

THE AIR CAVALRY DIVISION

SPRING 1969



THE POINTMAN





The time comes for all of us to say good-by, to take up other duties, to face new challenges, and, happily, to return to our loved ones. After two years on this tour, my time has come, and as I take leave of the **1st Air Cavalry Division**, I do so with extremely deep emotions. It would be foolish to say that I'm not happy to be returning to my family, just as I know so many of the men of this Division look forward to reunions with their loved ones back home. But, I also feel a great sense of loss in leaving the company of the finest fighting men on the face of the earth—my teammates on the **FIRST TEAM**.

Every one of us, from the moment he sews on that big black and yellow patch, becomes a part of this great Division's history and tradition. It is a history of tough fighting in three wars, of revolutionizing warfare by combining cavalry tactics with the helicopter; and it is a tradition of being the best—being on the **FIRST TEAM**.

To accept the colors and the responsibility of command of this Division was to take a privileged place in my profession. To pass the colors on, after serving with the men of the **1st Air Cavalry Division** in battle in three corps tactical zones is to leave with the conviction that they are the finest soldiers, the bravest men, and the most inspiring companions with whom I have ever served.

Tomorrow will be a new chapter in the Cav's history. There will be new faces and new names, and our tradition will live on and grow stronger. When men leave this Division, good men—even better men—have a way of replacing them.

I'm proud to have been a Skytrooper! My deep thanks to you for your loyal support and your brilliant performance.

I salute the officers and men of the **FIRST TEAM** and ask God's continued blessings on you and your great outfit.

Geo Forsythe

GEORGE I. FORSYTHE
Major General, USA
Commanding

FAREWELL MESSAGES

(Ed. Note. SGT Donald Howell is a 'US' who was recently promoted to sergeant. He is assigned to Company A, 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry.)

The end of the long year is finally here. Home is only a few days off. Behind me lay many memories, experiences, and buddies. The memories stretch from the mountains near Laos, to the sandy beaches near Quang Tri, to the Move South.

The mountains proved to be a challenge and breaking brush for days was as common as finding booby traps in the 'sands.' The move south was a new experience and the situation different, as the NVA moved in larger groups.

It was a long, hard year. New Skytroopers will find the going hard at first but soon they will learn to eat C's, sleep on the ground, and walk point. A lot of help and information will be supplied by the older Skytroopers, but experience is the best teacher.

Being out in the boonies you meet a lot of buddies. You eat, sleep, and fight with them. As always, a promise is made to meet each other back in the 'World.'

The habits I have picked up might be a little hard to break, but that is normal. I'm sure everyone will realize my situation.

Now I must bid farewell to everyone I have been associated with. I will miss my pals, but someday I know we will meet again. I am grateful to the ones who have taught me and I hope that I have been a good teacher. I wish everyone good luck and hope they will weigh every situation with an equal amount of seriousness.

SEE YOU BACK IN THE WORLD!

Donald S. Howell

Donald S. Howell
SGT
1st Bn., 7th Cav



The Air Cavalry Division



Volume 2, Number 1

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CONTENTS

COMBAT ASSAULT

page 2

OPERATION IN III CORPS

page 9

NAVCAV

page 17

15TH MEDICAL BATTALION

page 19

THE POINTMAN

page 21

FORWARD AIR CONTROLLERS

page 29

2ND BATTALION, 20TH ARTILLERY

page 31

DIVISION TRAINING CENTER

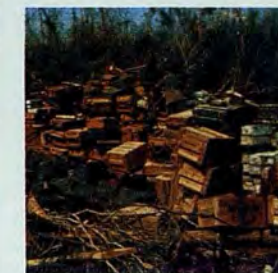
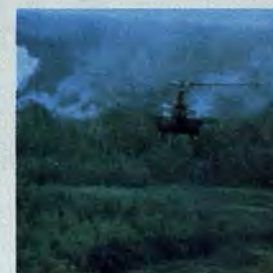
page 34

A GUIDE TO R&R

page 38

... In This Edition ...

The one operation which depicts every facet of the **FIRST TEAM** and brings out its greatest attributes is the combat assault. Correspondent **Phil Manger** and photographer **Paul Romine** dug into the subject and came up with the story of a combat assault. In gathering the material for the story both men had a single assignment for almost two weeks: making combat assaults. The results of their efforts start on page 2.



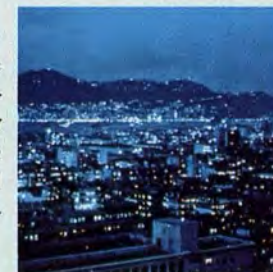
Correspondent **Michael Harris** has poured over the numerous news stories on the **FIRST TEAM** since its arrival in the III Corps Tactical Zone in November. Since that time Skytroopers of the Division continue to build an impressive and enviable record against the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army troops. For his report on the Operations in III Corps turn to page 9.

One of the most respected positions any Skytrooper in the Division can hold is that of the pointman for his unit. Correspondent **Gary Quillen** has made many patrols during his tour in Vietnam and spoken with numerous pointmen since joining the **FIRST TEAM**. Once again combat illustrators **Larry Collins** and **Ronald Doss** did an outstanding job in capturing the tempo of the patrol and illustrating it. The team's work begins on page 21.



Bringing "max" on Charlie is a job of every soldier in Vietnam, but for the men of the 2nd Battalion, 20th Artillery (ARA) this has a special meaning. The men of "Blue Max" are part of the world's only aerial rocket artillery battalion, and perform their missions with utmost skill and professionalism. Correspondent **Al Persons** spent time with this unique unit. His report on how they bring "max" on Charlie begins on page 35.

In the last edition, the magazine's roving correspondents and photographers paraded some of their more enjoyable experiences before the members of the division as they told of their R&R spots. This story proved so popular that we did a second story, this time exploring the beauties of Hong Kong, Taipei, and Bangkok. To learn a little about these Rest and Recuperation havens, turn to page 42.



COMMAND GROUP: MG George I. Forsythe, Commanding General; BG William E. Shedd, Assistant Division Commander (Operations); BG Frank Meszar, Assistant Division Commander (Logistics); MAJ J. D. Coleman, Information Officer; CPT JAMES RYAN, Press Officer.

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Combat Assault

The Cav's Thing

By Sp-4 Phil Manger

The men of the 1st Battalion 12th Cavalry arose reluctantly to the grey half-light of a cloudy February dawn. As they deflated air mattresses and rolled up poncho liners, the Company D commander, Captain James W. Speed, moved among them, giving last-minute instructions to his platoon leaders.

Not that they needed them, but CPT Speed liked to be sure. The briefing last night had been short and to the point. "We're going to make a Charlie Alpha (combat assault) here," he had said, aiming the beam of his flashlight at a point on the map just north of the junction of the Song Be and Dong Nai rivers. The platoon leaders gathered in the dark tent had closed into a circle for a better look.

CPT Speed went on, "We'll be the assault company, and secure the LZ for Hard Steel which is coming in behind us. One platoon to the north, another to the south. The assault platoon will secure the small hilltop northeast of the LZ, and the mortar platoon and CP (command post) will be inside the circle."

"Who led the last CA?" he asked suddenly.

"We did, sir," said a man with a drooping mustache.



A final check of your gear must be made before lifting off.

"We" was one-six or the first platoon, led by First Lieutenant Todd Ruedisili. The three rifle platoons of Company D take turns as the point platoon on combat assaults.

"Okay, then. Two-six (the acting second platoon leader), you'll be leading the assault." "Two-six," a career soldier who is better known as Sergeant First Class Edward Anderson, nodded. "You'll move immediately to the hilltop and secure it. Three-six (third platoon leader) will take the north side

of the perimeter, and one-six, who will run the PZ (Pick-up Zone) and come in on the last lift, will secure the south side of the perimeter."

CPT Speed continued, "It's a pretty good-sized LZ. It's bounded on the east by the Song Be and on the west by the jungle. We should easily be able to get ten ships onto it. Any questions?"

There were no questions.

Now, as he walked among the men, conferring with a platoon leader here, exhorting a man to hurry it up there, he knew he had done everything he had to do.

After a hasty breakfast and a last-minute check of equipment, the company saddled up and began to move to its assigned position on the PZ, a sandy stretch of ground about 100 meters from its hastily-erected tent city on the east side of the Bien Hoa perimeter.

For a brief instant a crimson sun winked through the clouds that hung over the still-burning lights of Long Binh a few miles to the south. Then the sun was gone and the sky reverted to a dark, ominous grey that held the promise of rain.

Quickly the company arranged itself in two broken lines stretching across the sands. At the head of the

The bright morning sun paints a red picture as Skytroopers fly to the landing zone (LZ).



lines, Sergeant Maurice McLettie, leader of the point squad, arranged his men into two groups of three which would board the chopper from the right and left sides. It was only SGT McLettie's fifth combat assault, but already he had the mechanics of the CA down pat.

Forty meters behind SGT McLettie's men stood the platoon command post. Among those waiting in this group was Sergeant Carlton Walker, who, having extended his tour six months, had been on more combat assaults than anyone in the company. "The last time I counted, I was up to 158," he remarked, "and you know something? I had to argue to get an Air Medal." To new men in the company, apprehensive over making their first CA, SGT Walker's presence was reassuring. As artillery recon sergeant, he had gone in on either the first or second

bird every time.

"It did get sticky a couple of times," he admits. "On the last CA I made, my bird got shot down, but we all got out okay."

Soon the lift ships appeared. There were 20 of them, snaking across the sky toward Long Binh. In a few minutes they reappeared, went into the final approach, and came in under the guidance of the black hat, (a ground guide from the 11th Aviation Group), the propwash from their rotor blades sending a hurricane of sand into the faces of the infantrymen who ran for the choppers and scrambled aboard.

In less than 30 seconds, the lift ships were airborne again. It was 0800 as they lifted off the sands and into the dark, grey skies. SGT Walker leaned against the doorjamb of his assault ship, stoically smoking a cigarette.

H-20

It was Hotel Minus Twenty—20 minutes to touchdown on the LZ.

The decision had been made by Major Donald Durr, the battalion S-3.

While the men of Company D were still standing on the PZ, waiting for the lift ships to come in, MAJ Durr was in the Charlie-Charlie (Command and Control helicopter), orbiting 3,000 feet above the LZ.

The grunts waiting on the PZ could not know this. They couldn't know that there was so much more involved than merely climbing onto some Hueys and riding to an LZ. They couldn't visualize the hours of planning, the anxious phone calls, the detailed, meticulous preparations and plans, the careful coordination and the tired, heavy eyes of those who had stayed up all night planning it. They couldn't know that the number of company-sized units directly involved in the as-

sault would easily fill a brigade, that the cost of the equipment used and the ammo fired could easily provide all of them comfortable incomes for the rest of their lives.

A combat assault is a lot more than a helicopter ride. The Charlie-Alpha is the Cav; it is the essence of the First Team—the one single tactic at which the Cav is most proficient and which distinguishes the Cav from every other division in the world. Chicago Tribune correspondent Ridgely Hunt was not exaggerating when he described a Cav CA as "a highly developed and finely orchestrated work of art."

There are only two facets of the CA which the infantryman ever sees: the pickup and the assault. He also sees part of the artillery preparation from the air, but what he sees are puffs of smoke on the ground, not what went into putting those puffs of smoke there. And after two or three CA's, during which he usually feels an eager excitement, he learns to take the assault for granted. He doesn't know what is going on beyond the confines of his heli-



Artillery chews up the area while Skytroopers approach the area.

copter. Not that he needs to. His job is tough enough as it is.

Worrying about the details is the province of men like MAJ Durr, who was now awaiting word from the assault ships. When the crackling voice in his headset told him that the lift ships were ready to pick up the assault element, he looked at his watch and announced that it was Hotel Minus Twenty.

In the doorway of a chopper, the battalion artillery LNO (Liaison Officer), First Lieutenant Donald R. Rieck, looked down at the LZ and gave the word to begin the prep.

The message was relayed to Battery C, 7th Battalion, 8th Artillery in Bien Hoa where Specialist Four W. G. Martin yanked the lanyard on his 175mm gun. The cannon roared, recoiled, and 147 pounds of steel and explosive arched high into the dark skies on a trajectory toward the LZ, 18 kilometers to the northeast.

The flight to the LZ is a cool one before possible hot action.



Martin's counterparts at Phuoc Vinh did the same, and 1LT Rieck, riding in the Charlie-Charlie far above the impact zone, watched the explosion of the rounds. He radioed an adjustment, the information was again relayed, and glowing orange numbers flashed the corrections across the olive drab console of the fire direction control computer.

Back on the gun, Staff Sergeant Rafael Millet made the necessary adjustments, and again Martin yanked the layard. As the round landed, 1LT Rieck studied the cone of smoke from the explosion and decided that it was good.

H-15

It was Hotel Minus Fifteen.

The assault ships lifted off the LZ amid clouds of churned sand. Over the high whine of the engines and the sharp reports made by the rotor blades slapping the air the men could hear the 175 firing the prep. They were watching the cannon, and almost failed to notice the four gunships and two ARA ships which had joined the lift.

