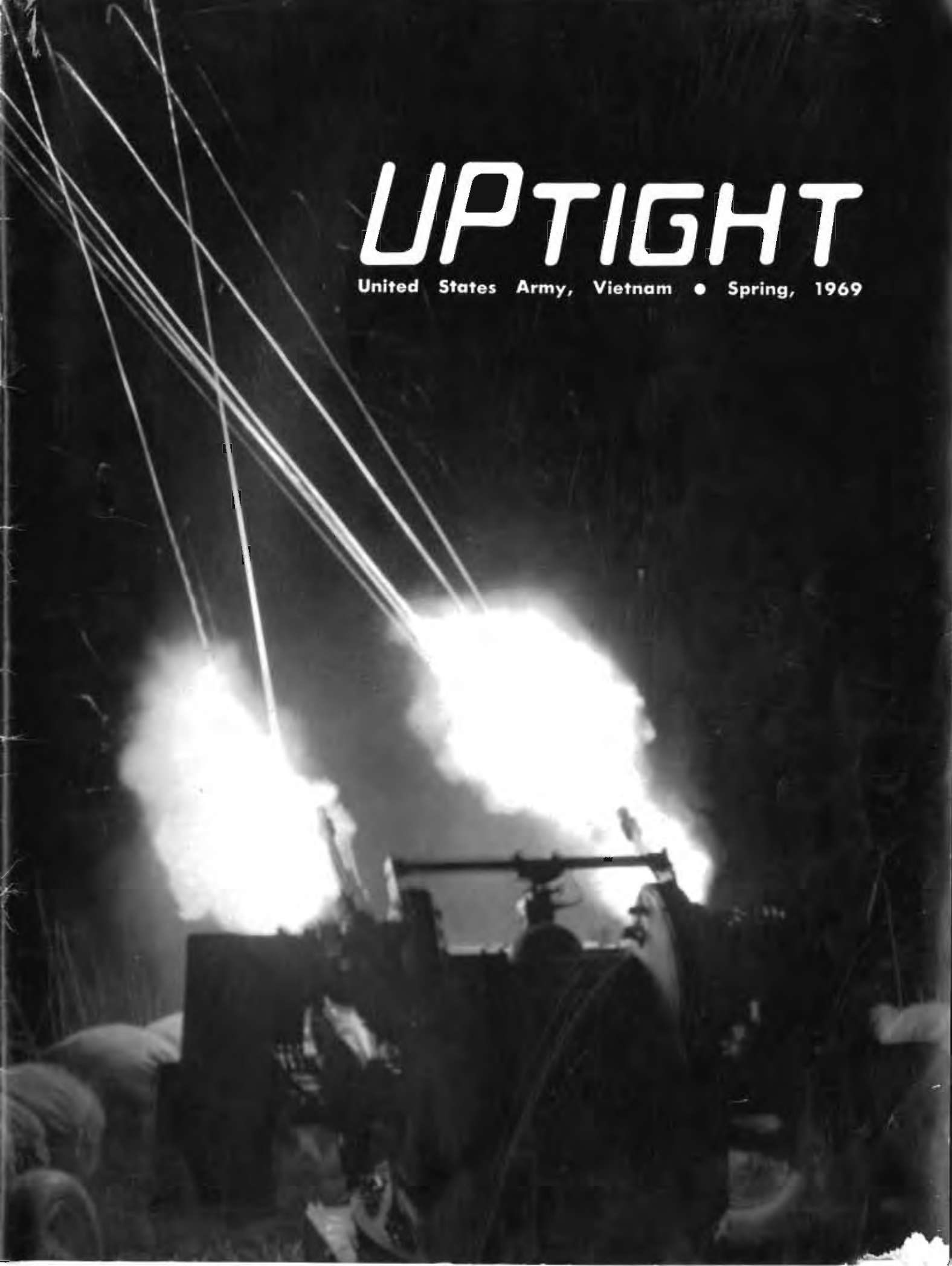
UPTIGHT

United States Army, Vietnam • Spring, 1969



Serving With Pride...

Each issue of UpTight will salute a major unit serving in Vietnam, selected randomly, highlighting the unit's historical background and illustrating the unit patch.

Tropic Lightning

On October 1, 1941, the 25th Infantry Division was born.

On December 7, 1941, the 25th Infantry Division was mature. It had to be. For the 25th was called to defend the shores of Hawaii after the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. Within a year of that day of infamy, 25th Division troops were on the offensive in the Pacific. From Guadalcanal through the northern chain of Solomon Islands to Arundel Island and Kolombangara the 25th moved like lightning and penetrated every Japanese stronghold. The 25th was Tropic Lightning and thus earned the name it received.

From January to June, 1945, division soldiers fought for 165 days in the liberation of the Philippines, setting a record among Army divisions for consecutive days of combat. After World War II, the Tropic Lightning Division had to occupy a defeated nation. The immense burden of processing thousands of refugees was undertaken. Efficiency on the battlefield was matched by efficiency in occupied Japan.

The men of the Lightning patch remained in Japan until 1960 when they were again called into combat. After the North Korean Army stormed across the 38th Parallel, the 25th Division, along with other United Nations' forces, raced to the defense of the port city of Pusan. It was heroics of Lightnings at Pusan that earned for the division its first Korean Presidential Unit Citation. For three years Tropic Lightning battled seasoned North Korean and Chinese Communist soldiers. In May, 1953, the capital city Seoul, was defended. Again bravery in the face of fierce fighting earned the 25th a Korean Presidential Unit Citation.

In 1954, the 25th was back in Hawaii, the place of its birth. The peaceful years at Schofield Barracks came and went, and by 1963 the division was sending men to Vietnam.

By late 1965 the move-in-force to Vietnam had begun. First was the 3rd Brigade, and by April, 1966 the move was complete. Tropic Lightning was again in combat. The present chapter of the 25th's history is still being written. Since the division has been in Vietnam, more than 188,000 Viet Cong and North Vietnamese soldiers have died at the hands of Tropic Lightning infantrymen, cavalrymen and artillerymen. Ten men have received the Medal of Honor while serving with the 25th in Vietnam. Before Vietnam, 14 Tropic Lightning soldiers received the nation's highest award.

In this struggle that combines battlefield fighting with an attempt to win the hearts of the people, division soldiers have shown genuine compassion and understanding of the problems of a people too long consumed in war. For its unshrinking devotion to the effort in Vietnam and its professionalism on the battlefield, the 25th Infantry Division was awarded the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm on January 28, 1969.

UPTIGHT

VOL. 1, NR. 4 SPRING, 1969

THE QUARTERLY OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY, VIETNAM


Laird


Resor

Leading the Way

The two men President Nixon chose to execute Army policy bring together congressional experience in dealing with military affairs and job experience with the previous administration.

Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird brings to his new duties at The Pentagon an interest and expertise in military affairs which dates back to his World War II service with the U.S. Navy.

For the 10 years preceding his selection as defense secretary he was a member of the subcommittee on defense of the House of Representatives Appropriations Committee.

Secretary Laird was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from Wisconsin's 7th District. He served in the 83rd through 90th sessions of Congress and was elected to the 91st Congress in November 1968.

Manning the post as Secretary of the Army is Stanley R. Resor, who made the transition from the Johnson administration.

Steady, reliable, methodical, a careful planner, are some of the ways associates describe the athletic-looking 6-footer.

