

Vol. 1, No. 4

SUMMER, 1969

THUNDER!



THE BATTLE OF SOU TRE

A hand-drawn map titled "THE BATTLE OF SOU TRE" showing military movements and positions. The map is overlaid with a grid with vertical coordinates 69, 70, 71, 72, 73 and horizontal coordinates 38, 39, 40. A central circular area with a jagged border represents a fortified position. Arrows indicate various attacks: "VC FEINT ATTACK" from the west (position B 2/77), "SECONDARY VC ATTACK" from the northwest (position A 2/77), "MAIN VC ATTACK" from the southeast (position C 2/77), and "ARMORED AND MECH RELIEF COLUMN FROM 2/22 AND 2/34" from the southwest. A dashed line labeled "ROUTE OF VC WITHDRAWAL" leads from the central position towards the northeast, passing a radio tower (position 3/22) and a headquarters (HQ 2/77). Two specific points on the central position are marked with 'X' and labeled "A 3/22" and "B 3/22". A compass rose in the bottom right corner indicates North (N).

As the battle raged, men of the 2d Battalion, 12th Infantry rushed in from the northwest, while the 2d Battalion, 34th Armor and the 2d Battalion (Mechanized), 22d Infantry raced in from the west.

3d Battalion, 22d Infantry
2d Battalion (Mechanized), 22d Infantry
2d Battalion, 34th Armor
2d Battalion, 12th Infantry
2d Battalion, 77th Artillery

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the Voice of Tropic Lightning **THUNDER!**

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Front When four Honda motorcycles arrived in crates at the 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry's supply room at Tay Ninh base camp, nobody was sure what to do with them. It wasn't long before they were assembled and roaring down enemy trails in War Zone C, where SP4 David DeMauro took this photo.

Back The sound of rotors slapping against the humid air is welcome at remote forward bases as it signals the arrival of vital supplies. A member of the Department of the Army Special Photography Team captured this Chinook helicopter delivering a load to a 25th Division base.

