, rice and a host of logistical items ranging from telephones to typewriters.

For the ARVN troops, the real significance of the Cambodian operation was not the decimation of the elusive Viet Cong and NVA forces, but the positive affect on the Vietnamese soldiers themselves.

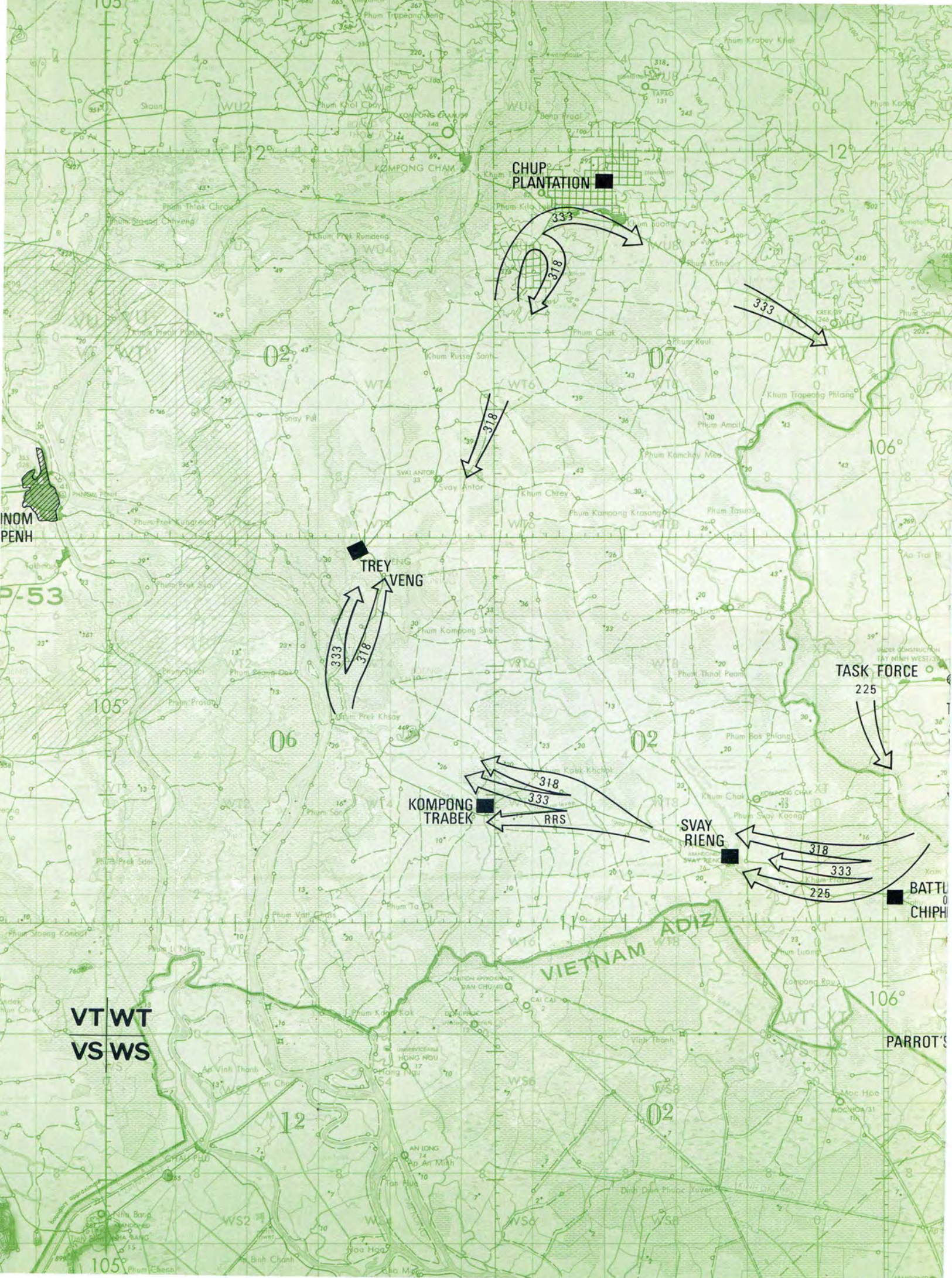
ARVN successes in Cambodia presented significant evidence that the 950,000-man army could fight and win on its own.