Secretary of Defense Laird, announcing Resor's reappointment, said the Nixon Administration wants the Army administrator to stay on to provide an element of continuity in the switch of administrations.

Secretary Resor, a one-time New York lawyer, puts in long hours and demands detailed reports from his staff. He watches the fine print closely.

COMBAT ACTION

SERVICE AND SUPPORT

HUMAN INTEREST

SPECIAL FEATURES

UPTIGHT is an authorized quarterly publication of the U.S. Army, Vietnam. Its mission is to provide factual, timely and in-depth information of interest to members of the U.S. Army, Vietnam. Articles of general interest may be submitted for consideration to: Editor, UPTIGHT, Information Office, Headquarters, USARV, APO San Francisco 96375. Direct communication with the Editor is authorized. Unless otherwise indicated, material published in UPTIGHT may be reprinted provided credit is given the magazine and the author. Opinions expressed in UPTIGHT are not necessarily those of the Department of the Army.

CREDITS: Front cover—U.S. Army leadership in Vietnam is backed by unprecedented firepower. Here a quad 50 machine gun is fired into the night from a landing zone north of Ank Khe. Photo by PFC Richard S. Durrance.

For leadership in the field
Infantrymen turn to the...

Platoon Sergeant

By SFC Larry Babbitts
Americal IO

Charlie was out there or at least he had been there. There would be no slip-ups now because this patrol was well planned. Soft moonlight accented tiny lines of strain at the corners of his eyes as they probed the darkness for VC.

The nuts-and-bolts of the patrol actually began earlier that day as the platoon sergeant leaned on a damp sandbag next to the bunker's entrance, a cigarette inserted between the thumb and the first two fingers of his left hand.

This evening, again, he would take his men out on another mission. Many of his men were new to the Company, nicknamed "The Gunfighters," 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry, 198th Infantry Brigade. For many it would be their first time out with a real prospect of coming under hostile fire.

Sergeant First Class James D. Winberry, a 16-year Regular Army veteran, moved his hand deliberately from the sandbag to run over his reddish, neatly-trimmed moustache, and continued to plan for tonight.

"I could use the second squad as point," he reflected, "putting them on the left side of the formation. Perhaps the first squad as rear security."

Decision upon decision would have to be made today. Decisions about tactics would have to be checked with First Lieutenant Fred Riegel, the platoon leader, but most of the other decisions were his to make.

Who will go? Who remains behind? What special equipment will be necessary for this particular operation? These thoughts he mulled over in his mind.

"Gene," he said in his soft, native Missouri accent, "tell the squad leaders I'll meet with them here, before chow."

Specialist 4 Gene Whitely, a machine gunner who just returned from the hospital where he went to recover from a light wound suffered two weeks ago, nodded and went down the trail.

"Oh," the platoon sergeant called, "also get me 'Mike'."

"Mike" is a local term used to denote the platoon radio telephone operator (RTO).

While most of the decisions seem small and unimportant, Sergeant Winberry has no margin for error. Errors and miscalculations may cost lives in a rifle company: a fact known only too well to this former Ft. Rucker, Ala., survival course instructor.

Three times decorated for valor, this Americal Division platoon sergeant believes that, "the men must have absolute confidence in me and my decisions. They must know that when I say something must be done and done now, that I'm serious and am basing each decision on my experience and sound advice from higher levels...and from their own suggestions, too."

"He always seems calm," said Specialist Whitely, "and strange as it may seem, I've never heard him raise his voice in anger. All his moves seem to be right, and he seems to know when it's time to play and time to work. Even

Platoon Sergeant Winberry relaxes after completing a successful patrol.

though I was hit last him out, I'd have no reservations about going out with him again."

The last time out, Sergeant Winberry's platoon had one man killed and three wounded and evacuated. A profoundly religious man and the father of two children, Winberry deeply felt the loss of one of his men.

"He's hard, but not cold," stated Captain John M. Plese, Company A commander. "He is capable of hiding his immediate feelings. This is often necessary to maintain morale among the troops, because the loss of a man is just about as hard as losing a member of your family."

"Whenever you lose anyone, it's hard to take," Winberry said, "and you begin thinking about why you're a 'lifer' (career soldier) anyhow. It'd sure be easier on the outside. You get pretty sore at yourself and at the world in general...but then you cool down and remember why you're in the Army."

Winberry, the farm-boy turned soldier, is one of the Army's professionals who isn't ashamed to admit the real reason he and many other dedicated career men stay in the combat arms.

"They need me here. Army life is my life...it's my 'bag'...and in spite of the family separations and other inconveniences, it's a job that must be done, and done right."

Three men came ambling up the hill to the bunker where Winberry waited. Two squad leaders and the platoon RTO arrived knowing that if he sent for them, it was important to be just a little bit early. They obviously were ready.

Some informal greetings and conversation were exchanged.

Then, as the facial expressions indicated it was down-to-business time. Winberry briefly outlined the plans for the evening operation. The conversation continued in short sentences, punctuated with terse grunts of agreement and a few direct-to-the-point questions.

The answers were always given in a voice exhibiting both certainty and consideration for the men.

The red-haired NCO often squinted in the direction of the setting Asian sun, and while sometimes seeming detached, demonstrated his confidence in the squad leaders by probing for suggestions ...and listening to them.

Although he doesn't always use their advice, he weighs it and, more often than not, the subordinate leaders' recommendations are integrated into his plans.

"Anybody got any questions?" he asks, raising himself from his improvised helmet-chair. "If not, have your men ready as soon as it gets dark. Rendezvous will be behind Bunker 11."

Now is the moment of truth for the platoon sergeant. He contemplates the possibility of losing some of his men. He is alone. The decisions have been made, the responsibilities are his. He tweaks his nose, runs his hand over his mustache again, and enters the command post (CP) bunker for a last conference with the platoon leader and company commander.

Winberry lights a short, unfiltered cigarette and puts on the eyeglasses he uses only for reading to check the situation map hanging on the CP wall. He checks for any movement of friendlies and any other changes since he last read the map...less than one hour ago.

"He's one of the most thorough people I've ever seen," said Plese, "he'll check and re-check, and then check again. That's the reason I believe he's had so much success with so few losses."

After entering a few brief notes in his pad, Winberry goes to his bunk and begins to get his things together. His canteens are filled, the rifle inspected, the straps on his field pack and ammo pouches are checked. Satisfied that he is personally ready, he prepares a cup of instant coffee over a B-unit can that he has manufactured into a cook stove.

Half-way through his coffee-break, a squad leader, Sergeant Joseph Simone enters, "Hey, Sarge, I don't think we ought to take George with us. He's leaving for R&R tomorrow." It's a question more than a statement.

Winberry looks up from his steaming canteen-cup, and answers, "He's your man. Whatever you think is best."

As darkness approaches, he dresses for the patrol, carefully tying the frag grenades in place; another quick check of the weapon and he starts for Bunker 11.

While quizzing the men to be sure they have been briefed by the squad leaders, he scans their equipment. Assured that everyone is ready, he turns and calls the point man to his post.

Another patrol begins.

The patrol moves noiselessly down the slope of a brush-covered hill, past the outpost bunkers and onto a rice-paddy dike. Each man knows his job; each man is confident in the other team members; each man is confident in his leader; and the leader is confident in them.