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COMMAND GROUP

MG Ellis W. Williamson
Commanding General

BG E.F. Black
BG David S. Henderson
Assistant Division Commanders

COL Robert L. Fair
Chief of Staff

INFORMATION STAFF

MAJ John C. Fairbank
Information Officer

1LT Randall S. Perry
Editor

SP4 Nick Carvagno
Assistant Editor



East of the Border

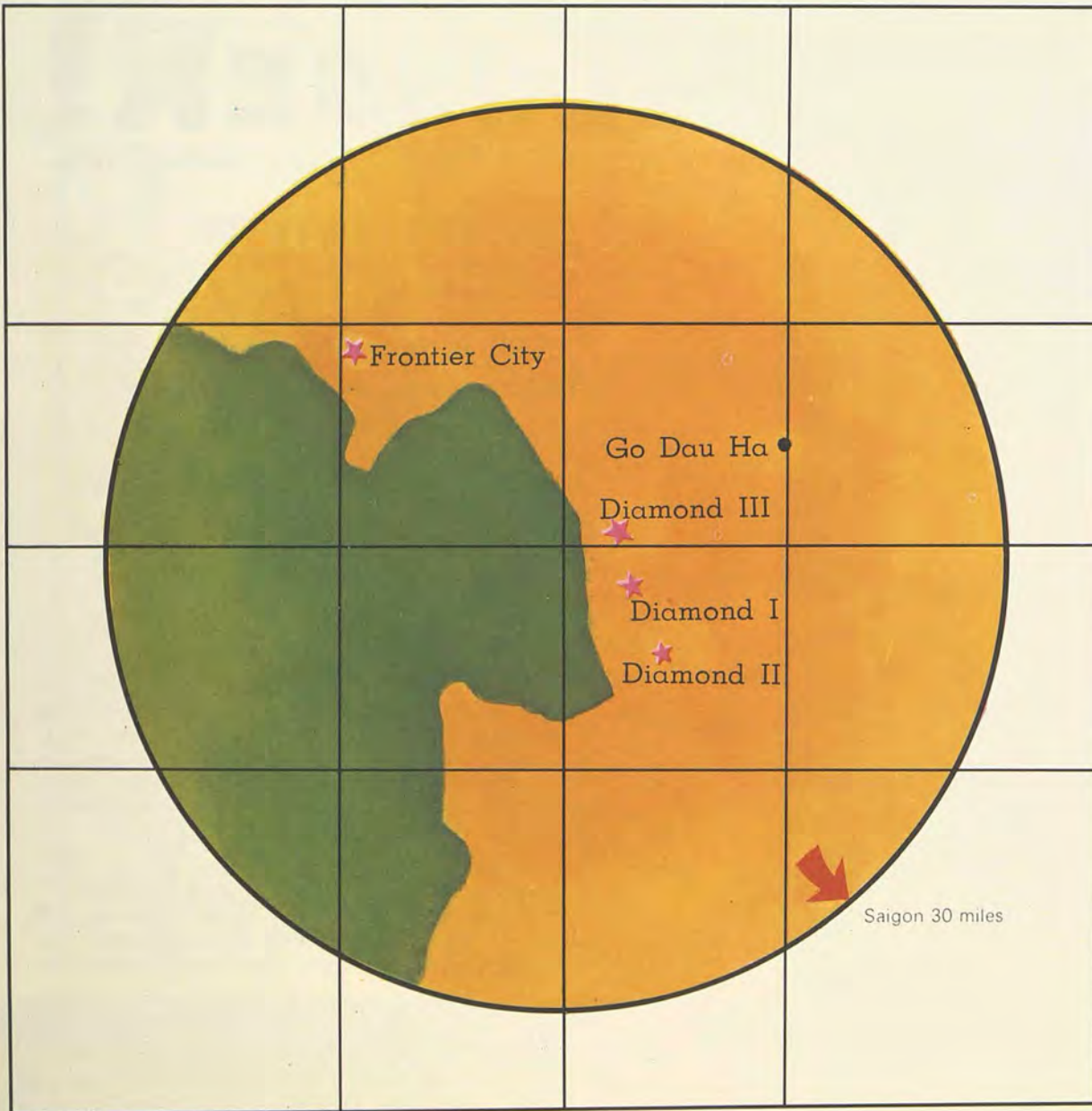
By Sp4 Harold O. Anderson

Diamonds Forever...

Two Tropic Lightning patrol bases near Cambodia, one called "Diamond III", the other "Frontier City". Small, amazingly small, barely 125 meters across. Yet these two tiny bases would account for two of the most lopsided, hardest fought battles of the war. Four hundred eleven North Vietnamese would die. Thirteen Americans would lose their lives.

The name "Diamond" seems incongruous. There was no beauty, no glitter. "Frontier City" is more appropriate. These battles were every bit as wild and dangerous as any the old west ever saw.

The battle of Diamond III was the third chapter in the "Diamond saga" that began in February at Patrol Base Diamond I. It all led up



to the climactic action at Diamond III in mid-April.

Diamond III lies 15 miles west of Cu Chi base camp. Two companies of Wolfhounds from the 2d Battalion, 27th Infantry and artillerymen from the 1st Battalion, 8th Artillery are its occupants. The patrol base lies in a giant open plain. When the wind blows, giant dust clouds sweep freely into the air.

All three Diamond patrol bases lay along the same plain near the "Angel's Wing" section of the South Vietnam-Cambodia border. All three withstood raging assaults by North Vietnamese elements charging across the border. Diamond III withstood the biggest attack of all.

The first Diamond was hit by a fierce attack from an enemy force coming from the base's south on Feb. 23. One hundred nine North Vietnamese died in a ferocious 10-hour battle. An uneasy quiet settled on the patrol base the next day, but nothing happened.

