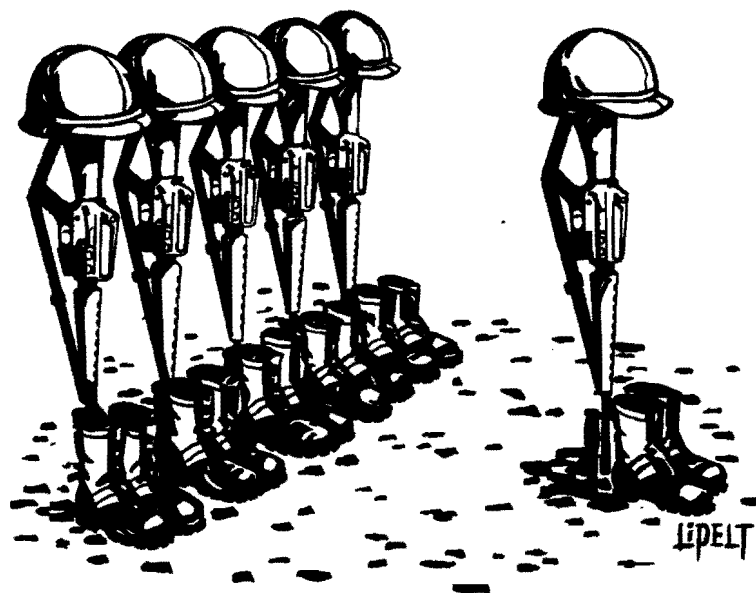


# REDCATCHER!

PEARBOCK





## Commanding General's Message

*The Redcatchers were designed and trained to fight in the Republic of Vietnam against the Viet Cong and the infiltrating North Vietnamese Army personnel. Since January of 1967 the Brigade has been in combat continuously. For the most part, its missions have been dirty and without glamor—but they have been essential to the overall mission of the U.S. Army's task in Vietnam. In these operations and, certainly, in the big battles—Tet 1968 and May 1968—the Brigade has acquitted itself so well that each member can rightfully feel that he has been a part of the finest unit fielded in Vietnam.*

*The story of the 199th Light Infantry Brigade is part of a continuing story of collective heroism. It capsulizes the efforts of members—past, present, and future—who, with varying degrees of sacrifice, have given and will give life and meaning to the name REDCATCHER!*

# REDCATCHER!

YEARBOOK

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Published May, 1969

## COVER

Private First Class Chuck Primeau helps Private First Class Fred McFarland out of the muck while on a patrol with Delta Co, 5th Bn, 12th Inf. Photo by Hassenfratz.

# Born, An Infantry Brigade

The 199th Infantry Brigade (Separate) (Light) was ordered formed at Ft. Benning, Ga., suddenly but not unexpectedly, with destination unknown. The Brigade's first commander, Colonel George D. Rehkopf, got orders April 8, 1966 to form the Brigade and, from the first educated guesses to jungle and swamp field training at Camp Shelby, Miss., the consensus was "Vietnam."

The previous year had seen the greatest debarkation for a foreign country by the U.S. armed forces since the Korean War's early days in 1950 and 1951. January 1 U.S. strength was 23,000 in RVN. Following a Viet Cong attack on the American compound at Pleiku and nearby Camp Holloway Feb. 7, 1965 President Johnson ordered the first air strike against North Vietnam. The following day he ordered withdrawal of all U.S. dependents and the decks began to clear.

Among other build-up highlights of 1966 were: First elements of the 173rd Airborne Brigade landed in

early May, as did Marines and Seabees to begin building their big base at Chu Lai. In June Army Engineers started construction on the huge facilities at Cam Ranh Bay needed to support the projected logistical increase necessary for more troops.

In July the Marines landed 8,000 more men at Da Nang and Qui Nhon; the 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, and the 1st Logistical Command landed at Cam Ranh Bay, Vung Tau and Qui Nhon. Later that month, the 1st Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division came in-country and U.S. military strength here became 80,000.

The first elements of the 1st Air Cavalry Division came here in September, the 3rd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division arrived in December, and what with other combat and support element arrivees, our strength by year's end was 181,000, including all services.

Despite the increase of about 800 percent in total strength in less than a year, the final total for 1965 would still increase by nearly 200 percent in

the coming two years to bring figures to above the 500,000 level deemed advisable by military and civilian commanders.



Light anti-tank weapon training at Benning.



Colonel Rehkopf received the colors in June 1966.

Small doubt, then, in any member of the 199th's mind that his Brigade was headed west.

Speed was to be emphasized in organization and training if the 199th was to make its target date in Vietnam by December. By May 5, less than a month after the initial orders, Colonel Rehkopf had more than 1,000 men assigned—even if many had to be temporarily billeted and fed by the Infantry School Training Brigade at Benning, the 197th. Two more weeks saw staff and command field grade officers join the Brigade and by mid-June most of the Brigade's officers would be on hand, as well as about 40 percent of its NCOs.

Formally activated June 1, the Brigade observed its first Organization Day with a formal review June 24 at Ft. Benning. Officers and NCOs included many career men (many had European tours curtailed as a result of the "draw-downs" for Vietnam service in 1966). In the ranks, the men had all completed basic training and were MOS-qualified. June 27 small unit training began at Ft. Benning, to be followed by eight weeks of field training at the National Guard site at Camp Shelby. Graduation would be after a Field Training Exercise, then members would be off on 15-day pre-embarkation leaves, final preparations for movement and so forth. Also, all would have to become familiarized with the M-16 back at Benning. Because of training realism, M-14s had been used at Shelby, since they could be fired on "automatic" with blanks.

Before leaving for advanced training at Camp Shelby, however, Redcatchers were finding out about other essentials for Vietnam—including helicopter assault techniques at the Air Mobility School at Benning. Because of the concept of the modern light infantry brigade ("Light, Swift, Accurate" says the 199th's motto) and its role in counter-insurgency warfare, it was designed to be a "hitchhiker" unit, with heavy equipment kept to a minimum. At first, for example, Delta Trp, 17th Cavalry had only jeeps with mounted machine guns. Its armored tracks came after it had been in-country for a while.

The 199th was still smaller and lighter than it is today because it lacked the 5th Bn, 12th Infantry, which did not join the Brigade until April 1968, after training at Ft. Lewis, Washington.

In another change dictated by the Brigade's TOE, Brigadier General Charles W. Ryder became Commanding General and Colonel Rehkopf became his DCO before leaving Benning.

Following intensive preparations, the advance party left in early November. After a final review, the ma-

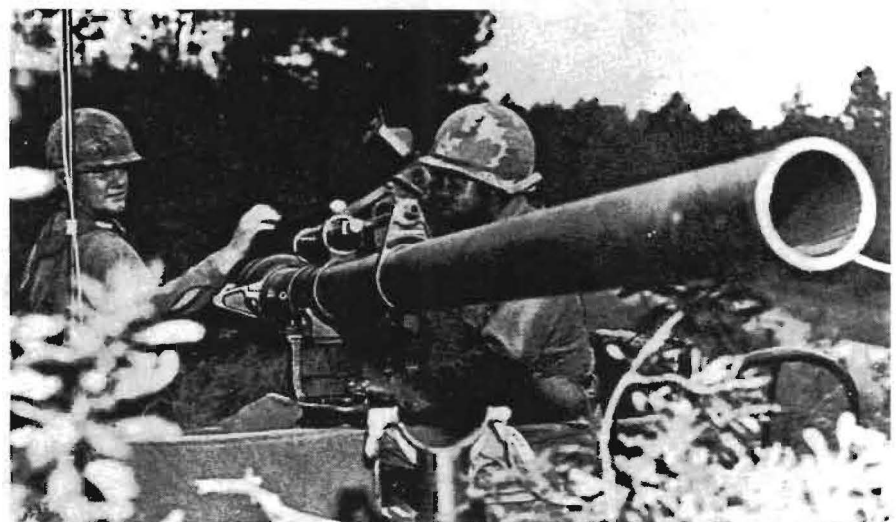
jority of Redcatchers were flown to Oakland, where they boarded the USS Sultan and USS Pope for the more than two-week trip across the Pacific. Landing was at Vung Tau Dec. 10 for the Sultan and Dec. 12 for the Pope. Once ashore units boarded trucks for their tent encampment, later to be known as Camp Frenzell-Jones,

located at the northern end of the Long Binh Army complex. At the time of their arrival, U.S. military strength in RVN was approximately 300,000.

Six days after landing a mild operation, UNIONTOWN, was begun to secure defenses of the Long Binh complex perimeter and the Brigade was officially operational, even in VC



Cross-country convoy roams the woods at Shelby.



Recoilless rifle aiming...

eyes. By the end of December the 2nd Bn, 40th Artillery had its guns unlimbered and was able to support the Brigade with 105s.

Speed of training, including final leaves, and of movement, is underlined by the date of the Brigade's initial operation—Dec. 16—just 6½ months after organization. Since the days of the British "square" when major subjects for infantrymen were musketry and close-order drill, this is felt to be a commendable, compact

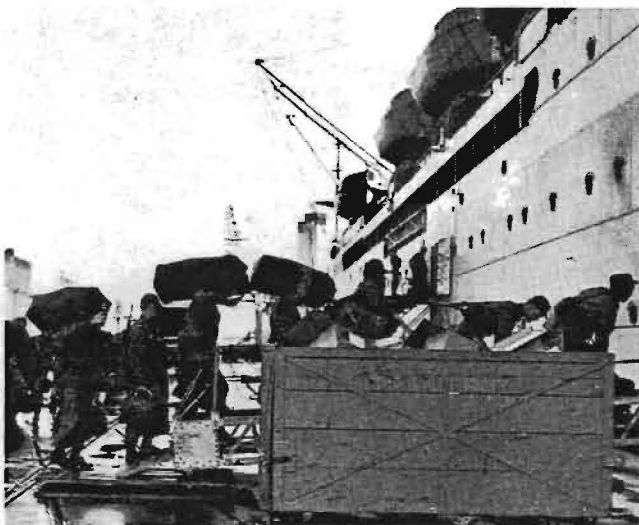
training time.

On New Year's Day, 1967, Redcatchers perhaps suspected it might be quite a year, but no one could foretell the ways individual soldiers might distinguish themselves: One man died to save other members of his Eagle Flight Operation; a buddy carried him back two miles to a landing zone, then hurried to tend another wounded man and was killed himself. The dead were honored by having BMB named for them. Or that the

year would see two new commanding generals, or that two men would be wounded by a suspected VC catfish. Or that in December Chaplain Liteky's heroism during an ambush would not only inspire the imagination of all Brigade members but of untold others and would lead to his becoming one of only five chaplains ever to win the Medal of Honor. But 1967 would be another year.



...And firing.



Walking the plank at Oakland.



Later, 5th Bn, 12th Inf flew in.

Ralph K. Anderson

# Pre-Vietnam Unit Histories

## ~~2nd Battalion~~ ~~3rd Infantry~~

All Brigade battalion-size infantry elements trace their lineage to the post-War of Independence period, but the 3rd Infantry is technically the oldest regiment, having been originally organized as the 1st Infantry from Massachusetts and New Hampshire in 1784. It first saw action 10 years later during the campaigns against Indians at the battles of Ft. Recovery and Fallen Timbers, Ohio. During the War of 1812 it was awarded campaign streamers for battles in Canada in 1813 and 1814.

During the Mexican War it fought successively from Palo Alto, Tex. through Monterrey, Mexico and all the way to the finish at the battles of Chapultepec and Mexico City. Because of the bravery of its successful charge to the heights of Chapultepec, the 3rd Infantry was given the honor of leading the Army into the city, where General Winfield Scott removed his hat and said to members of his staff, "Gentlemen, take off your hats to the Old Guard of the Army."

Following years saw the 3rd Infantry fight in the Civil War, the Indian Campaigns (from 1840 until 1888), the Spanish-American War (with action in both Cuba and the Philippines) and in World War II. Since 1948 elements, primarily the 1st Battalion, have constituted the Army's ceremonial unit in Washington.

## ~~3rd Battalion~~ ~~7th Infantry~~

The 7th Infantry Regiment traces

lineage, through consolidation, to 1798, although its first big fight was at the Battle of New Orleans. Firing at invading British troops from behind barricades made from bales of cotton, the regiment acquired the nickname "Cotton Balers." This late combat start did not keep the 7th Infantry from becoming the most decorated infantry regiment in the Army. It participated in frontier duty, the Mexican War, and 20 major battles during the Civil War. It fought in the Spanish-American War and during World War I was absorbed into the 3rd Infantry Division. Arriving in France in April 1918, it was awarded six battle streamers before the armistice.

In World War II it continued to fight with the 3rd Division and accompanied it on the invasions of North Africa, Sicily, Italy and France and then into Germany. During the Korean War the 7th Infantry, still a member of the 3rd Division, participated in eight campaigns lasting from the fall season of 1950 until the summer of 1953.

## ~~4th Battalion~~ ~~5th Battalion~~ ~~12th Infantry~~

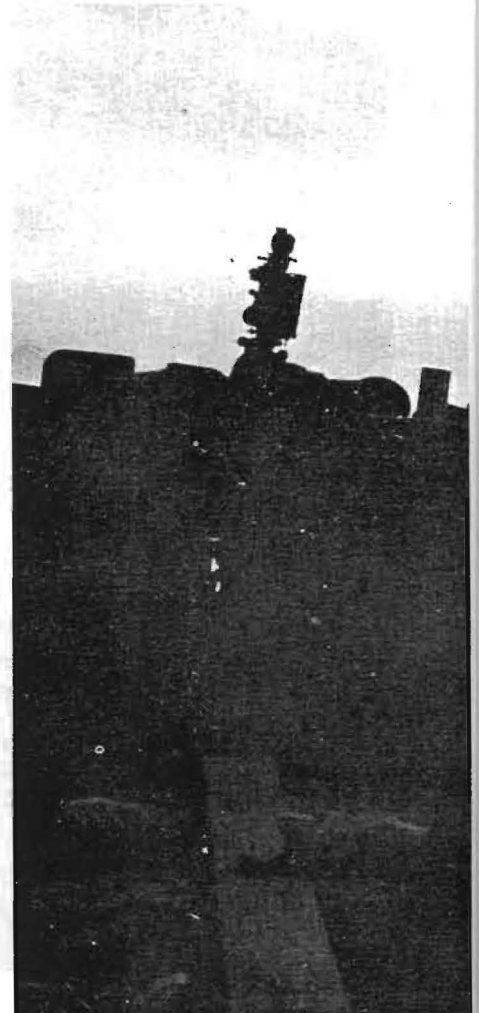
The 12th Infantry, called the "Warriors," is another regiment that traces its history through various Army reorganizations of the past to 1798. During the War of 1812 it took part in the battle at Ft. McHenry, Md. It fought in the Mexican War and during the Civil War did battle at Antietam, Fredricksburg and Gettysburg, among others.

A member of the 4th Infantry Division during World War II, it landed in Normandy, France June 6, 1944 and had won five campaign streamers as it struggled across northern France and through the Rhineland to Bavaria by the German surrender May 6, 1945.

The 4th Battalion joined the Brigade during activation in June 1966, while the 5th Battalion was formed later and arrived in April 1968.

## ~~2nd Battalion~~ ~~40th Artillery~~

The 40th Artillery was organized as Btry B, 40th Field Arty at Camp Custer, Mich., as an element of the 14th Infantry Division Aug. 10, 1918, three months before the armistice. It was demobilized the following February and not reactivated until June 4, 1941 at Camp Roberts, Calif. In 1943 it was redesignated as Btry B, 974th Field Arty Bn. Fighting in Europe, it participated in the Normandy, Northern France, Central Europe, Rhineland and Ardennes-Alsace campaigns before returning to



the United States, where it was deactivated in January 1946. Following a subsequent series of redesignation-reactivations, it was assigned to the 3rd Armored Division in 1948 at Ft. Knox, Ky. with which it went to Europe, where it eventually picked up the present number.

Besides 105 mm howitzers and 106 mm recoilless rifles, the cannoneers also control the Brigade's 4.2 mortar frings.

## D Troop 17th Cavalry

The 17th Cavalry was constituted in 1916 from people of existing units—1st, 3rd, 6th, 8th and 14th Cav regiments—at Ft. Bliss, Tex. and activated in September 1921. During World War II the unit saw action in the Normandy, Northern France, Rhi-

neland and Central Europe campaigns.

The cavalrymen came to Vietnam with machine gun jeeps and mounted armored cavalry assault vehicles came the following year.

## 7th Support Battalion

Seventh Support Battalion was constituted and activated specifically for the Brigade June 1, 1966. With capacity for brigade-level logistical and services support, including storage of all classes of supply, it provides direct support, maintenance, and can even furnish medical service. This last embraces evacuation, establishment and operations of clearing stations, and medical supply. The administration company of the battalion provides personnel administration services to all units of the Brigade. The battalion staff provides staff advice for the

Brigade commander on quartermaster and ordnance operations, supply and maintenance functions and transportation matters, as well as medical and administrative matters.

With the nickname "Sustainers," and the motto "On Call to Serve," the battalion was captionized by General Davison when he said, "When others were hurting (for supplies), we were not."

Field expedients developed by the battalion include a mobile electronic equipment repair van, a mobile dental office van, and point man flak protection equipment.

## 87th Engineer Company

The 87th Engineer Company was constituted in May 1944 and activated the following month at Camp Ataka, Egypt as the 2753rd Engineer Utilities Company. Later redesignated the 87th Engineer Service Company, the 2753rd served in the Europe-Africa-Middle East theater and is entitled to a streamer for North Africa.

In Vietnam the 87th has kept busy performing building and repair tasks on everything from bridges to roads. Many buildings have been built, including all the facilities at Camp Frenzell-Jones, housing and dispensaries for the Vietnamese.

## Other Units Of the Brigade

The 152nd Military Police Platoon concerns itself more with security than traffic tickets. Besides operating the prisoner of war compound at Camp Frenzell-Jones, the MPs man the gates, provide their share of perimeter security for both rear and forward headquarters with gun-jeep patrols, and convoy security when required.

"When you ain't got communications, you ain't got nothin'" is a well-known quotation from a World II commander, and ensuring that Brigade has "somethin'" is the job of the 313th Signal Company. In charge of laying or stringing wire, installing communication devices and equipment and generally seeing to it that one element of the Brigade can get in



Artillerymen swab a bore at twilight.

Joseph F. Whinnery



Craig W. Hansell

## Fireball Aviation supports all the Brigade

touch with the other when necessary. Teletype, telephone, photography, and radio all under the aegis of the 313th.

The 40th Public Information Detachment supplements the Brigade Information Office in providing reporters and editors to continue the flow of news about the Brigade's activities to outside sources such as newspapers, magazines, radio and television, and also helps staff the *Redcatcher!* newspaper and this publication.

The 44th Military History Detachment is, as its name implies, concerned with recording the deeds of the Brigade and its members for posterity. In years to come, its records will be the first source of military historians trying to assess the Brigade's role in Vietnam.

The word "Chemical" always implies a laboratory (perhaps with a mad scientist such as Boris Karloff), but the work of the 503rd Chemical

Detachment is far removed from this concept. Engaged in projects such as "people sniffing" by sophisticated detection devices, and defoliation of forested areas or places with heavy growth of flora in order to deprive the enemy of concealment, men of the 503rd mainly operate from helicopters for maximum effect, and are more adept at hustling barrels of defoliant than juggling test tubes or lab apparatus.



Peter Gyallay-Pop

Roseland Ballroom is easier on the feet.

Memorial Day ceremony, 1968.



U.S. Army



Peter Grayley-Pod

A helping hand is essential.



U.S. Army

Man and best friend back from patrol.

Wet landing zone.

U.S. Army



# 1967 ~ First Year In ~ Country

It hadn't taken the Redcatchers long to be up and moving, and this was the pattern they would follow during their first year in-country and beyond. Names such as Nha Be, Cat Lai, the French Fort, the "Pineapple" region, Camp Frenzell-Jones and the Rung Sat Special Zone—these would be learned the hard way.

Techniques undreamed of or only hinted at would become second nature to the young infantry Brigade. The eagle flights into unknown landing zones would be as familiar as taking the bus back home. The pacification program would quickly get into high gear as men became familiar with the methods of night ambush and were aided by acquisition of the Starlight viewer, which literally "sees" in nearly perfect darkness. Medcaps and other aids to the Vietnamese that included food, building materials and practical advice contributed to the pacification program, but the first step was a military one—making an area safe for its inhabitants to work and live in.

A major step in the program was the integration of the Brigade with units of the 5th Army of Vietnam Ranger Group. Its value became increasingly apparent as time went on. The Brigade had military expertise and the Rangers knew the territory and its people; each learned from the other.

"RAGs" (for Riverine Assault Group) or "Ragboats" became another source of standard transportation for Redcatchers, and many a watery mile was traversed as they struck the Viet Cong and his bunkers on river patrols, hit-and-run sweeps or cordons, transportation provided by boats.

Other technical developments included the coming of armed tracks to Delta Trp, 17th Cav to replace the gun-jeeps used previously, and the helicopter-provided mobility of 106 mm recoilless rifles to the rice paddies, which led Brigadier General John F. Freund to call 2nd Bn, 40th Arty "the only 18-square unit of its kind," in that the battalion had 18 106 mm recoilless rifles and 18 105 mm howitzers.

The mission of the 199th was made clear: It would mainly be committed to the defense of Saigon. With the forward Tactical Operations Center and headquarters at Cat Lai, southeast of Saigon, Brigade elements would be scattered from the Rung Sat Special Zone east of Saigon to the "pineapple" in the west.

January 21 was the date of the Brigade's first violent action in which Redcatchers were killed. Private First Class Herbert E. Frenzell and Specialist Four Billy C. Jones died during an eagle flight operation in the Thu Duc area near Brigade Main Base, which was afterwards named Camp Frenzell-Jones Sep. 18, 1967. The story of their courage and sacrifice has inspired Redcatchers since and is inscribed on a plaque near the flag-staffs at BMB. (A facsimile of the inscription is on the inside back cover.)



Jerrold Fishman

Water then as wet as now.

The first decisively favorable contact with VC came Feb. 7, when a Brigade unit killed 13 six miles east of Saigon. The day before, operating in the Rung Sat Special Zone—a mucky, jungly, dismal wasteland that gave Redcatchers pause as to who would want it—members of Charlie Co, 2nd Bn, 3rd Inf found a bunker complex housing a hand grenade factory that included 1,000 grenade bodies, 150 complete grenades and a quantity of raw metal for the molds. The complex also included a water purification plant.

Operating from its forward headquarters at Nha, Be, the "Old Guard" battalion reported considerable success to *Army Times*. In 10 weeks of activity, battalion casualties had been "negligible," but members had killed 180 confirmed, with a number of other possibles. Two companies of the battalion were quartered in the French Fort, somewhat south, built originally by the French more than a half century before to command the waterways leading to Saigon and since in-

habited by Japanese, British and Viet Cong as well as Americans. Called "Fort Myer, Southeast Asia Branch," the fort was romantic and practically indestructible, but one problem remained: Someone in 1962 had scattered tear-agent powder in the basement. Whenever anyone unsuspecting investigated the lower depths, the agents permeated the air and everyone had a good cry.

The 199th took to water early in the year and conducted operations with the U.S. Navy, RVN units, the

U.S. 9th Infantry Division (whose area of operation bordered to the south), and even its own floating devices, including sampans. Delta Trp, 17th Cav became known as "Sampan Hunters" or the "Inland Coast Guard" for its prowess in destroying VC water craft.

In an operation at Can Giuoc June 17-19, elements of the Old Guard joined a Riverine operation and helped the 9th Division "decimate" the 5th Viet Cong Independent Battalion, according to the *Baltimore Sun*. In the effort to halt VC infiltration of Long An Province through the Rung Sat Special Zone, Redcatchers and Old Reliables were supported by the floating gun-platform "Monitors"—named for the armored, low-decked assault boat of Civil War fame—in what was called the "first fullscale American riverine assault since the Civil War." At least 249 VC were killed and an unknown number were wounded. The "Delta Battleships" carried machine guns as well as 20 mm and 40 mm cannons.

Operation Fairfax-Rang Dong, conducted with ARVN units since January, had paid dividends to each partner by the end of June. More than 700 VC had been killed, 340 tons of rice confiscated, 3,300 enemy fortifications and 370 sampans destroyed. Working in combined operations with the 5th ARVN Ranger Group under the "Revolutionary Development Program," the Brigade offered firepower and mobility, the Rangers knowledge of terrain and enemy routes and habits.

By the end of fiscal year 1967 the Brigade could boast a high of 20,000 Vietnamese citizens treated by Medcap in one month. Two months later the number would be 32,186.

Additionally, the 87th Engr Co repaired eight major bridges, 92 smaller ones and 20 major buildings by the end of June, during which period the Brigade distributed 80 tons of food and clothing and established 11 permanent Medcap sites in Gia Dinh Province. And this was only a beginning for the Brigade's ambitious Civic Action program.

Two ceremonies held in the summer months attested to the combined nature of Redcatcher-5th Ranger Group operations. At the Capital Military District headquarters in Saigon, during a decoration ceremony, 40 Brigade members were given Vietnamese Army medals for valor, and at II Field Force headquarters 20 Brigade soldiers and 40 from the 5th Rangers received valorous awards. The ceremonies certified the seal of approval on the combined operations which had seen the soldiers from two countries

paired with each other down to squad level since January.

On the command level, General Freund replaced General Ryder. General Freund, wounded Aug. 7 when he attempted to rescue troops with his own helicopter during action that saw five helicopters shot down, was himself replaced Sep. 1 by General Robert C. Forbes. General Freund again lived up to his name while in the 3rd Field hospital in Saigon, recuperating from his broken leg. He discovered that a 13-year-old Vietnamese girl who had been wounded five days before during a firefight was making little progress following surgery. The general sent an interpreter to find out the trouble and found she was unused to American food and also worried about her parents, whom she hadn't seen since she was evacuated. No problem: General Freund gave the interpreter money to buy Vietnamese food and got in touch with authorities who could search for the parents. The happy reunion with father and mother—who had feared their daughter was dead—touched everyone. And the girl, who couldn't speak English, thereafter used to come to the general's bedside daily, just to sit and look at him and smile.

Human interest stories kept cropping up during the year. In April the Old Guard's Reconnaissance platoon wounded and captured a 12-year-old Vietnamese boy who had been taken prisoner by VC, indoctrinated, then forced to become an ammunition bearer. He was evacuated and given medical treatment and was soon on his way to a more promising life, no

longer fearing or hating Americans.

Another 12-year-old, who liked to be with American soldiers, became a hero when he disobeyed strict instructions and went along on a combat patrol with the Recon Platoon of Echo Co, 4th Bn, 12th Inf. Members didn't know he was in the area until it was too late. Grabbing a machete, he was cutting sugar cane in front of the platoon when he suddenly hollered "VC! VC!" The Warriors took cover just as heavy fire came from the VC ambushers. One VC grabbed the boy, who slashed at his legs with the machete. The VC let go his grip and allowed the boy to dash back to the Warriors. He made it halfway when the cross-fire began, then crawled the rest of the way, luckily unscathed. Viet Cong casualties were heavy on that one, thanks to the early warning, and Warriors of all five battalion companies later decided to do something for the boy: send him to college. Through payday collections enough was contributed to finance his education.

Human or otherwise interest was also generated by a catfish who found himself in someone's trousers leg during a steam crossing. His spiny fin imbedded itself in the calf of the soldiers's leg, causing a cramp. He yelled and his platoon sergeant came to the rescue. Rescue? The sergeant got finned himself in the process of grabbing the catfish. Both were dusted off, treated and returned to duty. The catfish is reported alive and well in a stream 12 miles southeast of Saigon.

Nha Be will surely be remembered by former Redcatchers as the scene of a potential catastrophe that ended relatively light Aug. 2—with 34 American casualties and about 50,000 gallons of fuel burned. Viet Cong hit the huge tank farm and U.S. Navy base with between 30 and 40 mortar rounds that also damaged six ships. Small arms and recoilless rifle fire wounded 12 Vietnamese as well. Redcatchers pitched in with other servicemen and helped roll "superheated, hand-scorching" drums of oil into the Nha Be River, while they (the rescuers) were continually sprayed with water.