The morning of April 29, 1970, dawned hot in Vietnam. Sweeping across the upper Mekong Delta regions, the new sun burst upon the Tien Thuan Woods about 6:30 a.m.

The woods are a tangled mass of jungle tucked into a wide bend of the Oriental River, a fecund tributary of the mighty Mekong, the pulsating artery that begins with a trickle high in the Himalayas, and flows with gathering force down through China, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam before gliding finally into the South China Sea.

Infantry (left) and mechanized soldiers of Vietnamese Task Force 333 move out on operations along Highway 1 in Cambodia.

SWEET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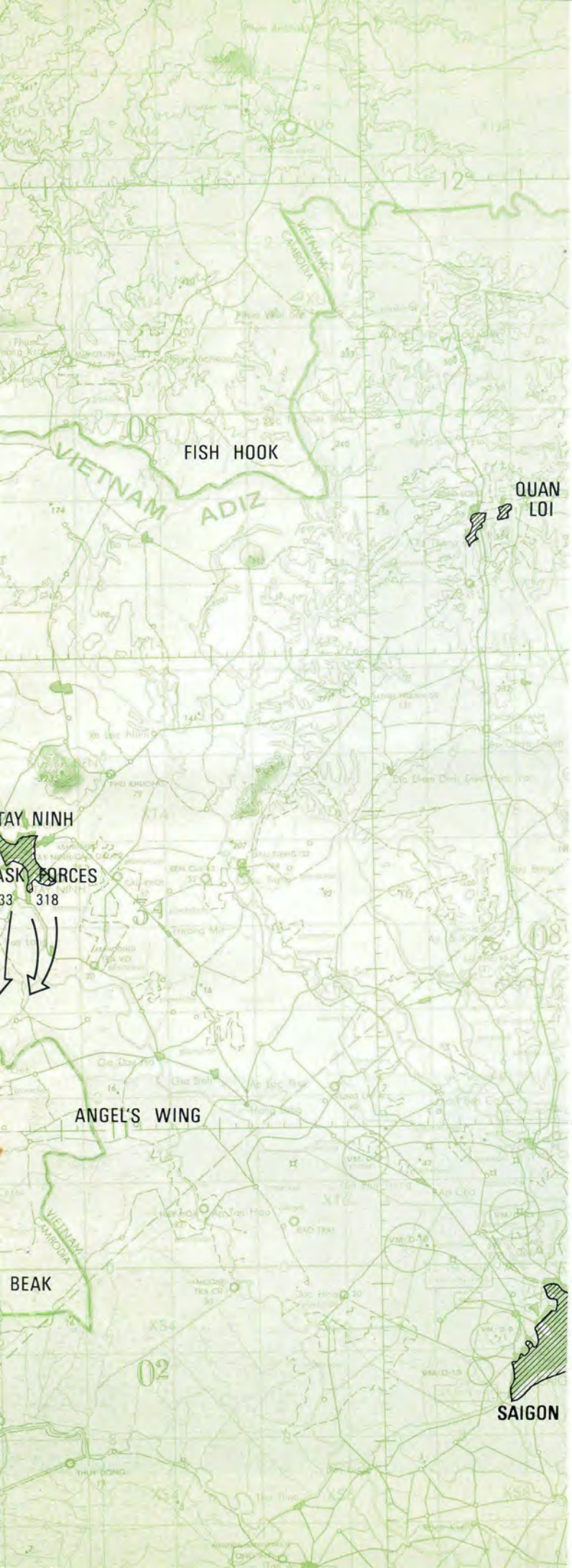


There, in the Tien Thuan Woods, Lieutenant Colonel Phan Van Phouc watched for first light, for with it would come an attack on North Vietnamese and Viet Cong soldiers based across the Cambodian frontier, less than 10 miles away.

Lieutenant Colonel Phouc had long awaited the day when NVA and VC would no longer have a refuge into which they could flee after attacking Republic of Vietnam or U.S. forces—a sanctuary where they could reorganize, retrain and refit for future attacks.

When the French pulled out of Vietnam, Colonel Phouc joined the Army of the Republic of Vietnam as an enlisted man and gradually rose through the ranks. In April of 1970, he was placed in command of one of the three task forces that would attack in Cambodia.