Early on the morning of the 25th, rockets and mortars rained into the perimeter again. Under cover of the barrage, a regiment of North Vietnamese tried a ground assault.

The enemy's attack was so devastating that for a short time the southern portion of the perimeter was neutralized by smoke, dirt and debris.

Then the Tropic Lightning firepower struck back by calling in all the elements in its arsenal.

The enemy assault was turned back. Artillery, gunships, "spooky" ships, air strikes all contributed.

But it was the ground trooper who drove the enemy off.

"I shoved my M-16 into the chest of an enemy soldier who had penetrated the concertina wire

A Tropic Lightning trooper mans his guard post at one of the lonely renowned outposts.



and pulled the trigger," said platoon sergeant Gonzales A. Marquez of Columbus, Ga.

Ambush patrols circulated outside Diamond I's perimeter and kept the enemy assault forces off guard.

Artillery units fired point blank at enemy soldiers still inside the wire.

"It was just like a firefight except that we were using 105's," said Specialist 4 John Jasinski of St. Paul, Minn.

Thus, the first chapter of the "Diamond Saga" ended. "Diamonds are forever!" they said after the battle. Two months later, after Diamonds II and III, they could repeat it.

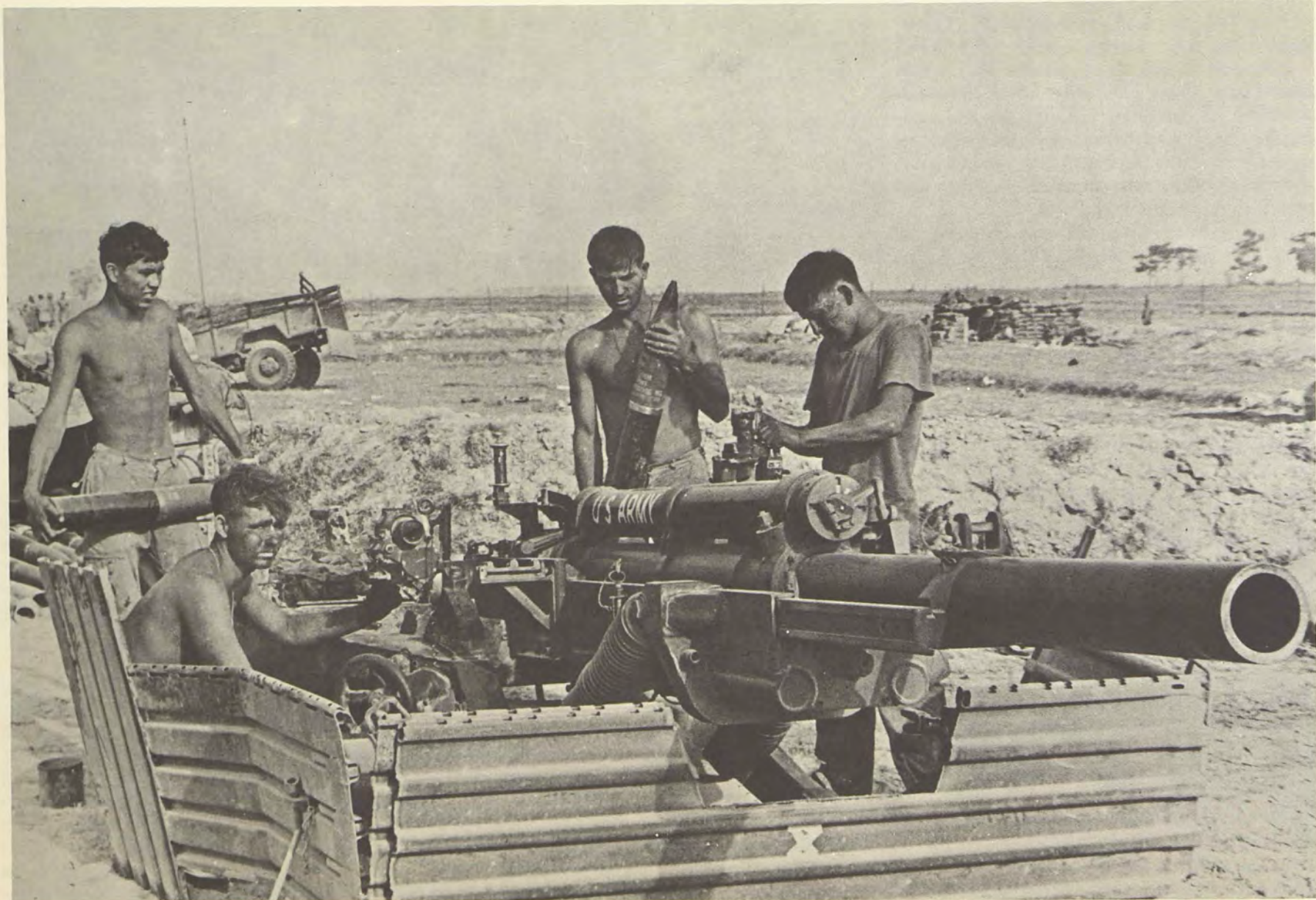
During March, Diamond I was dismantled and Diamond II was built. On April 5 and 6, the new base showed its mettle and lived up to the reputation of Diamond I.