Brigade Main Base increased to about 1200 acres and buildings were built accordingly with much assistance from the 87th Engr Co, but with other Redcatchers pitching in under the "self-help" program. In addition to three 500-man messhalls and one 165-man mess hall built by the engineers, two BOQs and 47 BEQs were built. About three miles of road, including drainage systems, were constructed. More than five million board feet of lumber were used by units at BMB during 1967. In addition, engineers provided "instant bunker" kits for for-



Jerrold Fishman

Sky Crane with dozer to order.

ward battalion base camps—wooden shells were lifted into the areas, and then protected by sandbags hauled by truck or whatever.

The last month of the year found the various operations of the 199th going well. The infantrymen had come far from the relatively green Brigade that had debarked at Vung Tau 51 weeks before and units had been "blooded" in battle. But on Dec. 6 Alpha Co, 4th Bn, 12th Inf sent a two-platoon patrol to find the mortar

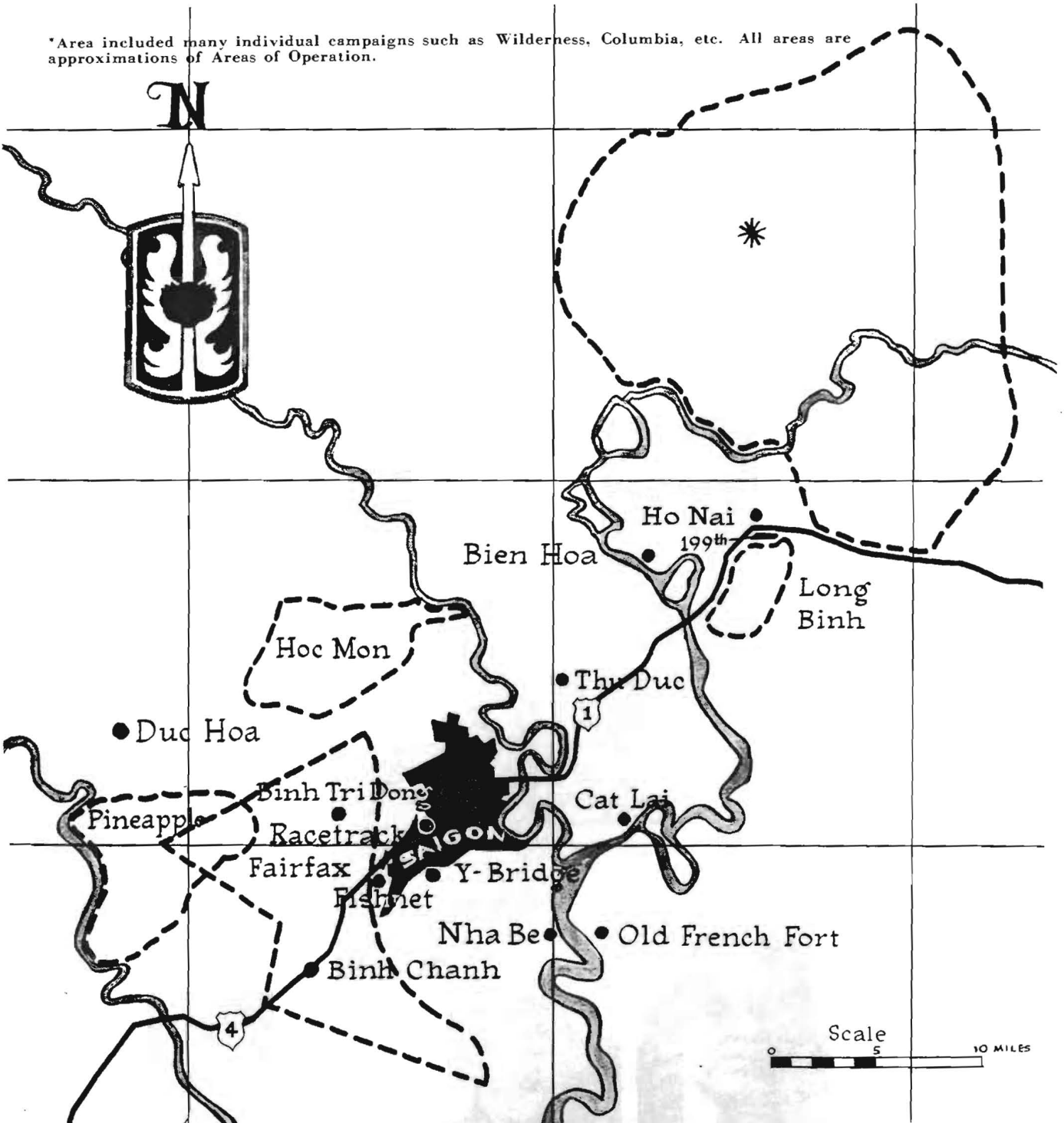
sites that had been firing on the battalion base camp. The platoons walked into an enemy base camp and lost 21 dead the first day and 74 wounded. (In the *Brigade Heroes* section, Chaplain Liteky's deeds are described, for which he was awarded the Medal of Honor, as well as those of Distinguished Service Cross winner, Lieutenant Morris.) Joined later by an airmobile company of the 3rd Bn, 7th Inf, which hit the base camp from another side, and a platoon from Delta Trp,

17th Cav, the Redcatchers turned the tide and eventually found 67 dead in the base complex, which consisted of over 125 heavily fortified bunkers.

The losses were a shock, a reminder that engagements in this often limited-contact war could be fast and violent. Such knowledge was to stand the Redcatchers in good stead during their heroic hours in the Tet and May attacks of 1968.

### Map of General Campaign and Battle Areas

\*Area included many individual campaigns such as Wilderness, Columbia, etc. All areas are approximations of Areas of Operation.



# They Led The Way In Heroism



Craig W. Hensell

Chaplain Liteky at Mass.

Chaplain (Capt.) Angelo J. Liteky became the fifth chaplain in history and the first during Vietnam to be awarded the Medal of Honor. He distinguished himself while accompanying Alpha Co. 4th Bn, 12th Inf on Dec. 6, 1967 near Phuoc-Lac, when the unit came under intense fire from a battalion-size enemy force. Said his citation: "Momentarily stunned from the immediate encounter that ensued, the men hugged the ground for cover. Observing two wounded men, Chaplain Liteky moved to within 15 meters of an enemy machine gun position to reach them, placing himself between the enemy and the wounded men. When there was a brief respite in the fighting, he managed to drag them to the relative safety of the landing zone. Inspired by his courageous actions, the company rallied and began placing a heavy volume of fire upon the enemy's positions. In a magnificent display of courage and leadership, Chaplain Liteky began moving upright through the enemy fire, administering last rites to the dying and evacuating the wounded."

Time after time the chaplain returned to the battle zone, returning with the wounded. "On several occasions Chaplain Liteky stood up in the face of hostile fire and personally directed the medevac helicopters into and out of the area. With the wounded safely evacuated, Chaplain Liteky returned to the perimeter, constantly encouraging and inspiring the men. Upon the unit's relief on the morning of Dec. 7 it was discovered that, despite painful wounds in the neck and foot, Chaplain Liteky had personally carried over 20 men to the landing

zone for evacuation during the savage fighting."

The Distinguished Service Cross was awarded to First Sergeant James A. Diamond for heroic action Feb. 6, 1969 near Thu Duc when his company's point platoon was ambushed by a VC company. After the platoon leader, platoon sergeant and RTO became casualties, Sergeant Diamond moved forward to take command. He set up a base of fire to drive back the enemy, evacuated the wounded, then remained in the bullet-swept position to call in air strikes onto the enemy bunkers.

First Lieutenant Wayne Morris was decorated with the DSC for the same action as Chaplain Liteky. After the savage initial enemy assault, the lieutenant reorganized his platoon and led three attacks on the enemy before being ordered to withdraw and reorganize. He risked his life by leading the rescue missions for casualties, who numbered about half his platoon. He then led reinforcements, finally overrunning and defeating the enemy forces, with his platoon killing more than 60.

A radio-telephone operator with 4th Bn, 12th Inf, Specialist Four Robert S. Archibald was awarded the DSC for heroism the night of Jan. 31, 1968 at the start of the enemy's Tet attacks. In action in a cemetery near Ho Nai village he partially concealed himself behind a pillar, threw a grenade at a VC position and missed. Then he charged the open-grave posi-

tions, killing four enemy. His citation reads, "He continued to fearlessly and methodically rout enemy soldiers from their positions, in the end killing a total of 12 Viet Cong with accurate bursts of his weapon. His actions proved to be instrumental in overwhelming the enemy and forcing them to withdraw."

Also honored with the DSC for action that night was Captain Robert L. Tonsetic, commander of Charlie Co, 4th Bn, 12th Inf. When his point squad ran against enemy forces preparing to attack BMB, he quickly moved forward and directed artillery fire to within 50 meters of his own positions. Calling in helicopter gunships to bring additional fire on the enemy, he ran through a hail of ricocheting small arms fire and rocket shrapnel to locate and bring all available firepower on hostile positions. He led an attack on the enemy and directed a massive grenade bombardment that halted VC mortar fire. He then followed through to close with the enemy, and after an hour-long battle the enemy withdrew.

Captain James F. Dabney was given the DSC for his actions during the period May 6-10 described in the May attacks section. In addition to leading Delta Co, 4th Bn, 12th Inf to victory in the protracted battle which destroyed the 246th NVA Battalion, he personally killed several enemy soldiers during separate assaults.

First Sgt. Diamond



First Lt. Morris



Specialist Four  
Archibald



Captain Tonsetic



Captain Dabney



# At Tet, Brigade Received Visitors

The Tet holiday marks the lunar new year for Vietnamese and it is customarily a time of feasting, worship, new clothing, flower-bedecked houses—a time when friends and relatives exchange visits amid general rejoicing. And when the VC came to call Jan. 31, the 199th was ready and willing to welcome them with salutations from cannon, mortars, automatic weapons, gunships, bombs, Claymore mines and everything else in the arsenal.

Enemy forces had prepared for weeks for the Tet attacks against not only military installations but also Vietnamese cities, including 27 province capitals, towns and villages. These attacks were meant to break the back of American military domination here, to provide propaganda ammunition throughout the world—including America—for a quick settlement of the war on terms favorable to the North Vietnamese and, most importantly, to effectively rally the

Vietnamese in RVN to their "true friends," the Viet Cong and overthrow the RVN Government. Many VC and NVA soldiers, indeed, surprised to find themselves not celebrating Tet in Saigon or Bien Hoa, were in fact dead.

Infiltrators into the Saigon area, for example, were numerous and largely undetected because of the holiday crowds, as were military arms and equipment. Coffins and even empty graves were used to conceal machine guns and rocket tubes. Small arms and ammunition were hidden in the traditional holiday floral arrangements.

Brigade's 179th Military Intelligence Det, working with the Intelligence Section, gathered evidence of the attacks and knew the exact date a week ahead. Their forecast was off by a mere three hours because the enemy was delayed in reaching his assembly point. Colonel Davison, then acting Brigade commander during the absence of General Forbes, had re-

positioned Brigade maneuver elements around the Long Binh-Bien Hoa area just before the attacks were scheduled to begin. The confused enemy's previous intelligence reports now became of little value.

The "Old Guard" had been ordered to the "rocket belt" north of Bien Hoa and Camp Frenzell-Jones. Overhead supporting the "Fireball" Aviation Sect. Air Force "Spooky" gunships and Huey Cobras from Alpha Trp. 3rd Sqdn. 17th Cav patrolled the rocket belt area. At about 11 p.m., Jan 30 a Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol from the 71st Inf Det reported a VC company of about 80 hurrying toward Long Binh Post, a few miles away.

The perimeter at Frenzell-Jones, with bunkers manned largely by men of 7th Spt Bn, received probing sniper fire from Ho Nai village. Soldiers were ordered to hold their fire unless they could see the man shooting, to avoid harming civilians in the area.



At Phu Tho Racetrack, Brigade covered "Charlie's" bets.

Jerrold Fishman

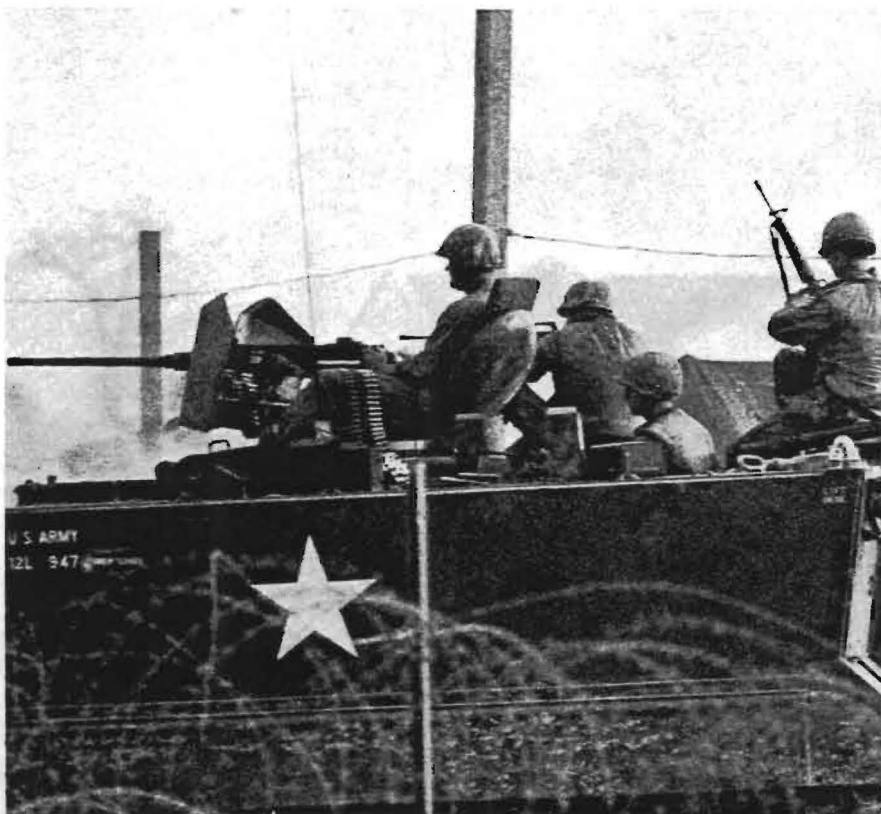
Post-Tet findings disclosed enemy elements had indeed infiltrated small villages such as Ho Nai and Widow's Village, across Highway 1A from II Field Force Vietnam headquarters. Terrorizing the citizenry, they hid in the houses, took what food they needed, dug holes or fighting bunkers under houses, and even strung barbed wire in a tanglefoot pattern around the houses.

The attack broke about 3 a.m. with 122 mm rockets slamming into Long Binh Post and Bien Hoa Air Base. Enemy gunners had time for one salvo before every rocket position was destroyed through combined attacks by gunships overhead and artillery volleys from 2nd Bn, 40th Arty. Large secondary explosions at each of the sites were reported by Old Guard elements in the area and by aerial observers.

The speed and effectiveness of the counter-attacks were extremely detrimental to the enemy, since he was now deprived of rocket and mortar support for his main ground attack, but he pressed on with the battle. Reports of activity in a hilltop cemetery just north of Ho Nai sent two platoons of 4th Bn, 12th Inf "Warriors" speeding there with a platoon of armored cavalry assault vehicles (ACAVs) from Delta Trp, 17th Cav. And so began the main battle of Long Binh for the 199th, for the Red-catchers had run into a VC battalion.



Silhouette of perimeter fighting met



Richard Freeman

Armored vengeance; Delta Trp kept the pressure on.



MP gun



Jerrold Fishman



Jerrold Fishman

Kicked out of Ho Nai by VC.



Jerry Van Wyngarden

Wounded brought to aid over barbed wire perimeter fence.



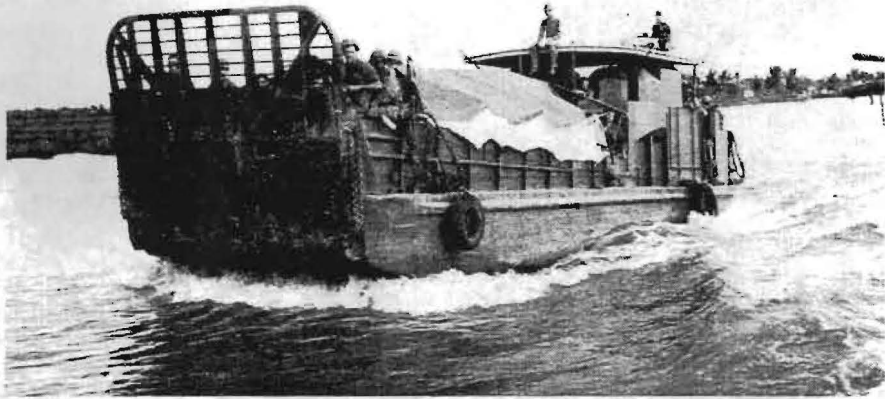
Jerrold Fishman

shot it out.



W.J. Du Puis

Captured weapons and ammunition.



Patrolling with 'Rags'—On guard

Jerry Van Wyngarden

Situated in shallow trenches among the graves, the enemy force was dug in and prepared to jump off for the attack on Frenzell—Jones. Hit and blocked by Brigade forces, the enemy troops reacted furiously, but were no match for the firepower against them. Again, gunships and artillery were used with devastating effect. Although the enemy directed heavy anti-aircraft fire at American helicopters, they kept flying for hours, landing only to reload and refuel at the Fireball heli-pad, or for pilots to exchange a damaged craft for a fresh one. Brigade helicopters joined in support as fleetships and for command-and-control functions.

Bombing strikes from Bien Hoa Air Base helped neutralize the enemy force, which was kept from escaping the Redcatchers' smaller cordons. Brigade infantrymen not engaged in the initial contacts were ordered into blocking positions while the nooses were tightened.

The largest group, estimated at 200 VC/NVA, was surrounded in heavy jungle northwest of Long Binh Post and took a beating from airstrikes and artillery fire on their hastily dug shelters. The remaining few were killed by the infantry or taken as detainees during a reconnaissance in force through the area. In similar manner smaller pockets of enemy soldiers were isolated and decimated. More than 189 suspects were detained.

The fighting was joined on other sides of the Frenzell-Jones perimeter by other units, including elements of the 11th Armd Cav Regt and 9th Infantry Division, who fought fierce engagements on the Plantation perimeter and beyond the highway in Widow's Village. The 3rd Ord Bn's ammunition dump was penetrated by an enemy demolitions crew and a regimental machine gun company to blow up the dump and destroy the helicopters of 12th Combat Aviation

Group. Gunships and airstrikes, combined with infantry sweeps, annihilated the force, but not before VC sappers had blown one pad of ammunition. Fast action by ordnance and other soldiers saved seven other pads, where planted charges had been detected.

In the Cholon section of Saigon, the 3rd Bn, 7th Inf, supported by ACAVs from Delta Trp, 17th Cav rushed to the Phu Tho Racetrack area, where a large NVA/VC force was reported. Six blocks from the racetrack the Redcatchers got their first taste of house-to-house street fighting when they were hit by rocket-propelled grenades and automatic weapons fire from rooftops and windows. As they continued toward the racetrack, enemy dead from previous contact with ARVN soldiers had to be removed from the street before the vehicles could continue. The infantry continued to neutralize the houses ahead. By late afternoon Jan. 31 Redcatchers were well in control of the racetrack, which had been used as an enemy central command post. Heavy fighting continued for another two

days, and accounted for more than 150 enemy dead (BC).

Sporadic contact with various enemy forces continued through mid-February as Brigade units mopped-up remaining VC and NVA soldiers in the Long Binh and Cholon areas.

The attacks had been a bitter disappointment to the enemy soldiers who met the Redcatchers. They had expected they could overrun Camp Frenzell-Jones, capture its stores of food, ammunition and supplies, and thoroughly demoralize American forces in the Long Binh Post area—then continue the assault. In Saigon they expected to be welcomed as liberators. In both places they met only death and devastation. Some were so confident of easy victory they carried civilian clothing in their packs, to wear as they celebrated the remainder of Tet in Bien Hoa or Saigon. Their motto might have been: Alas!

Shortly after the first attack Jan. 31, Colonel Davison said, "If we find them we can kill them—this time they've accommodated us. They're attacking us for a change. We've killed them, we're still killing them and we will continue to kill them." Casualty figures bear him out: During the first 14 hours the Brigade killed more than 500 NVA/VC; in the next few days more than 400 other enemy soldiers would die. Total Brigade casualties: 14 killed and 92 wounded, 45 of whom did not require hospitalization.

The Brigade had triumphed during its first major challenge and few thought that "Charlie" would again risk a slugging contest—within three months.



Guarding the bridges On edge

Craig W. Hansell

# Back For More Came 'Charlie' In May

The enemy attacks that boiled over during Tet took a while to simmer down. A week after the racetrack was retaken, elements of the "Cottonbalers" and "The Old Guard" battalions were once more in that area, clearing out enemy resistors. One action resulted in 38 enemy deaths. Sporadically rocket attacks were made on Bien Hoa Air Base, Long Binh Post and Saigon.

The Brigade returned to more-or-less normal operations after Tet, if you can call a herd of 12 VC supply elephants normal. Long Range Recon Patrol members saw them after attacking an enemy base camp a few miles north of BMB Feb. 9. Caches, bunkers and body-counts mounted as the Redcatchers patrolled their areas, the 2nd Bn, 3rd Inf generally south and west of Saigon, while the 3rd Bn, 7th Inf and 4th Bn, 12th Inf combed the jungles and forests northeast of BMB.

The "Cottonbalers" and "Warriors" had help from non-Brigade units such as elements of the 11th Armored Cavalry during Operation "Valley Forge" in mid-March, in which a moderate number of VC were killed. Near the end of the month came "Box Springs" for the Cottonbalers and Warriors in the area 15 miles northeast of BMB. Operation "Wilderness" began in early April and "Toan Thang" April 8, both fought by Cottonbalers and Warriors with the help of the 2nd Bn, 12th Inf, 25th Infantry Division. All operations were supported by Alpha Co, 3rd Sqdn, 17th Air Cav. The jungled area yielded numerous enemy bunkers and supplies, some hard fighting, and more than 130 KIA by the beginning of the May attacks.

In the first week of April the last major addition had been made to the Brigade with the arrival of the 5th Bn, 12th Inf at Bien Hoa Air Base to join its sister "Warrior" battalion.

By the beginning of May, Paris had been chosen as site for the peace talks. Peace! Several days later the enemy attacked in force in a desperate attempt to seize as many key cities as he could, and control as much territory and populace as possible. When enemy forces ran up against Redcatchers on the south and west inner defense perimeter of Saigon, they ran into a meatgrinder and lost more than 500 dead in a little more than a week of fighting.

Heavy contact began May 6 just before daybreak when reconnaissance

elements of Charlie and Delta Companies of 4th Bn, 12th Inf encountered two NVA soldiers near their combined basecamp, west of Saigon. One was killed, one captured. Moments later the basecamp was attacked by an unknown-size force: 12 enemy died. By noon Redcatchers had killed 25 and detained six; by 1:30 p.m. the toll was 44 and contact was broken.

Next day, May 7, Redcatchers supported by artillery and air strikes broke the back of an NVA battalion hopefully on its way to Saigon. It was stopped about 2.5 miles shy of its goal. Shortly after midnight lead elements of the approaching battalion made contact with Delta Co, 4th Bn, 12th Inf and an hour later other lead elements were hit by ambush patrols of the battalion. Army helicopters and Air Force airstrikes supported the action.

Just after 3 a.m. the main battalion force ran into one of the Warrior companies and was stopped by massive firepower. Apparently trying to flank the company, the enemy ran into the perimeter of the battalion base camp. Battered by heavy automatic weapons fire and artillery fired point

blank by batteries of 2nd Bn, 40th Arty and 2nd Bn, 35th Arty, enemy forces reeled back and scrambled with one of their own units, which had been repulsed by another Redcatcher company. At this point airstrikes were called. Sweeps outside 199th positions at dawn disclosed 92 enemy bodies. Sporadic fighting continued throughout the day.

That afternoon elements of 3rd Bn, 7th Inf combined with troopers of Delta Trp, 17th Cav in an attack on Binh Tri Dong village 2 miles west of Saigon, where enemy forces were heavily dug-in. The villagers had fled and NVA troops and weapons were hidden in buildings, haystacks and underground positions. Fire poured from the combined attackers, and this was reinforced by salvos from 2nd Bn, 40th Arty as well as airstrikes from F-100 jets that placed their bombs within 150 meters of Redcatcher positions.

Wednesday the assault continued, with 44 enemy killed, 54 enemy-occupied military structures destroyed and 27 other structures damaged. The following day, May 9, all Cottonbaler companies and Bravo Co, 4th Bn,



The battle at Binh Tri Dong.

Jerry Van Wyngarden



The cemetery was far from peaceful.

Jerry Van Wyngarden

12th Inf, (which supported them) swept through Binh Tri Dong. The enemy resistance had been broken by the numerous assaults, supported by 18 air strikes, and the victorious Redcatchers received only sporadic rifle fire. The initial sweep May 9 revealed 36 enemy bodies as well as small amounts of captured weapons.

The big fight Thursday, May 9, however caused the decimation of a body of enemy troops, estimated at 180 combined NVA/VC, who blundered into Redcatcher positions 3 miles west of Saigon just after midnight.

Delta Co, 4th Bn, 12th Inf found itself "surrounded" by enemy soldiers who unknowingly moved through the Warriors' area. Command-detonated Claymores and automatic weapons fire jolted the surprised intruders.

It was another classic demonstration of the rebound principle as the NVA/VC troops ran south, directly into the smoking gun muzzles of Charlie Co at the battalion's basecamp. Retreating again, the enemy headed directly toward the positions of Alpha Co, 3rd Bn, 7th Inf, whose heavy fire cut some down and left the remainder

reeling and thoroughly confused.

Meanwhile, up in the air, Army helicopter light fire teams and Air Force "Spooky" mini-gunships poured it on the hapless enemy troops as they were repelled from Redcatcher elements.

Their force completely shattered, enemy soldiers who could fled to the southwest. Besides the 135 dead, 18 suspects were detained.

The next-to-last sizeable body-count came Friday, May 10. Delta Co of the Warrior battalion fought an estimated Viet Cong battalion late Thursday night and early Friday and, with the help of air support, killed 24. Before noon, Charlie Co, 3rd Bn, 7th Inf killed 11 VC of an estimated 50 VC moving west through its area. Bravo Co of the same battalion spotted another 50 enemy on the plains west of Saigon and was supported by Huey Cobras and a "Spooky" that caused 7 KIA.

Saturday, May 11 was relatively calm, with Brigade elements and supporting units killing 12 VC. A recon element from Alpha Co, 4th Bn, 12th Inf fought an unknown-size enemy unit and killed five. Elements of the "Old Guard" had contact with 30 to 35 enemy at the south edge of Saigon and killed five. An ambush patrol from Bravo Co, 3rd Bn, 7th Inf killed two enemy and Charlie Co of that battalion discovered the body of a previously killed VC.

Elements of the Brigade found 16 enemy bodies on sweeps Sunday, as contact lightened. Most had been killed by prior air strikes or artillery fire.

Redcatchers made contact with an estimated VC company late Sunday night, and the fighting continued



Firing a recoilless rifle in battle.

Jerry Van Wyngarden



Joseph F. Whinnery

First Sergeant Tom Ogelsby, 4th Bn, 12th Inf: Suspicious.

through Monday morning, May 13. A recon platoon from Echo Co, 2nd Bn, 3rd Inf had contact with a large group of VC that eventually dispersed in small groups. An hour later 50 VC appeared and the "Old Guard" called in artillery. Later in the morning the platoon came into heavy contact with an unknown-size enemy force and was reinforced by Alpha Co, 5th Bn, 12th Inf. The contact continued with Delta Co of the Old Guard and Delta Trp, 17th Cav providing further support. Fifteen VC were killed in the gunfights that continued throughout the day.

Heavy fighting resumed late Monday afternoon and continued until Tuesday when the enemy broke off contact and left behind 86 dead, with weapons and equipment.