The point man and the second squad leader know their route, and lead the patrol into the ambush area. It is an area surrounding a road junction and it is covered with small scrub trees jutting out of high grass. It is a known VC infiltration route.

No words are spoken, or need to be. A slight touch on the shoulder or a hand motion by the leader indicates what action must take place.

The men settle down with as little noise and movement as possible and ready themselves in their makeshift fighting positions. Ammunition and grenades are placed within easy reach. Claymore mines are positioned, concealment prepared and the long wait begins.

Nearly nine hours of waiting, poised for battle, watching every shadow and waiting for any movement, leaves plenty of time for introspection and reflection.

After a final, quick check of the men's positions, Winberry crawls behind a hedge, his back leaning against a tree. He scans the area to assure himself that he too has a good field of fire, and is easily available to command should a fire-fight begin.

Any rusile of the leaves would immediately bring a reflex action from him and his men. By the dim light of the half moon, you can see the rifles poised, ready.

Just before dawn breaks, Winberry passes the word to withdraw from their positions and prepare to return to camp. Silently, stealthily, each man protecting his buddy's movement, the withdrawal

Sergeant Winberry checks map with his subordinates (top left). He talks to a higher element on the radio (top right). He uses a compass to determine direction (above), and points out fields of fire (left).

begins.

By the early light, you can see the look of relief cross the sergeant's face, as the patrol negotiates its own perimeter wire and he shouts, "Okay, light up."

The men grin and strike matches for each other's cigarettes.

"Another patrol over," reflects Winberry stroking his mustache.▲


A2-9026

The World's Largest Salvage Yard

Photos by SP5 David Shaw
UpTight Staff Photographer

Fragments and shells of jeeps, trucks and trailers are piled in an every-which-way heap. Nearby, shell casings gleam in the hot sun, the steel showing through the ubiquitous orange dust.

Here and there, groups of civilians load scrap onto trucks.

Rows of tires bake in the sun, leading to a large pile of tires, looking like so many black doughnuts frosted with sand. A rust-red and gun-metal gray mountain of wall lockers rises in still another area.

The insignia and emblems of several allied nations and the various American forces appear on the equipment.

This is the scene at the property disposal yard at Ho Nai—possibly the world's largest salvage yard. It is 115 acres crammed with 20,000 to 30,000 tons of equipment that has reached the apparent end of its usefulness to the Army.

The jeep, the truck, the armored personnel carrier (APC) that plied the roads, swamps and hill country of Vietnam, now economically beyond repair, lie waiting in the yard for civilian contractors buying scrap metal or old tires.

The Ho Nai yard is the end of the line for a great many items that once saw service in the war. And by the time a jeep or an APC or a wall locker or a gun barrel reaches Ho Nai, there is no doubt that the item has no further value to the Army.

You won't find a workable generator on any of the jeeps in the pile of vehicles, nor many other parts. The equipment that winds up in the property disposal yard has been checked and double checked to insure that nothing usable is not returned to service.

The yard is the disposal part of the retrograde and disposal program operated by the Army's Saigon Support Command.

And it is the retrograde and disposal program that insures that anything worth saving or repairing is removed from damaged equipment received from the field.

A principal part of the retrograde operation is the "Closed Loop" support program, which is designed to keep a constant flow of critical items going to the men who need them and a counter-flow of damaged but economically repairable priority items on their way to repair shops in the United States, Japan, Okinawa and Taiwan.

"Closed Loop" has a list of more than 580 critical or short-supply items, ranging from engines and generators to APCs. As soon as these items are damaged, they are shipped by the field unit to the Long Binh Depot. Here, they are inspected to determine whether it is economical to repair them. If the inspector at the depot decides that it is worthwhile to send the item off for repairs, it is given a steam cleaning or scrubbing to make it cleaner than it probably has ever been since it arrived in Vietnam, in order to meet requirements set up by the Army and health departments of the countries in which the repair shops are located.

Finally, if the item is small, say an engine, it is packaged for shipment. Larger items, such as trucks and APCs, are loaded "as is" on trucks. The equipment is then taken to Newport, where it is loaded on ships for transport to the repair shops. Critical smaller items are flown to the shops.

"Closed Loop" items move quickly through the retrograde process, sometimes in a matter of hours, usually in seven to 10 days. But, with a few exceptions, all other equipment that is found to be repairable also goes through the retrograde process and finds its way to out-of-country repair shops.

The exceptions to automatic retrograding are items such as jeeps, whose shipping and repair costs would exceed their value. However, the fact that jeeps are not sent back for repairs does not mean that they are automatically tossed on the Ho Nai scrap heap.

Soon after they have been brought to the Long Binh Depot, the jeeps and other items not shipped out of country are placed in a cannibalization point. Here, any authorized unit in the III or IV Corps Tactical Zones, having been unable to obtain a replacement item through normal supply channels, may strip the needed part from one of the vehicles.

Those vehicles that are not to be retrograded are left in the cannibalization point for about a week and then, usually far lighter than when they arrived, the vehicles are taken to the disassembly point, where last year 2,411 vehicles were taken apart to save valuable automotive parts. If necessary, the parts are repaired in-country or sent to out-of-country repair shops.

It is only after every economically repairable or immediately usable part has been taken from the vehicles that whatever is left is trucked up to the Ho Nai yard.

The retrograde program was begun in mid-1967, when adequate port facilities became available in Vietnam. Prior to that time, the only means of getting equipment back to be repaired would have been by air, a costly operation in comparison with the amount of equipment that could be circulated.

Since the retrograde program began, the monthly tonnage total has been steadily increasing. The January schedule for the Saigon Support Command was nearly 20,000 tons of material to be shipped.