At Diamond II, the enemy never breached the wire. His movement was detected by guards and ambush patrols; artillery and airstrikes broke the back of the assault before it got near the base.

"The battle was over actually before it got started," said First Lieutenant Robert Nebiker of Maywood, N.J.

In two days of battle, 81 enemy died.

Then came Diamond III. Of the three Diamonds, III was the closest to Cambodia, near the tip of the "Angel's Wing". The Wolfhounds moved out of Diamond II early on the morning of April 16. Their mission was to establish Diamond III in 24 hours—a task usually requiring three days. The reason: intelligence reports estimated massed NVA strength in the area; thus to maintain security the base had to be established quickly.



Frontier City . . .

The task started immediately. Digging bunkers. Filling sandbags. Stringing wire. They were tired by afternoon, but the base had to be completed. By dusk it was finished. Fatigue, Sweat.

Now came the wait. Those long, lonely hours in the dark are the worst. It was 3:30 am. Time to change the guard. Wait! Movement out 800 meters southwest. Command bunker notified.

The first rounds of artillery were fired. Gunships from Bravo Company, 25th Aviation Battalion were called in and the battle began.

At 3:15 am, the enemy started sending in mortars all over the camp.

"It was the most intense mortar attack that I have experienced, twice as bad as the attacks on Diamond I and Diamond II," said First Lieutenant James J. Sullivan of Chaton, N. J.

There were very few injuries considering that approximately 400 shells hit inside the perimeter. Then came a lull. The mortars stopped.

The NVA regrouped for a ground assault. The Tropic Lightning soldiers stood ready; but that quiet, that damned quiet after the mortars



Cannoneers from the 1st Battalion, 8th Artillery gave Diamonds added lustre.

Nelson

stop. You know they're coming and all you can do is be ready.

Earlier that evening, three listening posts had been established, one to the west, one to the north, and one to the south. Wolfhounds at the western LP took advantage of the lull to break for the patrol base.

They made it. The post to the east had suffered some casualties, while the post to the north held, kept low, and had no injuries.

Phase two of the NVA attack. They never vary their tactics, they thought—always a mortar attack then a ground attack.

A hail of RPG's and small arms fire. They were moving up toward the perimeter. Gunships showered lead from the sky. Artillery boomed its deadly payloads.

As the RPG's rained in, sapper squads closed on the perimeter's defensive wire armed with bangalore torpedoes and AK-47's in a desperate attempt to breach the lines.

Specialist 4 William Baumgardner of Huntington, Pa., recalled, "They blew the wire in front and right of my position. So we put a lot of fire in that direction. We were ready for them, and they never got inside."