Later, in Cambodia, after the NVA and VC had been routed from the border lands, he would hunch his shoulders against the chill of recurrent malaria and recall the first day of the attack as "a very happy one for the Army and for my country."

It was not, of course, the first ARVN operation in Cambodia.

Fifteen days earlier the Vietnamese had embarked on a four-day campaign in what was to be a successful dress rehearsal for the big push that would follow on April 29.

In mid-April, under the command of Colonel Phouc, Task Force 333, poised at An Thanh, swung down into what is known as the "Angel's Wing," an area where the Cambodian border makes an artistically shaped indentation that appears, on a map, to resemble such a celestial appendage. The two other task forces, 225 and 318, linked up near Phouc Luu and raced down to the Sieng Tadev River.

The success of the lightning thrust was, for the Communists, an ominous warning of what was to come in another two weeks. The three task forces—including three infantry battalions, three ranger battalions and three armored cavalry regiments—together killed 523 NVA and VC during the four-day attack.

Thirty-seven prisoners of war were taken, 111 weapons and 82 tons of rice were captured. ARVN losses were eight dead.

The operation not only threw the Communists off balance, but it also renewed the self-confidence of the Vietnamese soldiers, many of them accustomed to fighting only with the assistance of American forces.

The two successes of the four-day sweep into Cambodia, solely an ARVN accomplishment, heartened the ARVN Joint General Staff as it mapped out the strategy and tactics for the second thrust across the border.

The focal point of ARVN planning was the two-fold objective of the second major operation.

Providing security for ethnic Vietnamese in Cambodia was one reason for the attack on Communist troops operating west of the border. Estimates of the number of Vietnamese, Cambodia-born and immigrant, who were living in Cambodia varied from 400,000 to 600,000. There was no accurate count. But all authorities agreed that somewhere in the neighborhood of one half million Vietnamese did live in Cambodia. Their lives were in danger.

Beyond that was a desire to destroy the supply depots, ammunition points, training areas, hospitals and base camps which the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese Army had long since moved out of Vietnam and into Cambodia, whose border region provided a curtain of safety.

Cambodia, under Prince Norodom Sihanouk, had loudly and relentlessly proclaimed a neutrality that neither the Republic of Vietnam or the United States would violate.

Communist forces, knowing ARVN and U.S. troops would not breach the neutral nation's frontier, brazenly established logistical and staging bases near the Vietnamese border.

The Cambodian army, a poorly equipped 150,000-man force, could not have stopped them either. But Sihanouk had no intention of attacking anyone, for fear of upsetting the delicate diplomatic relationships established by his neutralist regime.

However, on March 18, 1970, Sihanouk was deposed and Premier Lon Nol vowed to rid the nation of the encroaching Communists. Later, he appealed to the Republic of Vietnam and the United States for help in doing it.

The invitation could not have come at a better time for the two allies, and the ARVN operation of April 14 was the initial response to the Cambodian summons.

Indicative of the extent of the Communist intrusion was the presence in eastern Cambodia of their Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN), a flexibly organized jungle command post located in the border area in the belief that it was safe from attack.

COSVN was no Pentagon, as some observers thought. It was a mobile, almost fluid staff of about 2,500 administrative personnel dispersed in huts and bunkers throughout the region.

The fact that it could—and did—exist in eastern Cambodia was to the ARVN and U.S. forces proof enough of the threat to Vietnam posed by the Communist sanctuaries.

Between COSVN and Saigon lay a half dozen routes along which Communist supply trains, efficient human convoys highballing through the canopied jungles, could transport food, ammunition and medical supplies to forces operating in Vietnam.

But the supply routes would be useless if the Communists had no place to store the war materials, no sanctuary to which the troops could repair after an attack.

At daybreak, on April 29, Task Force 333 was on the march. By 7:30 a.m. it had crossed the border. Task Force 318, also staged in the Tien Thuan Woods, moved out simultaneously.

A few miles to the north, also on the banks of the Oriental River, was Task Force 225, sweeping into Cambodia from Ben Soi, a sun-baked dot near Highway 13 in Tay Ninh Province.

Once in Cambodia, the three task forces consolidated briefly along Highway 1, the main route between Saigon and Phnom Penh. The enemy, caught by surprise, found himself in the grip of three awesome task forces.