The flight leader, Captain Nick L. Johnson, guided his bird out of the PZ. The tin roofs and concertina wire of Bien Hoa dropped away, and he headed north over the dry, brown rice

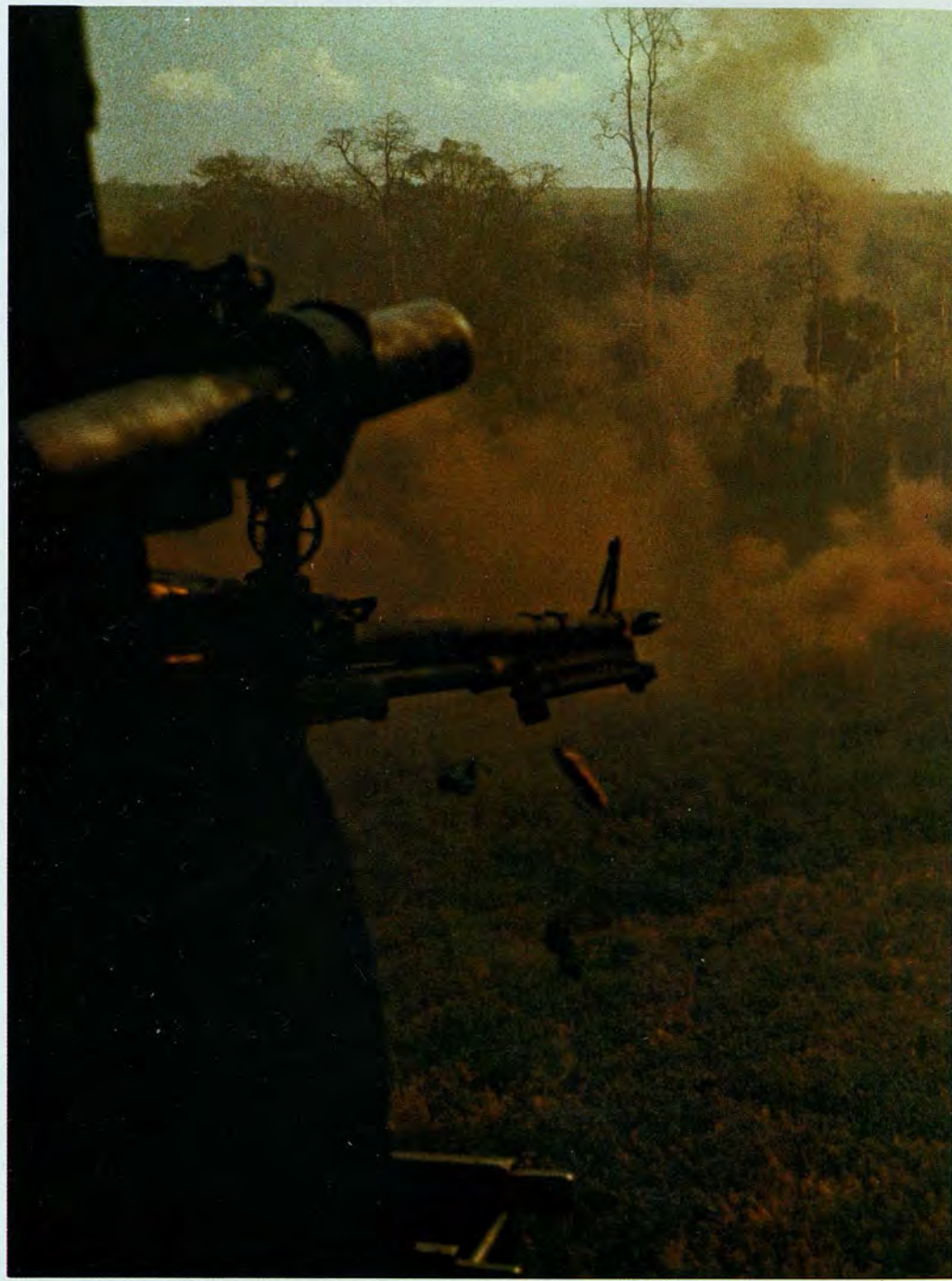


paddies to the Dong Nai River. There he turned right and headed east, the river, deep, dark and green, showing the way.

Far ahead he could see the tiny puffs of smoke dotting the meadow, which at this distance was still virtually indistinguishable from the surrounding jungle. Soon the line of choppers, already broken into two flights of 10, became staggered as every other lift ship pulled out to the right of the line.

When the countdown reached Hotel Minus Ten, the two ARA ships broke off the formation and headed straight for the LZ. The four gunships remained with the lift ships, scurrying about like mother hens protecting their broods.

The lift ships crossed the confluence of the Song Be and Dong Nai Rivers, banked right, and then swung into a leisurely counter-clockwise orbit over



Just before touchdown, the door gunners of the choppers open fire on the possibly hot LZ.



When the chopper gets close to the ground, Skytroopers waste no time as they jump from the skids.



Skytroopers begin to fan out as they continue securing the landing zone.

the rapids of the Dong Nai, a few miles east of the LZ.

Inside the choppers, the blank-faced men of Company D sat in silence. The screaming turbines and the explosive contact of the rotor blades with the air



Skytroopers take time out to examine a captured document.

made conversation impossible. In the doorway of the second ship, SGT Walker still leaned against the door-jamb, smoking his cigarette. The fields, the forest and river 1,000 feet below didn't interest him.

H-5

It was Hotel Minus Five.

Far above the lift ships, 1LT Rieck watched the impact of the artillery rounds.

Finally he saw the rounds signaling the end of the artillery prep, then another. In another minute, he saw the third and final round, a smaller one fired from a 105mm howitzer battery on LZ Mosby which had joined the prep at Hotel Minus Fifteen and had contributed 201 rounds.

It was Hotel Minus One.

The ARA pilots, orbiting nearby, saw it too. This was their signal, and now it was their turn. Leaning forward in a slant toward the ground, the ships dove at the LZ, firing 2.75 inch rockets as they went. About halfway down they pulled out of their dive, climbed again, and came back for a second pass.

H-45 Sec.

It was Hotel Minus Forty-Five Seconds.

While the ARA ships peppered the LZ with rocket fire, the gunships sprayed rocket and minigun fire into the treeline and other likely enemy hiding places. Their mission was not to prep the LZ, but to protect the lift ships, and the best way to accomplish that mission is to make life miserable for anyone crazy enough to pop his head up to take a shot at them. Now they sent a rocket and a burst of minigun fire into virtually every clump of bushes.

It was Hotel Minus Thirty Seconds.



One thing Skytroopers learn is that you catch sleep whenever and wherever you can.

Artillery fire bases are carved out of clearings and Skytroopers are only a radio call away from support.



The first flight of 10 lift ships was now in its final approach. Swinging over the treetops, the choppers had tilted back slightly to slow airspeed, and had spread out. They had come out of their orbit at Hotel Minus Two, and had swung to the south for the approach. Now they approached the LZ, and CPT Johnson in the lead ship could see the grass of the meadow

sliding forward to meet him. Ahead, the explosions from the rockets could easily be seen, and the blast of the explosions sounded uncomfortably close. As he broke out over the LZ, CPT Johnson's door gunners started firing their M-60 machine guns in a continuous burst. In a second the firing was picked up by the doorgunners on every other liftship in the formation. SGT

Walker, standing on the runners of the second bird, ignored the hot brass of expended shells falling against his arm. The cigarette was gone, but the same stoic expression remained on his face as he prepared to jump down to the LZ.

H-15 Sec.

It was Hotel Minus Fifteen Seconds.



(Above) Skytroopers usually spend a long day of "humpin" following a combat assault, but (Top Right) you normally get a few chances to take ten and a tree is a welcome relief for a tired trooper's back. (Bottom Right) Skytroopers walk to the Pickup Zone (PZ) to wait for their ride home.



Three thousand feet above SGT Walker, MAJ Durr glanced at his watch, his map, and then at the 10 helicopters which were almost where all the planning of the last 24 hours had dictated that they should be at 08:20 this morning. He called the flight leader on the radio and told him "okay," and went back to watching. It was Hotel Minus Ten Seconds.

Company D assaulted into an inferno of noise. The combined sounds of the gunships' rockets and miniguns, the ARA ships' rockets, and the assault ships' own M-60s gave the impression of a massive firefight on the LZ. Yet the LZ was empty: not that it really made any difference in the manner of approach—every LZ which is not occupied by friendly troops is assaulted

as if it were crawling with the enemy. As the men stood on the runners, watching the soft green of the meadow rising to meet them, the rockets, miniguns and machine guns were still firing at a steady rate. CPT Johnson, having reached the northern end of the clearing, expertly brought his ship to the ground, almost on top of the last rocket rounds. It



At last the choppers finally arrive and it is time for the ride home after another day.

was only when the first grunt leaped to the ground, jumping before the chopper was fully on the ground, that his own M-60s ceased their firing, and the other gunners in the line followed suit. Just about a second was all the first flight needed to discharge its passengers and lift off again. Leaning

forward in order to gather airspeed, the ships snaked off to the north, gained altitude, and headed back to Bien Hoa.

The two platoons which had come in on the first flight now arranged themselves so as to provide some sort of security for the second flight. SFC Anderson, whose platoon had earlier

been given the mission of occupying the high ground, now maneuvered up the small hill next to the LZ. The men poked in the bushes, looking for possible snipers, and reconnoitered the other side of the hill.

SGT Walker, who had climbed the hill with the second platoon, sat down, leaned back against an anthill, and took out his map, checking it against the terrain below him. Back down on the LZ, the third platoon took up defensive positions on the northern half of the LZ.

Once the two areas were secure, word was sent up to the Charlie-Charlie: the LZ is green, the second flight can come in.

It was, and they did, in much the same manner as the first flight, except this time there was no M-60 machine-gun fire from the choppers. The second 10 lift ships landed, the propwash beating down the grass into saucer-shaped depressions as the grunts leaped to the ground. In a second, these choppers, too, were gone.

In a matter of seconds the first platoon was in position on the southern half of the perimeter and the weapons platoon had set up its 81mm mortars. The LZ was secure and ready for the insertion of the next company.

It was Hotel Plus Two.

The ride home is similar to the ride in, but you are sure that the LZ will be green.

Making Life Miserable

By 1LT Michael Harris

On the evening of Nov. 13, 1968, scouts from the 2nd Brigade were flying their observation choppers over the jungle near the Cambodian border. In the fading light they spotted a group of North Vietnamese soldiers hiding in the trees near LZ Dot, a firebase manned by elements of the 36th ARVN Regiment.

The scouts swooped down with machineguns blazing. More NVA appeared, scattering. "Then," said Warrant Officer William Auten, one of the scout pilots, "we directed artillery in on the location."

The enemy soldiers encountered by the scouts were part of a force estimated at 2,000 men, poised to attack

LZ Dot. Perhaps forced by the discovery to hurry their timetable, the NVA assaulted the firebase before dawn on the 14th. The Vietnamese resisted fiercely and artillery and Air Force bomb strikes ringed the outpost with steel. Decimated, the NVA finally fled leaving 287 dead behind.

When the enemy tried to hit LZ Dot





A new term was introduced into the Skytrooper vocabulary when they arrived in III Corps, NavCav. Utilizing Navy boats, 1st Cav soldiers and choppers hunt for Charlie in a new way.

When a new landing zone is established, members of the 184th Chemical Platoon use flame throwers to assist in clearing fields of fire.



Following a long day's work, Skytroopers return home.



from long range with 120 mm mortars and 107 mm rockets later that day, the airmobile scouts again found them, adjusting artillery fire onto their positions. "The support we received from the 1st Cav was fantastic," said Captain Frederick L. Kuhns, U.S. advisor with the ARVN unit. "We got everything we asked for without hesitation."

This engagement, the first major contribution by the 1st Air Cavalry Division since it left its old area of operations in I Corps and took up positions 50-70 miles northwest of Sai-

gon, demonstrated the ability of an airmobile unit to tactically control great stretches of countryside.

Rather than physically occupy its areas of responsibility in Binh Long, Phuoc Long, Tay Ninh, and Binh Duong Provinces with ground troops—which would have been impossible—the 1st Cav built a string of firebases along a 100-mile stretch near the border. It controlled the space in between with artillery, gunships, and patrols inserted quickly from the air. The success of these tactics was shown by more than 4,000 VC and NVA killed by the Skytroopers during the period Oct. 31 to Apr. 15.

The Skytroopers' denial program was a success, collecting over 800,000 rounds of small arms ammunition and 300 tons of rice.

Remote forest areas previously used by the enemy as bases have been captured. The result of all this has been increased security for Saigon.

The 1st and 25th Infantry Divisions, which had previously patrolled the area, were able to provide denser coverage of areas closer to the capital. Thus, the overall defense posture of II Field Force improved.