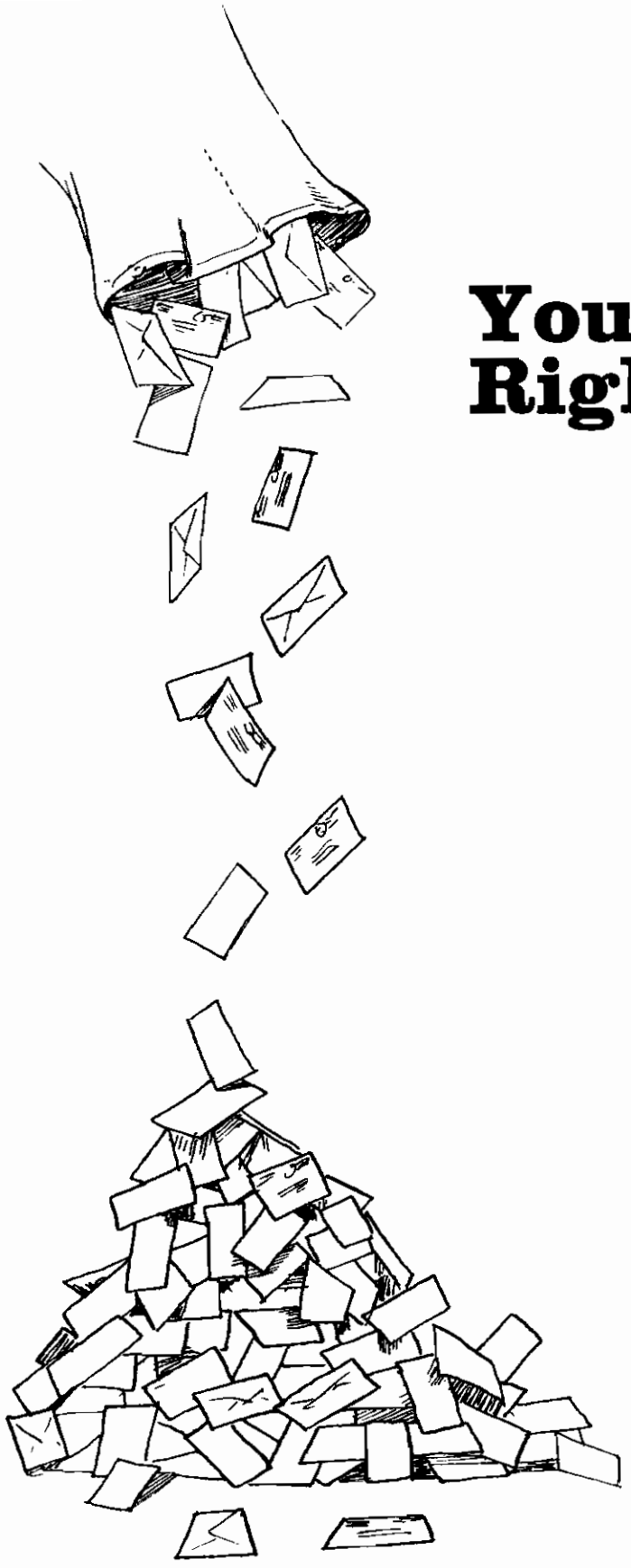
It is difficult to put a dollar figure on the savings that result from the "Closed Loop" program, which accounts for an estimated 80 to 85 per cent of the retrograding that is conducted by the Saigon Support Command, or through the general retrograding of non-critical but repairable items. The retrograde people talk in terms of the number of tons of equipment they handle, rather than the financial savings involved. But it is obvious that if you can repair a $200,000 item for $100,000, you are saving $100,000 minus scrap value by repairing it rather than buying a new one.

The dollar-consciousness comes in at the property disposal yard. After the equipment has been brought there for sale, much of it will be purchased by civilian contractors at scrap value. In one recent month, 10,948 tons of scrap were sold for $67,160 to contractors from the United States as well as from throughout Southeast Asia. During that month, damaged equipment once valued at $6,514,536 was received at the yard.

Buying through bidding, purchasers insure that there is a constant turnover in the disposal yard. And in addition to scrap sales, items are re-issued from the yard for purposes other than their original uses.

The retrograde and disposal procedures are unique in that the Army has never in a previous war had such a well organized system for the recovery, repair and return of vital equipment for a second, third or even fourth tour. Nor has there been an integrated disposal system that provided benefit to the Army through payment for scrap material while at the same time cleaning up the battlefields. ▲

Men affix crane cables to an APC which will be transported to the Newport docks (left). Below, they unload tires from a truck bed at the yard. Bulk characterizes even the chains at the world's largest salvage yard (bottom).



Your Right to Write

By SFC Carl Martin
UpTight Managing Editor

Editor's Note: United States Army Vietnam and subordinate units last year answered about 10,000 White House, Congressional and Department of the Army queries. Supplying accurate information to these queries consumed countless hours of research and preparation. Many of those hours were wasted. More often than not an individual can obtain information or a solution to his problem through his unit rather than writing to someone in Washington. And, he can obtain what he wants more quickly. There are, however, situations that warrant contacting your representative in government on an agency at DA. These situations should be dealt with accordingly in a mature manner. But, if you want a fast answer to a problem your local unit is often the best source of information.

Next time you lick the flap of an envelope to send a letter home, ponder the postal problems of the Department of the Army.

Letters? Correspondence? The DA gets its share. About 4.2 million pieces of mail a month is the current average.

The majority is official mail that deals with Army business from units and individuals in the field. Some are not strictly official, nor can they be categorized as unofficial. They may be informal letters that require an official reply from a DA staff agency. Nearly all of these "unofficial-official" letters are from men who are seeking answers to personal problems or information about policy at their unit.

The DA experts who prepare replies to this type mail agree that a soldier is entitled to an answer to a question or help with a personal problem. They also agree that solutions to most men's problems can be

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found at the individual's unit or local command. Indeed, the local level is often the place where DA experts themselves must go to find the answer.

DA officials describe a typical situation like this: PVT Doe of Company X feels he has a problem. It might be real or imagined. In either event he wants advice on how to solve his problem. Instead of checking at the local command, he takes the path so well worn by soldiers over the years—he writes his Congressman. It's a soldier's right to communicate with his elected government representative, as most men are aware. What they don't realize is that very few individuals—whether civilian employees, government officials or others—are familiar enough with the nuts-and-bolts of a military establishment to answer specific questions on its operation.

PVT Doe writes, "Why doesn't the Army issue raincoats to the troops in Vietnam?" The question implies that the Army does not provide gear for protection against wet weather. The Congressman has no answer to "why" but he knows that the Army should supply protective clothing for its troops. There is only one place to go for an accurate answer—the Department of the Army.

DA experts can readily explain that protective clothing and gear is issued to all Army members and is of the best design to help troops do their job. But DA must go a step further. DA must find out why PVT Doe doesn't have a raincoat. Is Doe authorized a raincoat? Or should he have a poncho? The answer to these questions must come from Doe's own unit, where he could have had the answer much more quickly in the first place.

Answering Inquiries. When a Congressional inquiry to DA is based on a soldier's complaint, the case is researched to determine if the complaint is valid and an appropriate reply is made to the Congressman's office. He in turn forwards the information to his constituent. The same procedure applies to all inquiries received from government officials—unless the letter is addressed to the President.

Soldier correspondence addressed to the President is referred to the DA staff agency concerned with the subject of the letter. A reply is developed in the staff agency, and the chief of the activity, or his deputy, generally replies to the individual on behalf of the President. The reply is made directly to the man who writes the White House.

Obviously, all letters referred to DA for reply cannot be answered immediately with a positive solution to a problem or answer to a question. If the case needs research and investigation, an interim reply is made to the soldier advising him that efforts are being made to find the information he wants. If the query concerns policy, a reply is made immediately using information available at the fingertips of the DA experts. More often than not, however, letters ask specific questions or present problems to which DA has no quick answer. In these situations, DA must contact the soldier's unit or organization to find the answer.

If the man writes to DA asking why his supply room does not have a certain item for issue to the troops, DA must contact the commander of the unit to find out why there is a shortage of the item. In many cases, it is found that there is no shortage—or, if so, it is only temporary. By the time a soldier writes DA; DA contacts the unit concerned; the unit replies to DA; and DA answers the soldier's question, the problem has resolved itself.

My Eyes Don't Match. Not all questions put to the Army specialists are answered by regulations or at the unit level. Consider this one. "I want to join the Army but my eyes are not the same color. One is blue and the other is brown. Can I join up? If not, why does the Army discriminate against men like me?" DA informed the man that the color of his eyes would not prevent him from enlisting in the Army.

Then there was the young soldier who asked to be deferred from overseas shipment. He explained that he had "been married for about three years and I'm still not a father." His letter stated that a few months of stateside duty would be appreciated so he and his wife could pursue their goal of parenthood. DA's answer—the needs of the military service come first.

The mail queries received at DA run the gamut from "why wasn't I promoted to PFC?" to "where can I buy a surplus Army tank?" All are answered. And they are answered personally by the experts.