Three company-size outposts of the 2nd Bn, 3rd Inf and one from the 5th Bn, 12th Inf came under simultaneous heavy attack from several enemy units trying to overrun Red-catcher positions during a heavy rainstorm.

At Delta Co of the "Old Guard," the commander said, "They crawled up behind dikes of rice paddies around us. With the heavy rain, we didn't see them until they were 20 meters from the perimeter and had started firing."

"We knew they were all around us. The men let go with all we had and held them. They were so close that they were throwing grenades at us. They were dropping all around. We could see them dragging bodies away. After 90 minutes of that, we started to conserve ammo some, and called in artillery, 360 degrees around us. The 2nd Bn, 40th Arty did an outstanding job," he said.



Big build-up of hope.



Joseph F. Whinnery

Specialist Four Kieth Knepley,  
4th Bn, 12th Inf; Apprehensive.



Jerry Van Wynyarden

The essential-muddy-man.

# We Defended Saigon

## In The 'Pineapple' And Elsewhere

By the end of May the Redcatchers were busy at their task of catching Reds—stray NVA/VC forces. For example, the 4th Bn, 12th Inf at the end of May was working with ARVN soldiers and marines and in two days killed 16 enemy, with help of Air Force and artillery. These were the stragglers from the southwestern approaches to Saigon. Up north, 33 miles northeast of Saigon and about 15 miles north-northeast of BMB, the 5th Bn, 12th Inf was clearing out the area of battalion-size base camps that had allowed the NVA/VC forces to operate in the jungles of that area.

In conjunction with B-52 air strikes they killed 60 enemy and destroyed several base camps.

They were not alone. Elements of the 2nd Bn, 3rd Inf and the 3rd Bn, 7th Inf were up north of BMB at these times, intermittently combined with the search-and-destroy missions.

By the middle of summer, the Brigade units were in their positions for a new assignment—defense of Saigon. And this they carried out with a will.

The assignment was not glamorous and involved much work that was dirty and dangerous without compensating rewards involving high body-counts and devastating breakthroughs. Assigned to guarding the southern and western approaches to Saigon (to the northern perimeters of the 9th Infantry Division's area of operations), the Brigade was responsible for streams and rivers, bridges in Saigon or nearby, the paddylands south of Saigon and the "Pineapple" region west of it. Many casualties were taken in these regions, which the VC had known as their own, by booby traps, to the sorrow of the commanders. It was a heartbreaking region. The daily body-count of enemy soldiers rarely got above three and was usually less. The work of the units in the various operations was to search and sweep, no matter what their means of transport, whether by eagle flight, ragboat, foot, or whatever.

The effectiveness of the operations became known, however, with the number of caches found, the number of bunkers destroyed—the Redcatchers became the bunker-busters, with more than 1,732 destroyed alone from Aug. 14 to Oct. 17, 1968 in the "Pineapple."

Statistics that may be of some meaning, although they can't be projected from a small scale, are that a typical day's summary might read like this, (from Oct. 10, 1968):

"The 199th Light Infantry Brigade continued defense operations south and west of Saigon, destroying enemy fortifications and finding small weapons caches.

"In action late Oct. 9, patrol elements from Alpha Co, 2nd Bn, 3rd Inf killed one of six enemy troops seen moving 100 meters northeast of the patrol's positions, some 5 miles southwest of Saigon. A sweep of the area revealed the dead enemy soldier, a machine gun ammo can, and leaflets.

"Units operating in the "Pineapple" region 3 miles south and southwest of Duc Hoa destroyed a total of 36 bunkers. Charlie Co, 4th Bn, 39th Inf, opconed to the 199th, found 16 rocket-propelled grenades, 3 AK-47s with loaded magazines and one carbine. Several booby traps were found and destroyed, along with scattered small arms ammunition."

The operations, not moneymakers in terms of newspaper coverage, were sometimes galling to the men involved. The area usually involved soup and slime and other hardships that kept a man either swimming for his life (across a broad, fast-moving stream) or else relying on his buddies to pull him out as he tried to cross a swampy rice paddy area or just plain swamp. And weren't there VC booby traps under the water? Bet your life! A tough life.

There is not one way that can chronicle the heroism of every man, whether he lost his life trying to save a buddy in the canals or jungles, or saved it through some fluke of fate. However, the Redcatchers never left a man, prisoner or wounded, from the time they arrived, and to achieve this goal a number of unsung heroes must have been responsible.

The Brigade was also operating in the rivers too, with the so-called "Ragboats" and under control of joint forces. In one of these operations, on Aug. 5, 1968, Brig. Gen. Davis, the new Brigade commander, was wounded and was later evacuated to the United States with an ear injury. Commander of the 5th Bn, 12th Inf, Lt. Col. Herbert F. Ray, was struck in the arm with fragments of a rocket-propelled grenade round. The

joint maneuver was carried out in conjunction with the 9th Infantry Division. ARVN soldiers and other forces.

At nearly the end of summer, Brigade Commander, Colonel Frederic Ellis Davison became a Brigadier General, with his star presented by General Creighton W. Abrams, MACV commander, at the fishnet factory. To add a distinction to the Brigade's commander: the first Negro on active duty in the Army to be so honored.

More of the same operations continued as far as the Brigade went, patrolling in its area of operations, but came another pleasant surprise Sep. 26 when representative soldiers stood at attention at BMB, including Delta Trp, 17th Cav, with their black cavalry hats, as General Abrams pinned on the Valorous Unit Citation to Brigade Colors.

A proud unit, of course, but the 199th had been such a unit before, even if assigned to such an important but often unglamorous assignment as the southern and western defense of Saigon.

For one thing, the 199th had helped Saigon when it first landed, beginning with the defense of the Long Binh Post perimeter. Later on it had helped a little north, northeast and northwest of the Bien Hoa area (and even nowadays sometimes continues to do so) and then most of its units went to the southern part of Saigon, where they eventually formed the south and westward inner defensive ring of the city.

They worked hard at the job. For example, since 1954 the Viet Cong had been in the "Pineapple" region and hadn't been driven out. It was the same in Gia Dinh. The enemy roamed at will. Well, they didn't quite roam at will after the Redcatchers got after them and now they don't at all. The military importance of this is that they used to be able to move companies and platoons whenever they wanted, and now they move squads or individuals, and are forced to seek hiding places for munitions. And it is a different life.

In the Rang Dong and other operations, (joint 199th-ARVN operations), there were 1053 VC killed in action and 7683 enemy fortifications destroyed. This figure goes to the root of the problem: Seek out the enemy, destroy his hiding places and territory, which we did.



Joseph F. Whinnery

River Patrol Boat helps Redcatchers join the Navy.



Peter Gyralay-Pap

Big provider in the sky.

An assist from a big brother at 2nd Bn, 351st Arty.

Joseph F. Whinnery





Robert Collins

Awaiting I.D. check beneath parachute tent.



Peter Gyallay-Pao

Swarming to Hung Long collection point.



Peter Gyallay-Pao

Battalion Surgeon Captain Stephen Jewett checks orphans.



Robert Collins

James Cakalovich and friend near Binh Dien Bridge.



Bruce B. Bollinger

Government transportation not available.

# AND WE HELPED THEM TO REBUILD

Political scientists assert that, against prosperous people revolutionaries have little chance. Vietnam has been subjected to colonialism, conquest and revolution since far beyond the years of its oldest inhabitant and the fabric of its social, economic and political institutions has been torn time and again. Realizing that military victories alone are not enough to ensure that the South Vietnamese will be able to pursue the sort of life to which everyone should be entitled, the United States Government has embarked upon a pacification and redevelopment program without parallel in its history. In helping the people of South Vietnam attain physical and economic security, improve their physical and educational facilities, achieve greater health through use of modern drugs and medical techniques, the U.S. Government is laying groundwork for a strong and confident society well able to hold its own in the modern world.

The 199th has aided in this program in many significant ways in its areas of operation. Even more important is the fact that since some hamlets and villages lie directly on main invasion routes and are prime targets for Viet Cong pressure, a strong, working pacification effort is not only desirable but necessary.

A principle tool for evidencing the loyalty of the civilian population is the cordon and search technique. In cooperation with such GVN agencies as National Police and ARVN, whole areas are sealed off, houses searched, and everyone's identity checked. Viet Cong suspects are detained for further questioning until their identity has been established one way or the other. This technique is meant to keep the VC infrastructure off-balance.

Brigade, for example, staged two huge cordons in February this year. "Strangler I" was held at Hung Long village and four of its hamlets, and a week later "Strangler II" began in the strategic Tan Nhut Triangle. Both areas are within 10 miles of Saigon on the southwest side. About 5,500 persons were checked.

These cordons were unusual in that "tent cities" were erected with maximum speed to facilitate processing the Vietnamese. Others involved besides infantrymen and engineers were Brigade and Old Guard Civil Affairs teams, intelligence and interrogation teams, medical and dental teams from 7th Spt Bn and other specialized workers. From various Vietnamese agen-

cies came Armed Propaganda Teams, a Political Warfare Team and even a Cultural Drama Team. While the lengthy processing goes on, people are fed, entertained, have their illnesses or dental problems treated, and also hear political messages explaining the facts of the Viet Cong attempt to infiltrate and demoralize existing government on whatever level possible.

These were "super" cordons, but Brigade has participated in other large ones and the emphasis has been on doing something positive for the Vietnamese in return for inconveniencing them.

A long list of positive day-to-day steps taken toward winning the friendship of the Vietnamese centers around medcaps and dentcaps, in which thousands of patients are treated each month. Between June and November last year more than 74,000 were treated by Brigade in the Saigon area alone. In one village a Brigade medical team prevented a malaria outbreak from becoming an epidemic and saved several already-endangered lives by prompt medical treatment.



Peter Gyellay-Pao

**First Lieutenant Jerry Dauphinee helps show films.**

Another aspect of medical aid—individual concern—has turned up in cases involving Americans with Vietnamese having such problems as hare-lips, deformed feet, broken bones—including Brigade members who have



Jerrold Fishman

**Medic Specialist Six Allan Jones gives novocaine at Ho Nai.**



Craig W. Hensell

Food for Hoi Chanh families.

helped reunite families separated when one member is in the hospital and no one knows where.

Building and rebuilding has also been an important part of the Brigade pacification program. Bridges have been repaired or replaced, as was the vital link between Duc Hoa and Saigon. The 87th Engr Co also built a dispensary for Vietnamese near a refugee village in Saigon. House construction aid has been given for the relief of citizens whose homes were destroyed during various attacks. Almost immediately after Tet, Redcatchers built 48 temporary shelters for the more than 100 homeless families in Ho Nai, then donated building materials and expert help to supervise Vietnamese efforts to rebuild their homes. Also, Brigade soldiers contributed nearly \$4,000 to help. Redcatchers as well helped residents of a hamlet of Binh Tri Dong village rebuild after their houses were leveled during the May attacks.

The readiness to help even extended to aid the man whose thatched house was literally flattened by the blast from a Chinook helicopter's rotors. Through coordination by Brigade Civil Affairs Office, plans were drawn and a new house constructed by the 87th Engrs. The man, himself a carpenter, helped with saw and hammer and pronounced his new house better—and sounder—than the old.

The distribution of food to families or orphanages has taken many forms. When caches of rice are found to be edible they are given to the needy, many of whom are refugees from other areas or have had their homes and possessions destroyed by attacks. Rations have been given to "Hoi

Chanh" families who have relocated. Surplus food goes to orphanages to supplement sometimes sparse fare.

Food is sometimes given as a present. At Tet this year, for example, more than 5,000 "friendship bags" were given to Vietnamese and contained Nuoc Mam sauce, salt, sugar, candy, soap and other desirable things. Distributed by battalion civil affairs members throughout the Brigade area of operations, the gifts were warmly received and, in some cases, the hospitality was reciprocated immediately by the offer of a glass of wine or some holiday delicacy.

Orphanages, many crowded far beyond their normal capacity, get special attention from Brigade members, who share the American soldier's almost universal enthusiasm for children. They not only give the orphans parties, but also more practical gifts such as television sets, construct playground equipment or, as in one case,

divide among four orphanages 18 sewing machines left behind in a cache.

The "Chieu Hoi" program itself has been an aid to the Brigade pacification effort, since the "Hoi Chanh" returnees help out as Kit Carson scouts with line companies, act as spokesmen for the program during cordons, help organize medcaps and dentcaps, and distribute pamphlets and leaflets explaining GVN's policies. Some even function as a pacification team that lives and works with villagers in Viet Cong sensitive areas within the Brigade AO.

By providing food for those without, increasing the health of the citizenry, aiding children and helping adults protect themselves and live without fear—pacification objectives are being helped by Redcatchers even as they help Vietnamese help themselves, and by so doing win their friendship.



Jerry Van Wyngarden

At Ho Nai: Before rebuilding.



Philip A. Saluter

A bridge is replaced near Duc Hoa.

# WADING INTO OUR THIRD RVN YEAR

The new year was just underway Jan. 6 when Colonel Jeffrey G. Smith, Acting Commander in the absence of General Davison, became the third Brigade commander to be wounded in action. Flying over a "hot bunker complex" that had shot a Huey Cobra down and forced another helicopter down, Colonel Smith's machine was struck while attempting to aid and he was wounded in the leg and shoulder. His helicopter managed to limp to support base Claudette and land safely.

Early 1969 found Redcatchers apprehensive about the coming Tet holidays and whether the enemy would try the same tricks as before. As against this, numerous patrols, a sharp eye for caches, and generally keeping "Charlie" off-balance and poorly supplied were the rule of the day.

When the VC wanted to slug, Redcatchers slugged back. While operating in a bend of the Vam Co Dong River known as the "parrot's beak," two companies of Cottonbalers from 3rd Bn, 7th Inf, supported by two companies from the 9th Inf Div, trapped an estimated force of 100 combined NVA/VC. The three-day action, beginning Jan. 27 nine miles north of Tan An, resulted in 42 enemy killed.

The 199th had its two largest cordons in February, when it completed "Strangler I" and "Strangler II" within a week of each other. Together the cordons checked the identities of more than 5,500 persons.

During the Tet holidays Brigade units offered Vietnamese gifts which were received and reciprocated, but during the holiday period, despite the official "cease-fire," there was no let-up in Brigade vigilance. All thoughts went back to 1968, when the Brigade's alert posture helped avert disaster at Long Binh Post and in Saigon. At the 1969 Tet period, Brigade was again ready for anything.

Trouble didn't start, however, until the morning of Feb. 23, when elements of Charlie Co, 5th Bn, 12th Inf and the combined platoon of HHC, 199th Brigade—working with various US and GVN forces—encountered the enemy at Ho Nai village and took their toll of his forces: 33 KIA in a 3-day period. In conjunction with artillery and air strikes, the friendly forces stopped the attack and forced the enemy to disengage. Enemy losses were not as heavy as the previous year, and VC have shown more prudence by hit-and-run tactics.

In March Brigade elements trapped and killed the Viet Cong temporary Chief of Staff for a large VC military

district in an area south and west of Saigon. The high-ranking officer, Nam Xuan, was killed by members of Charlie Co, 5th Bn, 12th Inf during a sweep through a suspected enemy stronghold 7 miles south of Saigon. The 2-hour firefight found seven other Viet Cong killed and also turned up two caches containing 38 mixed B-40 and B-41 rocket rounds with boosters.

## IN SHORT

When *Redcatcher Yearbook* is published, Brigade will have been in-country two-and-one-half years, and by extensive use of muscle and brain has made its capabilities grow and its accomplishments flourish.

Its techniques for patrolling, searching, night ambushes, and river assaults have been professional to a high degree and were developed often under extremely adverse and hazardous conditions—from the mangrove swamps of the Rung Sat Special Zone to the jungles of Long Binh and the paddies of the "Pineapple" region.

It has been possible to move units with dazzling speed from fighting in one terrain condition one day to fighting in another—totally different—the next. And so effective is their training no loss in professionalism is sustained.



Joseph F. Whinnery

At a wet LZ, General Davison Listens

Military methods indigenous to US fighting in Vietnam are second nature to Redcatcher units. Eagle flights; "people-sniffer" and defoliation missions; river operations ranging from Ragboat assaults to patrols with Navy PBRs, airboats and sampans; close and fast artillery and mortar support; excellent coordination for air strikes by Cobras, mini-gun Dragonships and others; extensive use of scout and tracker dogs; availability of Starlight scopes that make the "invisible VC" a thing of the past—these are but some of the advantages Brigade soldiers have over "Charlie," and they know how to use them.

They are part of the reasons for Brigade's success in keeping the enemy shifting in hiding, while rifling his caches that can contain anything from rockets and mortars, machine guns and rifles, ammunition, rice, medical supplies—even garden tools, typewriters, mimeograph machines and sewing machines.

A blown bunker can be replaced elsewhere with some hard work, but a captured weapon's replacement has to come down the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and it may never arrive.

This Brigade activity has done much for the pacification program, since it has allowed many Vietnamese to return to a reasonably normal life in areas VC formerly dominated—and it has shown that Saigon itself can be attacked only at high risk.

Redcatchers have taken many non-military steps to aid the Vietnamese as well, building roads and bridges, helping them rebuild their homes, establishing Medcaps and providing medical supplies for their dispensaries, furnishing them with food and even hauling water for them on occasion. The program never ends, but as it progresses it helps prove that Americans are friends of the Vietnamese people and not imperialistic conquerors, as the VC have told them. Every friend Brigade has made is one less friend for "Charlie."

The 199th has taken care of its own as well, in providing swift, dependable medical and dental care for its members, trying to make their living conditions as pleasant as possible—including hot food in the field—and ensuring in general that all supplies get there on time. While facilities have improved at BMB, emphasis for supply and other support effort continues to be in the field, where most time is spent.

From the first day a replacement arrives at Redcatcher Training Center, he is given the finest training, equip-

# Camp Frenzell-Jones - BMB

Brigade Main Base, later named Camp Frenzell-Jones, is a 1,200 acre complex at the northern end of Long Binh Post area and fronts on highway 1-A, which leads south into Saigon.

Originally part of a plantation area, the overgrowth was cleared by bulldozers as the camp was established, and nothing remains today of the trees. The original facilities were primitive, with tents sufficing for most activities, but as time went on improvements came. Today the Headquarters is in a semi-permanent building, as are most other staff section offices. The Brigade facilities, including PX, Post Office and other buildings are in wooden structures, as are most billets.

There is a canvas-type swimming pool, built in 1967, and there is now an air-conditioned library and photography laboratory. A new MARS radio station has just been opened, for the convenience of the men who wish to call home, even from the

field, where there are also subsidiary stations which allow them to call directly.

Enlisted, Non-Commissioned and Officers' clubs have been built within the year for the benefit of troops on stand down and rear-based soldiers.

A full-size cafeteria has been com-

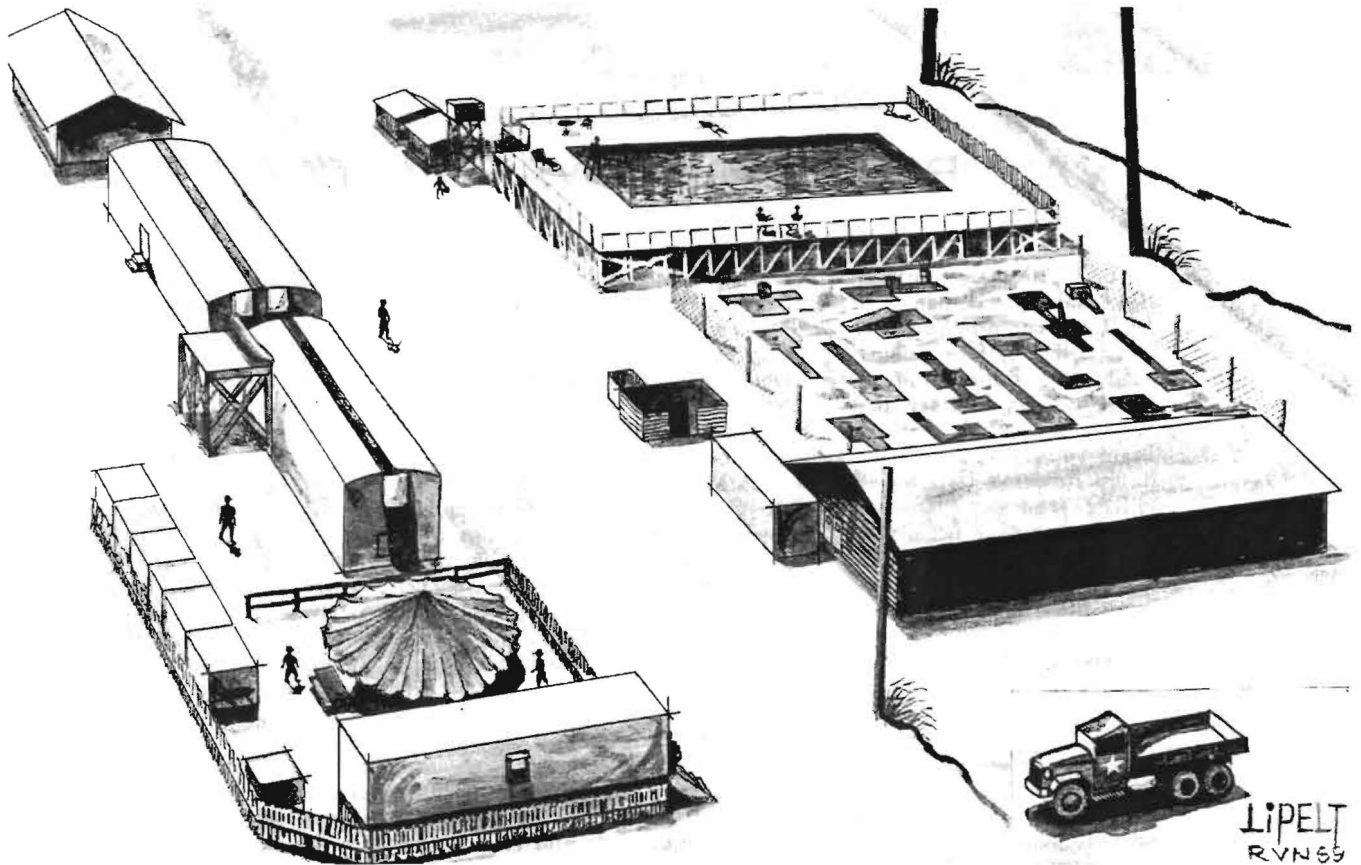
pleted near the recreation area to supplement Army cuisine.



Library: Reading, writing, relaxation.



New MARS



Brigade Recreation Center drawing shows (clockwise from bottom left): Old snack bar, photo lab, library, MARS station, swimming pool, minigolf course, new snack bar.

# Brigade Commanders



**Colonel**  
**George D. Rehkopf**  
**Apr. 26, 1966-Nov. 26, 1966**



**Brigadier General**  
**Robert C. Forbes**  
**Sep. 1, 1967-May 10, 1968**



**Brigadier General**  
**Charles W. Ryder**  
**Nov. 26, 1966-Mar. 1, 1967**



**Brigadier General**  
**Franklin M. Davis, Jr.**  
**May 10, 1968-Sep. 1, 1968**



**Brigadier General**  
**John F. Freund**  
**Mar. 1, 1967-Sep. 1, 1967**



**Brigadier General**  
**Frederic E. Davison**  
**Sep. 1, 1968-May 28, 1969**

## VALOROUS UNIT AWARD CITATION

The 199th Light Infantry Brigade and its assigned and attached units: Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 199th Infantry Brigade: 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry; 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry; 4th Battalion, 12th Infantry; 2nd Battalion, 40th Artillery; 7th Support Battalion; 87th Engineer Company; Troop D, 17th Cavalry; 179th Military Intelligence Detachment; 40th Public Information Detachment; 503d Chemical Detachment; 152d Military Police Platoon; 44th Military History Detachment; 71st Infantry Detachment (LRP) (now Company M (Ranger), 75th Infantry); 49th Infantry Platoon (Scout Dog); 11th Combat Tracker Team (Provisional) (redesignated and reorganized as the 76th Infantry Detachment); 856th Radio Research Detachment; Troop A, 3d Squadron, 17th Cavalry; Company F, 51st Infantry (LRP); and the 298th Signal Platoon (now 313th Signal Company) distinguished themselves by extraordinary heroism while engaged in military operations during the period Jan. 31 to Feb. 19, 1968 in support of Saigon and Long Binh Post during the Tet Offensive.

In the early morning hours on Jan. 31 insurgent forces launched savage attacks against Long Binh by firing rockets at II Field Force Vietnam and Bien Hoa Air Base. Brigade artillery promptly and effectively reacted to the attack, destroying two rocket bases and silencing the rest with a voluminous barrage. Thwarted in this aspect of their attempt, the Viet Cong then initiated well-organized and determined attacks upon Long Binh and the base camp of the brigade. In response clerks, cooks, mechanics and other support troops of the 199th Light Infantry Brigade manned the unit's perimeter while maneuver elements aggressively engaged and pursued enemy forces. During the fighting at Long Binh, the Brigade's firepower and indomitable spirit were instrumental in depriving concentrated enemy forces of progression into the city of Saigon. The resourcefulness and tactical expertise of unit commanders enabled units to retain constant contact with the insurgents and inflict numerous casualties which totally demoralized the enemy and destroyed his initiative. The men of the 199th Light Infantry Brigade displayed extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty which are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect distinct credit upon themselves and the Armed Forces of the United States.

# Dedication Plaque at Camp Frenzell-Jones

68  
SPECIALIST BILLY C. JONES AND PRIVATE FIRST CLASS HERBERT  
E. FRENZELL WERE ON AN EAGLE FLIGHT ON 21 JANUARY 1967  
WHEN THEIR UNIT MET A WELL ENTRENCHED VC FORCE. THE UNIT,  
CAUGHT IN OPEN TERRAIN AND WITHOUT COVER, WAS IN A  
DESPERATE SITUATION. PFC FRENZELL, WHO WAS NOT AT THE  
TIME DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THE AMBUSH AND WAS IN A SAFE  
LOCATION, CHOSE TO OPEN FIRE ON THE ENEMY, THEREBY  
DRAWING FIRE AWAY FROM THE EXPOSED POSITIONS. AFTER  
68  
EVERYONE HAD WITHDRAWN, PFC FRENZELL STARTED HIS  
ATTEMPT TO MOVE BACK TO REJOIN HIS SQUAD. AS HE LEFT HIS  
CONCEALED POSITION HE WAS SHOT AND KILLED. SPECIALIST  
FOUR JONES CRAWLED THROUGH THE MUD AND ENEMY FIRE TO  
RECOVER FRENZELL'S BODY. AFTER CONTACT WAS BROKEN, SP4  
JONES CARRIED PFC FRENZELL'S BODY FOR OVER TWO HOURS  
THROUGH THICK JUNGLE GROWTH AND HAZARDOUS SWAMPS TO  
69  
PLACE PFC FRENZELL ON THE WAITING HELICOPTER. HOWEVER  
WHEN HE SAW ANOTHER MAN HIT AND FALL, HE LOWERED PFC  
FRENZELL'S BODY TO THE GROUND AND RUSHED TO ASSIST THE  
NEWLY WOUNDED SOLDIER. IT WAS AT THIS TIME THAT HE WAS  
FATALLY WOUNDED. HIS FINAL WORDS WERE, "I TRIED, I DID ALL  
I COULD DO. I COULDN'T DO ANY MORE."

## Why The Brigade Patch?

The colors blue and white symbolize the Infantry and the shield shape represents the ancient forerunners of modern Infantry, who carried shields. The spear, likewise, represents the early Infantry use of thrust weapons such as spears, as well as those shot from bows or catapults. The yellow flames symbolize the advent of gunpowder and the development of a new trend in Infantry warfare. The red ball in the center of the patch indicates the Nuclear Age, in which Infantry can fight side-by-side with the nuclear weapons of sophisticated warfare.