After 16 hours of fierce fighting, Communist fatalities numbered more than 300. It was as though the enemy was paying at once for all the blood spilled during 16 years of terror in Southeast Asia.

Ahead, along Highway 1, lay a new litany of names that would etch their names in the tortured history of the Vietnam conflict: Chiphu, Svay Rieng, Prasaut.

The ARVN troops also fought the calendar as they swept through eastern Cambodia, for within days the six-month-long monsoon season would begin, and with it would come mud as thick and impassable as that of the Russian winter, which a century and a half before had had mired Napoleon's legions.

Throughout the month of May, Task Force 318 was in the vanguard, pursuing the fleeing Communists along the highway all the way to the Mekong River, where it turned up Highway 15 toward the French-owned Chup rubber plantation, the largest in Indo-China.

Meanwhile, Task Force 225 was angling northward just inside Cambodia, hugging the border and routing still other VC and NVA from the frontier. There, too,

Hundreds of mortar rounds were uncovered by units of the 9th ARVN Division at Ba Thu in the Parrot's Beak region of Cambodia.

JUSPAO

the fighting produced names that history would remember—0 Sam, Bat Tras, Tatrav.

That done, 225 wheeled around and darted back to Highway 1. As June approached it would help Task Force 333 keep the highway open for the thousands of Vietnamese and Cambodians fleeing from the retreating Communists into the safety of Vietnam.

While maintaining the security of the highway, Colonel Phouc and his men had probed for rice, weapons, ammunition and medical supplies abandoned by the Communists in their haste to escape the advancing ARVN forces.

Now, midway through the 60-day combined operation, Task Force 225 and Task Force 333 rushed to banish any Communist force that had eluded Task Force 318 in his initial sweep of the area.

Task Force 225 remained along Highway 1, but Task Force 333 followed the trail blazed by Task Force 318 and, upon reaching the Mekong River, it headed north along Highway 15.

When it reached the Chup Plantation, Task Force 333 linked up with Task Force 318, and the two groups —one attacking from the south along Highway 15 and the other approaching from the east along Highway 7—hurtled into the 70-square-mile plantation. Catching the exhausted Communists holed up in the rubber, the two task forces sprung a pincer-like trap.

In June, as the end of the joint 60-day operation approached, Task Force 333 headed down Highway 7, stringing out toward the Krek Plantation, also owned by the French, and secured it much as Task Force 225 had earlier done along Highway 1. Task Force 318 remained behind, the rear guard at Chup.

Discussing the operation near its conclusion for a group of visiting U.S. congressmen, Colonel Phouc described the results:

"There is little doubt that enemy forces seeking safety in Cambodia have been severely disorganized and hurt," he said. "Constant pressure will continue this disorganizing process."

The task forces had pushed the enemy out of his sanctuaries, emptied his reservoirs of supplies and, finally, established a giant, box-like perimeter.

As the last U.S. forces withdrew into Vietnam, the ARVN remained, determined to maintain a buffer zone that would keep ammunition and food, the two nutrients necessary to sustain fighting, out of the hands of Communist forces still operating in the Vietnamese countryside.

Statistics outlined the success of the operation: At least 11,362 enemy soldiers had been killed by the ARVN and U.S. forces, 19,337 individual weapons had been captured, 68,877 tons of rice had been taken and 55 tons of the Communists' meager medical supplies had been uncovered.

The cost to the ARVN was 874 soldiers killed and 3,779 wounded. U.S. losses were 337 killed and 1,525 wounded.

Beyond the strategy, the tactics and the stale—though impressive—statistics of the military accountants lay qualitative judgements.

One of the best, perhaps, was made by the 15th ARVN Armored Cavalry Regiment's commander, 43-year-old Lieutenant Colonel Nguyen Van Dong, a Thu Duc native with 19 years of Army service.

Sitting in his operations tent on Highway 7, some 15 miles inside Cambodia, Colonel Dong looked out at the gloomy sky and then at the mud, and thought for a moment. Then, speaking slowly and distinctly he said:

"We had been cutting the plant off again and again, and it kept growing. Now we are cutting out the roots."

Lieutenant General Do Cao Tri (left) and Mr. So Phiek Phoek, Minister of Public Works for the Government of Cambodia inspect a bridge recently rebuilt by the ARVN 303rd Combat Engineer Battalion near Svay Rieng.