DA officials determine what agency must prepare a reply. Often local commands or units are requested to provide the information.

Much of DCSLOG's (Deputy Chief of Staff, Logistics) mail follows this line: "Where are my household goods? I have been at my new duty station for 45 days now, and I'm still waiting. What happened?" The request for assistance is passed on to the appropriate office and the individual is advised that a tracer has been sent out to find his belongings. Transportation experts say the same thing can be accomplished by the soldier at his new duty station. And it can be done faster.

No Boots. Many letters channeled to DCSLOG pose questions about supply. They ask about everything from "why don't we have more typewriter ribbons?" to "my outfit needs more 2½-ton trucks. Why don't we have them?" One young man wrote, "I have just been drafted. I've been in the Army for almost two weeks and still have no boots or shoes. With all the money the government spends on equipment, why doesn't the Army have enough boots for issue to recruits?" DCSLOG checked into the man's problem and found that boots and shoes were being ordered for the soldier. He had failed to mention that his size

was 18EEE. Since footgear of this size is not regularly stocked in the Army's normal inventory, it is placed on a high-priority requisition when needed. It takes several weeks before the item can be issued to the man needing the equipment.

Another agency that gets a considerable amount of mail is the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel (DCSPER). The lion's share of mail received by DCSPER from men in the field falls into three categories—promotions, assignments, and separations.

Letters concerning promotions usually deal with specific situations rather than policy. Typical is the man who writes: "I am a clerk-typist and appeared before the promotion board in my unit. I came out on top of the recommended promotion list among my contemporaries, but I didn't get the stripe. Why?" Experts at DCSPER have no way of knowing why an individual in a unit in the field is, or is not, promoted. They must go back to the man's unit for an answer. More often than not, DCSPER finds that the man did not describe his situation accurately and could have readily obtained the answer had he asked his commander.

Men requesting special assignments upon return from overseas, present a problem when writing to DCSPER. Most men seem unaware that, whenever possible and as a matter of routine, assignments are made to the area of preference the man indicated long before his date for rotation to the States. Extra effort is made to place Vietnam returnees in the Army area they choose.

Usually, a letter to DA asking for a specific assignment area will result in little more than an explanation of the Army's assignment policy and personnel placement system. If the request is made because of compassionate reasons, research is done to determine if the man's problems warrant a compassionate reassignment. Rarely can DCSPER do anything about a compassionate reassignment that cannot be done at the local level and through proper channels.

Whether the mail goes to TAGO (The Adjutant General), DCSPER, DCSLOG, or any of the other numerous DA staff agencies for reply, it deserves and gets a prompt answer. A colonel, whose office processes thousands of inquiries a week, put it this way: "We are in the business of providing a service for the men in the field when they have no other place to go for advice or help. When a man does all he can at the local level to solve his problems, and cannot get results, it is satisfying if we can be of service to him. We go to the source of the problem and establish the level of responsibility for corrective action. The trouble is," he went on, "most of the letter writers seem to have forgotten one of the first things they learned in the Army."

He was referring, of course, to the necessity for following established channels in the chain of command.

For You! VA Benefits

Two recent "GI Bills" and their subsequent revisions, have extended a wide range of benefits to veterans of military service after January 31, 1955. These "Vietnam Era GI Bills" extend many benefits for the first time to soldiers on active dnty.

• Educational Assistance. For each month a serviceman spends on active duty, the Veterans' Administration will provide assistance for 1½ months of schooling or vocational training, up to a maximum of 48 months. Payments range from $130 a month and up (for full-time study). Payments for part-time study are also available.

• High School Training. Financial assistance for high school training, including refresher courses, is provided in addition to the regular educational entitlement, in order to qualify veterans for admission to an approved institution of higher learning.

• Loan and Loan Guaranty Benefits. The VA will guarantee loans made by a veteran from a private lending institution to purchase, alter, repair or improve homes; to purchase farms, farm real estate or equipment; or to improve, alter or repair farmhouses or other farm buildings. Under certain circumstances the VA is authorized to make direct loans for these purposes.

• Disability Compensation. The VA pays compensation to veterans who are disabled by injury or disease while on active duty and in line of duty. The monthly payments, depending on the extent of the disability, may run as high as $400. In special cases, the payments may be extended as high as $950 per mouth.

• Medical and Dental Care. The VA provides hospital or outpatient care for veterans with service-connected medical conditions. Dental care is provided to correct conditions which are service-connected or which existed, but were not corrected while the veteran was on active duty.

• Civil Service Preference. Veterans receive additional points on the Civil Service examinations, which are the basis for awarding federal employment. And, when a veteran and a non-veteran have equal scores on an examination, the veteran is given preference.

These are just some of the many benefits available to veterans of service in the Vietnam era. Complete details may be obtained by writing any Veterans' Administration office. In addition, all servicemen receive a personal interview with a VA representative as part of their ETS processing.

A Clean Sweep

By SFC Wilfred Gilleau
82nd Abn Bde IO

A bottle of salt tablets, a towel draped around the neck and a half dozen canteens of water help the infantryman combat the over-bearing heat of the countryside during the dry season. But it's not just the sun or the dust that may get him down.

The men of the 3rd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division were grousing as they moved across the parched terrain toward the area they were to check out. "Last night we set up an ambush, stayed in position all night and nothing happened." the squad leader, Sergeant Kenneth Grada, muttered to himself. "Then as soon as we get back to camp Charlie starts moving around out there." The other men in the squad were thinking the same thing.

It had all started earlier in the morning when the squad was called in for a briefing by First Lieutenant John Kane, their platoon leader, who told them what had been reported after they had returned from their fruitless ambush. The radar had detected human movement, aud there were no "friendlies" in the area.

"Take your squad out, sergeant, and sweep the area," the lieutenant said. "See just what's going on out there. Maybe Charlie was just passing through. He might have been probing the base camp perimeter, or he might have been hiding something for future operations. I want the answers."

Thus another daily sweep was in progress. Sergeant Grada warned his men for the hundredth time to be especially watchfull for any indications of mines or booby traps. Metallic minesweepers were selected for the operation because of their sensitivity and ability to disregard routine foreign matter. TNT, fuses and C-4 explosive--the required material for blowing mines and booby traps in place—were safely tucked away in the squad leader's rucksack.

The men knew this trail backwards, forward and sideways. They could have moved along the path in their sleep. Yet each had his eyes wide open, watching for any sign of enemy activity in the area since the last patrol.

Suddenly, without warning the point man, Specialist 4 Larry Carulla, gave the signal: "Freeze!" Something by the trail just didn't look right, something that hadn't been there when he passed through yesterday.

Cautiously moving forward, Specialist Carulla spied a fine trip-wire stretched taut across the path. Sergeant Grada moved up to check it out.

Carefully inspecting the wire without touching it, he traced it to its source: a well-disguised depression in the ground. With flank security provided, he gently began probing the ground with his bayonet. Soon he struck a metal object. As he deftly removed the dirt and small bushes, the fins of an 82 mm mortar shell came into view.

Rather than attempt to disarm the boobytrapped shell, he decided to blow it in place. Quickly, but with expertise gained from similar situations, he applied a small charge of TNT to the enemy round.