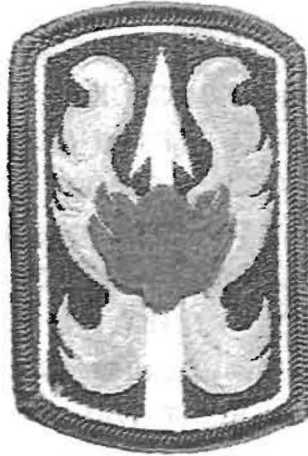
HHC, 199th Bde



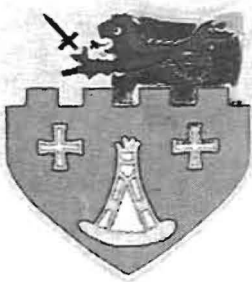
2nd Bn, 3rd Inf



3rd Bn, 7th Inf



199th Bde Shoulder Patch



4th and 5th Bns, 12th Inf



2nd Bn, 40th Arty



17th Armd Cav



7th Spt Bn





DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
HEADQUARTERS, II FIELD FORCE VIETNAM  
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96266


AVFB-CG

TO THE HURRICANE



Since its inception in 1967 each issue of THE HURRICANE magazine has consistently been of the highest literary merit and has unfailingly told the story of U.S. combat units in Military Region 3 while also highlighting the efforts of the Government of South Vietnam. Its portrayal of Vietnamese culture and life is not only informative and interesting but also a significant contribution to the understanding by others of the Vietnamese people and their struggle for freedom from Communist domination.

THE HURRICANE's unique position both as an outstanding command publication and as an artistic endeavor has garnered well deserved praise from its military and civilian readers alike. I add my own plaudits on a job well done.

  
MICHAEL S. DAVISON  
Lieutenant General, USA  
Commanding

APRIL  
MAY  
JUNE  
1971  
NO

**38**

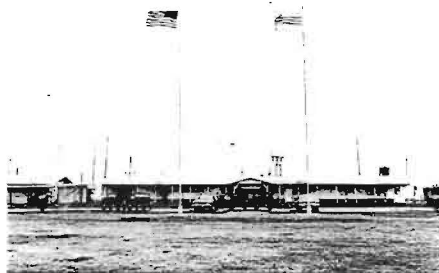
A PUBLICATION OF II FIELD FORCE VIETNAM

For three and one half years the *HURRICANE* has told the story of II Field Force Vietnam in the Vietnam war. During that time we have also endeavored to bring about a better understanding of the Republic of Vietnam and its people by surveying their unique customs and culture.

In this final edition of the *HURRICANE* LTG Michael S. Davison gives us his own assessment of the changing complexion of the war and of II Field Force's role. In a related story SSG Jerry VanDrew reviews the history of II Field Force Vietnam since its activation in 1966. We are also reprinting ten of the most representative stories from past *HURRICANES* which we feel best exemplify the men who have served in the command.

Assistant editor, Specialist 4 Randy Heidepriem, did the artwork for the cover representing II Field Force as a combat command. MSGT Allan Swarts shot the rear cover photo of an ARVN engineer captain and US advisor on a bridge building project, indicative of the new role ahead for II Field Force—The Editor.

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RETROSPECT P. 21



CG P. 18



ROME PLOW P. 41



DROPS P. 39



TET P. 2

II FIELD FORCE  
VIETNAM  
LTG MICHAEL S. DAVISON  
COMMANDING  
GENERAL  
LTC D. A. PEACE  
Information Officer  
MSGT A. C. SWARTS  
NCOIC  
16th PUBLIC  
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Officer  
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VAN DREW, Information  
Supervisor; SSG R. C.  
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SP5 C. CORBIN, Broad-  
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HAUGEN, Information  
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GOVERN, Information  
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Photographer; SP4 G.  
Adames, Photographer;  
SP4 R. Baker,  
Photographer

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Because of the reorgani-  
zation of Headquarters  
II FFV and the resulting  
reduction in personnel  
this will be the final issue of  
the *HURRICANE*. The staff  
of the *HURRICANE* wishes  
to thank the readership for  
the many suggestions and  
compliments received and  
the continual acceptance of  
the magazine throughout  
its three and one half years  
of publication.—Ed.



IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN a time of celebration. It should have been a time of feasting, fireworks, frolic and fun. It should have been a time of praying for ancestors past and a happy future yet to come. It should have been, but it was not.

Instead, main force Viet Cong and North Vietnamese units chose the morning of January 31, the first day of the Lunar New Year, Tet, to launch a major, coordinated assault against the population centers throughout the Republic of Vietnam.

This seemingly go-for-broke offensive, which counted heavily on civilian support that never materialized, was also aimed at major U.S. military installations to include Bien

Hoa and Long Binh.

The area around II Field Force Headquarters was the scene of some of the fiercest fighting in the III Corps Tactical Zone.

As the first moon of the lunar year began to appear in the skies over II Field Force the enemy made their presence known. A salvo of 122 mm rockets came crashing into the II Field Force area known as the Plantation. Within minutes after the rockets, which did minimal damage, hit II Field, an alert patrol from the 199th Light Infantry Brigade spotted the enemy position and eliminated it before a second salvo could be fired.

Shortly after the rocket attack,

units identified as belonging to the 274th and 275th Viet Cong Regiments launched a heavy ground attack against the area around II Field Force, with the heaviest attack aimed at the areas defended by the men of the 219th Engineer Group, 303rd Radio Research Battalion and 12th Aviation Group.

The village a short distance across the road from II Field Force Headquarters, "Widows' Village," exploded with a torrent of rifle, machine gun and RPG rockets all directed at the defenders of the Plantation.

The officers and men assigned to II Field Force and the Plantation area had been in a high state of alert for the past two days. Already in

The background of the page is a high-contrast, black and white photograph showing the silhouettes of soldiers in a trench. Several machine guns are mounted on tripods, their barrels pointing towards the viewer. The scene is backlit, creating a bright, hazy glow behind the dark figures of the soldiers and their equipment.

# TET TRUCE OFFENSIVE • 1968

perimeter bunker positions, the defenders returned the initial enemy gunfire, stopped the assault, and pinned the enemy to the ground.

During the offensive, military policemen from the 552nd Military Police Company Ready Reaction Team drove a gun jeep down highway 1A between the enemy and the II Field Force perimeter bunkers. The MPs were able to lay down a heavy column of machinegun fire into the enemy positions. Their heroic action kept the enemy pinned down until gunships from the 145th Aviation Battalion, 12th Aviation Group arrived on the scene.

The helicopter gunships dropped flares over "Widows' Village" fol-

lowed by continuous air assaults in support of the II Field Force soldiers on the ground.

Meanwhile, elements of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment had saddled up their tanks and armored cavalry assault vehicles and charged from Loc Ninh and Lai Khe to join in the fighting around Bien Hoa and Long Binh.

An armored cavalry unit from the 9th Infantry Division stormed down highway 1A and quickly joined in the battle around II Field Force. This was followed by the 9th Division helicopter assault that landed a unit of "Old Reliables" on the south end of the battle area. When the gunships lifted their supporting

fire, the infantrymen swept through "Widows' Village" meeting sporadic enemy resistance in house to house fighting.

The main body of the attacking units had fled north into the village of Ho Nai, two miles north of the Plantation. The enemy left 60 dead in "Widows' Village." The battle for the Plantation had ended. The battle for Ho Nai began.

Elements of the 199th Light Infantry Brigade, 9th Infantry Division and the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment combined to force the enemy out of Ho Nai.



FISHMAN

*(Reprinted from April 1968)*


AMONG THOSE UNITS on the Plantation that played a major role in repulsing the Viet Cong forces were Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 79th Engineer Group, the 66th Engineer Company and the 219th Military Intelligence Detachment.

Captain Roger Ballou, CO of the Headquarters and Headquarters Company and Captain Joseph Cain, CO of the 66th had half of their respective companies already manning the perimeter bunkers before the first of the 122 mm rockets slammed into the Palntation.

After the rocket attack, the rest of the engineers; clerk typists, draftsmen, carpenters, survéyors and map makers manned the line as combat soldiers.

Shortly after the rocket attack, the Viet Cong opened up on the perimeter with rocket, grenade and automatic weapons fire.

The engineers blasted back at the enemy with machine guns, rifles and grenades. They were joined in their fight by Headquarters personnel from the 12th Aviation Group and "gun jeeps" from the 552d Military Police Company.

Much of the fighting originated from Khu Gia Vien "Widows' Village", directly across highway 1A and about 150 meters away from the 79th Engineer Group headquarters building. 

*Plantation defenders take cover along highway 1A.*

# IN DEFENSE OF PLANTATION-1968

*A gunship fires on enemy troops near Widow's Village, scene of the battle for Plantation.*



# BUILDING PLANTATION

by Sergeant Major Clay Lacy

(Reprinted from April 1968)



The Plantation Chapel was one of the first permanent buildings erected in 1967.

JUST TWO SHORT YEARS AGO, a thickly matted greenery of jungle vines, lush foliage and stately rubber trees standing in precise rows like toy soldiers covered a strip of land 20 miles northeast of Saigon. Running along the edge of this area, called the "Plantation", was a narrow road which twisted northward to the rich truck garden oasis of Dalat.

Today, the same area has been completely transformed. Twin flag poles rising from the green lawn fly the national colors of the Republic of Vietnam and the United States. This is the headquarters of the U.S. Army's II Field Force Vietnam.

The advance group for this newly organized unit arrived in Vietnam in January 1966 and moved into the "Plantation".

The first year on site was spent in

constructing the headquarters building plus erecting the quonset huts used for staff section's offices. A major problem after the plows and bulldozers had scraped off the foliage was the high dust level, particularly in the hot dry season.

The solution came through the tedious task of digging up clumps of grass along the roadway and transplanting them at the site. It was backbreaking work in the steaming heat of Vietnam's summer, but the dividends are selfevident. Today, the long highway north from Saigon is bordered by growing military installations and marked with choking swirls and clouds of dust—except at the "Plantation". Here the dust problem does not exist due to thick grass throughout the headquarters area.

In January of last year the "old

troopers," those who had come with the new unit to Vietnam, rotated and a new crop of soldiers arrived to continue the development of the "Plantation." Sparkplugs for the new development were Lieutenant Colonel John P. Lamb of Seattle, Wash., and Sergeant Major Adam Minnick, a beefy soldier from Killeen, Tex.

Behind the headquarters building and staff offices built by the "old troopers" squatted rows of tents, the housing for enlisted men. Under the Lam-Minnic team, the canvas houses were replaced with metal "Adams' Huts," airy buildings atop cement foundations.

To accomplish these many improvements, Colonel Lamb, the Headquarters Commandant, had a team of seven non-commissioned officers and nearly 200 Vietnamese laborers, hired from the surrounding area. In addition, the men of the headquarters company and other units at the "Plantation" worked evenings in a massive program called "Self Help".

Engineer units contributed the major buildings to the growing complex. Company B of the 46th Engineer Battalion completed small cottages for the general officers of the headquarters, as well as a mess for the commanding general. A new 500-man mess hall for the troops was another engineer accomplishment.

The goal for the "Plantation" development is a functional site where soldiers of II Field Force will have a place to live, work and relax in relative comfort.

*Sandbag bunkers formed the first line of defense.*





*An Apache low-bird dips down to check out a village*

# Apache Scouts

By Specialist 5 Don Sockol

*The fragile, bubble-encased Light Observation Helicopter (LOH) flew out of Tay Ninh Base Camp at 7 a.m. Trailing it was the larger, more muscular Cobra, flexing 26 rockets, its dart-filled flachettes and two mini-guns.*

*Lumbering above them was a Huey H-Model, maintaining a dignified aloofness, but ready to descend from the heights to help the delicate low-bird, the LOH (pronounced loach), if it ran into trouble. The H-Model accompanies the "hunter-killer" team on particularly dangerous missions. This was a "first light" flight. First light is always danger-*

*ous. The enemy is on his way back underground for the day.*

The Apaches of A Troop, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), are a proud unit. The LOH crews are the proudest, with a fierce and tender comradeship.

"You get this close to a bunch of guys and realize they may not be here tomorrow—you're going to be pretty tight," said Specialist 4 Bill Gannon. "Even the bad guys are good."

Gannon is a gunner, or "Torque," who sits with his M-60 machinegun



SEITZ

## **Alfa Troop, 1st/9th Cav**

*(Reprinted from March 1970)*

in the back compartment of the LOH.

SP4 Michael Sanders is an "Oscar." He flies in front with the pilot, on the left side. He carries an M-16 and watches the ground. Officially, he's listed as "observer," but if the pilot is shot, he's got to be able to take the duplicate controls in front of him and get the chopper down safely. Every Oscar goes up on training flights with a pilot so he'll be able to fly if the need ever arises—and it has.

The Torques and Oscars are all volunteers. And any man who wants out of the Scouts can get out.

Warrant Officer Edgar Rickabaugh volunteered to fly a LOH after 36 weeks of training as a helicopter pilot in the States. "There's not really too much to tell," Rickabaugh said about his job.

A few months ago a Medevac was flying into a firefight to pick up wounded infantrymen. The enemy fired on the Dustoff. Rickabaugh flew his LOH in front of the Medevac bird and took the enemy fire himself. He received the Distinguished Flying Cross.

*The pilot of Apache 1-3, the low-bird, was new. He'd only flown about*

*half a dozen missions in the LOH before. He and the Cobra accompanying him arrived at their AO (Area of Operations), the Northwest Recon Zone. It was little more than a mile from the Cambodian border and the low-bird was flying over an enemy-infested area.*

The LOH is the "hunter" of the "hunter-killer" team. It flies at tree-top level, looking for enemy bunkers, enemy trails—and the enemy himself. And it flies at a 45 degree roll angle in clockwise patters, which is not easy on the stomach.

In heavily infiltrated Tay Ninh



Donning chicken board: a little life insurance

SEITZ

the LOH crews expect to find the enemy. They anticipate drawing fire at least once a day, and usually are not disappointed.

"You can see more action in one month with the Scouts than during a whole year in a line unit," said Gannon. "I'm not putting down infantry. They're fighting the war. But Scouts are something else."

Steffens used to be an infantryman before he volunteered to fly the low-birds. "When I was on the ground, whenever a LOH came in I figured my worries were over. They'd draw Charlie's fire and the pressure was off us. I thought they were crazy. And now," he added, "I still think they're crazy."

*About an hour and 20 minutes of Apache 1-3's two hour flight had elapsed, recalled Cobra pilot, Warrant Officer Gene J. Olson. "We were fairly low on fuel," he said. "We were working about three clicks southwest of a big open area we call 'Pearson's Field.' We were working our way toward the field.*

*"There's a big trail through the field. Every once in a while it shows use. This was one of those times. So we told the low-bird to go down and check it out."*

"You hope you find someone,"

Steffens said. "You hope he shoots at you, but that you get him first. It's part of the game.

"They've got the edge. They see us first and can take the first shot. Then we have to spot them."

If the LOH does make contact, the tactics are for it to get out of the way while spraying the area with small arms fire, and let the Cobra, the killer, come in to finish the job.

"But sometimes you wonder who the killer is," said Specialist 5 George Best, a Torque. "The low-birds get most of the kills."

From the vantage point of the high-flying H-Model the "hunter-killer" team looks like a fishing expedition. An invisible line stretches down from the Cobra to the tiny LOH which can barely be kept in view by the H-Model as it skims over the tree-tops.

If the enemy is the fish and the Cobra's job is to gather him in, only one part of the analogy is missing. The low-bird is the bait.

"I can't think of any other job over here that matches the job of LOH crews in courage," said Cobra pilot Olson. "If they find a fresh trail, they literally track the enemy down and bring him out by drawing fire."

"Sometimes I feel like pulling my hair over the job," said Gannon. "But after it's done, I feel good.

"You're proud of your bird," he said. "It's like having a new car. You want to clean it up and drive down the street and have people look at it.

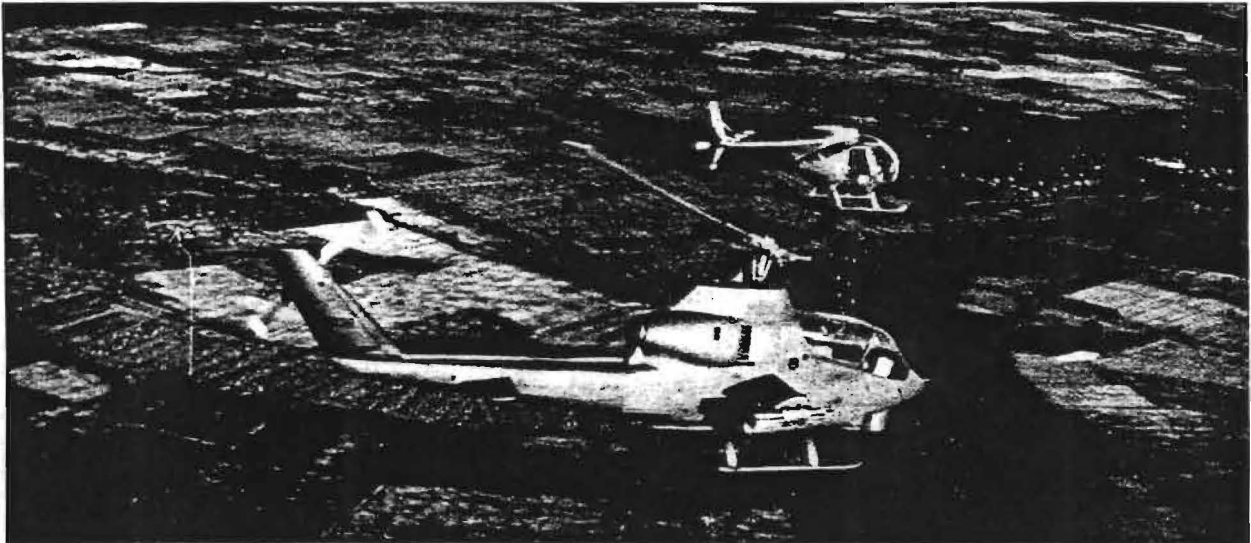
"I get mad as hell when we get bullet holes. It means more patches. When we get shot up I get upset and tell the pilot, 'You got us bullet holes again.'"

*"One-three went down to check out the trail," said Olson. "He was going from east to west at 50-60 knots. When he got to the edge of the trail, he took fire. The pilot radioed that he was getting hosed down. I started to roll in. About three seconds later he called and said he was still taking fire. Three seconds isn't a very long time, but when you're getting shot at it's an eternity.*

*"I told him to turn right, away from the clearing. I could see the Torque putting out fire like he was burning the barrel up. They took fire for about 800 meters. He didn't say what kind of fire, but it looked like AK. It had to be at least a company-sized unit to keep up fire for that distance.*

*"We were putting in mini-gun fire and I got about eight rockets off. Then I got another call from the pilot.*

*"He said, 'I'm hit.'"*



Heading home with friend: "killer" Cobra

SEITZ

"You ought to be here sometime when we have a scramble," Steffens said. "That's really something. The siren goes off and everybody—LOHs, Cobras, H-Models—everybody runs to their bird. I've seen guys go up in their underwear and I've seen guys go up with a towel wrapped around them.

"Because when that siren goes off," Steffens said, "you know somebody's down."

*Olson contacted the H-Model to let him know 1-3's pilot was hit. The H-Model started its descent to pick up the crew when the low-bird landed away from enemy lines.*

*"I asked the pilot, 'Will you be able to make it?'" said Olson. "The*

*last thing he said was, 'Yes, I can make it.'*

*"Then the bird nosed down and hit a tree. He either fainted or died from his wounds and fell forward on the controls and the Oscar couldn't fight him off. That's my theory. The chopper turned over and burst into flames."*

"I was the only one with a helmet. Everybody was standing around asking what happened. Then I heard, 'The low-bird blew up,' and I knew they were all dead. I knew who was on the aircraft and I knew they were all dead. I couldn't talk to the other guys. I had a big lump in my throat," Steffens said.

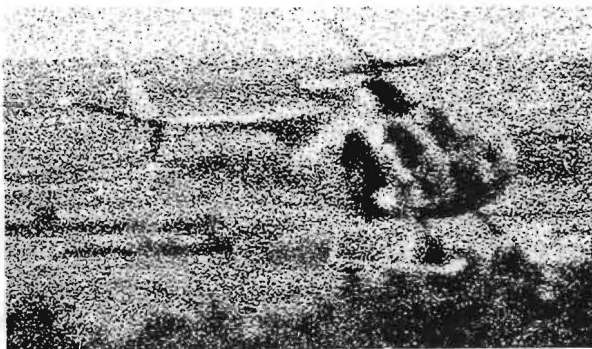
"Finally I got it out. 'They're all

dead,' I said. 'They're all dead.' Everybody walked off with their heads down. It took a part of everybody."

Compared with the casualties they inflict on the enemy, the low-birds suffer little. When a man is lost though, it is not soon forgotten.

"Our motto," said Steffens, "is 'Scouts don't give a damn about nothing.' But there's one exception to that," he said with feeling. "We give a damn about our buddies."

The enemy that shot down Apache 1-3 sustained heavy casualties from Cobra rockets, artillery, and air strikes by Phantom jets. The men of Apache 1-3 had accomplished their mission. They had found the enemy.



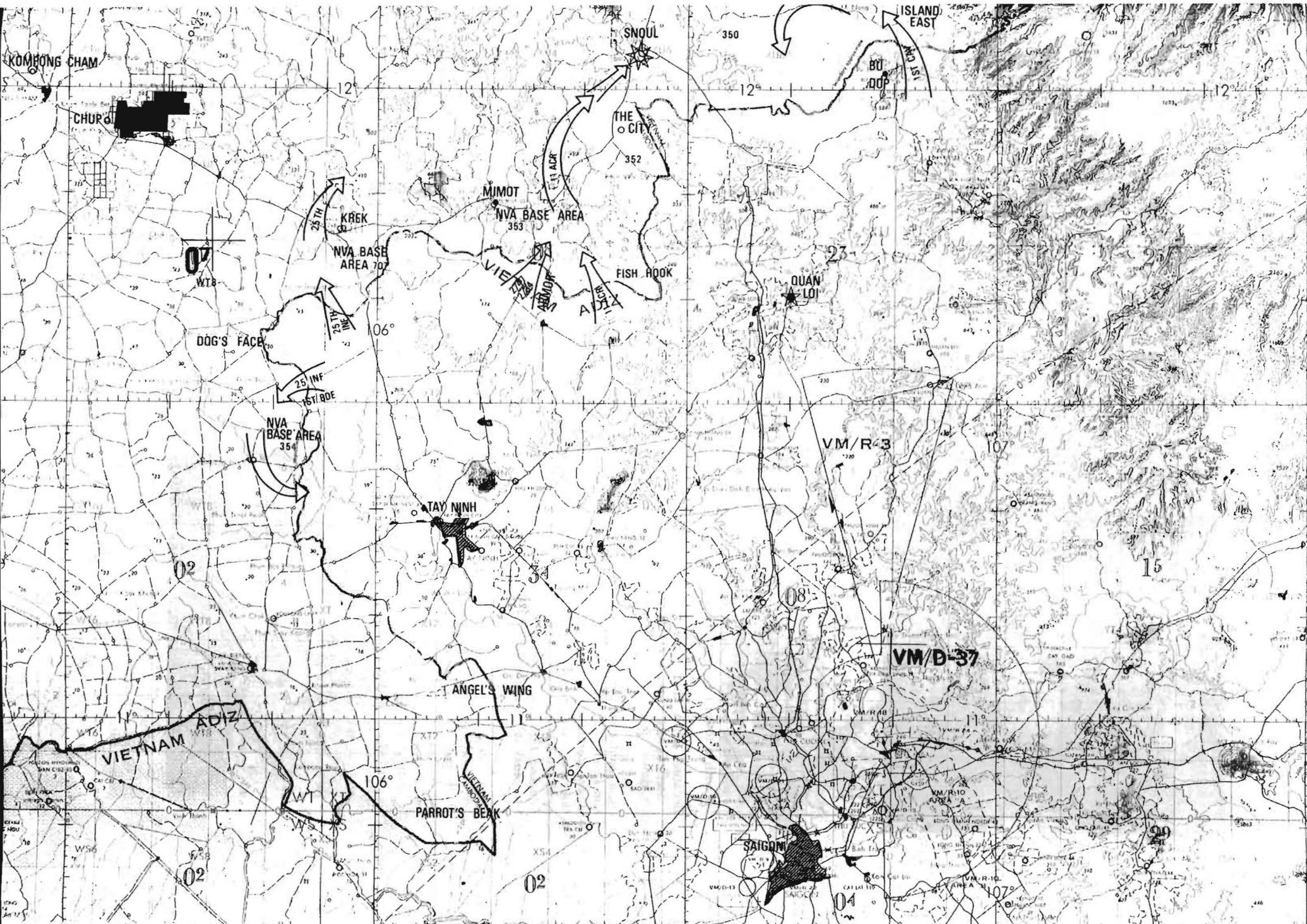
This story is dedicated, at the request of the men of A Troop, to the memories of the crew of Apache 1-3.

Warrant Officer

Thaddeus M. Yonika —Pilot  
Specialist 5

Christopher J. Gray—Torque  
Specialist 4

Barry A. Kaletta —Oscar



(Reprinted from September 1970)

# 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.

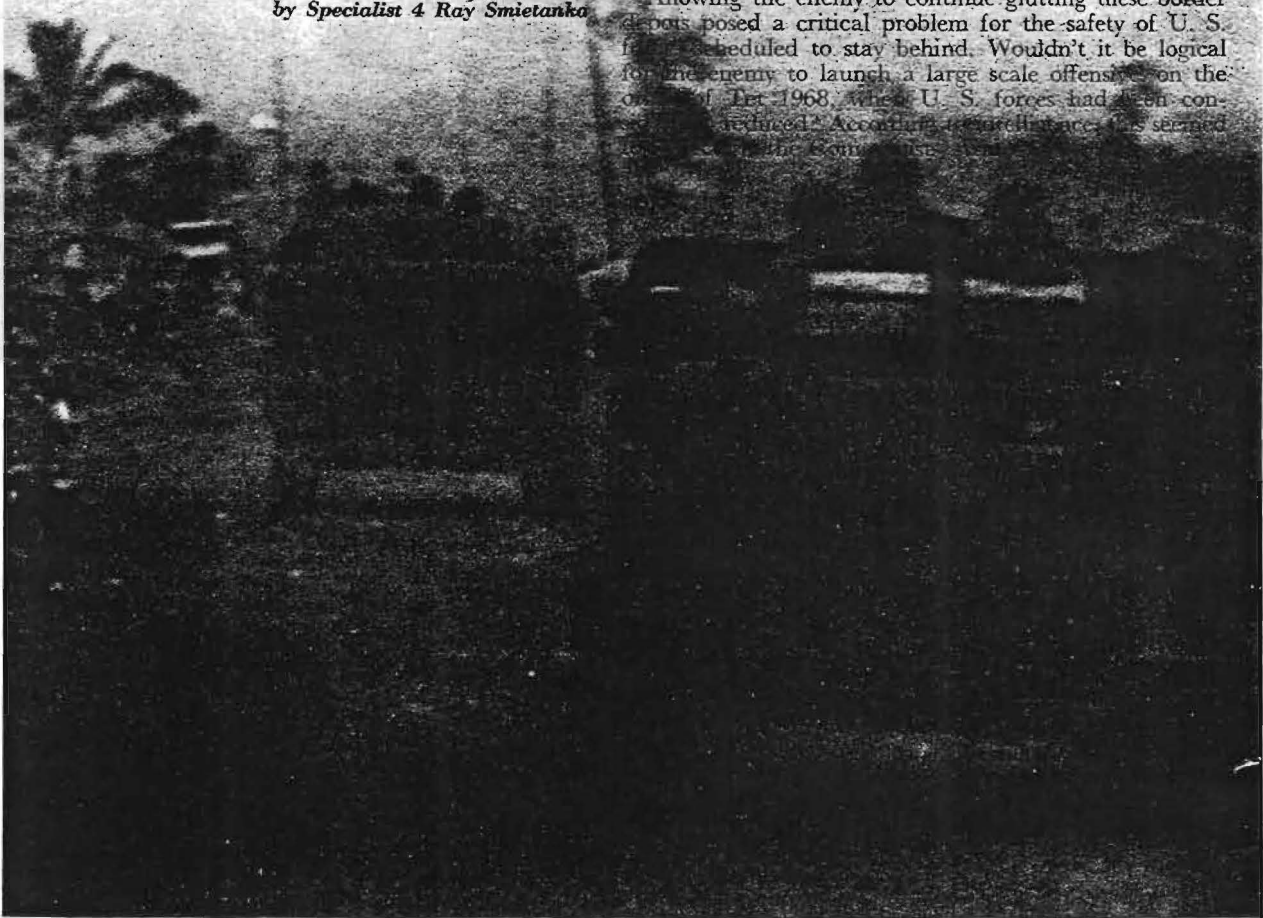
Throughout the Vietnam War, the U. S. had strictly adhered to a policy that Cambodian soil was off-limits. However, the enemy had maintained a more self-serving course, using the untouchable Cambodian jungle as a vast sanctuary for troops and supplies. Geography was half the Communists' advantage.