The 1st Cav made its initial combat assault in III Corps on Oct. 31. The 3rd Brigade operated from Quan Loi in Binh Long Province, while the 1st Brigade set up a base near the city of Tay Ninh. During the division's rapid move, elements of the 2nd Brigade remained just south of the Demilitarized Zone, fighting on a front miles away, before flying south on Nov. 7 to occupy positions between the other two brigades. The division's over 400 helicopters, which helped make this deployment possible, airlifted men and supplies into the jungle outposts. By Nov. 9 the division had already accounted for 109 enemy dead. Charlie was feeling the pinch.

After the battle at LZ Dot the Skytroopers punished the enemy in heavy fighting throughout November. In the week ending Nov. 30, 402 enemy were killed by 1st Cav elements, Air Force strikes, the 1st Infantry Division's 2nd Bn, 2nd Inf (Mech), the 1st Bn, 11th Armored Cav, and ARVN units. Large bunker complexes stocked with munitions were uncovered in the areas of contract, principally around Loc Ninh and along the Saigon River. Major infiltration routes from Cambodia were revealed by the enemy's desperate attempts to protect them. Using aerial surveillance, ARA, and tube artillery, the 1st Cav disrupted traffic on these routes.

The attrition continued in December: 45 enemy killed by allied units on Dec. 4; 50,000 rounds of ammunition captured on the 8th; 46 more killed on the 9th; 34 on the 10th; and



Slicks descend from above bringing in the second lift of a Combat Assault during an operation in the III Corps Tactical Zone.

Operations with Regional and Popular Forces continued to play a role in the Cav's operation.





42 on the 18th; 18,000 pounds of rice seized on the 21st; and a flurry of action after the 24 hour Christmas stand-down in which 155 VC and NVA lost their lives in three days.

Major Harold M. Carter, former 1st Cav Psychological Operations officer, commented: "Once they have been hit, and hit badly, they are vulnerable to what we have to say. They've seen the Cobras and felt the artillery and B-52 strikes blowing all around them, and they know that they can't just walk in and take over the way they were told by Hanoi." He reported that the number of rallying North Vietnamese soldiers had increased sharply.

With enemy units being driven away from numerous centers of population, the situation improved for pacification programs. For example, the 1st Philippine Civic Affairs Group—Vietnam (PHILCAGV) in Tay Ninh Province repaired the Co Nhi Vien Orphanage with the aid of funds contributed by Skytroopers. The group had taken advantage of relative security to build roads, stock a demonstration farm with livestock, and send mobile dental and medical teams throughout the province.

Also near Tay Ninh, the 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry supported the Ky-Mai-Vien Nursery School's 150 chil-



dren with recreational equipment, books, and repairs to the buildings. A hamlet near Quan Loi attacked by terrorists was rebuilt with the help of 3rd Brigade units. Tin and cement were issued to the inhabitants of 21 houses destroyed in the raid, a medical team treated the wounded, and food, clothing, and blankets were donated by Skytroopers.

In January, military successes continued. During the period Jan. 5-12, 267 enemy were killed by the cavalrymen. One of the largest munitions caches of the war, estimated at 18 tons was found near Tay Ninh by the 5th Battalion, 7th Cavalry on Jan. 21. "Scout birds from Troop C, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry spotted an ammo box on top of what seemed to be a bunker," said Lieutenant Colonel John F. McGraw, the 5th Bn., 7th Cav commander, "and requested that we move in and check the area." The enemy fought for three days to protect the bunker complex but was finally driven off by ARA, multiple Air Force bomb strikes, and artillery. The cache included over 100,000 AK-47 rounds,

35,000 heavy machinegun rounds, more than a ton of explosives, and 643 mortar rounds. "Considering how much time and effort it must have taken to move this much material," said Colonel Conrad L. Stansberry, 2nd Brigade commander, "this find has to be a real setback to the enemy effort."

First Brigade elements moved south into Hau Nghia Province to carry out joint "NavCav" operations with the Navy's River Divisions 553 and 554. Using patrol boats and helicopters, they searched out the Bo Bo Canal network and the Vam Co Dong River, curtailing the enemy's infiltration of men and supplies by water.

In all operations, helicopters—ranging from light observation craft to Flying Cranes capable of lifting a 155 mm howitzer—played a major role. Air mobility helped the 1st Cav and ARVN elements beat the Viet Cong in a race for the inhabitants of the Montagnard village of Bu-Nho in Phuoc Long Province.

Early one November morning, 15 people from the village walked into the province headquarters. They told the chief that the VC were going to draft the men of Bu-Nho and take them into the mountains to dig bunkers and haul supplies. "We have only 48 hours to prepare," they said. Immediately, the province chief asked the 1st Cav for assistance.

Two mornings later, a lone helicopter flew over Bu-Nho, broadcasting in the language of the Montagnards: "There is going to be an artillery barrage. Stay in your houses."

"The Air Force went in to pound the surrounding area with jets first," said Lieutenant Colonel James R. Bamberg, 1st Cav G-5 (Civil Affairs

and Psychological Operations Officer). "Then the artillery took over, and at eight o'clock, with ARA birds on station, the action began."

The ground troops were all ARVN's flown in on FIRST TEAM helicopters. They set up a cordon around the village to secure it and moved in. The Montagnards were waiting in their houses. When the province chief learned that they were safe, he arrived to direct the loading of families, livestock, and belongings onto big CH-47 Chinooks. Over 1,400 people were transported to the refugee camp at Song Be by nightfall. Though saddened at having to leave Bu Nho, they considered it far preferable to the hardships of forced labor.

In February the Cav's denial program continued in full swing. After the 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry found 10,000 pounds of rice in a giant cache on Jan. 31, an area roughly 25 kilometers northeast of Tay Ninh became the scene of repeated discoveries. During the action of the 31st, 47 enemy were killed by the division's units and 57,750 rounds of small arms ammuni-



Whenever a new landing zone was constructed the 8th Engineers played a vital role in clearing the area and building implacements.





tion were captured.

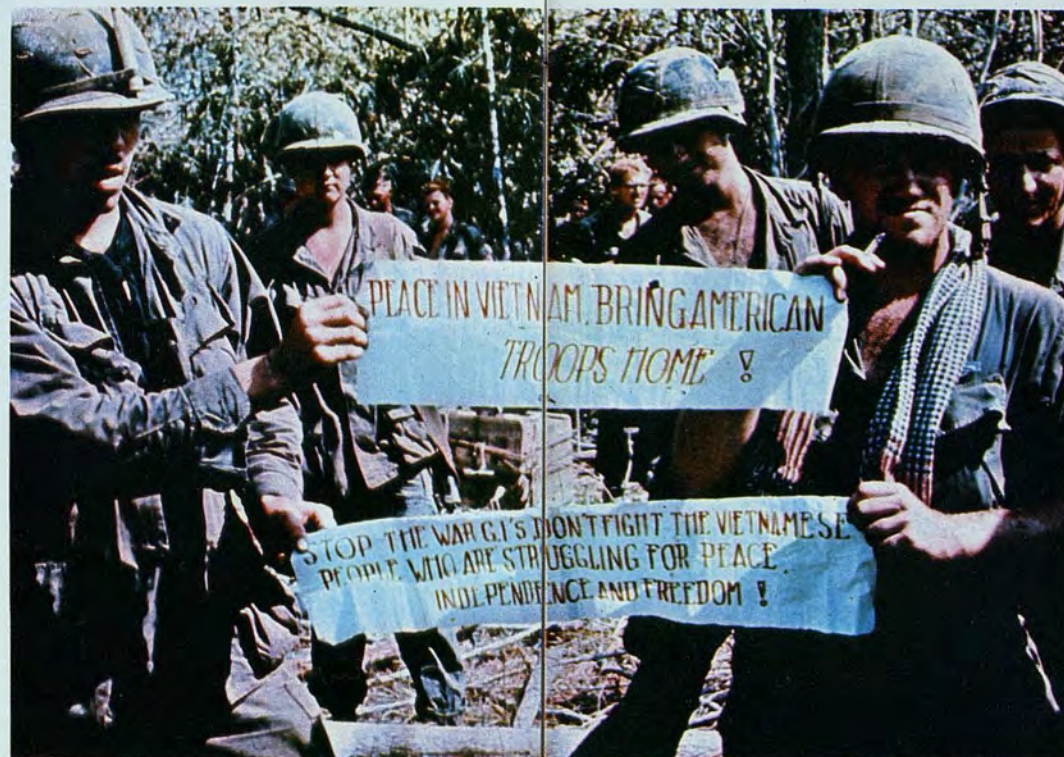
The battalion found over 37,000 pounds of rice on Feb. 1, while the 1st Sqdrn, 9th Cav added over 20,000; and 40,000 on Feb. 2. The 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry, searching 23 kilometers north of Tay Ninh, unearthed over 157,400 pounds of rice on Feb. 9 and 11. The 3rd Vietnamese Marines, working with the Skytroopers, found two large arms caches on Feb. 9 and 12, policing up over 100,000 rounds of AK-47 ammunition, 39 60 mm mortars, and 299 complete 122 mm rockets. There were also 50 specially-prepared oversized rounds which were mounted with 100 pound explosive warheads rather than the standard 15 pound warhead. They were mounted

on 122 mm rocket motors and had a range estimated at 2,000 to 3,000 meters.

The capture of this massive ordnance, which could have caused great damage to military installations or populated areas, was a significant achievement for the Marines.

The 1st Sqdrn, 9th Cav spotted North Vietnamese soldiers in the dense jungle on Feb. 12 and inserted a "Blue" (Infantry) element under a gunship barrage. Air Force strikes were called in, and they accounted for two of the day's total of 18 enemy killed. Over 21,000 more pounds of rice were captured by the cavalrymen that day.

On Feb. 3 the 2nd Bn., 7th Cav and



One of the largest ammunition caches of the war was found by members of the 1st Brigade (Below). Above Skytroopers display enemy propaganda banners captured in the cache.





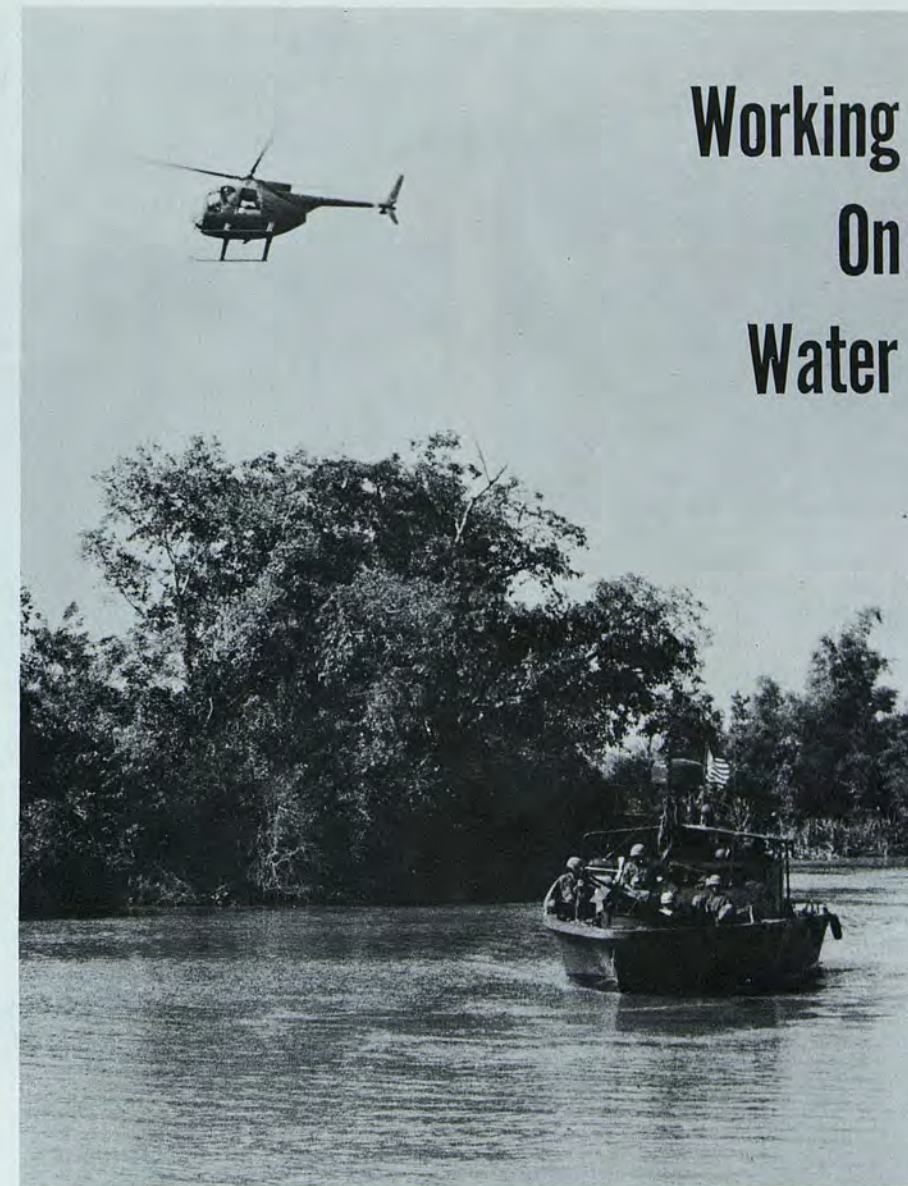
Above Skytroopers move out with armored personnel carriers of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment in operations near Quan Loi. Below, Skytroopers look over captured medical supplies discovered near Quan Loi.



the 1st Bn., 12th Cav, elements of the 3rd Brigade, moved south to an area of operations 13 miles northeast of Bien Hoa. In an operation nicknamed Cheyenne Saber, cavalymen placed themselves astride another prime infiltration route and turned up caches of medical equipment, arms, and rice. Contact with enemy forces was light. In the meantime, the 1st Brigade had returned to its original area of operations near Tay Ninh.