The men found cover a safe distance away. The sergeant detonated the charge, all that remained of the once deadly trap was a smoldering crater. Rubber trees nearby were bleeding from hits by flying shrapnel. The men were glad the point main had stayed alert; otherwise they may have been doing the bleeding.

The infantrymen went back on the trail and continued the sweep. The mine sweeping team was rotated to give the first operators a rest from the steady hum of the mine detectors. The hum varies in frequency when metal is detected, but prolonged exposure reduces a man's sensitivity to sound changes.

Further down the trail the soldiers noticed some footprints that had not been made by American combat boots. Broken foliage also indicated that the trail had been traversed by several people.

As the men crossed a road on their way back to camp, Specialist 4 George Koehler's mine sweeper went wild. The road looked innocent enough, but as Specialist Koehler pinpointed the spot and began probing with his bayonet, he uncovered a 20-pound land mine. With security posted, he and Specialist 4 Donald Woosley attached a grenade and blew it in place.

After returning to camp the men mopped their brows and reported their findings to the platoon leader. They had done their work well, having foiled two of Charlie's death-dealing traps for the unwary. Sergeant Grada reflected that it might be awhile before he complained again of lack of excitement. The other men were thinking the same thing. ▲

Soldiers with metal detectors uncover a land mine at the side of a road (top). Infantrymen walk in a column during a sweep (left). Soldier kneels for a closer look at the underbrush (above).

THE BIG GUNS

By MAJ David L. Stanley
UpTight Editor-in-Chief

Photos by MAJ Donald Blake
USARV-IO Photo Chief

YOU know the blasted thing is going to go off. You know when. In spite of that, when it does, you bounce. So does the earth around you. CAR ...RUMP! The sound pierces from ear to ear!

Another 174 to 200 pounds of high explosive is on the way to disrupt Charlie's day...or night. The dust settles for 20 yards around the 175 mm gun—or an 8-inch howitzer—and the gunbunnies hustle up the next round for firing.

For sheer, brute firepower, there's no weapon quite

Belching flame and smoke, a 175 mm gun sends a round on the way. Big gun firing is controlled by computer—called FADAC—in the fire direction control center (inset).





An eight inch howitzer is loaded by Corporal Roy Melton's crew, Battery C, 7th Battalion, 8th Artillery—the Automatic Eighth.

like the Army's 175 mm guns or 8-inch howitzers. Firing their biggest charge—three bags of powder standing nearly as tall as a man—the gunner will yank the lanyard from 50-feet away from the weapon. The 175 sends a round almost 30 miles out to hit a target.

Explained Captain Jesse Marsano, "The 175 has the range, but for accuracy, the 8-incher is the greatest. We don't know why its so good, but it will put round after round into practically the same hole if need be." Veteran artillerymen are also at a loss to explain why the weapon should be so accurate.

The lean, intense captain, a veteran of 26-months in Vietnam, commands Battery C, 7th Battalion, 8th Artillery. "It is so good," he continued, "that in one case when we had to help out some friendlies that were about to be overrun by the Viet Cong, we were able to fire within 40-yards of the defensive bunkers in which the allies were protected. Charlie never got to the bunkers."

The battery of the "Automatic Eighth" is just one of several composite gun units, able in a matter of a couple of hours to convert from an all 175 mm configuration to all 8-inch howitzers—or any combination in between.

"This helps us confuse Charlie," Captain Marsano explained. "We're pretty mobile—in fact we were traveling 80 miles a day for a while. But we might travel with our self-propelled units configured as 8 inchers. Charlie knows the range to the milimeter, so he may stay just out of 8 inch range. But we change to 175 mm tubes after arriving out our destination. Then we can hit him easily when he least suspects."

The big guns have been slugging it out with North Vietnamese artillery and Viet Cong rockets for some time. The guns move often, when they need to. Charlie battery has been moved from the Delta to Bear Cat to Bien Hoa within a matter of weeks. Other units, such as Charlie battery, 5th Battalion, 22nd Artillery, moved from Dak To to Kontum to a firebase near the Cambodian border in a few months.

Corporal Roy Melton, a crew chief in Captain Marsano's outfit, typified the pride in his unit. "We can get our gun ready to fire in well under a minute, once we know there's a mission. But because of firing restrictions, we might not be able to go as soon as we're ready."

Those restrictions? A friendly "spooky" gunship flying in an area which may be hazardous if the guns

The sun sets, but the gun crews continue their work of shaking up Charlie.

spoke. Safety restrictions, to see that friendly forces are clear of an area in which the big guns' shells will impact.

"The key word is safety," says Captain Marsano. "This outfit has fired 55,000 rounds without an incident, and it is simply because we adhere to strict safety standards."

Information fed from the Fire Direction Center to the guns is provided by one set of personnel, repeated back by others, thus insuring coordinates are clearly understood, and that no one man makes an error. Even the FADAC—the computer that provides fantastically accurate firing data—is double checked, as men manually plot firing missions. (See "Let FADAC Do It!", UpTight, Autumn 1968.)

"Every little thing has a bearing on safety. Ear plugs are nice, for example," said the battery commander. "But our gunners don't wear them when working the guns. The plugs are a hazard to hearing vital instructions. When the gun is going to fire the gunbunnies cover their ears instead."

Gunbunnies are the canoneers.

There's a lot of talk between gun crews about who's doing the better work...so much, that in many gun units the competition is played down. Such is the case in Charlie battery.

"Sure competition is good, but it might not be safe, and therein is the problem," Captain Marsano explained. "That little extra effort to get more speed might make that numeral 7 into a 9—and that spells wrong target. Or short cuts in preparing powder charges can cause problems. So safety is our big 'thing'."

The gunners look at it another way, too.

"We're part of team, and we can work together till we're doin' it just right," said one of Corporal Melton's crew. "The worst thing that can happen is one of us being moved to another battery of smaller guns, but its just about as bad to have to switch gun crews or platoons. But working with the guys you know helps you realize the need for doing things right."

Its just another way of being safe.

And so, the big guns speak out regularly—on intelligence firing missions, or on time-on-target firings. But when they speak, it is with authority: CAR...RUMP!

"Shot!" hollers the gunner. The hustle to put out the next round begins. ▲

Explosive Ordnance Disposal Badge

The Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Specialist Badge is awarded to those officers, warrant officers and enlisted personnel who have successfully completed the prescribed basic EOD course of instruction and who are assigned to EOD duty. The Explosive Ordnance Disposal Supervisor Badge is awarded to officers, warrant officers and non-commissioned officers in grade E-6 and above who have 18 months cumulative service in an EOD supervisory position. Noncommissioned officers must have been rated excellent in character and efficiency when recommended for the award. (Provisions of AR 672-5-1 apply.)

EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE DISPOSAL BADGE
(SUPERVISOR)

EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE DISPOSAL BADGE
(SPECIALIST)

Major Unit Locations

Battle Report— a quarterly summary of major unit actions

The thunder of rockets and mortars shattered the final hours of a Communist ceasefire period toward the end of February, marking the first broad enemy offensive of the new year.

More than 100 cities and military facilities in South Vietnam came under Communist attack but American forces quickly repelled and routed the attackers, inflicting heavy enemy casualties.

One major attack was mounted against Long Binh Post, where elements of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, the 720th Military Police Battalion, the 199th Light Infantry Brigade and post personnel killed 131 enemy soldiers. Attacks on 25th Infantry Division camps and fire support bases resulted in 309 enemy dead, while Americal Division soldiers killed 160 in one day's fighting. The 9th Infantry Division killed 109 on the same day.