Outside the concertina, flare ships and spookies turned night into day. Dust and the stench of gunpowder filled the air around the camp. Artillery, gunships, and air strikes broke the back of the enemy advance as automatic weapons cut him down in front.

At one point, 105mm Howitzers fired point blank into charging NVA. Two Howitzers fired an amazing total of 300 rounds during the peak of the battle.

Dawn was approaching. The red sun was nearly risen. The NVA knew it, and the inevitable retreat began. They fired a last volley,

then broke contact altogether and scurried into their sanctuary across the border. Fire ceased at 6:30 am.

Diamond III survived intact, but 198 NVA soldiers didn't. The victory wasn't easy or cheap. Thirteen Americans died.

"Diamonds are forever" was no cliché, no byword. It was a reality, earned by the determination of Tropic Lightning soldiers. An important enemy infiltration route was blocked.

Patrol base Frontier City had no predecessors, no reputation going for it. But just as the legendary frontier cities its name conjurs up—Dodge City, Tombstone, Abilene—this Frontier City lived up to its legend as a tough, impenetrable fortress.

The base was established late in April by C



Company Manchus from the 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry. The base would also house artillerymen from the 7th Battalion, 11th Artillery.

Like Diamond III, Frontier City sat temptingly close to the Cambodian Border near another enemy infiltration route. An attack against the post seemed inevitable. No one could have guessed that this was to be an even bigger rout of the enemy than Diamond III.

It was April 25. The Manchus were barely settled in their new patrol base.

"We were ready for them," recalled Major Harry D. Ray, Jr., the Manchus' operations officer. "We really had expected them to hit us the first night we were there, in fact; so the longer we waited the more anxious we got."

Ambush patrols were out. At 10:10 pm they

alerted that enemy activity was increasing on all sides of the base.

Four hours went by. Nothing. Suddenly, a 107mm rocket crashed into the camp and broke the silence. The battle was on.

Nineteen more 107's and more than 250 82mm mortar rounds would come into the camp during the night. Manchu mortar crews scrambled to the parapets and immediately began returning fire.

Gunships from the 25th Aviation Battalion and Delta Troop, 3d Squadron, 4th Cavalry were already on the scene and blasted away at enemy mortar positions. Air Force spookies patrolled high above. Artillery from Tay Ninh

The battles on the plains of the Angel's Wing area cause a dismal haze of dust and smoke (left) to rise. An illumination flare slowly descends to the ground near the Cambodian border (right).

and all fire support bases within reach sent out hundreds of rounds in support.

Then came the quiet, just as at Diamond III. Soon, ground attack. Sapper squads reached the wire only to find direct artillery and M-60 machine gun fire pointed directly at them.

At one point, company commander Captain Ramon T. Pulliam of Chattanooga, Tenn., went to the bunker line himself and manned an M-60 during the height of an enemy assault. His inspiration kept many of the men going.

"Captain Pulliam did a great job in keeping everything running smoothly," said Private First Class Floyd Sinclair of Union, S.C., "and when we saw him take over that M-60, it made us want to fight that much more."

The main ground attack lasted an hour. It seemed a week. At no time did any NVA get

beyond the wire. Sporadic fire continued for three more hours. "Won't dawn ever get here?" they wondered.

At first light, the Manchus looked out across the perimeter and saw little else than enemy bodies, 213 of them stretched across the wire, lying in the fields beyond. Through a fantastic combination of determination, skill and luck, not a single American was killed. There were seven soldiers slightly wounded.

"It was the fiercest fighting I've ever seen," said Ray. "Our air and artillery support was tremendous. We had air support on three sides and artillery on a fourth. We couldn't have been better prepared."

Frontier City had proven that the infiltration routes from Cambodia above the "Angel's

Wing" were closed. The Vietnamese in the area could live in security. Frontier City had lived up to its "legend".