As a footnote to the Cav's February activities in III Corps, the Montagnards who had lived in Bu-Nho and were taken to the refugee camp at Song Be built a new village in a secure area, with construction help from the 8th Engineer Battalion. The other units of the division were busy turning the forests and rubber plantations into "Cav Country," just as they had previously mastered the mountains of I Corps and the highland valleys of II Corps. They fought, hoping that someday these people could live tranquilly in an independent South Vietnam.

Working On Water



Perhaps one of the greatest assets of the 1st Air Cavalry Division has been its flexibility. Indeed, the ability to adapt itself to the ever-changing combat situations has served it well as it has hopped from one trouble spot to another in South Vietnam. In their last full-scale move, for example, the Skytroopers had to adjust from the mountains and coastal plains of I Corps to the densely vegetated flatlands further south to the flat open lowlands and neatly planned rubber plantations of War Zone C and III Corps.

No sooner than they had accustomed themselves to this, the men of the 1st Brigade found themselves facing another change as they jumped nearer the Cambodian border west of Saigon.

Here the Skytroopers slogged waist-deep through flooded rice paddies. However, something new had been added to the Cav's *modus operandi*—something which would enable the troops in the field to make maximum use of their own resources, and at the same time, exploit the terrain.

What they came up with was the NavCav operation.

The NavCav operation was actually a combination of techniques used in riverine and mini-cav operations.

(Left) A 1st Brigade Scout helicopter flies above a group of skytroopers sailing down the Vam Co Dong River during a NavCav operation. (Below) Skytroopers from the 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry ride on an armed gunboat during joint operations.





Utilizing both air and sea power, it employed a minimum number of troops to cover a maximum number of locations.

The Navy provided an assortment of river crafts including assault patrol boats, armored troop carriers and "Monitor" gunboats. Each of these boats was equipped with .30 and .50 caliber machineguns, but the "Monitors" packed the extra punch of 20 and 40 mm cannons, automatic grenade launchers and 81 mm mortars. Some of the troop carriers even sported helicopter pads on their front decks.

The Cav provided scout helicopter crews which flew ahead of the boats checking the tree-lined banks for possible ambush sites or likely places for caches. The scouts were also used to look over feeder streams too narrow for the patrol boats. Cavalrymen, in squad sized elements manned the patrol boats, and in larger numbers occupied the troop carriers.

As the armada proceeded up a river, the patrol boats would pull into shore at irregular intervals, discharging

their landing parties. The troop carriers and gun boats floated in mid-stream ready to assist the landing parties if they made contact or uncovered a cache.

Although NavCav operations were an almost daily occurrence along the Vam Co Dong and Vam Co Tay River, actual enemy contact was very light. The success of the operation was based upon the numerous caches found in these areas.

Huge quantities of munitions were found buried in the mud at the water's edge. Loaded in 55-gallon drums, almost all of the ammunition was in excellent condition.

Some of the more significant finds yielded a complete 120 mm mortar and 46 entire 122 mm rockets. The total of small arms ammunition totaled more than 100,000 rounds for the entire operation.

Impressed by all the captured enemy equipment, both Army and Navy officials praised the concept. A favorable reaction was even forthcoming from the infantrymen, as one was heard to say "it sure beats walking."



It's not all work as two Skytroopers take a dip in the Vam Co Dong River (Above Left). (Above Right) Skytroopers of the 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry come ashore following a ride up river to a suspected enemy cache area. (Below) A member of a Navy armored troop carrier guides a chopper onto the landing pad.



Airmobile Medics

Keeping Skytroopers Healthy

Providing medical support to an airmobile division requires a special type of medical unit. In the 1st Air Cavalry Division, this unit is the 15th Medical Battalion.

The men of the battalion take great pride in the accomplishments of themselves and their unit. This pride was summed up by Captain Robert Wood, the Aviation Platoon leader, who said, "the wounded man on the ground deserves the best. He has done his job and then it becomes our job. He deserves to be taken care of." CPT Wood was serving his second tour of duty in Vietnam and has logged in well over 2,400 hours of flying time.

The battalion was organized in 1926 at Ft. Bliss, Tex. It was then called the 1st Medical Squadron. The unit remained at Ft. Bliss until 1943 when it moved overseas to Australia. In December of that year, the squadron was designated the 1st Medical Squadron, 1st Cavalry Division (Special).

The unit moved with the 1st Cavalry Division throughout the Southwest Pacific during World War II, participating in the campaigns of New Guinea, Los Negros, Bismarck Archipelago, Luzon, Leyte and Antipolo.

The unit entered Tokyo with the

division in September, 1945. In 1949 it was redesignated the 15th Medical Battalion. It moved to the battlefields of Korea in June, 1950, earning seven campaign streamers to add to its long list of commendations.

During June, 1965, at Fort Benning, Ga., 15th Med. Bn. became the first airmobile medical battalion in the Army and was assigned 12 aeromedical evacuation helicopters. The battalion arrived in Vietnam in September of the same year.

Just how effective is an airmobile medical battalion? This question may be justly answered in a story recalled by Sergeant Major Ramon F. Segura, Command Sergeant Major of the 15th Med. Bn. "During Cardinal Francis Spellman's last Christmas visit to Vietnam in 1967, he met and talked to a young soldier in the field. Cardinal Spellman departed Vietnam and arrived on Okinawa the following day. As he began a visit of the wards at the U.S. Army Hospital, Okinawa, he was surprised as well as amazed to meet the same young trooper he had talked with in the field on the previous day. The trooper had been wounded during the afternoon of the Cardinal's visit and in less than 24 hours was now in a modern hospital thousands of miles from the battle zone."

"We can have a soldier wounded in the 1st Air Cavalry Division in a hospital quicker than anyone involved in an accident on any major freeway in the U.S.," explained CPT Wood.

Support is given to everyone in the division's area of operations. Records for the month of January show 2,542 evacuations: 1,943 U.S. (1/3 combat, 2/3 non-combat), 193 South Vietnamese civilians, 26 NVA, and 295 ARVN. In addition, the records reflect 893 missions (663 day—210 night), 1,948 sorties, 21 hoist missions and 46 hoist patients.

"Having such a close-knit unit as ours is a morale factor with the fighting man on the ground," said CPT Wood. "He knows we'll come in and get him if needed."

Although Medevac is a vital mission in the 15th Med. Bn., activities are not strictly confined to this mission. Equally important is the health and general welfare of the approximately 19,000 men of the 1st Air Cavalry

Division.

The 15th Med Bn consists of three lettered companies, A, B, and C, and a headquarters and support company. One lettered company is in support of each brigade and the Hq and Spt Co provides support to division headquarters and support units in the division area. Each lettered company is staffed with four doctors, one dentist and two Medical Service Corps personnel.

Doctors of the battalion perform the mission of stabilization, insuring that a wounded or seriously ill patient is in condition to be evacuated to a hospital without his condition deteriorating. They are also available for emergency treatment and hold regular sick calls for common illnesses.

During January, 1969, 2,935 outpatients—patients treated and released after a short time—were handled by the Admission and Disposition sections (A&D) of the battalion. In addition, 806 patients were admitted for further treatment.

"Dental health in Vietnam is just as important as dental health anywhere in the world," said Captain Thomas P. Kish, dental officer at Phuoc Vinh. "We treat an average of 25 to 30 military patients per day, plus one to five





A confident Skytrooper relaxes while a Medic takes a blood sample. Examining X-rays is but another of the jobs performed by the Airmobile Medics.

Vietnamese civilian patients."

In comparing the condition of the teeth of soldiers in Vietnam to that of soldiers stateside, where facilities are more plentiful, the dental officer said, "It seems most soldiers, like most civilians, pay little attention to dental health. Both here and stateside their condition is poor. They never seem to think of dental health until it hurts, not realizing we could possibly prevent most of that hurt."

"The Optometry Clinic at Phuoc Vinh has the capability of providing, at division level, visual examinations and single visual optometry services," explained Captain James E. Bailey, Optometry Officer.

"We have in stock 432 different powers of lenses to service prescriptions," said CPT Bailey. This total stock is estimated to provide approximately one million combinations of lenses.

Eight hundred eye patients were examined and treated at the clinic during January and approximately 550

pairs of glasses were made.

"On a normal day, if a patient walks into the clinic with single vision eye trouble, we can give him an eye examination, fill the prescription, and have him out in one hour," the captain explained. "However, bifocal patients take a little longer."

Prescriptions coming into the clinic from the field are filled and returned in five to six days under normal circumstances. "If a person already wears glasses and should break them, we don't need him physically or his prescription to fix him up. All we need are the broken glasses, and we can take it from there. We are air-mobile and speed and accuracy is our motto," the captain said.

High morale, professionalism and dedication to duty are all very important ingredients that make an outstanding unit. However, as Specialist Six John Reid, who is on his second tour with the 15th Med. Bn., puts it, "It's the people that make the unit, not the unit that makes the people."



ment, but the pointman must also possess a keen sense of sight and hearing.

"There are many things that the pointman has to look for," said one young Skytrooper. "He always has to be on the lookout for snipers in the trees, signs of recent use of trail, and bunkers and caches to the side of the trail."

At times a keen sense of smell helps the pointman find the evasive enemy. If a company has made contact with the enemy on one day, the sensitive nose of its pointman may help as the unit begins to penetrate enemy territory on a search and clear mission.

"When we were operating in the Quang Tri area, smell helped me on many occasions," said Specialist Four Louis Vargas, a pointman for Company D. "One time that really sticks out in my mind is the time we were operating in Base Area 101."

As the cavalrymen began their sweep of the enemy-infested jungle, the pointman noticed an unusual odor in the area. The smell sharpened and he perked up—looking and listening.

"We found some dead bodies," said SP4 Vargas, "and then I heard other people talking in the bushes close to us."

Crawling over hard dirt and under the tangled growth, the cavalryman spotted a small group of enemy soldiers sitting beside a stream eating and talking. Quickly withdrawing to his company, SP4 Vargas notified the artillery observer. Within minutes artillery rounds were pounding the enemy emplacement, resulting in six North Vietnamese soldiers killed.

A freshly cut tree, an overturned rock, or a micro-thin wire stretched across a jungle path may not catch the eyes of other men in the company, but these signs become very obvious to the pointman. They indicate enemy ambushes or booby traps, and to him stick out like sore thumbs.

The pointman also develops his sense of hearing over a period of time. Many times a new pointman is jumpy when the bushes or trees around him move a fraction of an inch. After a while, he turns "professional" and can tell the difference between the movement of trees and bushes caused by the wind rushing through them and movement due to the enemy.

"At first, I hit the ground whenever the smallest thing moved around me," stated one well-tanned, moustacheoed cavalryman. "The company was beginning to get mad at me because of my jumpiness. But after a while the newness of the position wore off, and I could tell the difference in signs and movements."

Some pointmen describe their hazardous occupation as "just another job," but to the men of the company,

it is a little more important than most. Heavy responsibility falls upon the shoulders of the lead man. He is the one who can prevent the entire company from being ambushed or some of his fellow soldiers from being killed or wounded by booby traps.

He also has the responsibility of getting the company to its destination as quickly as possible, without too much wandering around. At times, the pointman may decide to divert from the company's preplanned path because of signs spotted by his developed senses.

"At times it's easier to go down a beaten path instead of through the thick brush," said Private First Class Terry Morris, a pointman for Company C, "but there is more likelihood of an enemy ambush on the trail. There have been times when I've advised the company to try another path because of signs I've seen that give strong indications of booby traps or an ambush."

Because of the strain on the point-

man, most companies have a point team. This team usually consists of from three to six men, varying from company to company.

"There is a lot of pressure on the pointman, and after beating the thick brush for a while, he wears out and loses some of the abilities he usually possesses," said Specialist Four Cleveland Bryant, pointman for Company E.

As the pointman looks for signs on the trail, there is always a "third eye" he relies upon. This is provided by the second man in line. His job is to watch the trees and higher areas for concealed enemy.