BUU GIAO

Close-up: LTG Do Cao Tri

A Look at the "Patton of Vietnam"

by Staff Sergeant Jerry Van Drew

FOR THE ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM (ARVN), the American-South Vietnamese incursion into Cambodia was a moment of truth. And the man of the moment was the colorful and competent commanding general of the ARVN III Corps and III Corps Tactical Zone, Lieutenant General Do Cao Tri.

By early May, General Tri—who commanded more than 25,000 of the eventual 40,000-man ARVN force in Cambodia—became the most interviewed, the most quoted, and the most-often-pictured participant of the operation. The attention focused on him revealed the image of a flamboyant leader who had found his bag and was doing his thing.

The New York Times, for example, billed him as "A Fighting General. . . ," Time magazine dubbed him "The Patton of the Parrot's Beak." Newsweek magazine told his story under the heading "Saigon's Man in Cambodia: Road to Glory."

To those who work closest to him, the "road" had been long and the "glory" was slow in coming. To General Tri himself, the road was 23 years of fighting Communists, and the glory meant being besieged by hordes of reporters just when he was grappling with logistical and support problems for which his Army Corps was not equipped, dealing with the command problems of a task force structure that had not previously worked together, and forging into a new area of operations.

One aspect of the man is illustrated by his unruffled acceptance of these new problems and the unaccustomed acclaim. One day, when a CBS television camera truck blocked the advance of one of his armored columns preparing to move out, he calmly commented, "It's a strange war."

Yet stranger still in this age of instant communications, when television crews mingle with troops on the front lines of war, is the fact that a man with General Tri's attributes went unnoticed by the press for so long.

Stories of his exploits on the battlefield, his daredevil defiance of death and danger, and his survival when all around him had fallen wounded or killed, have made him a legend within the ARVN. Furthermore, he is accessible, he speaks fluent English and French, he is colorful and photogenic, and he has a fine sense of humor.

In Cambodia, the aspect of his behavior catching most reporters' fancies was his penchant for getting involved in the thick of the action, even when reporters were along. A Time correspondent was with him, for example, on the day when he landed his helicopter amidst a group of armored personnel carriers (APCs) engaged by sniper fire. He proceeded directly to one of the APCs and shouted his orders, urging *"Anh, di di mau! Di di mau!* (Go fast, man! Go fast!)"

A similar incident occurred on the day when James P. Sterba of The New York Times went along. General Tri landed in the midst of a skirmish and boarded one of the APCs. Sterba reported: "Seconds later he found the armored car on which he was standing leading the charge—40 yards in front of the rest of the troops."

But no reporters were along on the more typical day when General Tri landed amidst enemy fire to board an APC with one of his battalion

General Tri talks with a North Vietnamese detainee taken as III Corps units operated near the Chup Rubber Plantation in Cambodia.

BUU 61AO

commanders to assist in the direction of an important battle. "He depends on his subordinate commanders and key staff officers, explains Brigadier General D. P. McAuliffe, Deputy Senior Adviser to General Tri and the American who spends the most time with him. "But he keeps his finger on all the major aspects. He has a strong sense of knowing where his presence will be most effective He goes right to the bottlenecks, and by doing so often turns the course of the battle."

Command Sergeant Major (CSM) Harry Sanders, CSM of the military advisory team to III Corps Headquarters throughout General Tri's tenure of command there, explained the general's ability to get extra effort from his men: "General Tri is an inspiration to his men. They look for him in the field because they're used to seeing him there... You can see their feelings toward him by the look in their eyes and the smiles on their faces when he's around, like they're partners."

Part of his influence derives from stories describing his incredible survival in combat. Never considering his own safety and often daring danger, General Tri states that, "Maybe ten times everyone around me was all killed or wounded. I have never been touched by an enemy bullet.

"Once I was walking," he continues, "and I stepped on an antipersonnel mine with my right foot. It didn't explode. With my next step my left foot came down on another mine. It didn't explode. I don't know why."

General Tri seems to go out of his way to dare death and danger. A master parachutist (meaning he has made at least 65 jumps—he no longer keeps track of how many he has actually made), he states, "I make all of my jumps free fall. I quit making (static) line jumps before 1957."

His attitude toward controversy shows the same daredevil approach. The day his troops started taking the Chup rubber plantation, he confidently predicted, "We'll be swimming in the plantation pool tomorrow." The next afternoon he proceeded to take his swim, much to the chagrin of the French plantation managers.