The new year had got off on a hopeful note with the release of three American soldiers captured during 1968 by the Viet Cong and the escape the day before of Special Forces Major James Rowe, a VC captive since 1963.

Specialist 4 Thomas N. Jones, Specialist 4 James W. Brigham and Private First Class Donald Smith were handed over to a II Field Force, Vietnam team near Tay Ninh City on New Year's Day. Specialist Brigham died later in the month when Walter Reed Army Hospital doctors were unable to cure him of complications from VC surgery for a head wound.

Some of the largest caches of the war were uncovered during December, January and February and sharp fighting resulted as American units sought to stamp out enemy efforts to mount holiday offensives, particularly a repeat of last year's Tet offensive. The largest single rice cache of the war—320 tons—was discovered and subsequently destroyed by 25th Division elements in Tay Ninh Province near the Cambodian border.

I CORPS TACTICAL ZONE

Americal Division units saw a number of sharp engagements, including a pre-Christmas fight six miles southeast of An Hoa. The infantrymen killed 103 NVA and VC. Late in January, division elements set up a cordon about seven miles northwest of Quang Ngai City, killing 46 NVA soldiers in one day's fighting.

During the quarter, Americal soldiers participated in a number of successful operations. Operation Fayette Canyon, begun Dec. 15, approximately 25 miles northwest of Tam Ky, resulted in 322 enemy deaths against only two U.S. fatalities by mid-February. In Operation Hardin Falls, which began on Dec. 2, the mid-February figures showed 70 enemy dead and 17 suspects detained contrasting to only one U.S. soldier killed.

Operation Russell Beach, an effort by Americal elements, ARVN troops and U.S. Marines, began Jan. 13 and ended Feb. 10, with 139 enemy killed in a cordon on the Batangan Peninsula. Operation Vernon Lake II, begun Nov. 2 west-southwest of Quang Ngai City, had resulted in 385 enemy killed and 143 suspects detained as compared with 23 U.S. soldiers killed.

Americal soldiers also uncovered a number of large munitions and food caches during the quarter and toward the end of December discovered and destroyed more than 350 enemy bunkers northwest of Tam Ky in one day.

Just before Christmas, elements of the division destroyed a 120-hut base camp consisting of a blacksmith shop, classrooms and a hospital ward.

The 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) met generally light and scattered fighting throughout their area of operations during the quarter. In December, a combined cordon operation in the area east of Hue was initiated by the Screaming Eagles and soldiers from the ARVN 1st Infantry Division. By late in the month, 48 enemy had been killed and 48 suspects detained in the move to route members of the Viet Cong infrastructure.

Operation Nevada Eagle continued during the quarter, resulting in more than 3,000 enemy killed by the end of February.

Red Devils of the 1st Brigade, 5th Infantry Division (Mechanized) also encountered generally light and scattered fighting as they maintained a seal along the northern corps area.

II CORPS TACTICAL ZONE

Paratroopers of the 173rd Airborne Brigade ended three operations along South Vietnam's north central coast that accounted for nearly 2,000 VC and NVA deaths. These were Operations Walker, Bolling/Dan Hoa and Cochise Green.

Cochise Green, centered in Binh Dinh Province, began March 31, 1968 and in 10 months the paratroopers killed 929 enemy soldiers, detained 2,062 suspects and confiscated 122.1 tons of rice. Bolling, in the coastal mountains west of Tuy Hoa, began in late October, 1967, and resulted in 715 enemy killed and 2.498 suspects detained. Walker, around An Khe, left 272 enemy killed and 269 suspects detained as brigade forces supplied security for Highway QL 19 between Qui Nhon and the Central Highlands.

Ivymen of the 4th Infantry Division continued to keep the enemy off balance in light and scattered action during the quarter.

The infantrymen also turned up a number of food and munitions caches, principally in the areas around Dak To, Duc Pho and on the Dak Payou River.

In the continuing search for the enemy, several cordon operations were conducted by the division elements. In one day's action, 74 suspects were detained

and 24 Hoi Chanhs received.

III CORPS TACTICAL ZONE

Striking hard and often, Skytroopers of the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) made their III Corps area of operations a hot-spot for Charlie during the quarter. The infantrymen scored impressive kill totals, capped by one of the largest munitions cache discoveries in the war. And, after robbing the enemy of his munitions, they turned around and took his food from him—in huge quantities.

Division elements were credited with finding one of the largest munitions caches of the war when they discovered a 30-ton cache in a bunker complex 14 miles southwest of Katum in the third week of January.

A little more than a week later, a sweep by other elements 12 miles northeast of Tay Ninh resulted in the discovery of 50.7 tons of rice one day and another 18.5 tons the following day. By the third day, the division's combined rice haul exceeded 100 tons. Not stopping there, division elements swooped down a week later and captured more than 80 tons of rice about 15 miles north of Tay Ninh.

While causing a ration shortage in the enemy ranks, Skytroopers also were cutting down on the number of enemy who would otherwise be answering mess call. Repeated sharp fighting ran up the enemy death toll. Three days of hard, post-Christmas battling began when the crew of a light observation helicopter spotted about 60 NVA soldiers in what appeared to be an outdoor classroom. School ended early and permanently for 31 NVA soldiers, along with 10 other "scholars" killed by Cobra gunship crews in the action 12 miles east of Katum.

Another 41 NVA soldiers were killed in a 4½-hour battle six miles northwest of An Loc when they fought with an element of the 1st Infantry Division under the operational control of the 1st Cavalry Division. The next day, 59 enemy were killed in action against elements of the cavalry 22 miles southwest of Phuoc Vinh.

Tropic Lightning soldiers of the 25th Infantry Division saw heavy fighting during the quarter, with some of their sharpest contacts during the week before Christmas.

Just three days before Christmas, 103 NVA regulars were killed when they tried to overrun a patrol base about nine miles south of Tay Ninh City. After the battle, one officer declared that "in my 26 years of service, I've never seen fighting like that. The enemy used every trick in the book against the patrol base."

A few days earlier, NVA soldiers attempted to ambush a U.S. truck convoy moving from the division's 3rd Brigade base camp at Dau Tieng. The enemy hit the 50-truck convoy four miles south of the camp but the ambush was broken and 73 NVA were killed. Still in the week before Christmas, a 7½-hour battle three miles northwest of Cu Chi resulted in 30 enemy soldiers killed.

Tropic Lightning soldiers plowed through a longtime enemy stronghold nine miles northeast of Go Dau Ha during the third week in January, killing 54 enemy soldiers in two days.

Division elements during the quarter also grabbed a number of large munitions and food caches, including a sizeable cache 11 miles northeast of Go Dau Ha and a regimental-size enemy base camp with heavily reinforced bunkers three miles northwest of Dau Tieng.

And then there was the cache that contained 100 loaves of bread, three sandbags of rice, 20 cans of fish, two packages of pastry, five bundles of rice paper, a bag of mixed candies, a bag of mixed nuts, two cucum-

Infantrymen walk through dense vegetation (above). Riflemen assault from helicopter (right).

bers, five bags of fish, VC and civilian clothing and one unplucked chicken.

Action for the Big Red One soldiers of the 1st Infantry Division was characterized by small, sharp scattered actions throughout the division's area of operations. The infantrymen pounced on a number of enemy bunker complexes and uncovered several caches during the quarter.