As the company's platoons are rotated on a daily basis for lead or point element, so are the men walking point. In a case such as this, the point team is very effective because of the short time walked by each man.

When the second man takes over the point position, he brings experience with him. Usually the second man in a column is the predecessor of the main pointman. All members of the



point team stay in front of the line so that every sign can be detected and confusion is lessened when they rotate positions.

Obstacles often hinder the pointman in his movement. Some of the previously mentioned hindrances are booby traps and enemy ambushes. But the pointman is also trained in cutting a new path for the company. At times this calls for a combined effort from the entire point element. The undergrowth is so heavy in places that one can barely move on his own.

"Crawling through the bushes and making a new way is just another part of our job," said a scratched up, bronzed cavalryman. "We're like trail blazers."

Who'd be crazy enough to walk out in front of everyone and get shot at first? Many pointmen would have a straight and direct answer—"I would. I volunteered for the position." To the obvious question of "Why?" the cavalrymen gave many different reactions.

"It was something unusual when I began walking point," said Private First Class Phil Kingsbury, a pointman for Company C, "but I like it because I knew that if I was hurt it would be my own fault. Of course there was more pressure on me, because I also knew that the lives of the men behind me were in my hands."

Another Skytrooper said that he liked the point position because walking in the lead kept him more informed about what was happening. SP4 Bryant explained his reasons for becoming a pointman:



"When I first came to the company, I was really afraid that they would make me walk point. But after a while, I saw that the guys really knew what they were doing and that I might as well learn. Other guys before me had done it, and I thought that I had guts enough to do it too."

The young cavalryman did volunteer for point position, and has been there for four months.

In November 1968, when the 1st Air Cavalry Division made its tactical move from the I Corps Tactical Zone to III Corps, there were many adjustments to be made.

The I Corps area presented an environment of arid, sandy beaches or rugged mountains. But in III Corps the Skytroopers found the terrain entirely different. Water-filled rice paddies and swamp areas now confronted

them. The jump up north had been nowhere near as tangled as the almost impenetrable thickets near the Cambodian border.

To one Skytrooper, the terrain was the most difficult thing to get adjusted to when moving.

"The terrain up north was much easier than down here," said Specialist Four Robert Condela, pointman for Company D. "The brush is so much thicker down here that it's much harder to see what's in front of you."

Specialist Four Donald Mason, a pointman for five months with Company C, conveyed the same feelings.

"When we were up north, there really wasn't too much to worry about because you could see for a long way on the sands. But down here, if the pointman is walking down a trail or into a bunker complex, he really has

to know his stuff. The brush is thicker and the number of enemy is greater."

One 19-year-old, short-haired, moustacheoed cavalryman, who walked as pointman in both I and III Corps, expressed more concern for the number of enemy troops in the south.

"Up north, there weren't as many enemy soldiers," explained Specialist Four Robert Gilles, one of the pointmen from Company C. "Even though the going was rougher, it didn't seem quite as hard. Down here there are more enemy soldiers, and we seem to run into them more often."

But there is one big advantage to being down here," the infantryman commented. "There doesn't seem to be as many booby traps as in I Corps."

Supported by men within his own company and battalion, the pointman also receives assistance from other elements within the division. Two of the primary groups which support the trail blazers are the scout dogs and the tracker teams.

When the scout dogs are operating with a company, their normal position is either directly behind the pointman or directly in front of him. Due to the dogs' special training in this type of work, the pointman is glad to have their assistance.

With the tracker teams, the position of point falls to both the pointman and the tracker dog and handler. The pointman performs his normal duties of finding signs that reveal recent use of the area by the enemy, and then the tracker team assumes the pointman's position.

The dogs are used to equalize the three senses. The pointman's weakest sense in searching for the enemy is smelling. With their "extra" sense the dogs follow the enemy by sniffing his tracks.

"The tracker and scout dogs are really fabulous," stated one pointman. "They really help us a lot and it gives us a rest."

Supported by the previous mentioned personnel—the second man in the line, the rest of the company, artillery, and the scout and tracker dogs, the pointman performs his job in a professional manner. Although he has developed the senses of seeing, hearing, and smelling almost to perfection and has sharpened his ability to move quickly, the pointman still relies on one big important supporter in his job.

One pointman summed up the assistance depended upon by the majority of the pointmen in these words:

"I'm sure most people have seen pictures of the writing men do on their helmets. Most of the pointmen write five small words which truly express their feelings—'God is my pointman.'"

Brigade Scouts

Searching For Charlie



At times, Scout pilots have been called upon to carry wounded Skytroopers from the battlefield to the nearest aid station. However, most of the Scout pilot's time is searching for Charlie in the FIRST TEAM's area of operations.

(Ed. Note: Although this story deals primarily with the Scouts of the 2nd Brigade, it is indicative of the esprit and ability which characterize the scout pilots within the FIRST TEAM.)

By CPT Peter Zastrow

The call may come any time during the day. It may come from a company commander whose unit is in contact, from a battalion commander whose units hear movement, or from the brigade commander who needs to find a worthwhile target. But in each case, the call is made to the scouts.

In the days when the hostiles were Indians, scouts moved out from their cavalry units to keep track of enemy movement. Because they were experienced and knew the area, they were also used as pathfinders or guides. Because they went out alone or in small groups, they avoided contact whenever they could. And because they had an unusual job which required independence, they were a group set apart from the usual cavalryman.

Today, when the hostiles are more

sophisticated, the mission which the scouts once performed are given to specialized units. The pathfinder who knows the area and knows the enemy is the Kit Carson Scout. Rangers go out in small groups to watch for enemy movement. Despite these units, however, most of the duties of the cavalry scouts now belong to the helicopter scouts.

As the far-seeing eyes of the brigade commander, the scouts lift off at first light to cover the expanse of jungle which is the brigade's area of operations. Cutting through early morning fog, they dart over the area looking for tell-tale signs of the enemy. A bunker that was not in the area the day before, a trail with signs of recent use, even elephant tracks can point to enemy activity.

At last light the scouts again sweep over the area, flying at treetop level. At each Landing Zone (LZ) they check with the troops on the ground to see if there are spots which need close observation.

In between first light and last light, the scouts wait for the call which is never long in coming.

Two light observation helicopters





(LOH's), marked by silver lightning bolts painted on the front, compose the Silver Team of the 2nd Brigade. Their theory of maneuver is simple. The first LOH finds the enemy—by drawing fire if necessary—and the second returns the fire. If the target is too big, they call in ARA, artillery, or air strikes.

Not many targets are too big for the lightly armed ships. In one recent mission, the Silver Team spotted a VC suspect ducking into some handy bushes north of the Blackhorse Brigade base camp at Quan Loi. When they reconned the area by fire, shots erupted from seven huts in the area. When the dust of the mini-gun cleared, 11 VC were dead, and the Silver Team was off on another assignment.

When the Cav moves into a new area, the scouts expect to take fire almost daily. After a month in an area, ground fire is less frequent, for the enemy knows that firing on a helicopter will bring prompt disaster. U.S. psychological operations make use of the enemy fear with a leaflet which first shows a helicopter drawing fire; the second picture shows the enemy being blown away.

For the scout pilots, getting shot at is part of a day's work. The most experienced of the present group of pilots was Warrant Officer William Auten who flew as a scout pilot for over ten months. In that time his ship had been hit 20 times, and shot down seven times; each day he goes out again. "Other pilots don't go looking for trouble," he said. "Our job is to look for trouble, and usually we find it."

As the end of his tour drew near, Mr. Auten planned to switch his job as scout pilot for the less eventful job of flying the liaison helicopter, a mission which entails much higher altitudes and a much lower risk. After one day in the LNO helicopter, however, he was reconsidering. "I think now that maybe I'll fly right up to the last day," he said. "Flying scout is habit-forming, and it's a hard habit to break."

Flying scout makes most other jobs seem dull. In part this is because of the number of different missions the scout performs for the brigade. Like the scouts of old, they find the enemy, pinpoint his movement, and report back to the brigade. Locations of trails or bunkers are used by the brigade intelligence officer to plot the enemy's intentions; location of units or signs of recent use can lead to a tactical reaction, whether by moving troops into the area or by using artillery or air strikes.

As guides or pathfinders, the scouts work directly with the ground unit. Circling overhead, they provide covering fire for the company on the

ground. Zig-zagging over the company's objective with smoke grenades they make the job of the company commander that much easier. And reconnaissance by fire into suspicious locations discourages enemy ambushes.

Although operating the LOH should require both hands and both feet, the scout pilot has time to read a map, and flip radio switches as well as keep both eyes on the ground flashing below him. The map is vital since the scouts must know the precise location of significant signs; more than once, in their role as pathfinder, the scouts have had to help out a misoriented company commander whose position has been lost in the dense jungle.

For the road convoys which bring the needed supplies from the south to Quan Loi, the brigade scouts provide road security. As for the ground company, they watch for ambushes or for likely ambush positions. At times they have even directed traffic, persuading vehicles on the move off, or getting pedestrians out of the convoy's path.

Occasionally the scouts have even served as Medevac birds when the wounded have been in an area too dense to permit the larger UH-1 Huey to come in. With the two crew members holding the wounded soldier on the skids, the small helicopter maneuvers out of the jungle location and carries the wounded man to treatment.

Despite the many missions the scouts actually perform, their primary mis-



A Scout ship from the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry hauls a dead pig back to its base camp where it will make a tasty morsel for the troopers.

sion remains the same: to find out what the enemy is doing, and then disrupt his plans.

A typical mission might begin with an intelligence report. VC were seen moving around a small hamlet 20 kilometers from Quan Loi. The message goes from the Blackhorse Brigade TOC to flight operations: mission for the scouts. Within minutes, the LOH's dart down the runway. The lead ship carries a pilot and two gunners—one with an M-16 and one with an M-60; the second ship is armed with a mini-gun.

From the ground, the two choppers soon look like mosquitoes, playfully chasing each other. In the air, the job is serious. The dipping, bobbing, changing directions are all part of the scouts' technique of avoiding enemy fire: if the man on the ground doesn't know which way the ship is going to move, the ship is that much less a target. The gunners are alert, ready at a second's notice to return ground fire.

Although the flight to the suspect village is made at altitudes between 50 and 100 feet, it is uneventful. As they near the village, the alert crew becomes even more alert, looking for



Most of the time Scout ships fly near tree-top level in their search for Charlie.

trails, for untended fields, for any evidence that the village and its surrounding area have changed since yesterday's flight over the area. The scouts make a swift pass over the village. All appears normal. Again, they buzz over, from a different direction and a little lower—at 80 knots, the village whizzes by. Still, there is no reaction from the village other than the startled looks of an old man outside his hut. On the third pass, with the scouts barely clearing the rooftops, two black-clad figures scurry out of one of the huts into the nearby undergrowth. The second scout ship follows them; the mini-gun explodes with noise as it sprays the area. A quick recon shows two VC bodies. For the scouts, another mission is complete and they return to Quan Loi.

Other members of the Headquarters

and Headquarters Company of the 2nd Brigade look on the scout pilots with a mixture of respect and puzzlement. "They have to be nuts," is the usual, only half-joking observation. The job has special dangers and special risks; it also has special rewards.

Warrant Officer Randy C. Hinds arrived with the Aviation Platoon of the 2nd Brigade in January, hoping to become a scout pilot. Flying with one of the experienced pilots has convinced him that his choice of jobs is right. "In a month and a week, I've already put in over a hundred hours, been hit three times, and got one purple heart," he said. "Flying scout gets you right down where the action is—you are part of what's going on instead of just a spectator."

The action in Vietnam is on the ground, and the scouts are as close to

the ground as is possible in a moving helicopter. "It's worth a million dollars to hear the reactions of the troops we're covering," said Mr. Hinds. "When you hear about action somewhere in the brigade," he continued, "you don't have to ask about it; you were there."

After flying scout for 100 hours or more, members of the Silver Team, pilots and crew alike, wear the scout patch. Crossed silver lightning bolts decorate the upper right hand corner; across from them is a LOH circling near the ground. In front is a scout with his long rifle, observing the area. And so it is today, the big men in the small ships confusing and destroying the enemy in the area of the Black-horse Brigade.



Your company is on patrol. Suddenly, from the bamboo to your front comes the distinctive crack of an AK-47. Several more AK's open up as your company takes cover.

Your company returns the enemy's fire, the scout helicopters overhead bombard the area with mini-guns and grenades, and the aerial rocket artillery (ARA) ships release their ordnance. But the sophisticated enemy bunker complex doesn't yield. An air strike is needed.

You keep firing away at the enemy bunkers. All of a sudden a jet fighter screams out of the horizon, drops a bomb right on the enemy bunkers, and banks up and away into the clouds.

After two more passes by the fighter, you have lost contact with the enemy.

The success of the air strike was mainly due to one man—an Air Force officer flitting about dangerously low over the contact area in a small, single-engine Cessna.

The Forward Air Controller (FAC), who works directly with the 1st Air Cavalry Division, rendezvoused the fighters, marked the target, and talked the jets in on the strike.