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 night of Tet 1968, when U. S. forces had been completely reduced? According to intelligence, it seemed that the enemy was planning to do just that.



*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.

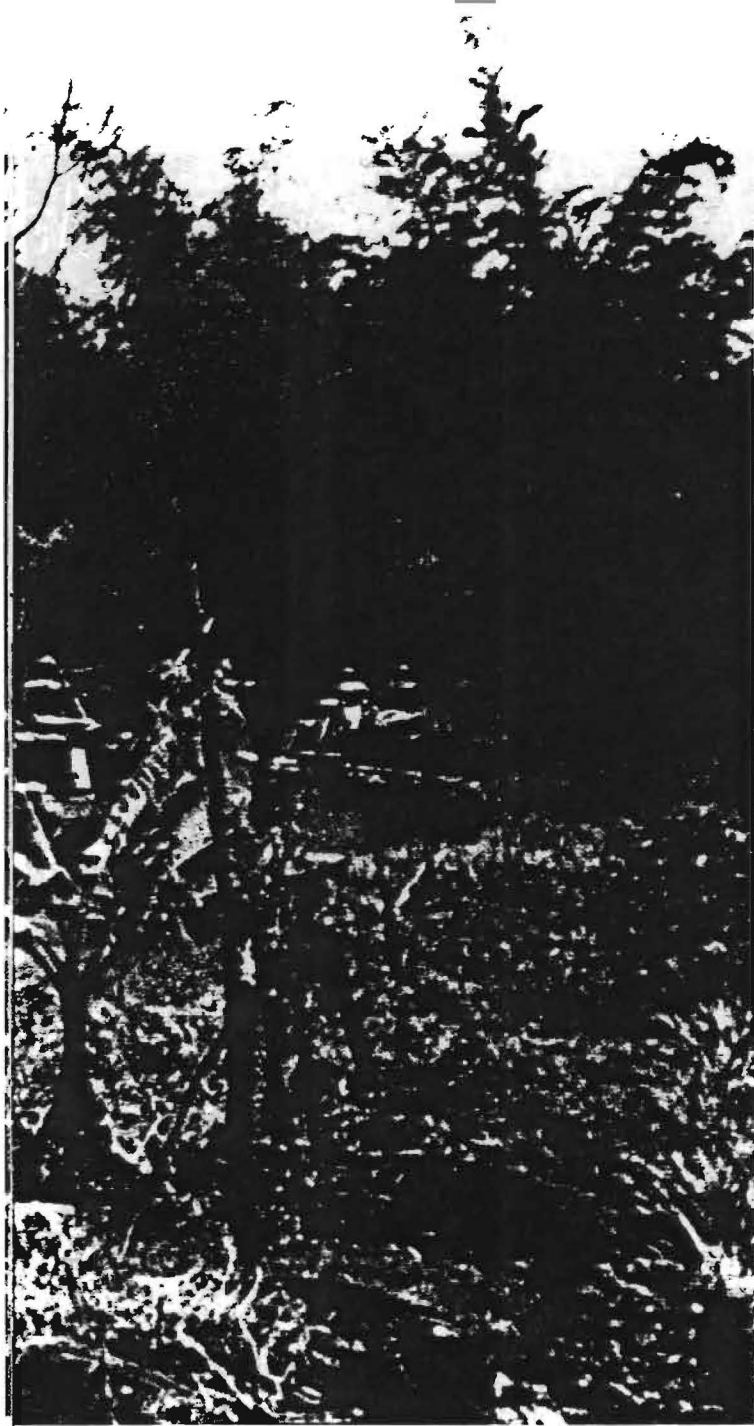
"Our second option is to provide massive military assistance to Cambodia... Our third is to go to the heart of the trouble. That means cleaning out major

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



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."

Striking 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.

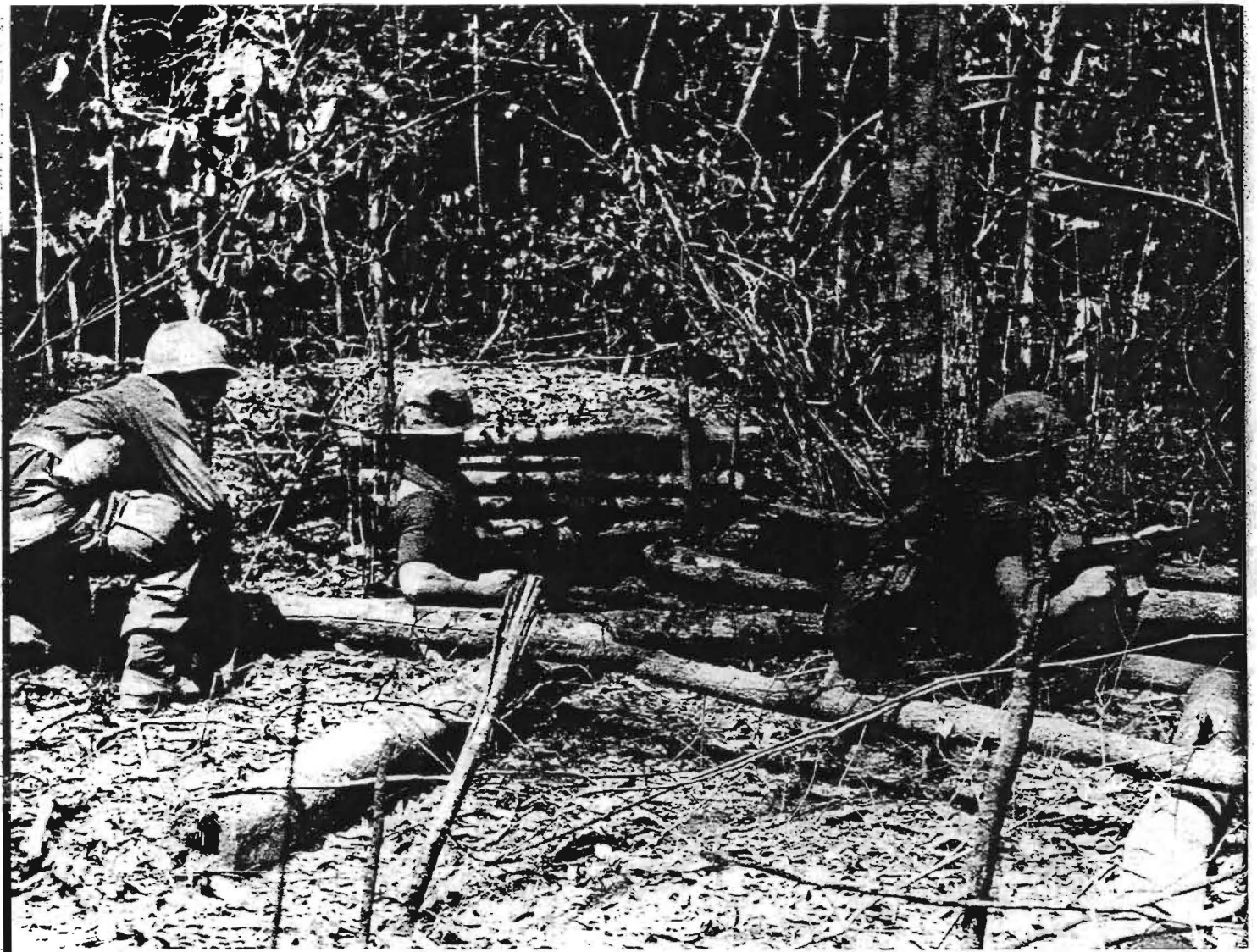
First sighted by a helicopter observer, The City was so well covered by thick jungle that it was detected only because the pilot was flying at nearly tree top level. The next day the 1/5th Cav was airlifted into the nearest fire support base, Terri Lynn, five miles to the north of what was then just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



*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

pace. Everything that could possibly be moved was transported back into Vietnam, remaining weapons and ammunition were destroyed where the enemy had stored them. Rice caches were funnelled into distribution to Cambodian and Vietnamese refugees.

By the time the last American unit had withdrawn, a devastating blow had been struck to the entire NVA/VC supply network. Captured material alone was staggering: 19,337 individual and 2,499 crew served weapons; 1,768 tons of ammunition and 41 tons of explosives; 6,877 tons of rice and nearly 300 tons of food and salt; 29 tons of communications equipment; 12 tons of clothing; 55 tons of medical supplies; 18 tons of gasoline and oil and 432 enemy trucks. Although these the vast majority of this equipment was taken along III represent the total captured throughout the operation, CTZ border areas.

That Cambodia has had at least some deleterious effect on enemy morale is certain, but how great the psychological blow is could have a vast significance on the future of the entire war.

"This has been particularly marked within the western areas of III Corps," said Colonel David Beckner, assistant chief of staff for psychological operations, II Field Force.

"During May, we had 1,346 Hoi Chanh (ralliers), an all time record for the program, and the vast majority of these came from the western III CTZ provinces."

According to Colonel McKee, the VC soldier is "getting tired."

"For him the war is becoming interminable," he said. "Three years ago his leaders were telling him, 'Just keep going a little longer, we've almost won.' So he keeps on going and after three years not only is the war still going on, but the Americans have just wiped out what he thought were his secure Cambodian supply bases.

"But he still gets the same line from his leaders, so now he's beginning to wonder, 'If they were wrong three years ago, there's a good chance they're wrong now.'"

Another severe morale blow comes in the area of medical care. When the Cambodian sanctuaries were operating full-scale, they represented the first place a wounded VC or NVA could expect professional care.

But with the vast quantities of medical supplies captured, even that assurance has been taken away.

The iron-clad security that the enemy enjoyed for years in his Cambodian sanctuaries is gone forever. Never again can he be completely certain that someone will not march in and repeat the cache-destruction process.

One of the most probable results of the Cambodian incursion has been that if the enemy restocks his sanctuaries at all, they will have to be moved farther west and north.

"Getting supplies down to near South Vietnam has never been a problem for the enemy," said Colonel Pendleton. "The problem has been in distribution, and by this operation we've forced him to extend still further his already precarious lines of distribution."

But not only will the enemy be forced to extend his supply lines, he will have to increase by possibly three times the number of men involved in the simple transportation of supplies. Further complicating the situation for the enemy was the capture of hundreds of trucks used to stock the Cambodian border depots in the first place.

Not only did the enemy lose supplies during the U. S. operation in Cambodia, U. S. intelligence sources indicate that the enemy suffered more than 11,000 of its troops killed in action. This compares with 337 American dead and 1,524 wounded for the entire Cambodian campaign.

The Cambodian operations did produce the unex-

pected for the U. S. command, one being the discovery that the VC/NVA administrative network is so large. Or, in other words, that there were so many desk jobs "out there in the jungle."

"They kid a lot about our Army having a long supply tail, but we found out that the VC/NVA tail is three times as long," said Colonel McKee.

"Also the idea that somehow the enemy was fighting this war on a shoestring was disproved by some of the sophisticated machinery and elaborate facilities we found," he said.

"I mean—an X-ray machine in the middle of the jungle?"

*In an extensive base area dubbed "The City," U.S. troops uncovered large training centers abandoned by Communist forces.*





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

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

By now the men on the near bank were under the cool shade of the hedges. The enemy had left but his snipers were still in position, a few of them firing at the Cobras. The Cobras caught the fire and returned it.

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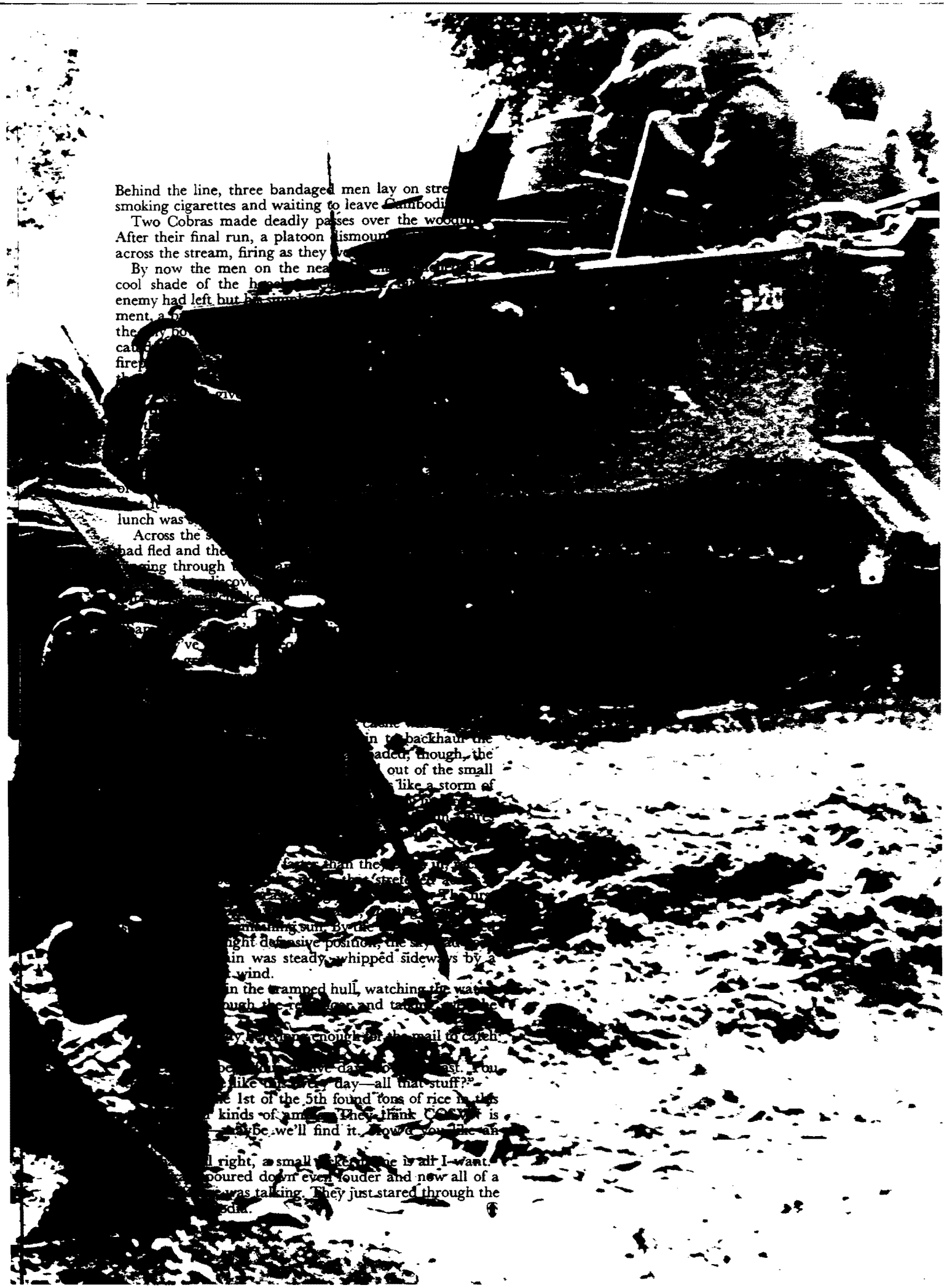
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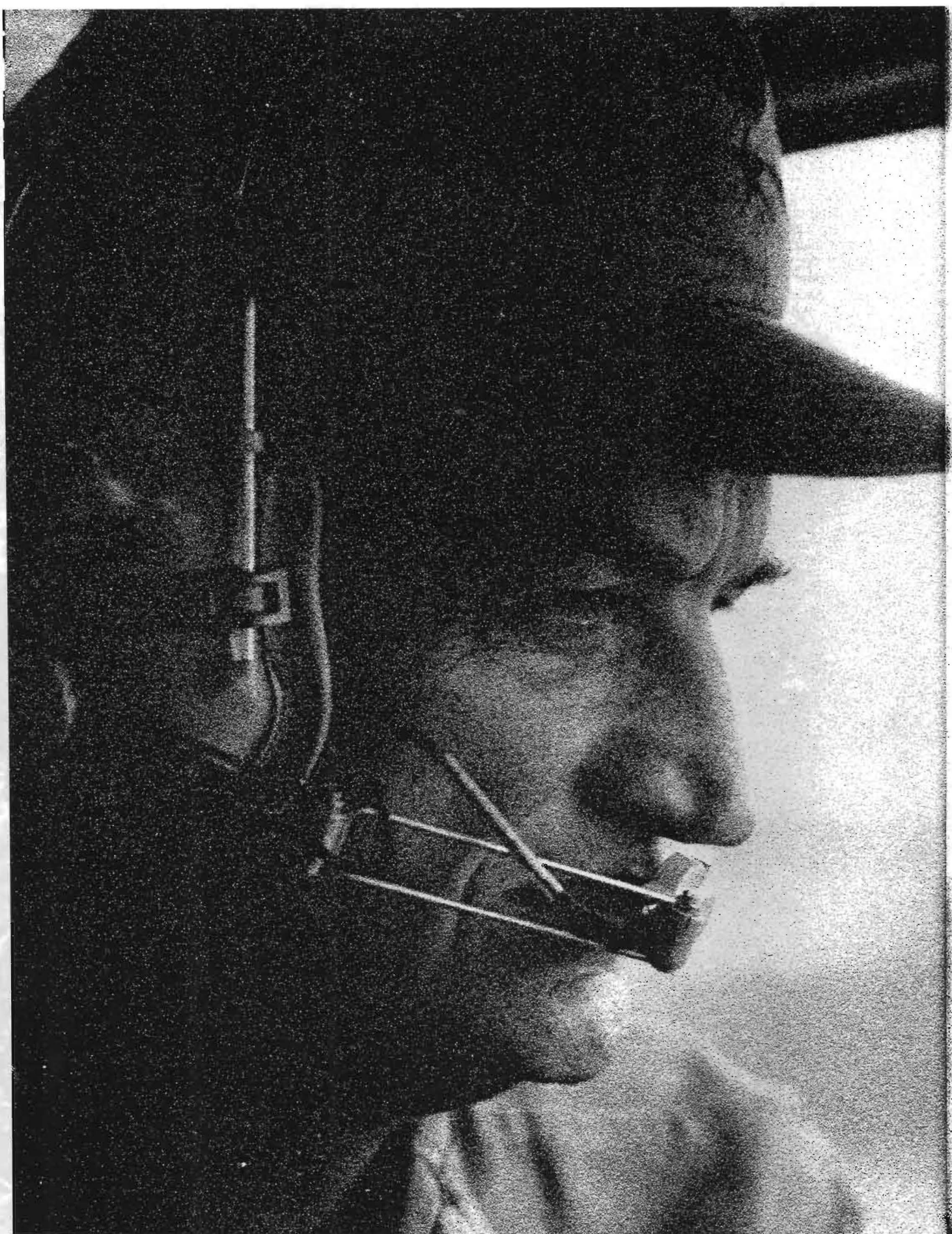
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media.





*Lt. Gen. Davison was recently named by President Nixon for assignment as Commander in Chief, United States Army Europe and Seventh Army and for appointment to the grade of General. His assessment here covers the 12-month period of April 1970 to April 1971 that he commanded II Field Force Vietnam—Ed.*

# YEAR OF CHANGE

## an assessment

by Lieutenant General Michael S. Davison

ONE THING IS CLEAR about the year I have spent as commander of II Field Force Vietnam. It has been a year of perhaps the most significant and rewarding changes in the Vietnam War.

Within a week after my arrival to assume duties as the Commanding General from Lieutenant General Julian Ewell, I was personally tasked by General Creighton Abrams with the planning and execution of an operation to eliminate the North Vietnamese base areas in the Fish Hook region of Cambodia, adjacent to northern Military Region 3. Later this operation was expanded to include the other half-dozen enemy base areas as well. The planning was made in cooperation with my Vietnamese counterpart and valued associate the late Lieutenant General Do Cao Tri.

The operation was a significant tactical success. Now, nearly nine months since its conclusion, I believe we can make several valid assessments about its quantitative, qualitative, and psychological effects.

Originally our intelligence personnel had calculated that we had destroyed: nearly thirteen percent of the enemy personnel in the base areas; enough rice to feed six of his divisions for a year; and more than two-thirds of his available ammunition supply. Because of the ensuing wet season his combat units found themselves with a severely reduced ammunition supply rate in a suddenly widened-for-him conflict.

Before we moved across the border, the NVA had opened a second front against the Cambodians, long intimidated by the enemy's substantial military presence in their territory and alienated by his attempts to replenish his vanished food supplies by preying on the local inhabitants. We had expected to gain six months in which to carry out programs in MR3 before the enemy restored his supplies sufficiently to pose a military threat. In fact, this period was extended, thanks to the stiffening and aggressive defense by the Cambodians, the continued harassment by ARVN

cross-border operations and the interdiction missions of U.S. air and artillery both in Cambodia and along the Ho Chi Minh trail in Laos. Thus, the enemy's quantitative losses had a greater impact on his capabilities than we had initially calculated.

Psychologically, of course, the enemy suffered a severe blow. No longer were his vaunted sanctuaries secure. We had forced his controlling headquarters to relocate rapidly, resulting in loss of enemy personnel and records. We had caused his rear area units to suffer the same debilitating mental and physical hardships of inadequate food and shelter and constant allied harassment which his front line troops had known for years. And we had deprived his remaining units and infrastructure in MR3 of anything but moral support from an increasingly demoralized headquarters.

On the South Vietnamese side of the house the effect was just the reverse. They had met the enemy in his territory and defeated him. They at last were carrying the battle to the enemy. They showed that they were able to operate without advisory assistance as they moved beyond the 21.7-mile limit established for U.S. troops. During the months since, they have continued to go it alone. They have admirably demonstrated their tactical skill and have learned invaluable lessons in logistics and supply.

Back in MR3 the Territorial Forces shouldered the burden of protection against the approximately 28,000 remaining enemy of all types and classes. This they have done with great success.

But like no other war we have fought, the Vietnam War has been a political conflict. Tied closely to the political ramifications of the war are the social and economic effects and presently evolving peace in the country side. After the U.S. ground role in Cambodia had ended we found ourselves faced with the task of creating conditions which would assure meeting President Nixon's commitment to withdraw

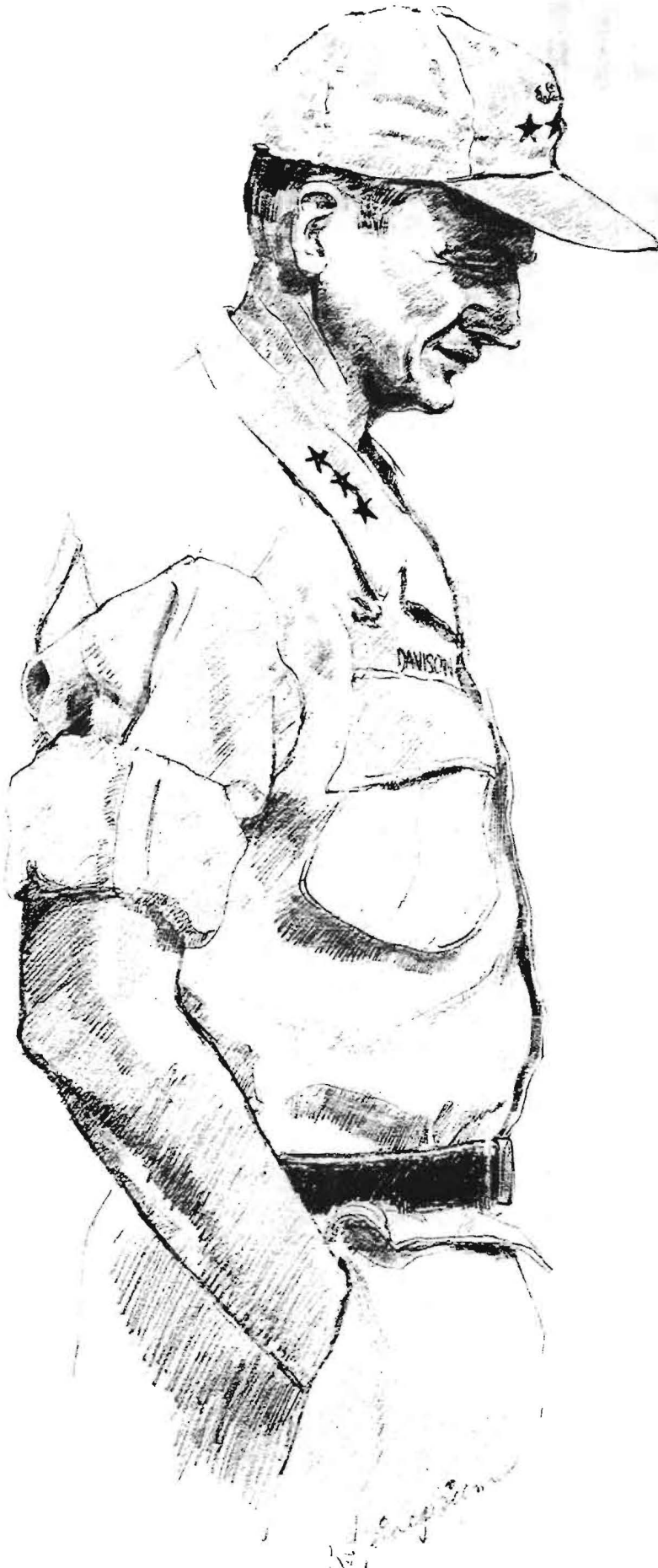
American ground combat forces from Vietnam. We needed, therefore, to deal with the remaining main force enemy units in the region while the ARVN was occupied in Cambodia and the border regions.

In July, U.S. units were redeployed against the enemy in the unpopulated areas of central and eastern MR3, while the ARVN assumed full responsibility for the border area. For the first time, we began to turn the equipment of American helicopter units over to the VNAF. Vietnamization continued to progress at an accelerating rate. U.S. units increasingly devoted substantially greater portions of their time to training of Territorial Forces.

During the last six months of 1970 a total of four brigade-size units were redeployed from the command and the Republic. Such battle-honored brigades as the 199th Infantry Brigade, the 3rd Brigade of the 9th Infantry Division, and the 1st and 3rd Brigades of the 25th Infantry Division no longer appeared on the II Field Force order of battle.

Enemy incidents and terrorism continued at a low level after reaching a high point in June and July. The People's Self Defense Forces grew in numbers and quality. Local elections of province and village officials were held. Pacification went forward while the U.S. presence moved into the background, only advising and actually participating when there was an absolute need for our expertise in a given area. Increased efforts were made to neutralize the VC infrastructure.

Care of refugees, economic improvement, road building, and village self-development projects all under the auspices of Civil Operation and Rural Development Support (CORDS) became the new objectives of our operations plans. Under the able leadership of Mr. Charles Whitehouse and later Ambassador Richard Funkhauser these programs are bearing fruit—fruit which will contribute more in the long run toward winning the peace in Vietnam than the military gains of Cambodia which created the condi-



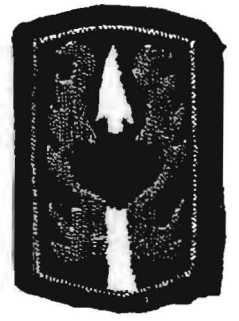
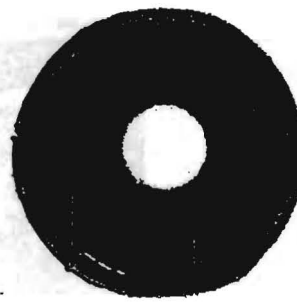
tions in which the fruit could be grown.