He even survived three assassination attempts during his early military career, when he commanded airborne companies and battalions. No attempts have been made against his life since before 1954.

Perhaps, because of his tendency for being in the middle of the action, one woman correspondent asked him if a press trip into Cambodia was going to be safe. General Tri spunkily replied: "If it's in the III Corps AO, you can be sure it's safe."

A little later that same day, another reporter asked much the same question about the danger from the enemy situation. General Tri repeated in assurance, "Don't worry about that! I know well my situation."

Conducting his own press briefings, rapidly replying to complicated questions and always ready to back up his statistics with tabulated information, he didn't leave much doubt that he did indeed 'know well" his situation. That knowledge contributes to his abundant self-confidence.

His voice is deep, and he speaks English with a strong French accent. His modifiers, in English, are sometimes misplaced. He is more fluent in French than English, reflecting his longer experience with that language. He studied French at Petrus Ky high school in Saigon, and spent his first seven years of military service under the French from 1947 through 1954.

General Tri wears a distinctive uniform: a camouflaged jungle suit with a snub-nosed Smith & Wesson 38-caliber pistol in a shoulder holster, and a black felt baseball cap adorned by his three stars of rank. He carries a swagger stick and a briar pipe. The pipe, though, seems to be more something to light than to smoke.

His humor and spunky attitude were reflected by some of his many off-the-cuff remarks during Cambodia. He explained his ever-present swagger stick, for example, by saying, "I use it to spank the VC."

Or when asked about a hoard of National Liberation Front money found in two of the many caches uncovered by his men, he said: "We think they plan to use this money when they overrun Vietnam. But now we know it is just their imagination."

When asked about plans for disposal of the NLF money, which had been scattered everywhere by helicopter-generated winds, he ad-libbed, "We take this money back to Vietnam and give it to our wives to light the fires to cook." Several of his men were already cooking their noontime meals nearby over paper-fed fires.

Yet, despite these humorous remarks to the press, he's serious in tone with his own men. "He reserves

BUU GIAO

Always first to lead the way, General Tri directs Vietnamese mechanized elements moving through Communist sanctuaries near the Cambodian border.

At Home with General Tri

IN THE DAYTIME, General Tri is a man of incessant action, an energetic leader on the go, a soldier who unflinchingly faces death and danger, and somehow survives. In the evening, he is a man of wealth and leisure. His thoughts turn easily to other things.

He lives in a massive government-owned villa facing the Dong Nai River in Bien Hoa with his wife and four youngest daughters. His oldest daughter, now 18, is studying in Switzerland. His 17-year-old son lives in Saigon and goes to school there.

Sitting in a lawn chair on the nicely-grassed and well-kept lawn in front of the villa, the general points to a white rabbit nibbling the shrubbery.

"Did you notice my menagerie?" he asks.

Ducks, geese and other rabbits can be seen roaming the grounds at will. "There are now 17 rabbits altogether," he explains. "They are simply pets, not sources of food. I cannot eat them," he continues. "I think of them like my children."

Himself, the third of 13 children, he talks about his wealthy family matter-of-factly. The family owns a great deal of land in the Bien Hoa area, including parts of what are now Long Binh Post and all of the land where II Field Force Headquarters stands at Plantation. His own share of the family land includes the island in the Dong Nai River west of Long Binh Post, as well as villas in Saigon, Bien Hoa and Da Lat.

He was the first son in his family to enter the military. "Now all of my brothers are officers," he says. "One was killed, and two have been wounded."

When asked how he accounts for his own survival in combat, he says,"Who can explain such things?" Gesturing toward the sky, he adds, "It is for God to decide."

He disclaims all interest in politics, and states that he can foresee no circumstances which would lead him to political activity. His 23-year-long military career has had just one interruption—a two-year exile which he spent in Hong Kong, Europe and America, followed by one year of service as the South Vietnamese Ambassador to South Korea just before he was appointed III Corps CG. The exile was imposed during the political maneuvering of other generals following the overthrow of Diem in 1964. "I was given only 24 hours to leave the country with part of my family," he recollects.

"My only ambition," he states, "is to retire after 25 years of military service. That will be in 1972. I count the days."