An immediate call for an air strike such as this is mainly handled by the FAC with assistance from the Air Liaison Officer (ALO). The ALO advises the Army as to proper ordnance plus rounds up the fighters for the strike.

The FAC also directs pre-planned air strikes, most often at empty bunker complexes that should be destroyed, denying the enemy their use.

At noon, Captain John Ewing, a FAC working with the 2nd Brigade, pulls his bird-dog off the runway at Quan Loi and heads for a bunker complex near the Cambodian border.

After thoroughly reconning the area, CPT Ewing contacts the fighter pilot.

"Killer Spade, this is Rash 24. Rendezvous over the black airstrip with the Special Forces Camp to the November (North) while I put some smoke on the target."

The captain flips his aircraft around and puts it into a dive at the bunkers,

FAC Brings Smoke



releases one of eight smoke rockets slung under the wings, and quickly climbs out of the dive.

"Killer Spade, you are cleared for approach. Make your drop 20 meters to the left of the smoke."

The fighter-bomber crashes past the target. There is a flash of fire, a billow of smoke and the roar of the exploding bombs, all coming up to meet the FAC and his little plane who are orbiting low near the strike area.

"Killer Spade, this is Rash 24. We were pretty close with that one. Let's put the next one about 10 meters to the right and we'll be right on."

Again the jet drops over the target, dropping the load precisely where the

captain instructed.

"That got it Killer Spade, right on target. Thanks a lot, over."

"Actually the FAC does more than just directing and strikes," said Captain Willy Preciado, a veteran FAC with more than 1,000 hours over Vietnam. "We direct artillery, ARA, and Spookey. We can also be very useful to the infantry in many other ways. We spot trails, look for a good night position, see if there is a possible ambush sight ahead and if the infantry needs a landing zone real quick and does not know where the nearest one is, we'll locate one for them. We can also check position for a ground unit that happens to become 'misorientated'.

"The most personally gratifying mission I've had was at a landing zone near Cu Chi," said CPT Preciado, "I was juggling three radio pushes (frequencies) as I talked to the ground units, the fighter pilots and artillery. We brought everything in that night—ARA, artillery, gunships, four Spookeys were expended and we had 11 air strikes."

It is this kind of expertise the Cav has working for it when air power is needed.

"Always, contact with the enemy is lost after an air strike," stated CPT Preciado.



Charlie Says

'Blue Max Number 10'

By Sp-4 Al Persons

The afternoon was just beginning to turn into evening and the breezes that blew across the airstrip were cooling off what had been an unusually hot day. Along with that, the many shades of red, orange, and patches of blue that made up the sky added to the peaceful feeling that seemed to oppress everything at the time.

The two Cobra crews were sitting in the "Hot Van" playing cards, talking with each other, their minds prob-

ably on someone back home, but half anxiously awaiting a call to action.

When they least expected it, they received word that a line unit needed support. Within two minutes, they were in the air and on their way. When they reached the area of contact, they slammed into the enemy with everything they had. Like "Chicken Little," Charlie thought the sky was falling. The Cobras were credited with saving the line unit from destruc-

tion.

This is a typical example of the action of the 2nd Battalion (ARA), 20th Artillery, perhaps one of the most unique artillery units in the U.S. Army.

ARA (Aerial Rocket Artillery) is a unique concept in that it replaces the medium and heavy artillery which is not available in an airmobile unit.

ARA's strength is based on the powerful Cobra helicopter, one of which has the equivalent firepower of



three conventional tube artillery batteries.

The battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel John H. Schnibben, is broken down into A, B, and C Batteries, which are fire batteries, and a Headquarters and Services Battery. Alpha Battery is located in Tay Ninh, Bravo Battery in Phuoc Vinh, and Charlie Battery in Lai Khe. Headquarters and Services Battery is also located in Phuoc Vinh.

Each battery consists of 12 Cobras and is broken down into three rocket platoons of four aircraft each and a service platoon which maintains the aircraft mechanically, recovers downed aircraft, and keeps them supplied with fuel and ammunition.

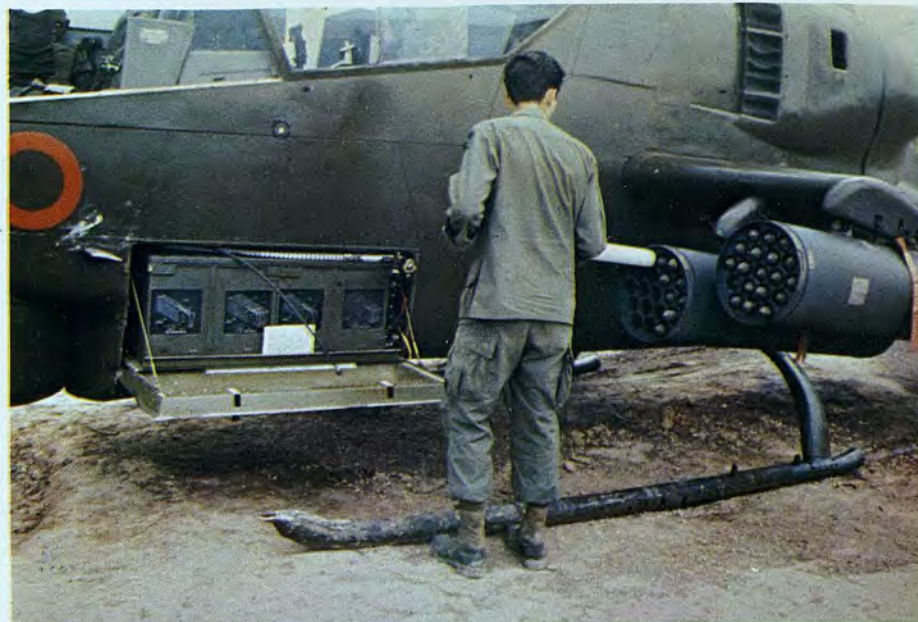
Each platoon is made up of two sections of two aircraft each. Usually, an air strike is not carried out by anything less than a section.

The Headquarters and Services Battery consists of the clerks, administrative specialists, the communications section, the motor pool, and the many other specialists that are necessary to run the battalion. It also has three Cobras.

When artillery support is needed, the aerial artillery proves to be just as effective if not more so than a conventional artillery battalion.

When artillery is called for, instead of firing from guns in the rear, the Cobra carries the firepower right out to the scene of the action. When Charlie hears its "hiss," he knows to keep his head down.

Every 36 hours, the Cobra crews spend 12 hours in their second home, the "Hot Van," on a ready status. The "Hot Van" is a van that houses the crews while they are waiting to be called out. Inside, it has a map of the area, radio equipment, television, bunks and other conveniences to make



The big punch of the Cobra are the 2.75 inch rockets.

the pilots feel at home.

"It's like solitary confinement. They lock you in and never let you out unless there's a fire mission."

These are some of the remarks you get when you first encounter the crews inside the "Hot Van." Later on, however, they let you know that it's not really so bad and what they're doing is absolutely necessary.

The surface may be rough at times, but inside, the morale of the Cobra crews is very high.

The way to describe a Cobra is that it looks much like a "wasp" or a "hornet," and its sting lives up to its looks.

No more than three feet wide, the Cobra just barely seats its crew of two. Protruding from its sides, the Cobra has two stubby little wings that carry two rocket pods under each, giving the aircraft a total of 76 rockets.

This is the Cobra's big fist that brings havoc on anything that might cross its path.

This mighty wallop that a Cobra packs carries the name "Hog Configuration."

For defensive purposes, the Cobra has its turret system under its nose. Originally, the turret system carried only the powerful mini-gun that is capable of firing 4,000 rounds per minute.

The newer turret system has not only the mini-gun but also has the 40 mm grenade launcher that fires rounds the same size as M-79 rounds except a little longer for better stability in air flight. The "40 Mike-Mike," as it is called, can fire 400 rounds per minute.

The Cobra's rocket and turret systems make it one of Charlie's most formidable enemies and Charlie usually makes himself scarce when the aircraft is around.

The mission of the unit, nicknamed "Blue Max," is fourfold. However, its primary function is fire missions.

Each infantry unit within the division has an ARA forward observer who travels with it wherever it goes. He serves the same purpose as a forward observer for conventional artillery. If the unit ever needs more support than can be provided by tube artillery such as 105 mm howitzers, he contacts Division Artillery which in turn contacts the ARA battalion.

Then, within two minutes, one or more sections are sent out from whichever battery is closest to the unit in trouble.

While in the air, the Cobra pilots

must obtain the answers to the questions on their checklist.

1) Does the mission conform with the rules of engagement for armed helicopters? 2) Are the controller's instructions clear and in accord with safe operating instructions? 3) Is the target positively identified? 4) If the target is in a populated area, has clearance for fire been confirmed? 5) Has contact been established with friendly ground elements in the general area of the target? 6) Are all the friendly positions marked? 7) Have the friendlies been warned if the target is within 200 meters of them? (Two hundred meters is the normal range at which rockets are fired.) 8) Has the safest direction of attack been selected? 9) Are the friendly positions remarked prior to each pass? 10) Has clearance for Long Range Patrols been confirmed through the Direct Support Battalion Fire Direction Center?

Once this information is obtained, the Cobras move in for the kill.

Great care is taken, however, to keep from harming any of the friendlies.

Captain Michael D. Brock, executive officer of Battery B, in Phuoc Vinh, said, "The prime importance of ARA is knowing where the GI is."

The pilots are highly skilled, however, and few mistakes are made. This makes aerial rocket artillery with the Cobra just as effective, if not more so, than conventional artillery.

The second mission of ARA is preparing landing zones.

Before a combat assault, tube artillery peppers the landing zone to do as much damage as possible before the choppers arrive with the ground troops. However, it must cease firing at least one minute before the choppers arrive to avoid injuring any of the friendly forces. This one minute

gives Charlie enough time to lift up his head and see what is going on. The minute gap is filled in by the Cobra.

While the Skytroopers storm from the helicopters, the Cobras keep Charlie's head down. They fire on the approach and departure ends of the landing zone and also on the sides. After the ground troops have taken over the situation, the Cobra orbits overhead until the LZ is declared Green. If any additional support is needed then, it is provided.

"The idea," said CPT Brock, "is to put as much steel on the target, as fast as you can."

The third mission, extraction, is similar to LZ preparations in that during the extraction of troops, the Cobra gives cover while the Huey picks the troops up from the LZ. Under normal conditions, though, it doesn't fire until everyone is out of the area.

The fourth mission of the battalion, and perhaps the most unique, is the night Mortar and Rocket Patrol.

Every night, patrolling the skies from 1730 to 0700, a Cobra watches out for surprise mortar and rocket attacks. If an attack is attempted, the Cobra bites.

One night at about 2000 hours, recalled CPT Brock, mortar rounds began to come in around the airstrip and flight line area at Phuoc Vinh. Immediately, the sister ship of the one already in the air and a third ship were sent up. They spotted the enemy mortar position about 2,000 meters away and wiped it out.

Suddenly, rockets began to come in from farther north. Another section was sent up to join the other two. As this point six Cobras had been scrambled within a matter of minutes. Soon after that, they located the rocket position and destroyed it.

"The incident is a good example of

the quickness and efficiency of the night Mortar and Rocket Patrol," commented the captain.

The fact that Charlie knows about the patrol also makes the entire operation a deterrent to mortar attacks.

The battalion originated as part of the 377th Artillery at Ft. Benning, Ga. It was then an entirely experimental unit.

It began to grow, and from September to November of 1964 it was given its big test to decide whether or not it would be successful. It passed the test with flying colors.

In 1965, the unit joined the 1st Air Cavalry Division and was designated as the 2nd Battalion (ARA), 20th Artillery.

The battalion's nickname, "Blue Max," originated during World War I when it was the name of an award given to German pilots who downed 25 planes in aerial flight.



Despite all the firepower and armament that any unit might have, there is only one thing that makes it a great unit, its men. In view of the past and present efforts and the attitude of the men of the 2nd Battalion (ARA), 20th Artillery, they have made their unit a great one, simply by living up to its motto: "Duty, not reward."

At dusk, a member of the mortar and rocket patrol taxis before taking to the air. The patrol is flown nightly making Charlie's mortar and rocket attacks harder to commence.



This smoke bringing Cobra hits speeds in the vicinity 215 of miles per hour.



"Charm School," as it has been dubbed by its graduates, is the three-day in country training given every new member of the Division. Instruction ranges from weapon firing and rappelling to civil affairs.

"I've had all of this back in the States. Why are they making me go through it again?" was the complaint given by most prior to arrival at the Division Training Center (DTC).

For those who have had similar training before arriving in Vietnam, the program is a refresher course in "Charlie's" tactics and weapons. It is essential for new arrivals who have never had training of this kind. For all it sets the tone and mood for a tour in 'Nam.

The most important day at the DTC is the one spent on the firing range. Following a 30-minute march to an

area out past the perimeter, the training company is divided into two sections. One group goes to the firing line to zero its weapons while the other positions itself at the grenade pit.