By Christmas, II Field Force's combat role had not ended, but it was winding down. We still provided air support for the ARVN. Units of the 1st Cavalry Division, the 2nd Brigade of the 25th Infantry Division, and the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment still occasionally tangled with the 33rd and 274th NVA Regiments and rear service units in Binh Duong, Long Khanh and Binh Tuy provinces in eastern MR3. But against the canvas of Cambodia or Junction City or Tet of 1968 they were considered mopping up actions.

However, we must not be overly optimistic. Our enemy has endured such hardships before. He is a wily, cunning, persistent and above all patient opponent. He is ruthless and will strike wherever and whenever there is an advantage to be gained politically or militarily. The fortunes of the Vietnamese Armed Forces and the people of Vietnam seem to be on the rise, but the task is not yet finished. Much hard work remains and we must be prepared to overcome any temporary setbacks that may occur along the way.

And so we come to the present. In February two squadrons of the valiant 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment were redeployed. The remaining U.S. and allied units of the command now find themselves in the process of restructuring their basic roles in MR3. Present plans call for a combined tactical and advisory headquarters for the region. The remaining U.S. combat troops will form a highly mobile and powerful reaction force capable of moving anywhere anytime at a moment's notice to counter any enemy threat and supplement our Vietnamese allies. We will continue to provide training, logistical, and air mobile support to the Vietnamese. And we shall continue to build toward the President's goal of a "just and lasting peace."

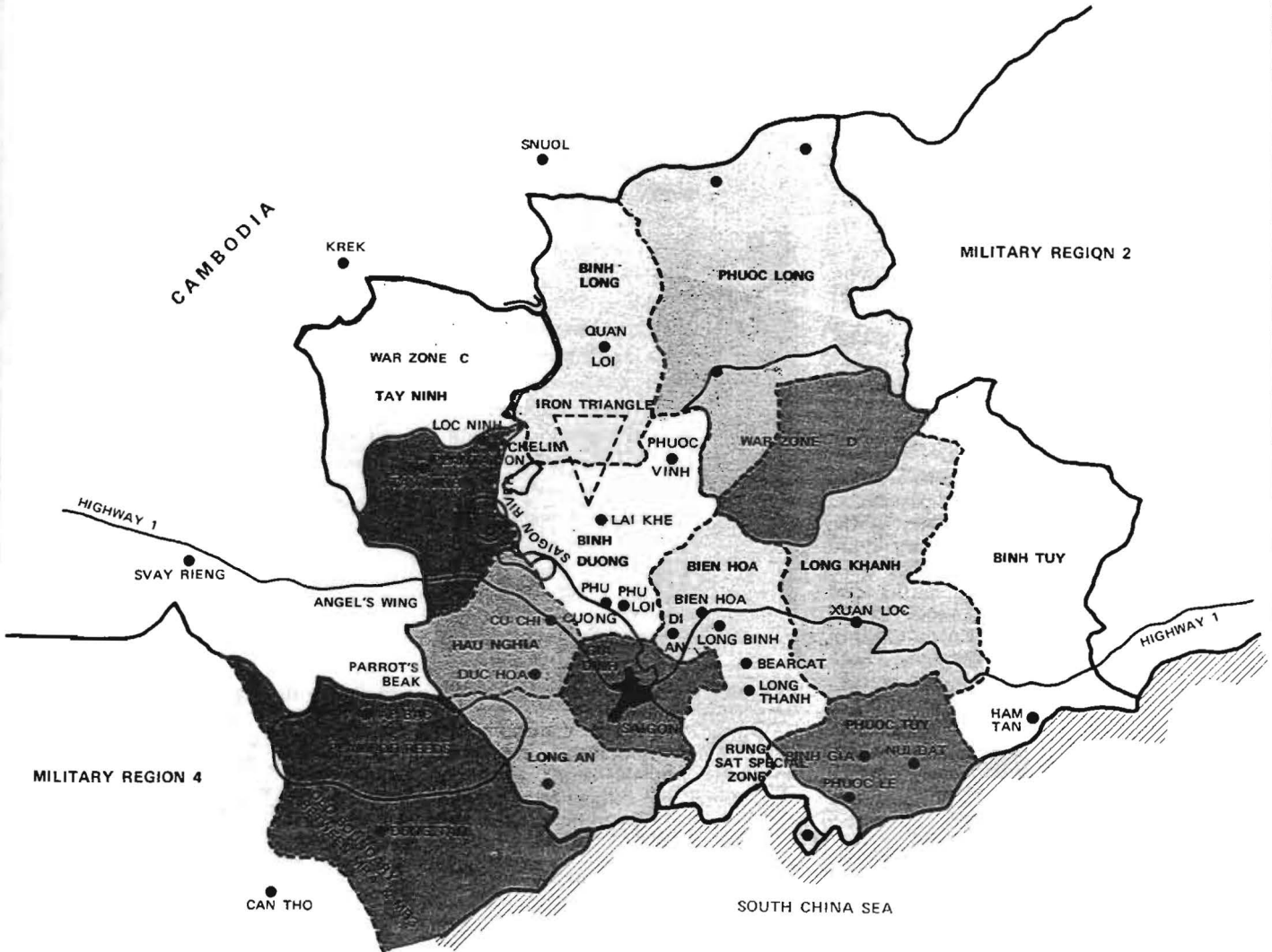
Finally, I pay tribute to all those members of the command and its opcon units whom I have been privileged to command in this year of change. Your valor and devotion to duty was ever an inspiration in battle. Your compassion and understanding has made this truly a people's collective endeavor toward peace. It is largely through your efforts that we have made the metamorphosis from the world's largest combat command to the role of an advisor and supporter. Thank you and may God bless you all.



# RETROSPECT 1966-1971

## UNITS BATTLES CAMPAIGNS OPERATIONS

*by Staff Sergeant Jerry Van Drew*





# RETROSPECT

## BATTLES CAMPAIGNS OPERATIONS COMMANDERS

DURING ITS FIVE YEAR AND ONE MONTH LIFETIME, II Field Force Vietnam (II FFORCEV) has achieved a proud place in the history of warfare. Its area of operations (AO) has been the most critical in the Vietnamese conflict. At peak strength, it was the largest corps level unit ever fielded. During its early life, it conducted more major operations against the enemy than any comparable unit in country. During its later life it has trained its counterpart—the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) III Corps—and turned over combat operations to them before any other American corps in the country could do the same. And it was the first American corps in Vietnam to be reorganized, to get its job done.

The II FFORCEV AO is Military Region 3 (MR3), earlier known as the III Corps Tactical Zone (CTZ). It consists of Saigon and the eleven surrounding provinces (see map on page 21).

Throughout the war, the communist's primary objective has been to take and hold Saigon in order to control the government, population and industry centered there. By the time the American military build up began in mid-1965, III CTZ had seen more major battles and more prolonged confrontation with the enemy than any other CTZ in Vietnam. It also housed the only significant enemy base areas and war zones in the country.

Consequently, when II FFORCEV became operational on March 15, 1966, its AO was critical. Starting with five major units (see chart on page 22), and adding and dropping units from its operational control as the war progressed, II

# COMMANDERS

LTG Jonathon O. Seamon	15 March 1966 – 23 March 1967
LTG Bruce Palmer, Jr.	24 March 1967 – 30 June 1967
LTG Frederick C. Weyand	1 July 1967 – 31 July 1968
LTG Walter T. Kerwin, Jr.	1 August 1968 – 2 April 1969
LTG Julian Johnson Ewell	3 April 1969 – 14 April 1970
LTG Michael S. Davison	15 April 1970 –

1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile)	Oct 68 – Apr 71
1st Infantry Division	Mar 66 – Mar 70
25th Infantry Division	Mar 66 – Dec 70
101st Airborne Division (Airmobile)	Dec 67 – Jan 68
3d Brigade, 4th Infantry Division	Dec 65 – Oct 67
3d Brigade, 9th Infantry Division	Dec 66 – Sep 70
2d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division	Dec 70 – Apr 71
3d Brigade, 82d Airborne Division	Oct 68 – Nov 69
1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (Ambl)	Jan 68 – Apr 68
3d Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (Ambl)	Jan 68 – Oct 68
173d Airborne Brigade	Mar 67 – May 67
196th Light Infantry Brigade	Aug 66 – Jun 67
199th Light Infantry Brigade	Dec 66 – Sep 70
1st Australian Task Force	Jun 66 – Apr 71
Royal Thai Army Volunteer Regiment/Force	Sep 67 – Apr 71
Capital Military Assistance Command/Team	Jun 68 – Apr 71
11th Armored Cavalry Regiment	Sep 66 – Jun 68
12th Aviation Group	Mar 66 – Apr 71
23d Artillery Group	Mar 66 – Apr 71
54th Artillery Group	Oct 66 – Nov 69
Company A, 5th Special Forces Group	Dec 66 – Apr 71

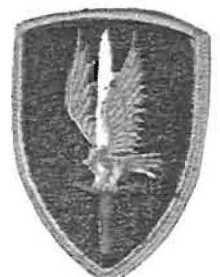
FFORCEV soon seized the initiative from the enemy.

Of the five major confrontations with the enemy during its first year, only one was the result of enemy initiative. The other four ensued from II Field Force operations (see chart on page 26).

II FFORCEV maintained this

initiative during 1967, when three of five major confrontations with the enemy resulted from II FFORCEV operations. Longtime enemy strongholds were cleared, and the communists were forced to move their base areas back into Cambodia.

These operations were so successful that the enemy was seriously



**HEADQUARTERS**  
 UNITED STATES MILITARY ASSISTANCE COMMAND, VIETNAM  
 OFFICE OF THE COMMANDER  
 APO SAN FRANCISCO 96222

26 FEB 1971

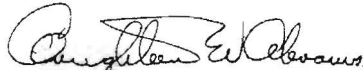
TO THE OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE  
 II FIELD FORCE, VIETNAM

On behalf of the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, I extend my congratulations to II Field Force, Vietnam, on the fifth anniversary of your activation, 15 March 1966.

As in the past years, II Field Force has continued to play a major role in bringing a freer and more rewarding life to the people of Vietnam. Your participation in the Cambodian cross-border operation of last spring denied the enemy his sanctuaries and caused him costly and considerable logistics problems. Your Toan Thung operation of late 1969 and early 1970 inflicted heavy losses on enemy troops and effected the capture of more than 1,000 individual weapons and a half-million rounds of ammunition.

Further, your pacification program is to be commended. Your units have relocated people in new hamlets, constructed new schools and roads and significantly increased the availability of food, medical supplies and medical treatment. This program has earned you the respect of the Vietnamese people.

I salute II Field Force, Vietnam, as worthy members of the United States team in the Republic of Vietnam and wish you continued success in future operations.

  
 CREIGHTON W. ABRAMS  
 General, United States Army  
 Commanding

unable to sustain their effort in this AO.

Spurred on by the Tet attacks, American troops reached a peak strength in early 1969. The ARVN also expanded, its ranks swelled by full mobilization and lowering of the draft age. By 1969, earnest Vietnamization had begun, although it was not yet called that.

But the III CTZ AO was still the most critical.

Vietnamization priorities for both combat and support elements placed I Corps ARVN units first, then II Corps, and finally III Corps. II FFORCEV was to be the last American corps to leave Vietnam.

The communists meanwhile improved their Cambodian sanctuaries. The allies continued joint operations, with the ARVN assuming more and more of the combat responsibility.

Tet 1970 passed quietly. II FFORCEV finished its fourth year.

Then, the political situation in neighboring Cambodia suddenly changed. Prince Sihanouk was ousted and a Republic unfriendly to communist infiltrators was proclaimed. The situation deteriorated as the NVA attacked Cambodian cities, and allied task forces formed along the South Vietnamese and Cambodian border.

The Cambodian operation, like many operations that preceded it, was a Combined ARVN/American campaign—except that this time the III Corps was the senior partner and II FFORCEV was the junior part. The ARVN went into Cambodia first. They had more men participating, they made more contact with the enemy, they captured more supplies and killed more enemy, and they stayed after the Americans left.

The war situation had dramatically changed. The ARVN III Corps was revitalized. They assumed major combat roles throughout III CTZ while the Regional and Popular Forces assumed territorial defense duties. People's Self Defense Forces were trained and equipped to guard villages and hamlets. New levels of security were achieved throughout III CTZ. The South Vietnamese people gained new

# CAMPAIGNS

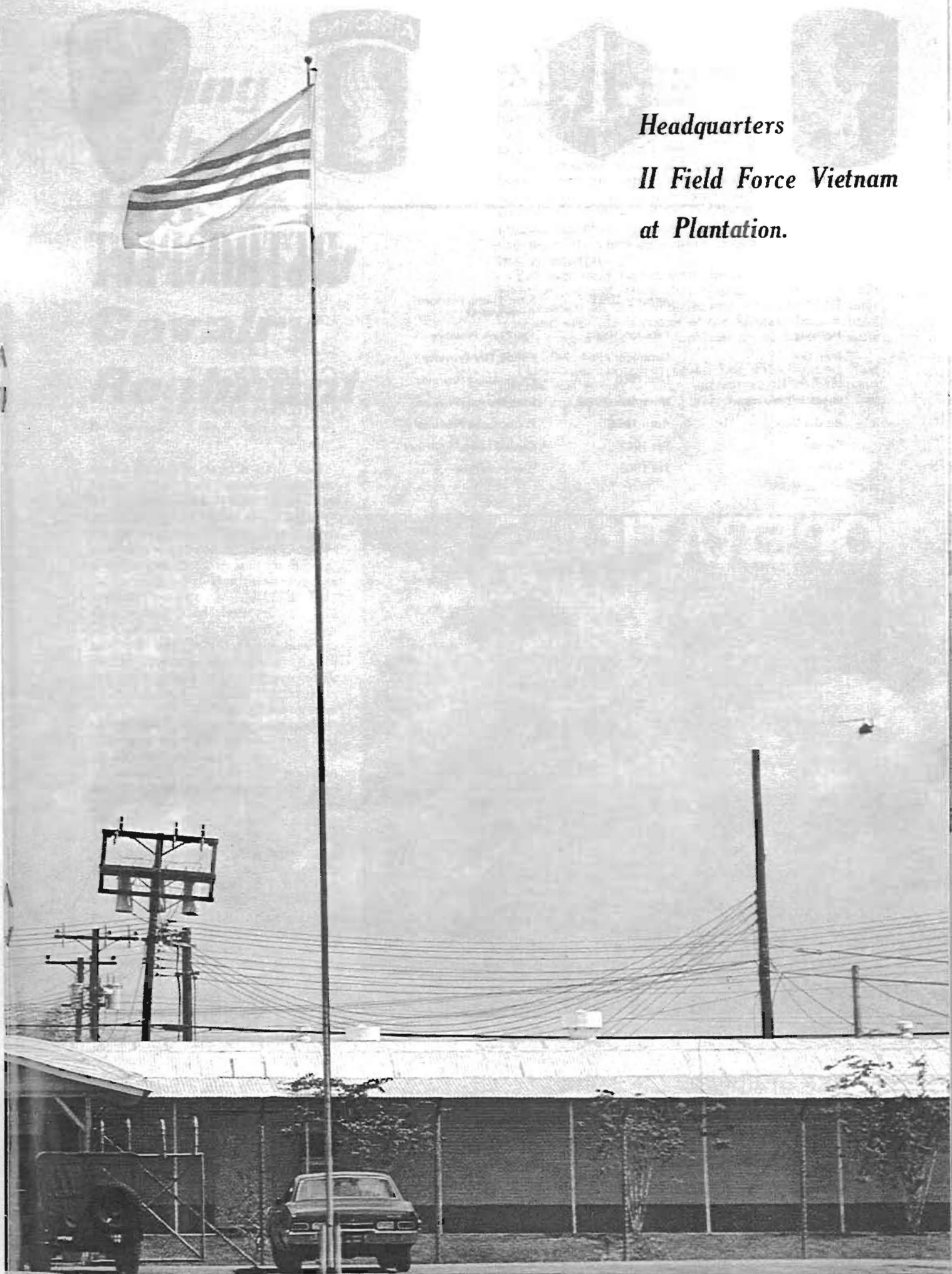
CAMPAIGN DESIGNATION	PERIOD
Vietnam Counteroffensive Phase I	25 Dec 65 to 30 Jun 66
Vietnam Counteroffensive Phase II	1 Jul 66 to 31 May 67
Vietnam Counteroffensive Phase III	1 Jun 67 to 29 Jan 68
Tet Counteroffensive	30 Jan 68 to 1 Apr 68
Vietnam Counteroffensive Phase IV	2 Apr 68 to 30 Jun 68
Vietnam Counteroffensive Phase V	1 Jul 68 to 1 Nov 68
Vietnam Counteroffensive Phase VI	2 Nov 68 to 22 Feb 69
Tet 1969 Counteroffensive	23 Feb 69 to 8 Jun 69
Vietnam Summer-Fall 1969	9 Jun 69 to 31 Oct 69
Vietnam Winter-Spring 1970	1 Nov 69 to 30 Apr 70
Unnamed	1 May 70 to a date to be determined

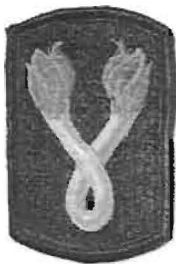
hampered in conducting attacks in III CTZ. Faced with longer supply lines and stiff II FFORCEV and III Corps resistance, only two major battles—at Saigon and Bien Hoa—occurred in III CTZ during the

infamous Communist Tet Offensive in 1968. Even though widespread clashes occurred throughout III CTZ, including an enemy probe of II FFORCEV Headquarters at Plantation, the communists were



*Headquarters  
II Field Force Vietnam  
at Plantation.*





Ap Bac	January 1963	Kien Tuong Province (now MR 4)
Highway 1	February 1964	Tay Ninh Province
Binh Gia	December 1964	Phuoc Tuy Province
Dong Xoai	May 1965	Phuoc Long Province
Michelin Plantation	November 1965	Binh Duong Province
Bu Gia Map	April 1966	Phuoc Long Province
Saigon	Tet 1968	Capital Military District
Bien Hoa	Tet 1968	Bien Hoa Province

## RETROSPECT

### UNITS BATTLES CAMPAIGNS OPERATIONS COMMANDERS

Less than a year after the Cambodian operation, and shortly after its own fifth anniversary, II FFORCEV is being reorganized. Its troops are nearly gone; it is no longer a combat headquarters. It is instead serving as a military advisor and reaction force.

II FFORCEV infantry, armor and cavalry men have fought valiantly. Their artillery, aerial and medical support has been the best in the history of warfare. Their widespread use of helicopters has proven the value of airmobility in anti-guerrilla warfare.

Engineer construction has made the best possible facilities available to allied forces, while engineer jungle clearing operations have taken the best hiding places away from the enemy.

Administrative and supply support, often under trying conditions, have kept men, material and services flowing smoothly whenever and wherever needed.

Advisory and assistance teams have imparted the knowledge and skills which enabled the ARVN to Vietnamize operations. Civilian specialists and military civic action personnel have advised and assisted the Vietnamese people in achieving broad level improvements which supported ARVN military efforts.

II FFORCEV has achieved its place in history through the efforts of these people. Each has come to the most critical military area in South Vietnam. Each, through his efforts in doing his job, has left the country a better and safer place for the South Vietnamese people. ↗

## OPERATIONS

NAME	PERIOD	LOCATION	KNOWN ENEMY CASUALTIES
EL PASO II	Jun 66 — Jul 66	Binh Long Province	855
SMITHFIELD	Aug 66	Phuoc Tuy Province	245**
ATTLEBORO	Sep 66 — Nov 66	War Zone C	1,106
FAIRFAX	Nov 67 — Dec 67	Saigon Area	1,043
CEDAR FALLS	Jan 67	Iron Triangle	720
ENTERPRISE	Feb 67 — Mar 68	Long An Province	2,107
JUNCTION CITY	Feb 67 — May 67	War Zone C	2,728
KOLE KOLE	May 67 — Dec 67	Hau Nghia Province	645
CORONADO	Jun 67 — Mar 68	Long An Province	2,368
SHENANDOAH II	Sep 67 — Nov 67	Binh Duong and Binh Long Province	956
YELLOWSTONE	Dec 67 — Feb 68	War Zone C	1,254
SARATOGA	Dec 67 — Mar 68	Saigon Area, Cambodian Border	3,862
UNIONTOWN	Dec 67 — Mar 68	Bien Hoa Province	922
QUYET THANG	Mar 68 — Apr 68	Saigon and 5 surrounding provinces	2,658
TOAN THANG	Apr 68 — May 68	III Corps Tactical Zone (CTZ)	7,645
TOAN THANG II	Jun 68 — Feb 69	III CTZ	17,015
TOAN THANG III	Feb 69 — Oct 69	III CTZ	34,630
CAMBODIA	Apr 70 — Jun 70	III CTZ	8,700
TOAN THANG IV	Nov 69 — continuing	III CTZ	13,785***

\* Only those Operations resulting in more than 500 known enemy casualties are listed, except for Operation Smithfield

\*\* Operation Smithfield, also called the Battle of Long Thanh, was one of the major battles of 1966 described by Gen. W. C. Westmoreland in his Report on Operations in South Vietnam

\*\*\* As of 31 October 1970

Operations in bold face type were the largest operations to date in the Vietnamese conflict at the time they were conducted

confidence in their army and in their government.

Meanwhile, communist forces in III CTZ shrank drastically in size. The Viet Cong Infrastructure became exposed and vulnerable. The communists, without their Cambodian sanctuaries or the weapons and supplies they had lost from them—and with no ready substitutes—were no longer a serious

threat in III CTZ.

The order for Vietnamization of I, II and III Corps was reversed. III Corps was designated to take over from the Americans first; they would be given their own support units before II Corps and then I Corps. The title "III Corps Tactical Zone" was changed to "Military Region 3." II FFORCEV began phasing out.

# **Riding with the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment**

By Specialist 4 Phil Schieber

(Reprinted from April 1970)

"NOW I KNOW how Pigpen in Charlie Brown feels," said a begrimed trooper from B Troop, 1st Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment as he jumped from his track at the end of an all-day mission. "This damned dust is blowing my mind," he grumbled as he knocked the red powder from his clothing.

The damned dust hung over Fire Support Base Dennis like an impenetrable cloud, and red ghosts moved about in green uniforms. The soul brothers were strawberry blondes with orange-red eyelashes, and tongues searched for dust that stuck to the roofs of dry mouths—Vietnam peanut butter, low in calories, rich in minerals.

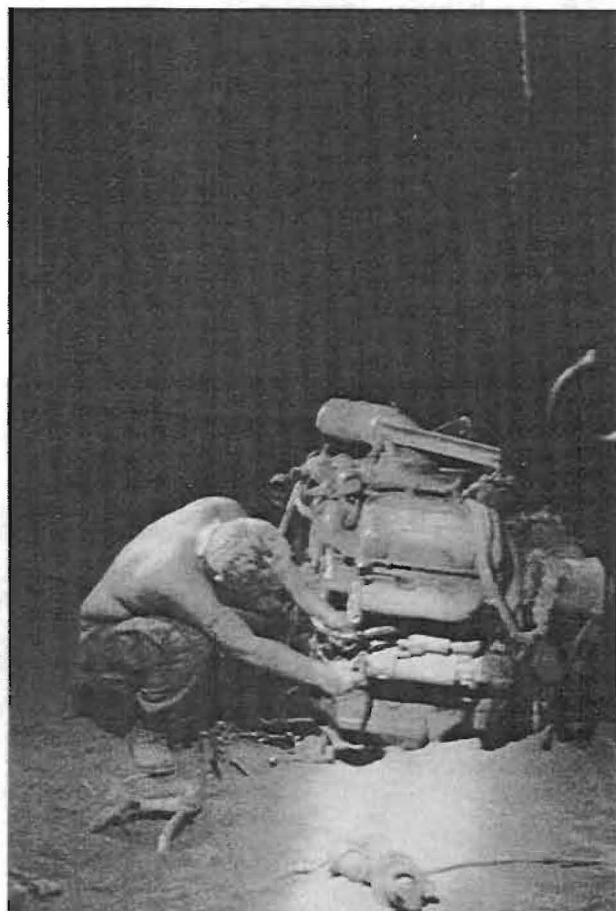
The men and tracks were home again for another night at Dennis. Here they would rest, after pulling maintenance on their vehicles and weapons, read their mail and yesterday's copies of the *Stripes*, drink a beer, maybe even a *cold* beer, and later try to wash off some of that dust.

Thirty miles north of Quan Loi, Fire Support Base Dennis was simply a large circular earth embankment thrown up by bulldozers. Later there would be barbed





*Dusty trooper changes machinegun barrel: the firepower of a battalion*



*Maintenance is a 24-hour job*

wire, but for now the only thing that stood between the jungles and the center of the base were 31-.50 caliber machineguns, 44 M-60 machineguns, nine 152mm guns on the Sheridans and those proponents of the scorched earth policy, the "Zippo" flamethrower tanks.

The overwhelming physical presence of the armor with all that firepower made one feel that Dennis was the safest place in Vietnam, because no one in their right minds would want to mess with these guys.

No one, that is, except an estimated division of NVA who lurk in the jungles and rubber plantations between Loc Ninh District and Cambodia. The area has long been an infiltration route from Cambodia to the south.

"Things get a little hot sometimes," said Private First Class Ray Covarrubias. He's a loader on a Sheridan tank in B Troop. "They (the NVA) throw everything they have at us when they get the chance. Rockets, RPGs and .51 calibers." He spoke softly, with a California dreamin' look in his eyes.

"A platoon of cavalry has the same fire power as a battalion of infantry," said Staff Sergeant Loren Alford, platoon leader of B Troop's first platoon, "so if they ambush us, those first 10 seconds give us the

SKIFFINGTON



*Lunchtime in the rubber: the security of a 152 mm "Peace Pipe"*

SKIFFINGTON

*Finding a mine the easy way*

most trouble. Then we establish our fire superiority."

Riding atop a tank or an ACAV (Armored Personnel Carrier) is a wild experience. The tracks roll down the roads like battleships in a heavy sea, crashing and careening with graceful brutality.

The only man who gets down inside the vehicle is the driver. Everyone else rides on the top. "In a firefight a few weeks ago, the only guys who were wounded were hit because they were standing in the holds of their ACAVs and the bullets went right through the sides," said one tanker.

Someone new to the cavalry usually feels like a sitting duck perched on top of a tank. Either the troopers don't mind it, or they get used to it.

"The grunts are really weird sometimes when it comes to working with us," observed another trooper. "They gripe about having to walk around all the time and they honk about how easy we have it riding around but when they're with us and we make contact, wow, they sure get back on the ground in a big hurry."

If you put an infantryman and a cavalryman together, before long there is a good chance they'll be haggling over who has it tougher. And the cavalry does have



SKIFFINGTON

advantages over the infantry in some respects. Rain or shine, the tank or ACAV is somewhat like a mobile home. Cots, ice chests, care packages from home, collections of *Playboys*—all these little comforts are carried along in the vehicles. But as a home, a track is still not much of a castle.

After bouncing around all day on hard steel, the troopers must pull maintenance. If an ACAV throws a track, the troopers have to get it back on. Batteries have to be checked, and running out of gas has to be avoided at all costs.

A healthy rivalry exists between the crews, mainly because each crew feels that everyone else is riding a piece of junk in comparison to its pride and joy.

The day's routine at Fire Support Base Dennis begins shortly after sunrise and a big breakfast cooked up by a mess sergeant wearing a tanker's helmet.

Early morning in Vietnam is chilly, like a frostless fall morning back in the States, and the coffee, yes, even *Army* coffee, tastes good. Men walk around with their hands in their pockets, while others start up their tracks and sit above the engine vents, catching the heat from the idling motors in the poncho liners they wrap around themselves.

In less than an hour Dennis is trembling from the roar and rumble of the 1st Platoon moving out. Leaving the Fire Support Base in a cloud of dust, the tracks churn down the road and into a rubber plantation.

The missions vary from day to day. Sometimes the platoon will run a mine sweep of the roads in the area. On those days the tracks creep along behind those all-important men up front—those who walk down the roads slowly swaying mine detectors back and forth. Trudging down a road looking for mines isn't exactly a glamorous assignment, but it beats finding them the hard way.

But this day, the mission was a reconnaissance patrol, a trip of a approximately 20 kilometers, 20 bouncing, deafening kilometers that would lead B Troop back to the scene of a hard-fought battle three days earlier. It was a long journey, but not a sentimental one.