The quarter opened with fierce fighting when an estimated enemy battalion tried to overrun a division element's night defensive position seven miles west-southwest of Ben Cat.

The 2½-hour battle, which began shortly after 3 a.m., resulted in 44 NVA regulars killed and the attack repelled.

Infantrymen and troopers of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, under the operational control of the 1st Infantry Division, continued to ferret out the enemy, and in mid-January it was reported that elements of the cavalry, in conjunction with Vietnamese units, confirmed that 27 persons detained in a village seal operation four miles southeast of Lai Khe were members of the VC political and military structure.

In mid-December, the infantrymen announced that they had inaugurated a special series of operations near Di An to keep rice in the hands of the Vietnamese farmers who raised it—and away from the Viet Cong.

Toward the end of January and again in the second week of February, the infantrymen smashed large enemy base camps around Lai Khe.

Redcatchers of the 199th Light Infantry Brigade kept pressure on the enemy during the quarter, conducting a number of cordon operations around Saigon.

During the first week of February, Redcatchers teamed up with ARVN rangers, Regional Force companies and National Police units to seal off a 9,000-square-meter area eight miles south of the capital. The cordon was designed to identify and apprehend the VC infrastructure and was one of the largest combined cordons ever undertaken by the brigade.

In an earlier cordon, Redcatchers and elements of the 9th Infantry Division killed 42 enemy and captured numerous weapons and munitions nine miles north of Tan An over a three-day period.

Operating south and southwest of Saigon, brigade infantrymen turned up numerous caches during the quarter and destroyed a number of enemy bunkers and base camps.

Troopers of the 3rd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division during the quarter continued operations around Saigon, sinking a quantity of sampans and discovering munitions and food caches, along with several bunker complexes.

IV CORPS TACTICAL ZONE

Old Reliables of the 9th Infantry Division continued to inflict heavy casualties among the Viet Cong in the Mekong Delta during the quarter and also uncovered numerous food and arms caches.

January proved to be a month of tough fighting for the infantrymen and supporting gunships. Ending the first week of the month, elements of the division, who were air-assaulted into an area of VC concentration nine miles southeast of Cao Lanh, hit an enemy base camp. The two-day operation resulted in 54 enemy killed.

The Plain of Reeds proved a good hunting ground for the division on several occasions. In the last week of January, infantrymen teamed up with artillerymen and gunship crews to kill 78 enemy in fighting centered nine miles northwest of Tan An. One element of the division killed 25 enemy in a night-long fight that began immediately after their insertion into the area. Less than a week later, other elements hit the enemy 10 miles north of Tan An, killing 50 in two days of fighting.

Near the end February, infantrymen discovered a large munitions cache along the Bobo Canal in the Plain of Reeds, seven miles west of Ben Luc. Part of the cache was hidden in the canal and the rest on nearby grassland. "It took the whole platoon to carry it," reported one infantryman.

Another large munitions cache was found 12 miles northwest of Tan An on the Plain of Reeds by elements of the division, while early in December still another large munitions cache had been uncovered 11 miles northwest of Tan An.

Gunship crews of the 1st Aviation Brigade operating in the Mekong Delta got their share of enemy kills during the quarter as they flew in support of the 9th Division and ARVN troops. The gunship crews killed 37 enemy one day while supporting ARVN infantry in a battle nine miles west of Cai Cai in mid-February. In January, the total enemy kills for one day of operations was 110 VC dead, while another day's work in December resulted in 91 enemy structures destroyed.▲

What it's like on the Reaction Force

CLERKS ON THE PERIMETER!

By SP5 Peter C. Bedard
USARV Staff Writer

A pair of ears perk up, hoping they didn't hear the alert siren. A pair of eyes glance nervously around the hootch, and the brain confirms the siren as fact.

Bare feet drop into unlaced boots. Flak jackets are juggled around shoulders on the dead run. At the arms room, the line forms, and quickly and smoothly 48 men secure M14s and ammo.

"Fall in!" Then out onto the truck.

Out into the darkness and dampness. Rumble, sway, lurch, stop.

Off the truck, doubletime, an orderly doubletime, to prearranged positions between the bunkers on a section of the perimeter. "Step it up, troop."

Perhaps this is the night Charlie will be out there. So you hustle. You never ran so hard in your life—even in basic. And never before while carrying two cases of ammo and an M14—an M60 if you were one of the "really lucky" ones.

In the dark, you stumble over loose gravel, slosh through goo. (Are there really snakes out here?) Panting. How much farther??? (Gotta stop smoking!)

Ah, there it is: your position. Catch your breath and scan the area. (Next time, try to get into the second squad. They don't have so far to run).

To your left, there's the squad leader. Up front in a bunker: the lieutenant, intent. Can't see what he's doing.

Whoosh. Bright.??? Ah, flare. This must be the real thing, all right.

God, it's hot.

Naw, nobody out there tonight after all—except the monkeys. And the (slap) mosquitoes.

The all clear sounds (at last!). Trudge back to the truck. Climb. (Funny, it was so much easier on the way out.) Return. Dismount. It's over—for a while.

* * *

Reaction force is never really over. Every night, as long as the enemy is somewhere out there, clerks and comptrollers, artists and admin NCOs will be infantrymen-on-call, to protect U.S. base camps throughout Vietnam.

During the day, they're "desk soldiers" or "rear echelon types." But the desks and the rears have to be protected, too. The base camps, the operations centers, the supply depots, are as vital to the infantrymen at the front as they are to those who live and work almost entirely within their confines.

And their first line of defense is the reaction force.

The theory behind having a reaction force is quite logical. "On any perimeter-type defense," said Colonel Edmund Castle, former commander of Long Binh Post, "you're thin. You can't have every inch of perimeter fully manned every minute of the time." It would take a division-sized unit—some 13,000 men—to post a soldier at every five meter interval along Long Binh Post's 41.8 miles of perimeter. "But with a reaction force, you have a mobile reserve, ready to counter an attack at any point on the perimeter."

The job of the reaction force is to bolster the defense, hold the line, until the attack is broken, or further reinforcements arrive. The force is ready, too, to take up pursuit of the enemy beyond the barbed wire, should the chance arise.

Though their primary duties lie in other fields, the men of reaction force know their jobs as infantrymen. Some have had previous combat experience. All have been through basic combat training. All have had a week of training with an infantry unit in Vietnam before assuming possession of their desks. Weekly training periods emphasize the points which will help the individual soldier in the event of an attack. And numerous practice alerts are held—unannounced—to keep the men on their toes.

How well do these "front-line backup men" perform? Colonel Castle, who has led several reaction force patrols beyond the boundaries of Long Binh Post, will tell you, "You couldn't ask for anything better. Sure, there are jitters and nervousness among the newer men. But we usually have along a few combat veterans, and they help to calm and guide the novices. And the novices learn quickly."

How would Colonel Castle compare these part-time infantrymen with their full-time counterparts? "You couldn't do that without maligning one group or the other. If you said the clerks fought better than the infantryman, you'd be slighting the professional. But if you said the clerks didn't measure up...well, that wouldn't be the truth, either. My view is this: The American serviceman is first and foremost a soldier. Clerk or rifleman—whatever his primary duty—when the chips are down, he'll do the job, and do it well." ▲