"Nice toss! Keep your head down, Number Seven! Start passing out grenades to the next eight men!" are often-heard words from the NCOIC at the grenade pit.

With weapons combat ready and

confidence gained in throwing a "frag" (fragmentation grenade), the training group is taught the basics of squad tactics. A short, practical application of these tactics, complete with the sounds of combat, is terminated with live fire at silhouette targets.

A direct-fire artillery demonstration, with a 105 mm howitzer battery deftly placing rounds in view of its audience, fills most of the after-

noon. A volunteer from the training company is even allowed to direct a fire mission.

With nightfall an air of apprehension and tenseness prevails throughout the entire group. The green line is to your back and "Charlie" is known to be operating in the area. Foxholes are manned around the perimeter while others from the training group position themselves on the rifle range for night

firing. Everybody gets his chance on the line and in the foxhole.

"Man, if anything moves out there I'm emptying my M-16 on the area." "Hey! Quit making so much noise. They'll know where we are." "I'll sure be glad to get back inside the green line," is heard from every foxhole around the perimeter.

Rappelling from the Division Training Center's tower is the highlight of

Charm School Teaches

Etiquette, Vietnam Style



One of the more memorable experiences is climbing to the top of the rappelling tower then jumping. Among the many things that a new Skytrooper learns is how to set up a trip flare.



During a new guy's stay at the "Charm School" seasoned veterans teach them the art of staying alive in Vietnam. Above he learns how to recognize booby traps, while at left how claymore mines are set up and above how to search a house.



Before the new Skytrooper ascends the rappelling tower to try his hand at rappelling, a veteran instructor demonstrates to the students the improper way of coming down from the top.



Weapons, both friendly and enemy take up a portion of the new soldier's time at the training center. Above he learns some of the characteristics of the enemy's weapons while below he performs the age old ritual of cleaning his weapon.

another day at "Charm School." Technique is everything from inching down to freefalling. Everybody is required to tie himself into a Swiss-seat and descend from the tower.

"Groovy." "Climbing that ladder is the worst part." "It's not so bad." "They'd better give me jump pay," are common comments of future Skytroopers fresh down from the rappelling tower.

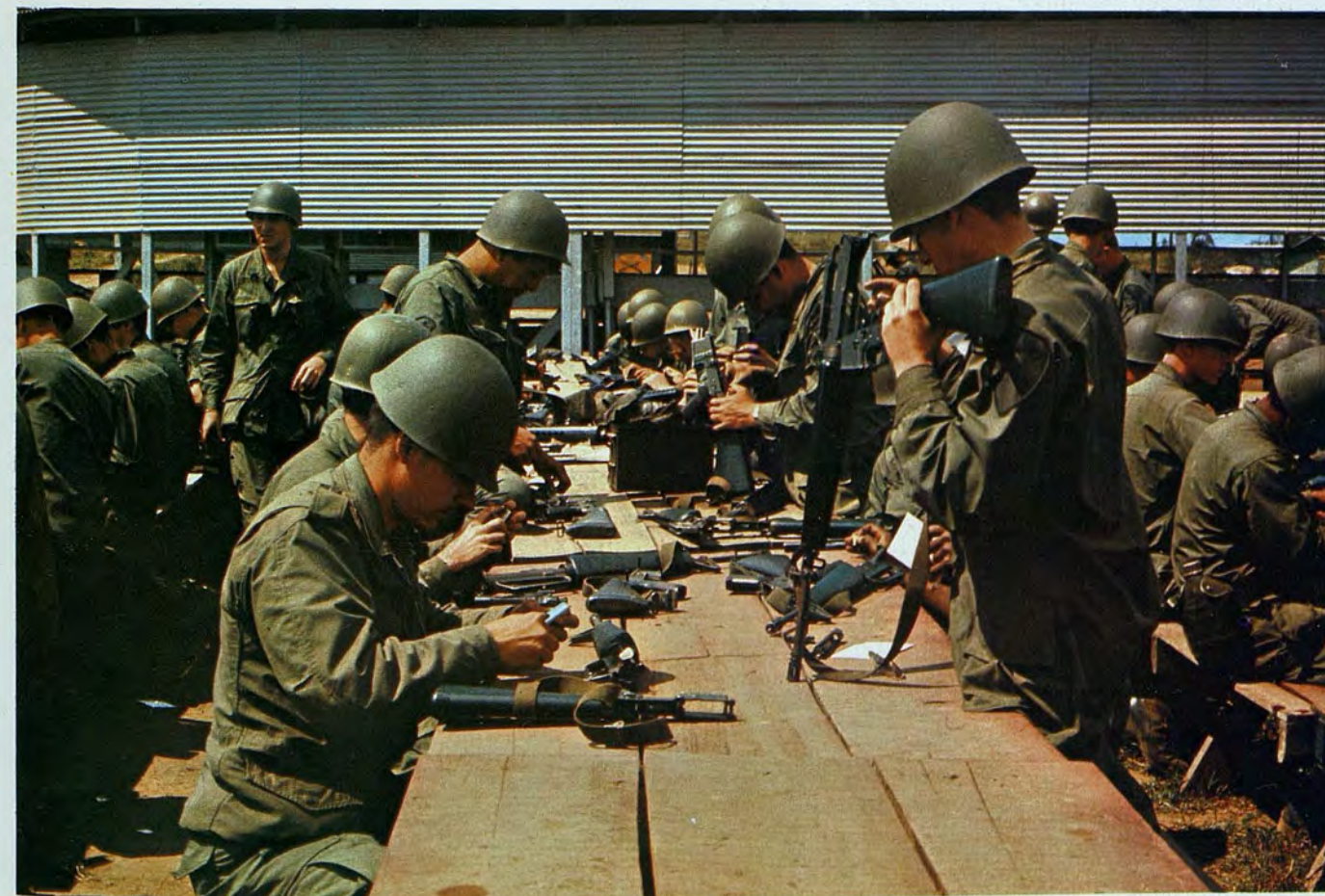
One full day is devoted to briefing on enemy weapons, history of the division from its start to present operations, civil affairs, communications, Medevac, trip flares and claymore mines.

Other instruction at the DTC includes mines and booby traps, different types of leaves, and early-outs.

The instruction at the DTC is given by NCOs who have spent time in the field with infantry units and by officers who are specialized on a specific topic that new in-country arrivals need to know. Many times personal experiences are used to emphasize a point.

The morning after the third day at the DTC, the graduates are loaded onto a bus and taken to the airport where they fly to their various units.

The training is often directed at the 11 Braves and 11 Charlies—the infantrymen—but everybody is grateful to have had it.



Part Two

Holiday From A War Zone

Boy, this is really a tough decision to make. I just can't seem to make up my mind where I should take my R&R. Everyone I have talked to said that the place they went was the greatest. Where should I go?

HONG KONG

Located on one of the most beautiful harbors in the world, the Chinese city of Hong Kong is a combination of charm, beauty, splendor, and just plain fun. Almost anything that can be found in a major American city can also be discovered in Hong Kong—and often at a much better price.

Specialist Five Al Garcia, who recently returned from a Hong Kong R&R, took advantage of some of the city's excellent buys. "I picked up three tailor-made suits for \$120," grinned Garcia. "Not junk, either. Excellent material. I also grabbed a camera for \$99 that would have cost me over \$200 back in the 'World.' You can't beat their prices on a lot of things."

Of course, the city abounds with shops, bars, excellent restaurants, and scores of plush clubs.

Recommended hotels in Hong Kong are the Hong Kong Hilton and the President, where, for reasonable

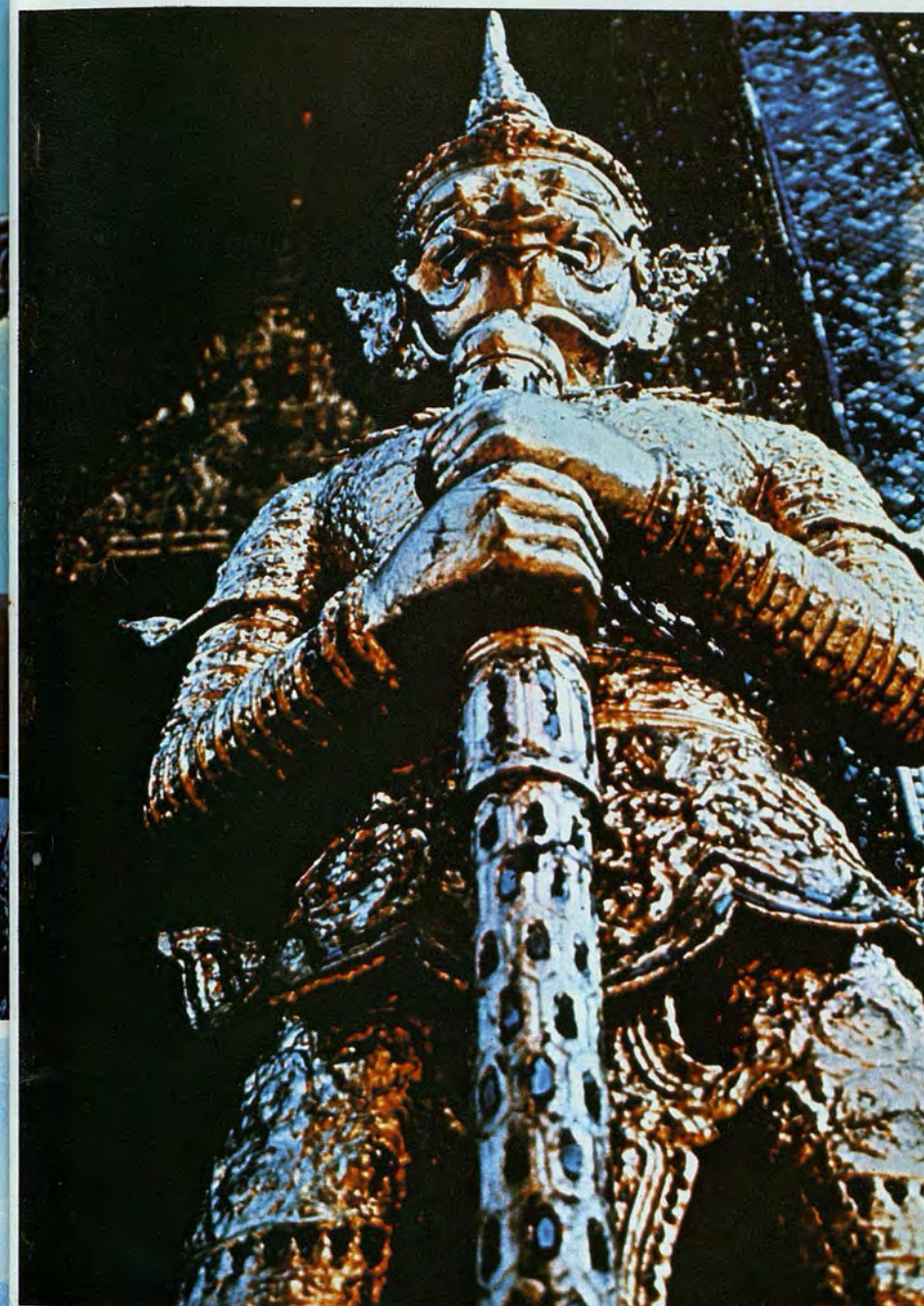


(Right) Two Chinese Junks are silhouetted against the setting sun in Hong Kong Harbor. (Above) Two oriental beauties are pictured in their native Mandarin dresses.





Bringing together both the old and new worlds, Hong Kong offers Skytroopers on a vacation everything he could want while forgetting the rigors of war for a few days.



Night fall in Kowloon brings a bright array of colored lights. Not all Chinese girls wear the old fashioned Mandarin attire, some prefer the modern style. One of the features of Bangkok are its many temples with their towering statues.



prices, one can enjoy luxurious privacy, one thing the average soldier doesn't get much of in Vietnam.

Most Skytroopers can't help but comment on the ladies of Hong Kong. One returnee stated, "They're gorgeous. In one block you're liable to see ten or twelve really beautiful women. It's fantastic."

Many tours are offered in Hong Kong and you would probably be making a big mistake if you didn't take one, at least. A stranger in a town can't possibly see everything there is to see in five days, but a complete tour could guarantee him see-

ing the most important sights, anyway.

The majority of Skytroopers returning from Hong Kong R&R's praise the town and the people highly. If you're interested in picking up some real bargains, as well as having a real swinging time, Hong Kong could well be your best choice for Rest and Recuperation.

BANGKOK

Becoming an increasingly harder-to-obtain allocation for R&R is Bangkok, the capital city of Thailand and one of the most charming cities of the East.

A town of festivals and holidays, Bangkok offers the vacationer such items of interest as antique temples and shrines (thought by many to be the most beautiful in the world), a swinging, jet-set style of night life, miles of cool beach-front, an age-old culture, and even the famed bridge over the River Kwai of World War II and motion-picture fame.