SKIFFINGTON

After cruising through the groves of the rubber plantations in the morning, the platoon headed for the scene of that last contact, partly as a show of force, and partly because they wanted to see what the enemy had been up to since his last drubbing.

Barreling along the roads, the Sheridans and ACAVs can approach speeds of 40 miles an hour, a little less than half the speed at which your body seems to be vibrating. Late in the afternoon, the tracks headed north out of the rubber and into thick underbrush on the edge of the jungle.

Slowly pushing down the jungle in its path, the 18-ton Sheridan on the point stopped suddenly, and several troopers dismounted, M-16s in their hands. It was about to run over a bunker.

While the men searched the bunker, four other tracks came up on line and began scouring the area for other bunkers. Soon it was evident that they had discovered a small complex.

The bunkers were deserted, but the persistent troopers managed to salvage a few trophies of the hunt—several NVA canteens, belts, battle dressings, parts from a .51 caliber machinegun, and a Chinese Communist hand grenade. After thoroughly searching the area, the tracks destroyed the bunkers by grinding them into the ground.

Mission accomplished, they returned to Dennis, home for another day.

So it goes. Another day in the cavalry, long hours of dust and grime. Not exactly in keeping with the technicolor visions that usually come to mind whenever someone mentions cavalry. There is no Errol Flynn here, waxed moustache glistening in the sun, charging with the Light Brigade into the jaws of death, like they used to do at Balaclava. No jingling spurs, honking bugles, or fluttering guidons.

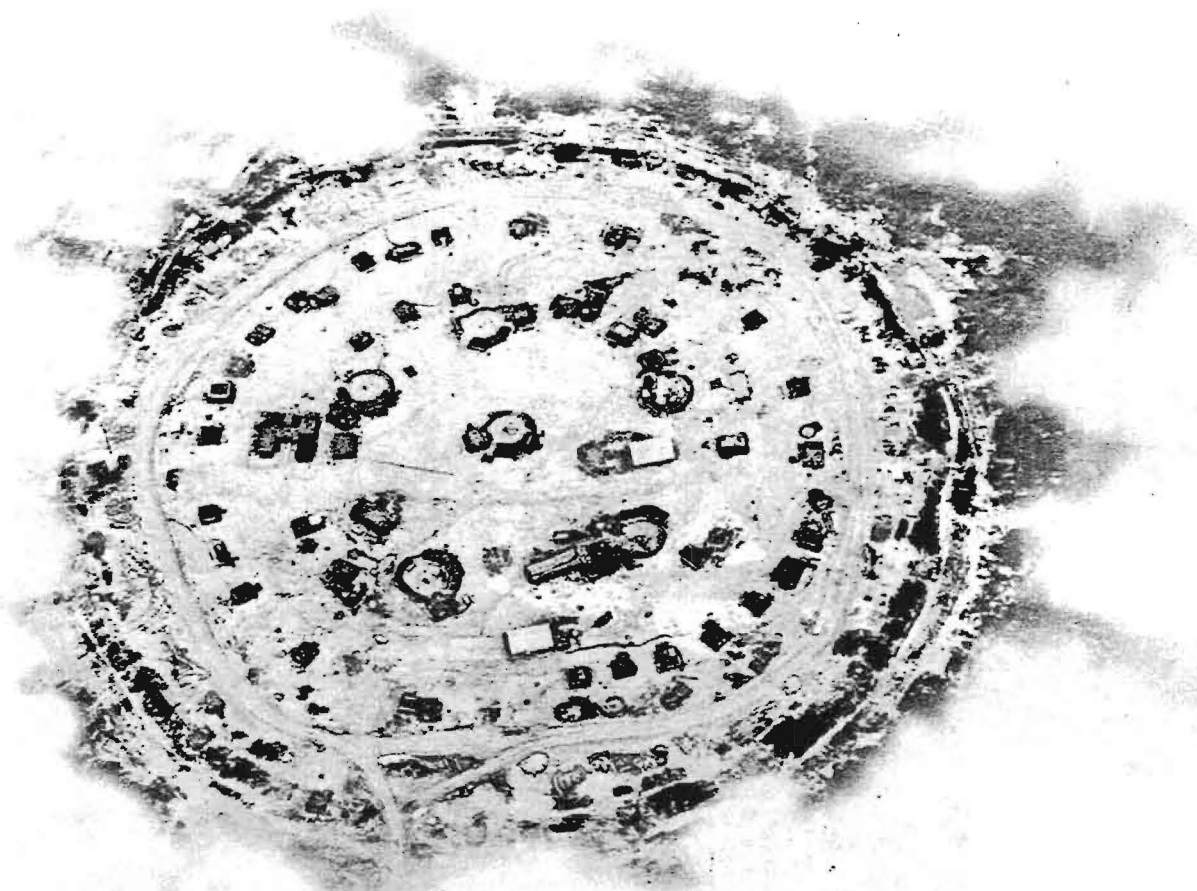
The thunder of horses' hooves has been drowned out by the roar of clanking steel and exploding cylinders in the modern cavalry. Bugles have been replaced by radios, and nobody carries a sword anymore. ⚡



ACAV crew on the ready: nobody inside but the driver

# FSB

(Reprinted from February 1970)



**Hot Chow,  
the 20-Foot Dash,  
Sandbags  
and "Killer Junior"**

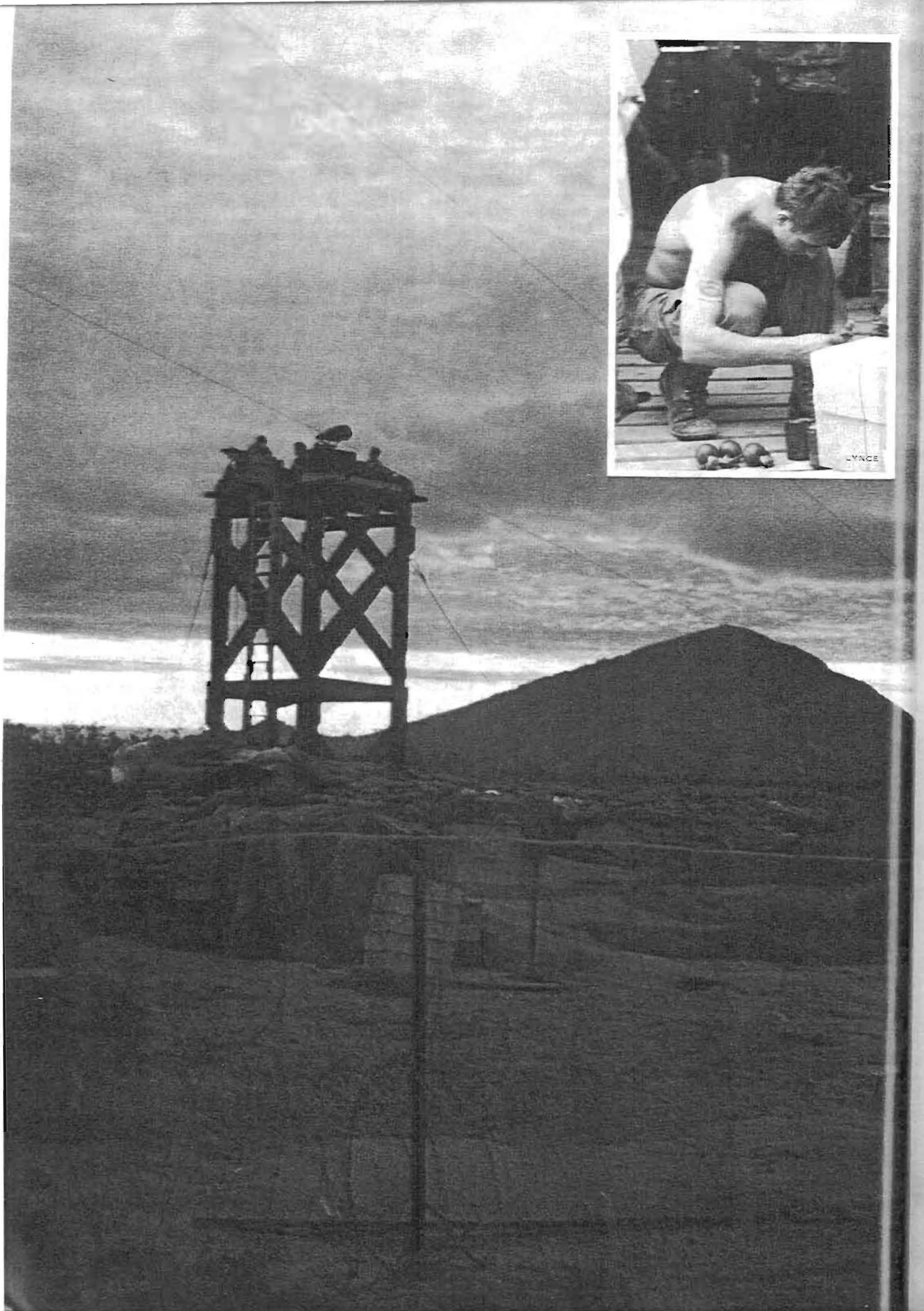
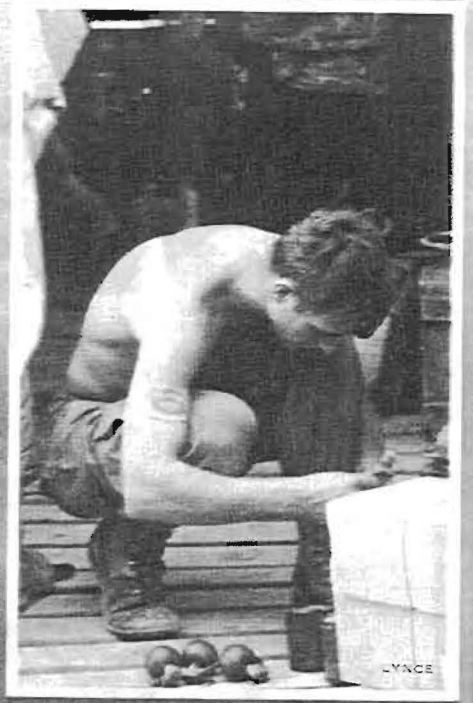
*By Specialist 5 Andy Dyakon*

IT BECOMES an exercise in circles. The artillery map of III Corps on the wall of the TOC is a series of overlapping circles, the centers of which are fire support bases. The radius of the circle is the maximum range of the guns. The idea, of course, is to have the guns of one fire base cover another.

The individual fire base is another series of circles, a defensive perimeter surrounded by loops of barbed wire. And it is here, the home of the infantry battalion and the artillery battery, that one gets a good look at the way the Vietnam war is being fought.

Where is a fire support base (FSB) located? Wherever the enemy is—near a base area or along an infiltration route. And because of the versatility of the helicopter, a fire base can be built in a day.

Pathfinders are the first into a new sight, to control the air traffic. Then the engineers and the artillery tubes are brought in by Chinook. With their specialized teams of heavy equipment operators, carpenters and





demolition experts, the engineers begin work on the outer berm and the perimeter bunkers. By noon they are stringing barbed wire.

The initial building phase is completed by late afternoon, but Chinooks continue to bring in supplies. Before nightfall, nearly 100 sorties may be flown.

Those first few nights at a new fire base are the nervous ones for the infantry. The enemy would like to attack, if he can gather his forces, before the finishing touches are added to the defenses.

Life at a FSB soon settles into a routine. One company secures the camp while the others look for the enemy in the surrounding area. As one infantryman put it, "When we're out in the field, we can't wait to get back to the fire base. When we're there though it seems all we do is fill sandbags and build new bunkers.

"It's not really that much work in comparison to humping through the boonies with 60 pounds on your back, so though I shouldn't gripe, I will anyhow," he added. "The thing that is nice is getting those care packages from home and my girl. You get sick of Cs, and you even get tired of hot Army chow, so it's really great to gorge yourself on food from home for a change."

FSB Grant, in War Zone "C," 70 miles northwest of Saigon, sits in the shadow of Nui Ba Den, the mountain that dominates that flat countryside. It is here that Lieutenant Colonel Roderic Ordwal and his 1/12 Cavalry of the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) are located.

Grant is one of the nicer fire bases in the 1st Brigade's area because it has been there more than a year and the defenses have really been refined. There are now five separate barbed wire perimeters, laced with flares and claymore mines.

Ground radar and starlight scopes are vital to the night defense of the base. And a large observation tower is manned 24 hours a day.

"Our job," said Sergeant James Cothorn, "is to spot the bad guy before he reaches the wire. And we use the M-14 from the tower because it is more accurate than the M-16 at long range."

One of the big reasons the grunt likes to get back to the fire base is hot food. There are two mess halls, one infantry and one artillery. More than one infantryman has been known to try to eat at the artillery mess because the food is supposed to be better. As one man said, smiling, "If we didn't complain about the food it just wouldn't seem like the Army."

Other morale boosters are mail call, cold coke and beer at night, and even an occasional USO show. The latter is one of the few opportunities the soldier at Grant would have to see a female, and, said one, "After five months here, they all look mighty good."

Movies, however, are taboo. By the time it's dark enough for movies it's also dark enough for light discipline. Sports activities are encouraged though.

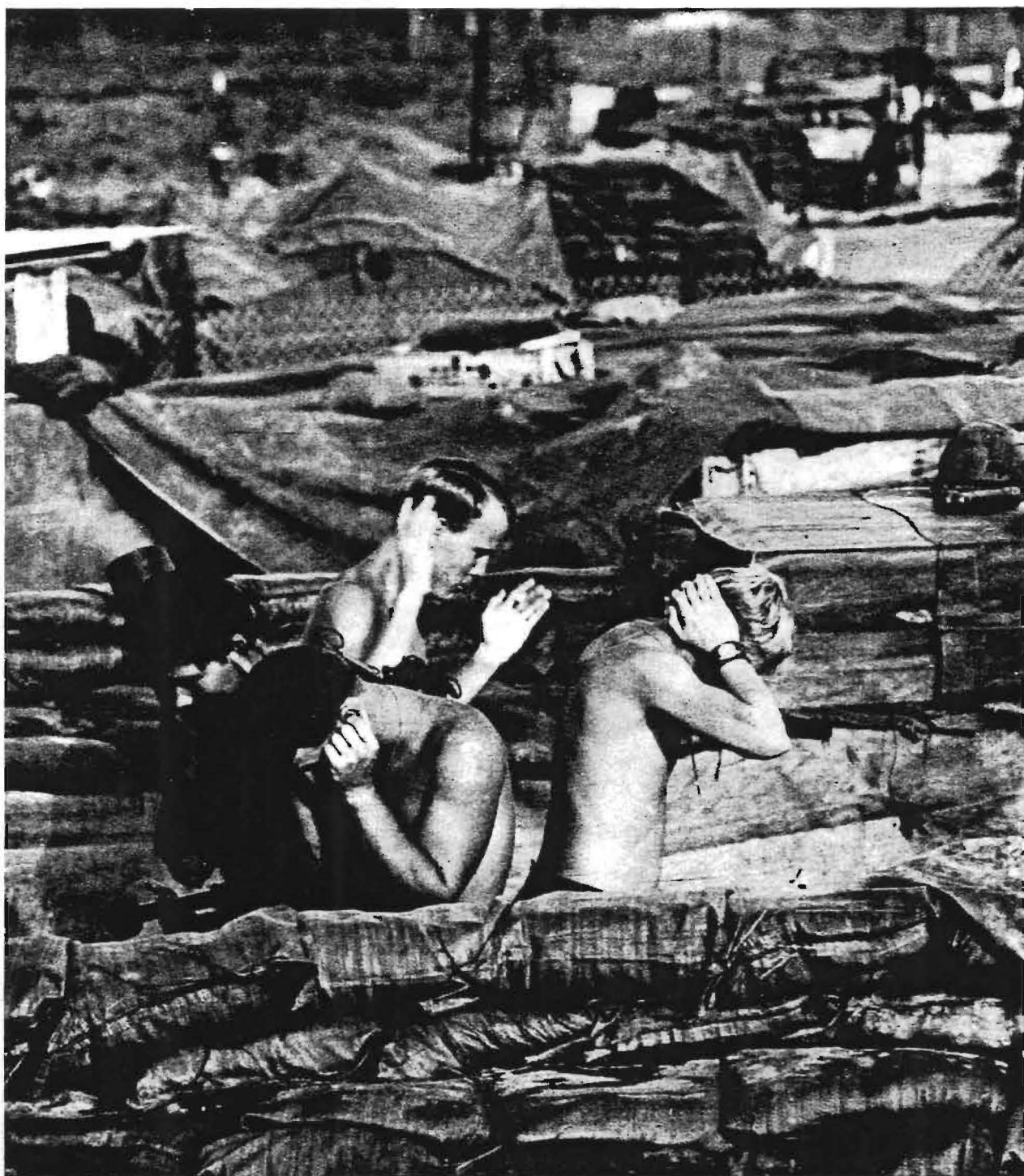
Only space and imagination are limiting factors. The basketball goal in the arty section is a favorite. And though there is no swimming pool, the underground bunkers could well serve as one during the rainy season.

"Our most popular sport is track," said Sergeant Ronald Earnest, of Portland, Oregon. And the most

*The infantryman—tools of his trade*

*At times though, a chance to relax*

*Sunset at FSB Grant, and the lookouts wait for darkness*



ZIPPER

*Mortar crew—part of the concentrated firepower of the fire base.*

popular event is the 20-foot dash—to the bunker to escape incoming rounds. The base record is held by numerous soldiers at Grant. A boxing ring and weight-lifting facilities are also available, and for the less energetic there's always cards.

For those who may be slow in the 20-foot dash there is a first aid station under the direction of Captain David T. Sidney. "Each man knows he'll receive the best medical attention possible when he arrives here," he said. The aid station has facilities to handle eight bed-patients and a doctor is on hand at all times. "We

also have the lowest number of malaria cases of any line unit in the division," Captain Sidney added.

Frequent visitors to the aid station are the chaplains that make the rounds of the fire bases by helicopter. They hold services for the troops and Chaplain Nicholas Waytowich said, "We fit our services in with the schedule of the soldier. Since they have many duties to perform, we arrange our service so the majority of troops can attend."

Both the aid station and the chaplain are comforting to have around when a fire base meets its ultimate test—

the ground attack. Grant hasn't had one for a long time, but other nearby bases have.

It is during this experience that the men of a FSB forget all about whose mess hall serves the best food and are at last thankful they filled all those sandbags. For under attack, a fire base is a fortress like the frontier forts of the old West or the rockwalled castles of the Middle Ages. Her moat is claymore-laced concertina, her perimeter archers fire M-16s and machineguns.

The big difference, of course, is the tremendous firepower available to the defenders of the fire base. They can depend on the guns of other FSBs, whose overlapping circles of fire cover them.

Their own guns can supply a deadly variety of fires, from "killer junior" air bursts that cover the area just outside the wire, to "beehive" rounds that can be fired pointblank at attackers who may get close.

The extra added attraction is air power, both helicopter gunship and Air Force jet fighter. As Major General Ellis W. Richardson, former commanding general of the 25th Infantry Division, wrote recently in *Infantry* magazine about a ground attack on a "Tropic Lightning" fire base:

"Shortly after the ground attack commenced, two Cobra gunships were orbiting the fire base requesting instructions and an artillery check fire. By this time, the battalion commander was sufficiently abreast of the situation to make the decision to split his support fires.


All artillery fires were directed to concentrate to the north. The battalion commander then concentrated his aerial fires to the south. Throughout the night split supporting fires were used.

"The initial helicopter gunship team rolled in for repeated rocket and machinegun runs on the enemy attempting to approach the wire. When they had expended their ordnance, a forward air controller was standing by with Air Force fighter bombers on station ready to assume the aerial fire support mission.

"The fighters moved in . . . as the helicopters moved off station. . . . An Air Force AC-47 ("Spooky") aircraft with rapid firing Gatling guns and area illumination capability was also used in the aerial firepower effort."

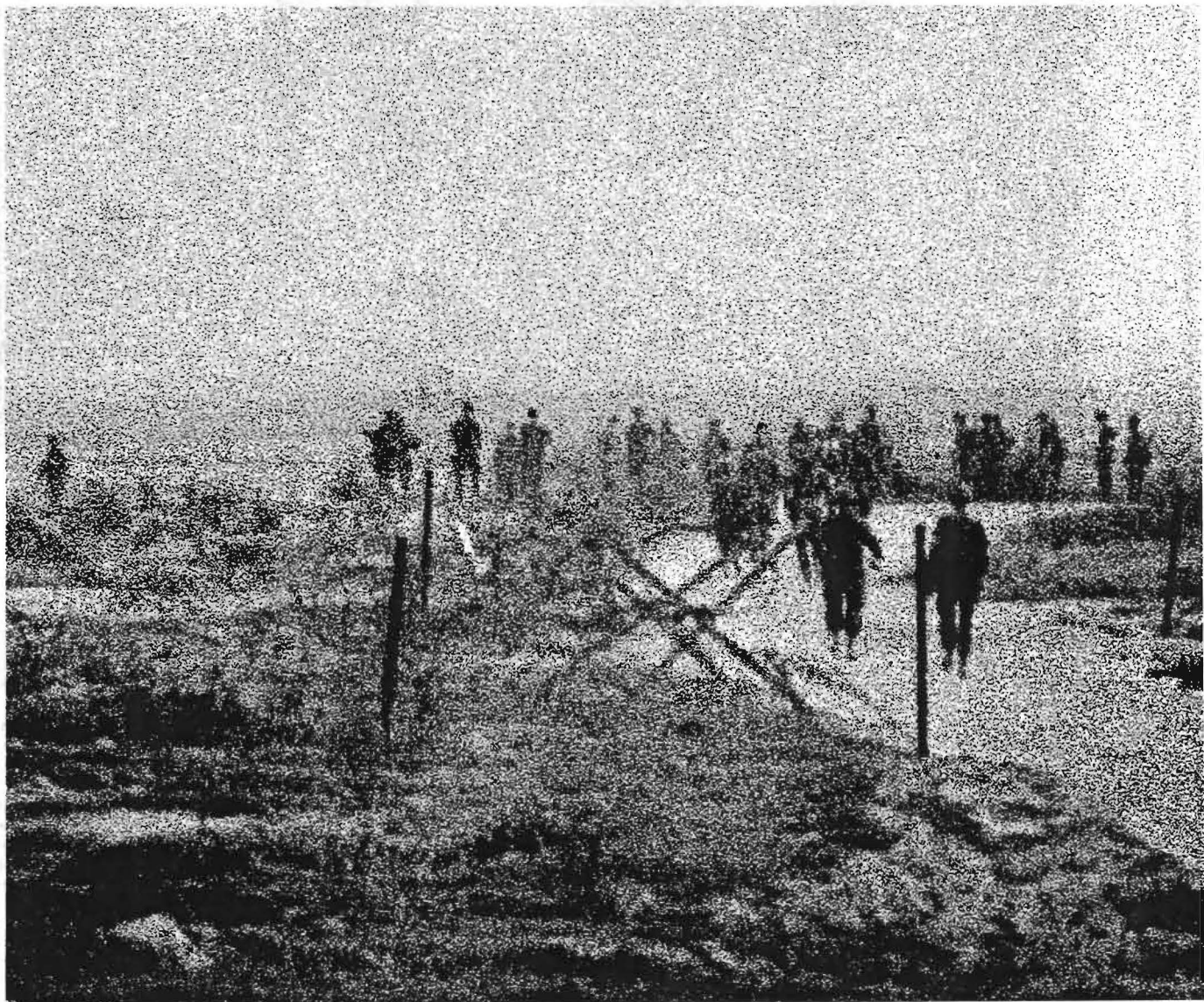
The next day an infantry sweep found 104 enemy killed and eight wounded and a considerable number of weapons, documents and ammunition. American losses within the fire support base were one killed and 26 wounded.

Similar encounters at FSBs Crook, Frontier City, Diamond, Ike, Buttons, and others have also resulted in lopsided NVA defeats.

Thus, whether it's the daily routine of "stand down" and "fire missions" or the test of a ground attack, the fire support base is the center of the circle of attention in the fighting man's world. 

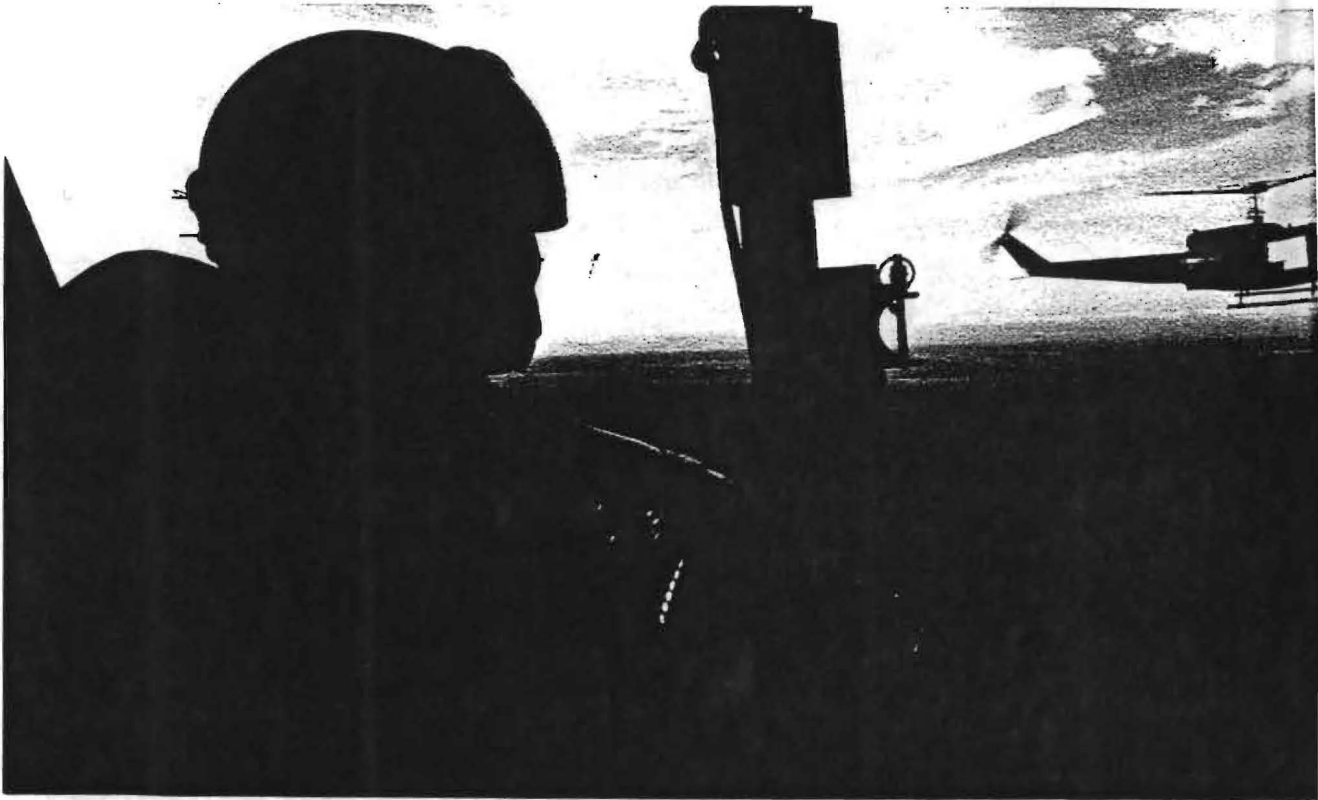
*Out in the early morning fog to look for the enemy*

cox



# The Flying Fighters

(Reprinted from November 1969)



by Specialist 4 Ken Heinrichs and Specialist 5 Darrell Batchelder

**N**O ONE LIKES to kill, but . . .”

“You don’t always know when you kill or how many you kill. You shoot at houses, wooded areas and you know they are there.”

“When your ship is hit, you want to hit back.”

“That’s our job. Does anyone ask how many American lives we’ve saved?”

More than half of the gunners in the 116th Assault Helicopter Company have extended or transferred for the chance to be a door gunner. Ask them why and the responses you get vary. Yet most say they want to be where the action is.