"I will look after the education of my family," he continues. "Maybe I will live in all of my villas, changing from Saigon to Bien Hoa to Da Lat."

Going inside, he remarks, "The government owns the house, but all of the furniture is mine."

Inside the large receiving room on the ground floor is a stuffed tiger and cub. "I killed this tiger in Pleiku, when I was Third Military Region Commander (1956–58). I also hunt elephant, panther, and deer. Maybe I will hunt more after I retire."

His many statements about retirement show

REIMER

this to be a matter much on his mind of late. Yet, the prospect of a man of action going entirely out of action at age 42 somehow seems hard to believe.

His expectation that things will be better in the future, coupled with the satisfaction of personal achievement, undoubtedly have shaped his plans. After 23 long years of combatting Communists and struggling to the top of the military ladder, he may suddenly have realized during Cambodia that the security he has been fighting for in Vietnam is not far off, and that he has indeed reached the top (only one officer in the Vietnamese military holds a higher rank, and Tri must be considered the number two or number three man in the Vietnamese armed forces).

Besides that, he is very likely tired of it all.

his humor for his close associates," explains General McAuliffe.

"He's a tough commander," adds Colonel Andrew J. Gatsis, assistant to General McAuliffe. "He pushes his men hard."

In his message to the troops when he assumed command of III Corps on August 6, 1969, General Tri himself said: "I am forced by circumstances to bring you hardship.... There will be no victory without great efforts.... The path that leads to final victory and peace remains strewn with many sorts of difficulties.

For a year and a half under General Tri, the ARVN soldiers in III Corps made these great efforts with little recognition and not much satisfaction. They trained hard and overcame many of the difficulties that had made them a junior partner within their own AO. Slowly, they assumed more and more of the combat duties. Then, during the Combodian Operation, they dominated the action.

Midway through the campaign, he discussed the effect that Cambodia had on III Corps' morale. "It is good. Cambodia gives my men the chance to apply the techniques they learn in training. They make large unit contact with the enemy. They have the opportunity to conduct search and destroy missions." He emphasized: "And they do it by themselves!"

But Cambodia was not without problems for III Corps and its flamboyant commander. Scheduled as the last Corps to be Vietnamized (there were no American troops in IV Corps months before Cambodia, and the ARVN were to assume all combat roles in both I Corps and II Corps before that step was to be taken in III Corps), III Corps was given lowest priority for adding combat support units and equipment. The long supply lines into Cambodia created severe logistical problems.

Never one to avoid controversy, General Tri emphasized his support and logistical difficulties in talks with reporters during the campaign. Later, he commented, "Sometimes it helps to make noise about things you need."

Early in July, after American participation in Cambodia had been discontinued, General Tri still had "about a division" of men operating there. "I have only eight helicopters to support these men," he said. "I must have a command post, make medical evacuation, and provide aerial resupply. It is very difficult."

But despite these difficulties, the ARVN III Corps operation in Cambodia was so successful that the Corps' Vietnamization schedule was altered. "III Corps will be next to replace American combat troops with Vietnamese," General Tri predicted.

General Tri would not, however, make any short-range predictions about Cambodia. "It is the wet season now. Wet weather slows my men down. Wet weather slows the enemy down. But the situation can change rapidly."

His expectations for the future, however, are optimistic (see sidebar). "In two years," he says, "the situation will be better."

The path ahead for the ARVN in III Corps seems strewn with fewer difficulties than it did two years ago. The Cambodian incursion last spring illustrated just how much progress this fighting unit has made.

Much of the credit for this progress naturally goes to the colorful and competent III Corps CG, Lieutenant General Do Cao Tri.