For the souvenir hunter, the city boasts a collection of the finest silks and jewels in this part of the world. Beautiful sculptures, wood carvings, and a variety of beads are also available to purchase for yourself or your

family back home.

Beach lovers need not necessarily go to Hawaii or Sydney on their R&R. Bangkok's Pattaya Beach offers swimming, sailing, fishing, water skiing, or just plain relaxing in the tropical surroundings.

One Skytrooper who tried Bangkok for his R&R stated, "At first, I wasn't really looking forward to Bangkok so much. I was just interested in getting out of 'Nam for five days. But when I hit Bangkok, I fell in love with the city almost immediately. The women are beautiful, the scenery is beautiful, everything about it is great. I'm de-

finitely going to try to get back someday."

Recommended hotels in the capital include the Thai International, the Century, the Continental, and the Miami. Reasonable prices as well as plush atmosphere can be found in any of these places.

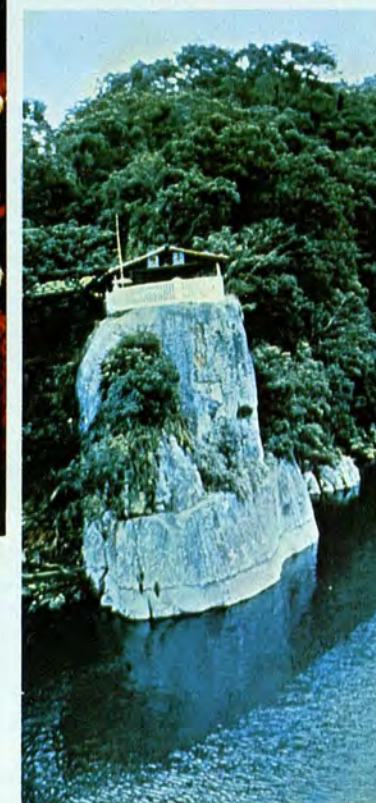
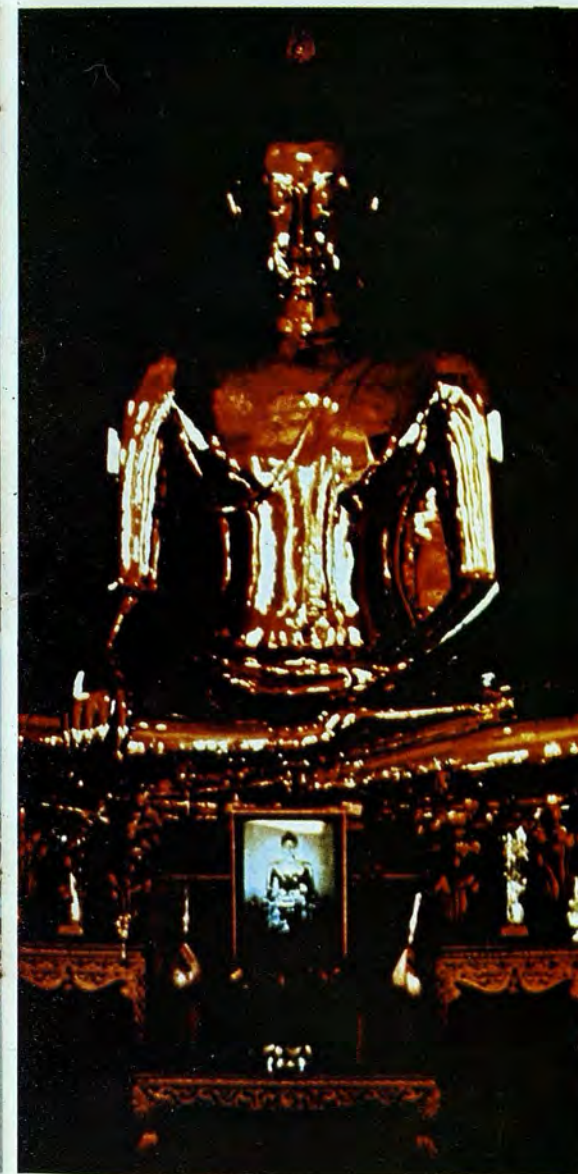
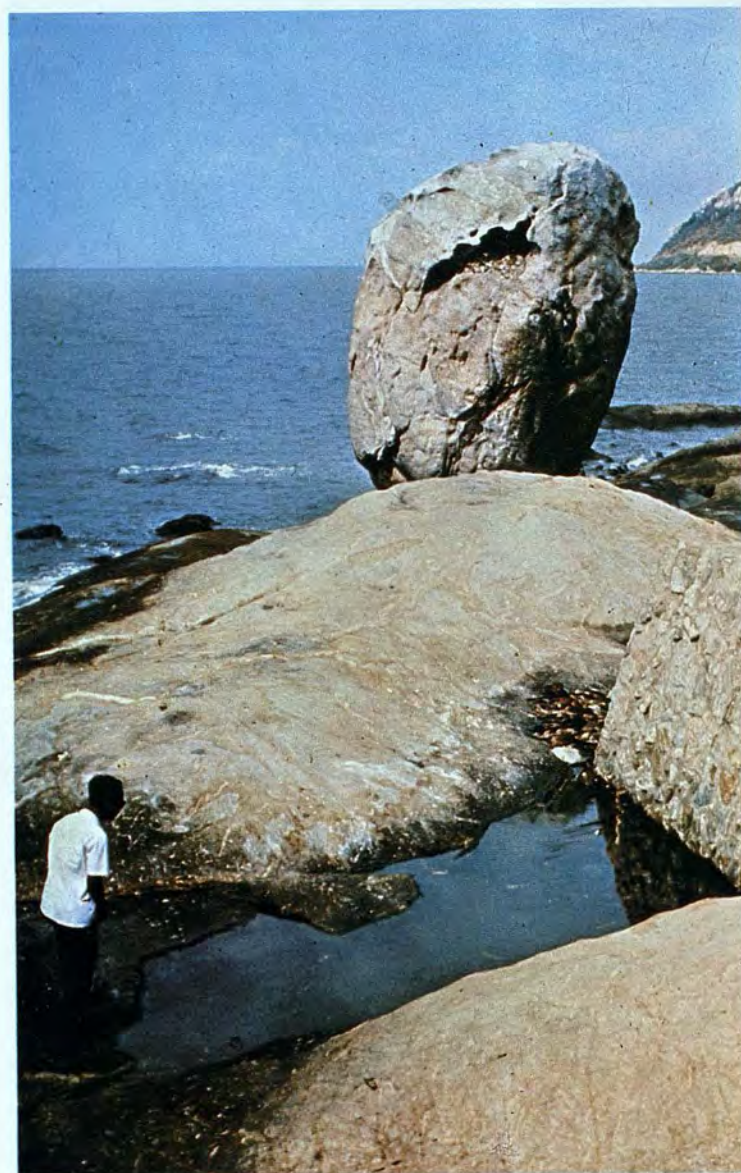
While in Bangkok, check into points of interest to include the Emerald Buddha, the Grand Palace, the Marble Temple, and the Floating Market. All are excellent subjects for the camera bug, as well as for those who just enjoy seeing a part of Bangkok's history.

Put in for your Bangkok R&R early, as the allocations don't last long. You probably won't be disappointed that you did.

TAIPEI

Taiwan, an island off the mainland of China, is often called the "Terraced Bay" of the Orient. The capital city of Taipei, known to most of the Western world as Formosa, is a city of beautiful women, hundreds of restaurants and clubs, old shops, new hotels, and beautiful scenery.

The dozens of small market shops



Some of the many sights which might pass in front of the Skytrooper's eyes in Bangkok are the Bonson Beach (Left) the floating market (Below) and the unusual Thai style of boxing.

BANGKOK

With its many temples, beaches and shops provides a change of pace for weary Skytroopers seeking fun and pleasure.



Some of the things which make Taipei pleasant for the vacationing Skytrooper are the National Museum, the Grass Mountain Park and theatre restaurants for a delicious evening meal and good show.

that line the narrow streets offer a unique variety of items to include wood carvings and ancient scrolls, musical instruments made from snake-skin, and figurines sculpted from jade, coral, ivory and bone. One section offering bargains to the vacationer is dubbed "Haggle Alley," where nothing carries a price tag, and the amount you can bargain with the shop's owner.

For the guy who's looking for a chance to relax, the city boasts a number of hotels which could stand beside the most modern stateside inns. The plush Ambassador and President

Hotels appeal particularly to the Westerner who desires a little home-like atmosphere amid an Oriental decor.

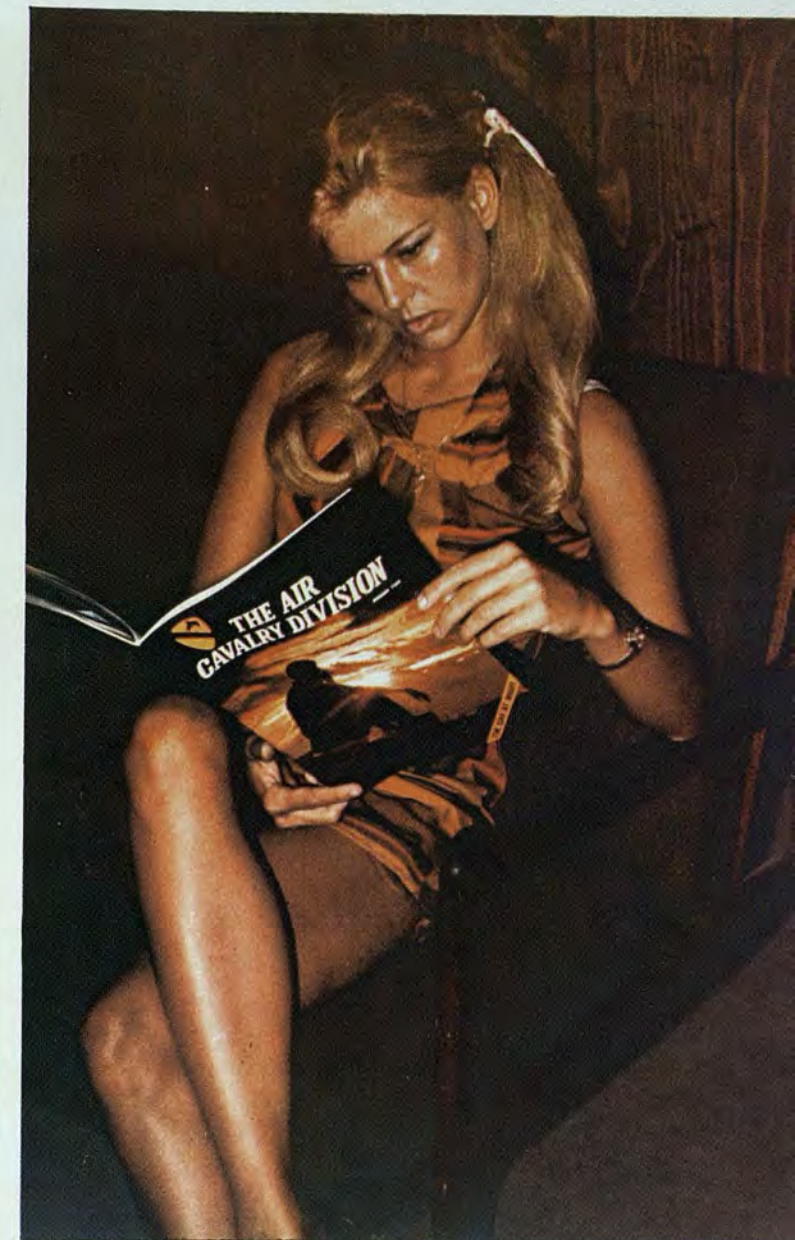
Some of the more popular night-spots are the Camel and the Play Boy cabarets, the Suzie Wong, the Little Women, and the Play Mate. Virtually any mixed drink you prefer can be made, and most of the clubs employ hostesses who will chat with you, usually in exceptional English.

Taipei is a relatively inexpensive R&R when compared, for example, to the cost of a vacation in Hawaii or

Tokyo. It's probably a wiser choice for those who prefer a more intimate town. One Skytrooper, who is current on a six-month extension in Vietnam, said, "During the first year I was here I went to Tokyo on leave and Sydney on R&R. I just got back from Taipei on my extension R&R. I enjoyed it more than the other two put together. I'm from a medium-sized town in the 'World' and I just felt more at home in Taipei. It's smaller, easier to get around, and it still swings like mad. It's some great town."

WHAT SORT OF GIRL READS THE AIR CAVALRY DIVISION MAGAZINE?

We know this much: she has class, and good taste. Heads turn when she walks down the street. This young swinger's hobbies include grooving to a jazz combo in a dimly lit after-hours club, walking in a sunlit park on an autumn afternoon, and men. Special men! And what men could be more special than those written about in her favorite magazine, the magazine of **THE FIRST TEAM, THE AIR CAVALRY DIVISION.**



Watch for Bobbie Kieth nightly with the weather on AFVN-TV

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