“You feel like you’re accomplishing

something rather than just sitting at a desk,” said Specialist 4 Tom Wallace from Wichita, Kan. And he should know. Six months ago he was punching keys on an IBM computer in Long Binh. “I ‘1049ed’ out,” he explained. “Now I can travel, see what the war is all about instead of just reading about it in the newspapers. You’re out where the action is.”

Fifteen miles northwest of Saigon, Cu Chi stands as an operations and fire support base for the 25th Infantry Division and the 3/4 Cavalry among others. The 116th, the Hornets, are part of the aerial artillery and troop carriers there.

The 116th leads their 269th Combat Aviation Battalion, the Black Barons, in missions and enemy kills. In the last four years the company has registered 1,500 enemy kills, first in Phu Loi and for the last three years in Cu Chi.

Sometimes they get their share in return too. Over 300 rounds have hit Hornet helicopters in those same four years.

Specialist 4 Lee F. Gentry is a door gunner with the 116th whose ship has taken rounds on three occasions recently. This is his 18th month in Vietnam. His first 11 were with an artillery unit before he extended for his present slot.



CLEVELAND

the weapon. Sure enough, running back was the worried 'grunt' waving his arm frantically. The pilot put down and the embarrassed guy retrieved his weapon."

On a big operation, nine slicks in two waves would be accompanied by three stingers and a command ship, but most missions are "eagle flights" where the chopper picks up the 'grunts' and ferries them a short distance, maybe across a river.

No matter what the mission is however, the door gunner's M60 is always ready to take part. Most of them have been lightened so they can be fired with one hand while guiding the ammunition into the breech with the other. Off come the bi-pods, the flash suppressor and the hand guard. In the command ships they are often hand-held for greater maneuverability. And every night they are stripped down, cleaned, oiled and lovingly put back together.

In the stingers, just as their M60 is not their only weapon, being strapped into a gunner's chair is not a door gunner's only job. With a crew chief keeping the ship running, pilot and co-pilot flying, the door gunner does the routine work, washing the bubble windows, scrubbing the deck, maintaining the weapons and assisting the crew chief in general repairs. When the ship lands to take on fuel, he is also the gas station attendant.

In tight landing situations the door gunner guides the pilot so the skids are over a flat area or lets him know of obstacles to the rear. Donning chicken plate over their Nomex (fire protective) clothing during most missions, the gunner sits on the right side of the ship with the crew chief manning the M60 on the left.

*Crewmen clean weapons, check ammunition and load up for the next mission*



CLEVELAND

Captain Bob McNay from Santa Barbara, Calif., expressed the importance of his right-hand man. "Without the suppressive fire of the door gunners we would be in a lot of trouble in the landing zones."

And just as the others depend on the door gunner for support in fire zones, the dependence and respect goes both ways.

"We have some great pilots," said Specialist 4 Fugman. "A couple of weeks ago one of our ships had hydraulic failure and the pilot nursed it back to the base in a heavy monsoon downpour."

When it is not dropping troops into the jungle, the 116th often flies CMAC (Capital Military Assistance Command) missions. CMAC is responsible for protecting Saigon and these missions could mean working with any number of infantry units. But, the door gunners have noticed they are supporting more Vietnamese units lately.

The 116th area of operations is III Corps but these missions, along with duty on the command ships, are relatively routine. Most of the men prefer flying the hotter missions to the Boi Loi Woods, the Citadel or Rang Rang.

These are the most gratifying assignments. The door gunner realizes his ship has the capability to break up an ambush or help relieve a platoon of infantrymen who are pinned down by enemy small-arms fire.



CLEVELAND

While one might expect the men to leave their jobs at the pad at the end of the day, most do not. Their bull sessions at the club or in the hootch include the day's action and what tomorrow's mission might mean. In the evening the gunners also check the board to see what type and how much ammo will be needed for the next day's flights.

Day to day the routine is pretty much the same. But, according to the gunners, things have changed a little.

When the unit first came to Vietnam, they say, the pilots were more daring and would fly tight formations. Now they are more cautious. They think twice before landing in a hot zone, much to the gunner's dislike. The gunners like to be where the action is.

# DROPS



by Specialist 5 Tim McGovern

IN ENGLAND, you risk it with a serious crime. In America, you put them in your ears, nose, eyes and on your feet. Humpty Dumpty took one and never recovered while candy manufacturers sell millions every day. Here in Vietnam, they have a special meaning. Everyone anticipates one, prays for it, and dwells upon it to the exclusion of everything else, wives and girl friends notwithstanding.

Especially since the conclusion of the spring Allied incursion into Cambodia, it has surpassed even The Universal Subject in volume of verbiage expended on it.

From the Delta to the DMZ, the word on every's lips is: DROPS.

*"Rumors to the contrary notwithstanding, just because a man is closer to the flagpole, it does not necessarily follow that he will get a bigger drop than a field trooper."* (SP5 Walter E. Willmert, Secretary, Stenographer to CG, II FFV)

The reason this rather drab sounding syllable has replaced the exclamation 'SHORT!' as the GI's favorite slogan here is that a drop can actually shorten your shortness. The lucky ones who receive drops can cease being short, and become NEXT!

In official terms, we are talking about the "curtailment" of the 12-month Vietnam tour for selected U.S. Army personnel under the jurisdiction of United States Army Republic of Vietnam (USARV) Headquarters. As if you didn't know.

Several factors exist today which enable the Army Headquarters at Long Binh to offer some a curtail-

*"If I get a 39-day drop, I'll leave tomorrow."* (PVT William E. Sheates, Company A, 1/27 25th Inf Div)

*"If it were left up to me, I'd give ALL the grunts their drops and give fewer to us rear area types"* (SP4 Roger A. Osborne, Orders Clerk, II FFV AG)



ment of their Vietnam tours. First and foremost is the success to date of President Nixon's Vietnamization Program. Personnel arriving in country today who have served a previous Vietnam tour before the Vietnamization Program was introduced are visibly impressed by the difference in the Vietnam of today compared to the one they served in two or three years ago. One former infantry platoon leader who served in 1968 and now is assigned to a MACV Advisory role, remarked that the difference was "Absolutely remarkable. I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't seen it. Everything has improved 100 per cent, especially the ARVN."

While this dramatic takeover by the Army of the Republic of Vietnam is being effected, U.S. troops are steadily being withdrawn from the war zone. Since President Nixon took office in January, 1969, U.S. troop strength in Vietnam has dropped from a peak of 530,000 to the present level of fewer than 300,000. April 30 will mark the end of Increment 6 of the US withdrawal and, hopefully, Phase 1 of the Vietnamization Program; i.e. complete turnover of ground combat operations responsibility to the ARVN. Authorized U.S. troop ceiling at that time will be 284,000.

As the process continues and American units are withdrawn, soldiers all over Vietnam await word from their respective "rumor control agencies" about their unit

redeployment or inactivation or even just a measly 50 or 60 day drop which will send them home soon after they become officially two-digit midgets.

Unfortunately, many soldiers misunderstand the intent and process of the curtailment program, and become disappointed or disenchanted with this, USARV's sweetest program.

USARV has two totally different curtailment systems for its troops. The first deals exclusively with personnel in units scheduled for redeployment or inactivation. In previous increments of troop withdrawal, the regulation stipulated that personnel with fewer than 60 days remaining in country on the last day of the unit standdown would be returned to the States while all other personnel were re-assigned in-country. Troops affected by Increment 6 may see this period lengthened to 90 days, depending on the pace and requirements of redeployment. As of press time a final decision has yet to be made. Personnel with 60 (90) days or less remaining upon completion of standdown may get drops with the exception of the following:

—Those who have extended their Foreign Service Tour for the purpose of early release from active duty, unless they elect in writing to negate extension.

—Those serving on a tour extension who have taken the 30 days special leave.

—Court reporters, who must request curtailment as an exception to policy.

Personnel who have extended for 180 days and who have NOT commenced travel in conjunction with the 30-day special leave will be allowed to:

—Transfer to a unit remaining in Vietnam to complete the extended tour with the new unit and retain leave benefits.

—Terminate the extension and DEROS in accordance with existing criteria.

Most two, and three-year enlisted personnel, however, are more affected by the 150 and 179-day early out policies. The regulations are specific with regard to who can receive these early outs and who can't.

All enlisted personnel are eligible for separation up to 150 days prior to normal ETS provided they have completed or received credit for completing the normal Vietnam tour (at least ten months). Individuals returned under this authorization must arrive back in The World with 150 days or less remaining to ETS.

As an exception to policy and effective only through April 30, 1971, enlisted personnel assigned to units inactivating or redeploying are eligible for release from active duty up to 179 days prior to ETS provided they meet both of the following criteria:

—They have completed 12 months or more in Vietnam on their

*"I don't want to go until June anyway. That's when all the girls get out of college."* (SGT Robert A. Brazziel, HHC 1/27 25th Inf Div)



*"I should get at least a 30 day drop but I'm hoping for 60."* (SP4 Delbert L. Burnham, 7th Battalion, 8th Field Arty, 23rd Gp. His DEROS is 30 May, ETS 14 July)



*"What drop? I extended!"* SP4 Russell R. Vindick, 532d Sig Company)



current tour.

—They may be on Foreign Service Tour extension that was originally executed to qualify for the 150-day early release.

Those returning to the States with more than 150 or 179 days will be assigned stateside to complete their active duty obligation.

All of the foregoing pertains exclusively to personnel in units redeploying or inactivating and is the first process in the curtailment program. The redeployment curtailment includes officers, NCO's, and EM alike.

THE SECOND program pertains only to enlisted men E-6 and below and is a direct "across the board" designation of days curtailment to selected personnel. It is based solely on date of DEROS and all personnel with at least 10 months in country are eligible for a drop, should space reduction requirements dictate it. During the past Christmas season, these drops reached an unprecedented high due to the Army's desire to get as many soldiers as possible home for Christmas, while at the same time reach the announced troop ceiling of 344,000 by December 31. Drops of as high as 48 days were allocated.

A third program announced early in March seeks to dump excess lieutenants throughout the world and may effect the tours of those in Vietnam. Under this program initial obligated two year duty tours may be shortened by a period of up

to two months on an adjusted scale depending on current ETS. Medical, legal, and chaplain officers are excepted, as well as those who have applied for extensions of active duty for any reason including to make captain.

The onset of the new year saw the instant revival of an undefatigable Army institution—the Rumor Control Center. Agencies of this type sprang up all over Vietnam and the first 'official' release was that the Vietnam tour had been shortened to ten months and that everyone who arrived after March 1, 1970 would serve only 10 months. (As the rumor failed to materialize, the date was changed to April 1 and then finally to May 1). Word of the new '10-month tour' spread like wildfire until it became widely known at the replacement stations at Oalkand and Ft. Lewis. Since that time, countless thousands of troops with long faces have passed through in-country replacement stations at Long Binh and Cam Ranh Bay after receiving DEROS dates for a full 365 days later. More grist for the mill was provided by some farsighted individual who decreed that when an individual reached the 150-day mark prior to ETS he would DEROS regardless of time in country. Several individuals who had short tours to begin with were disappointed to find they were not scheduled to DEROS a month or two after their arrival in country. Surprise!

Commanders of units in Military Region 3 have been most affected by unit redeployments and concomitant drops for their personnel.

Lieutenant Colonel Don A. McKnight, commanding officer of the 1st Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment voiced command concern for the curtailment policies shortly after his unit stood down in February.

"The business of 'drops' requires frequent attention by commanders at all levels. Everyone would like to have one, but, of course, only a lucky few in fact, get them and vice versa. 'Drops' are undoubtedly the most talked about subject and the most used raw material in the 'rumor factories' of USARV troops at the present time."

In another vein, Captian Wendell H. Duncan, personnel management officer, S-1, 2nd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division has emphasized the need for discipline in enforcing regulations on drops.

"You have to establish a cutoff somewhere," he said. "The cutoff points must be adhered to and you just have to live with it. People who meet the criteria will go home; those who don't, won't."

Despite the uncertainties involved, every GI in Vietnam is certain he will get a drop. From the highlands to the lowlands, visions of darkened calendars, hold baggage lines and Freedom Birds dance upon the imaginations of thousands of not-so-short short-timers.

*"Right now, it looks like everybody is packing their bags to go up north." (PFC Tim H. Howle, Delta Co, 1/27, 2d Brigade, 25th Div.)*



*"Just get me out of here. The sooner the better." (SP4 Otte D. Davis, 1st of the 5th INF, 2nd Bde 25th INF DIV)*



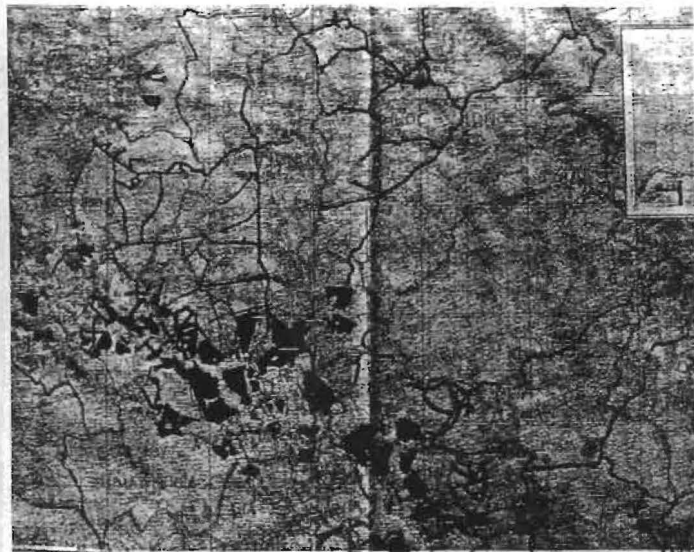
*"We're moving to Lai Khe and I can't get a drop unless it is a 6-month early out drop." (on 2nd 6-month extension, normal DEROS 29 May. SP 5 William A. Holmes, F Troop, 4th Cav, 25th Inf Div)*





# THE PLOWS

by Specialist 5 Ray Smietanka



THE ROME PLOW, designed years ago as a tool for clearing American farmland, now is one of the most effective weapons in the faraway Vietnam war.

In more than four years of service here, the Rome plows have cleared more than 215,000 acres of jungle in Military Region III alone. Since the Cambodian incursion of last May and June, MR3's major land clearing unit, the 62nd Engineer Battalion, has been responsible for Rome plowing almost 60,000 acres.

Although these land-clearing operations have considerable military effect in curtailing guerrilla activities and securing rural areas previously plagued by the Viet Cong, the results have been more than military.

No sooner do Rome plows complete clearing an area than Vietnamese move in to begin farming the newly cleared land.

"As a farm boy myself," says 62nd Battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Robert Monfore, "It's good to see development and not just destruction."

II Field Force Engineer, Colonel J. E. Foster, considers the Rome plow as still primarily an agricultural rather than military weapon, but one which happens

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*(Top left) Rome plows of the 62nd Land Clearing Battalion at work near the Cambodian border. (Bottom left) this map shows the extensive land cuts in MR3 which have helped pacify the region. (Top right) plows and security on the move.*

to have tactical applications for Vietnam.

"Rome plowing provides new land for agriculture and for population growth," he says. "People will move to good farm land, but only if it is secure. Rome plowing offers both good land and the security that encourages people to develop it."

MR3's 62nd Battalion is composed of two U.S. land clearing companies, the 984th and the 60th, each with approximately 30 Rome plows. An ARVN unit, the 318th Land Clearing Company, has been trained by the 62nd and already has cleared 22,000 acres in MR3, as well as considerable land in Cambodia.

In Rome plowing there are two types of operations, the area cut, and the tactical cut.

The area cut, directed at known enemy base areas, aims at exposing guerrillas to observation and interdiction. Cutting out broad swaths of jungle across infiltration routes will force enemy soldiers to cross open ground at various intervals, where, with the aid of aerial observation and sensor devices, they risk easy detection.

This type of operation also provides land routes and landing zones for allied units to strike quickly against

enemy forces.

"The use of cuts as roads is especially important for the ARVN units," says Col. Foster. "They have fewer helicopters and have to depend much more on ground transportation."

Area cuts have apparently had considerable effect on the enemy. According to Col. Montfore, intelligence reports during a recent plowing operation indicated that the VC had ordered its troops to move out just as soon as the Rome plows moved in. Although the region had been considered a secure Viet Cong haven, merely the presence of the Rome plows seemed to be enough to make the enemy look elsewhere.

The other operation is the tactical cut. This cut is used in support of specific allied operations and usually entails expanding the clearings along major highways in order to lessen the chance of Viet Cong ambush. Jungle is also often cleared around villages and allied installations to provide security from ground assault or mortar attacks.

As with most Rome plowing operations, the tactical cut has numerous non-military benefits for the local



*Crews of a Rome plow and a protecting Sheridan tank take a break in the thick jungle.*

citizenry. For example, last July, after the Cambodian operation, the 60th Battalion went to work clearing roadways from Bu Dop to Song Be and to Dong Xoai. With jungle growing close to the highway, Viet Cong ambushes were so frequent that the roads had been practically unused for six years. After clearing 200 meters away on either side of the road, engineer crews set to work resurfacing the highway and now the heavy traffic is bolstering the economic growth of the region.

For years the enemy has reacted vigorously to Rome plowing, as can be adjudged from the 15 killed and almost 400 wounded of the 62nd Battalion. But, according to Col. Monfore, enemy action against his battalion is decreasing as techniques for dealing with harassment are refined.

Rome plow units are usually teamed with armored cavalry when working an area and the two "are improving our tactics every day."

"Get a cavalry squadron and a land clearing unit together and you have a powerful offensive weapon; "they're better than almost anything," Col. Monfore says.

The potency of the Rome plow has long been recognized. Last year the former commander of II Field Force, Lieutenant General Julian J. Ewell, called the Rome plow then "the most effective device" for winning the war.

But one of the chief advantages of the Rome plow remains the fact that it's basically a weapon of peace rather than war.

"Ecologically speaking, the Rome plow is just the right thing for our purposes," says Col. Foster. "It clears land without destroying it. It not only permits settlement and development, it encourages it. The economic benefits are just as tremendous."

While Rome plows are busy clearing Texas brushland, machines from the same assemblyline are recording spectacular success in the jungles of Vietnam. Although it would seem an unlikely weapon to the Texas farmer, the Rome plow has become one of the major instruments for defeating an armed foe while at the same time building an economy.

(Reprinted from June 1970)

# Artillery on the Move

by Specialist 4 Phil Schieber

*In past wars and during the early years of Vietnam the basic tenets of field artillery prevailed. It was easy to "move and shoot" by air-lifting the 105's and 155's from rice paddies to jungles to mountain bases. But what about the heavy artillery—the eight inch and the 175? Their weight made airmobility impossible...*

**B**U GIA MAP is an exception to the ill-defined lines that characterize a guerrilla war in the jungles. Until only recently, U.S. commanders would look at the area and scratch their heads. On their maps, Bu Gia Map was abandoned. It was an impenetrable maze of jungle whose vegetation was so thick that in the mornings you had to chop off the vines that laced themselves in your boots during the previous night.

Bu Gia Map was an exception because only one side had abandoned the area. Every time a U.S. commander would point to Bu Gia Map, he could be fairly sure that under the ridges of his index finger, there were several battalions of communists running around in those jungles. For a while, things got so bad that the Bu Gia Map was being referred to as the Long Binh of the NVA. On a good day, a squad of NVA could pick up a few rockets just arrived from trails exiting Cambodia, take a nice afternoon hike through the Bu Gia Map, dine at dusk on the outskirts of Song Be, lob those rockets into allied positions just after dark, and be back in the lush green security of Bu Gia Map in time for midnight snacks.

In 1969, the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) and the 1st ARVN Airborne Division began operations in Phuoc Long Province, within whose boundaries the Bu Gia Map lies. By early 1970, the allied forces had succeeded in pushing as far as Landing Zone Hung, the pinnacle of the northernmost thrust into the Bu Gia Map.

Supplied completely by air, LZ Hung was manned by several ARVN battalions and Regional and Popular Force units which conducted operations throughout the area. Artillery support was provided by a battery of U.S. 105 and 155 millimeter howitzers.

In March, it was decided that heavy artillery would be employed at LZ Hung. Previously, heavy artillery had been used only in static support roles. The big guns were strategically situated to provide an umbrella of protection for units operating at any point on the map in the III Corps Tactical Zone. The guns seldom moved.

But now heavy artillery was moving, moving into places that had never seen such heavy artillery before. LZ Hung was one of those places.

The only problem was getting the guns up there. An eight-inch gun weighs 58,600 pounds, and a 175 tips the scales at 62,100. A Sky Crane could lift a 155 self-



propelled howitzer, but even that powerful helicopter would never be able to get a 175 off the ground.

The only way for the heavy artillery to reach LZ Hung was to travel on the ground. Super highways are notably lacking in the Bu Gia Map. The guns would have to be moved up to LZ Hung in a convoy, breaking their own trail along the way.

The guns selected to be moved were from II Field Force Artillery's heavy arsenal: B Battery, 6th Battalion, 27th Artillery. Positioned in Camp Martin, on the out-

skirts of the 1st Cav's LZ Buttons near Song Be, B battery's guns rested on large circular pads that cost an estimated \$25,000 each to construct. The huge wooden platforms were set in tons of limestone fill which prevented the heavy guns from sinking and shifting in the oozing red mud that always accompanies the rainy season.

In March, though, the weather was still dry, and the earth was like concrete.

On March 15, the guns of B Battery moved out on the first leg of their journey to LZ Hung.

"We moved heavy arty into what normally would have been an airmobile LZ," said Captain William C. Buhmann, commander of Bravo Battery. "We were sent up there because they needed heavy artillery."

The push north involved a convoy of 15 vehicles. The first obstacle was the Song Be River, which was



negotiated after B Company, 8th Engineers found a suitable ford. En route, other streams were crossed with the aid of an armored vehicle launched bridge from the 919th Engineer Company of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment. A combat engineer vehicle rode point and broke the trail with a bulldozer blade.

"On the way up the trip took about 12 hours," said Captain Buhmann. "The last people to travel over the trails we used were the French. Most of the way we had to cut our own path."

After reaching LZ Hung, engineers assisted the men of B Battery in building bunkers and firing pits, all of which was accomplished in less than 48 hours.

B Battery was at LZ Hung for 19 days. During that time, the four guns of the battery fired 3,490 rounds.

"We shot a lot of support missions for ARVN contacts," said Captain Buhmann. "We also did a lot of

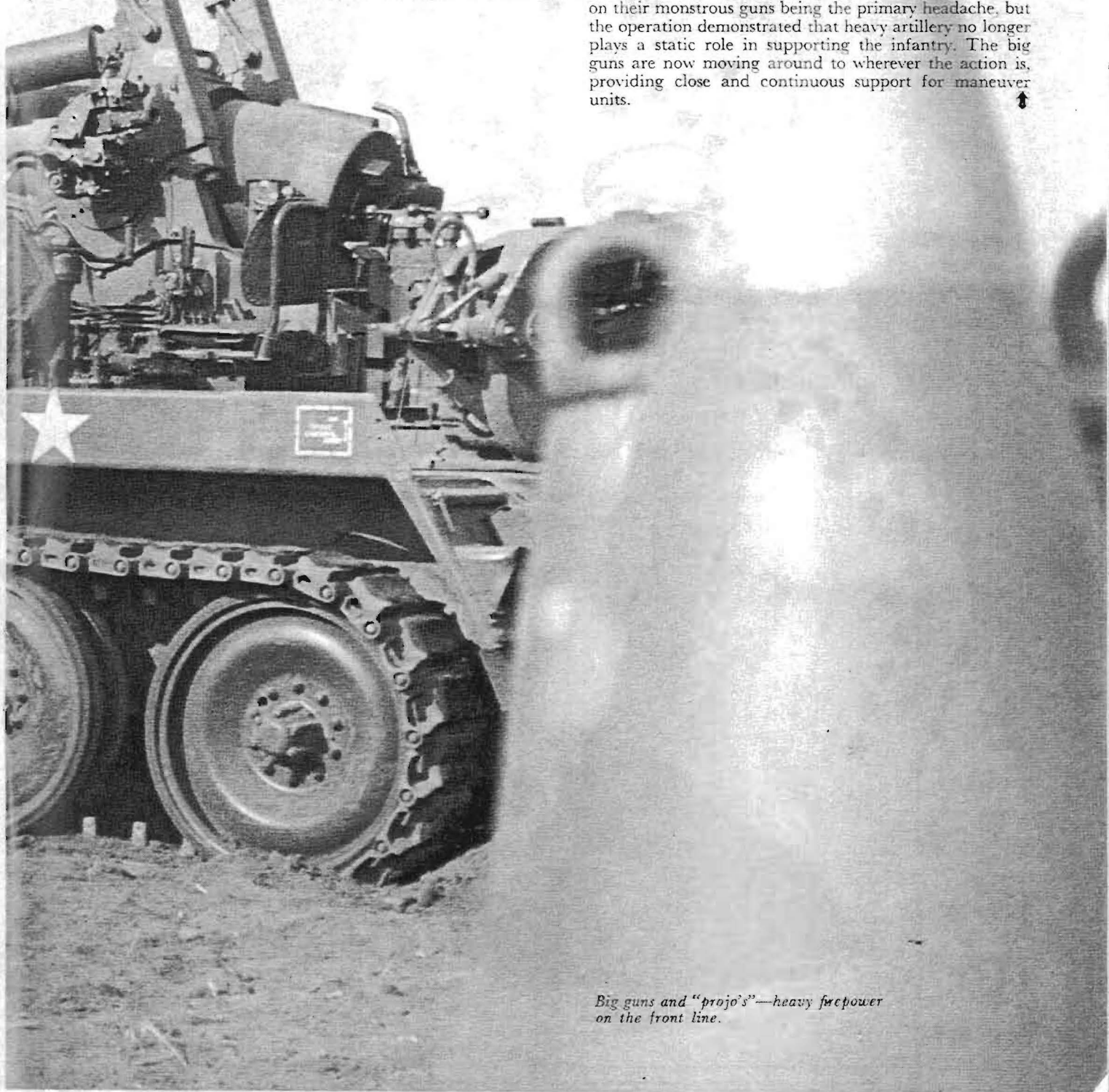
bunker busting with our eight-inch guns."

Toward the end of March, though, rain began to fall almost nightly, and the guns were beginning to sink and slide in the softening earth.

Although from LZ Hung the heavy artillery could easily range the northern part of the 1st Cav's area of operations, it was decided that they would have to be moved early in April, or else sit out the monsoons at LZ Hung.

And so on the morning of April 3, B Battery began to move right back where it started from, with armored vehicles busting down the jungle and dusters from the 5th Battalion, 2nd Artillery providing security. Trails were swept for mines by elements of the 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry.

For the men of B Battery, the whole operation may have proved to be a bit of a grind, with maintenance on their monstrous guns being the primary headache, but the operation demonstrated that heavy artillery no longer plays a static role in supporting the infantry. The big guns are now moving around to wherever the action is, providing close and continuous support for maneuver units. ↑



Big guns and "projo's"—heavy firepower on the front line.





# *The Gambling Cook*

A VIETNAMESE LEGEND

ONE DAY, the cook for a wise man lost his market money while gambling. Afraid to tell his wise master the truth, he invented the following story:

*"This morning, on arriving at the market, I noticed a large fish for sale. It was plump and fresh—a superb fish. It was such a fine fish that I spent all of today's market money for it, so that you could taste of it.*

*"Halfway home, the fish began to stiffen, as in death. I recalled the old adage: 'A fish out of water is a dead fish.' Since I happened to be passing a pond, I plunged it into the water, hoping to revive it.*

*"Since it was still lifeless, I took it off its line, and held it in my hands. It stirred a little, and then with a quick movement, slipped from my grasp. I plunged my arm into the water to seize it again, but with a flick of its tail it was gone.*

*"I have been very stupid!"*

*Upon hearing this story, his master clapped his hands and said: "That's perfect! That's perfect!"*

*He was thinking of the fish's bold escape.*

*The cook failed to understand this, and left. He went about telling his friends: "How can my master be wise, if he believes such a story?"*

*Mencius once said, "A plausible lie can deceive even a superior intellect."*



*Building for the future.*