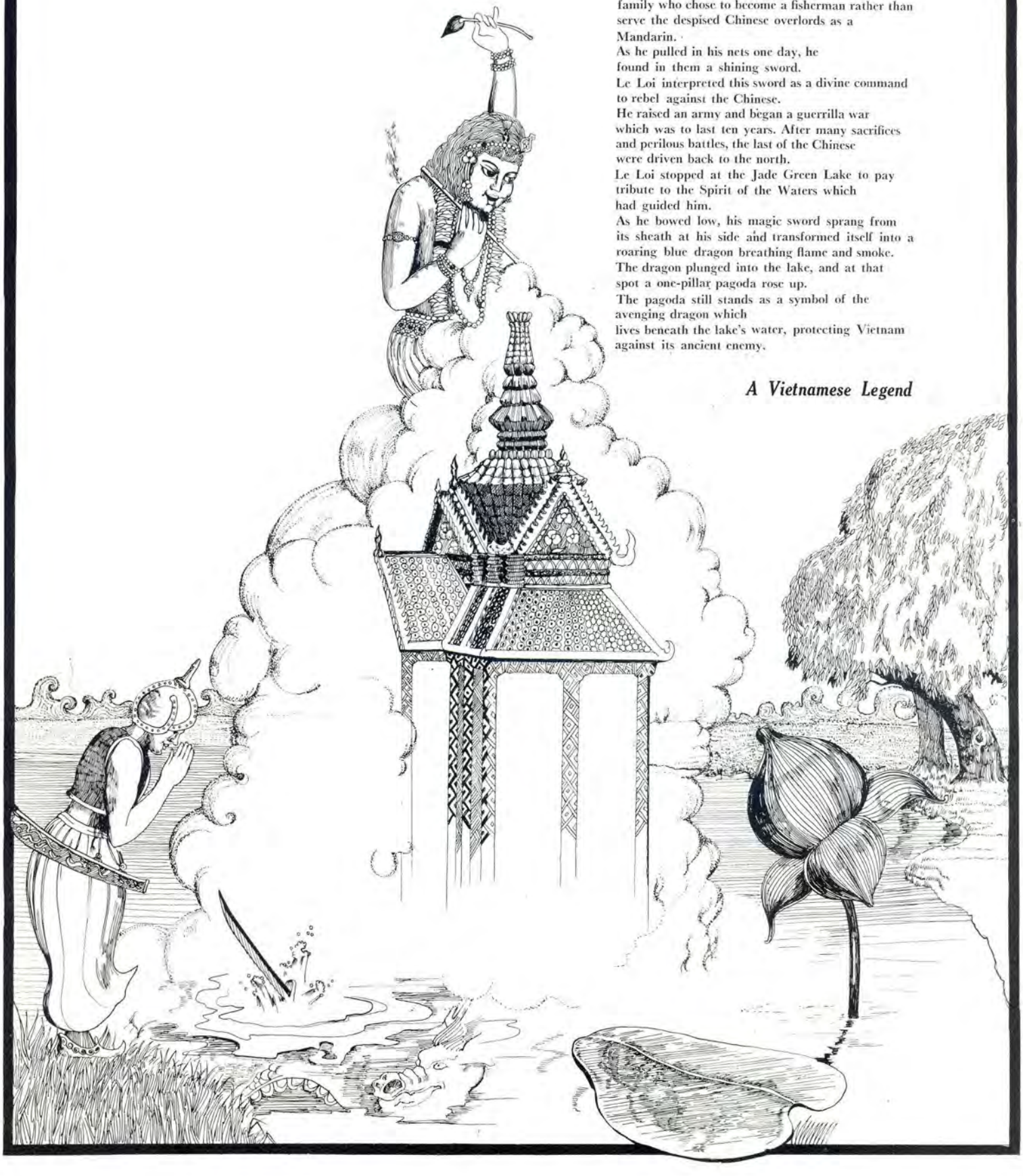
A frequent situation: candid and accessible General Tri surrounded by a clamoring press corps.

VAN DREW

LE LOI'S MAGIC SWORD

Le Loi was a member of a large and wealthy family who chose to become a fisherman rather than serve the despised Chinese overlords as a Mandarin.
As he pulled in his nets one day, he found in them a shining sword.
Le Loi interpreted this sword as a divine command to rebel against the Chinese.
He raised an army and began a guerrilla war which was to last ten years. After many sacrifices and perilous battles, the last of the Chinese were driven back to the north.
Le Loi stopped at the Jade Green Lake to pay tribute to the Spirit of the Waters which had guided him.
As he bowed low, his magic sword sprang from its sheath at his side and transformed itself into a roaring blue dragon breathing flame and smoke.
The dragon plunged into the lake, and at that spot a one-pillar pagoda rose up.
The pagoda still stands as a symbol of the avenging dragon which lives beneath the lake's water, protecting Vietnam against its ancient enemy.

A Vietnamese Legend



Weapons Cache at Rock Island East