And, as at Diamond III, the overwhelming victory at Frontier City proved a kind of invincibility.

"Diamonds are forever!" "Frontier City stands!"

One look at the face of an infantryman after the battles is convincing evidence of the victory and its price. It was bought with his blood and the bright young years of his life. He won't stand up and yell, "We won!" He probably won't say much of anything. But he's there. His patrol base survived. The enemy was driven off.



25th Inf





Portrayal

Two Americans...

There is value in the Vietnam experience

The influence of Youth has reached into every facet of our lives. Whether it be the vocal minority demonstrating on scattered college campuses; or others, seemingly more typical citizens attempting to find their place in society; Youth is becoming a more powerful force in the American society.

Two members of the 25th Infantry Division, Captain Jim Kelsey and Staff Sergeant Stephen Duerk of Division Headquarters, here give their impressions of and reactions to the rapidly changing face of Youth.

Pensive Jim Kelsey is a 25 year old captain. He completed his Bachelor's Degree in education at the University of Rhode Island in 1965. He plans to make the Army his career.

"Today's youth is better educated than any previous generation. I won't say they're misguided, but I think too many feel they have to have an ideal. They have to have a reason to exist, and they grab hold of something like SDS. And this is the way you can be 'in' with the group—and they may or may not really believe in it.

Let's take Columbia. Four hundred kids at Columbia put 22,000 kids out of work, or out of school. I still don't think that's a majority. That 400 is the cream of the crop intellectually—they are verbose by all means—and they also make headlines. They're brilliant students, but I still believe that it takes time and wisdom to make these big decisions that these kids are

trying to make.

Like pulling out of Vietnam, which of course is the biggest thing they're pushing right now. Bring them out and that will...? Yes, stop the war; stop the killing—from our point of view. The U.S. will withdraw completely. Okay—but what about these people to whom we have given some assistance? Do we leave them on the limb? Do we just say to heck with it—thanks a lot—it's been a nice seven years now—we'll see you later? Do we have any moral responsibility to them any more? Do we owe them something—or do they owe us something? These decisions I don't think can be made on a 22 year-old level—or 25 year-old. And I don't think George Washington at 22 was

Two Soldiers...

By 1Lt Jim Black

I can relate myself to these people

Staff Sergeant Stephen Duerk is a 27 year old University of North Carolina graduate who joined the Army in 1967. Unlike Kelsey, Sergeant Duerk is not a career soldier, he will return to a New York management position at the end of his Vietnam tour.

"Probably the biggest thing we read about today is the disturbances on the college campuses. When I went to college there weren't disturbances like we have now. Students tried to have a voice to some extent, but they didn't feel they had to go to violence for it. I agree with the students in some cases, where they want to change curriculums to better suit themselves and better advance themselves, but I firmly believe that this violence or militant activity is

wrong. It's the wrong way to go about it. Organization without discipline is not right; it leads to nothing but violence.

But at the same time the universities and colleges should work very closely with the young people to learn from them what they desire. The universities cannot stay stagnant—teaching philosophy that's been going on for 40 or 50 years—it has to be changed to meet with today's needs. Only through discussion can these things be changed. I do feel that the youth of today have a right to their means of expression, to their own voice, for the simple reason they are in the majority. There's no reason why they shouldn't have a view or shouldn't be allowed to express their views, or run the country, as

we've noted we have younger and younger presidents and members of the legislative bodies. But we can't allow people who don't have a direction to run our country. We have to have people who are mature and who have had experience in organization.

The people who run our government and our lives, no matter what their age, must be able to think for all the masses. We can't afford to have people who think along one line only—that their particular group must do this or that. Our young leaders as well as our elder leaders must be able to define their aims—whether they're trying to represent themselves or one small group, or they're trying to represent the entire country.



Black



Black

Kelsey

making historic statements as to the situation at that time.

I think if a person has a legitimate social gripe that's fine; but a guy tagging along just to get an easy way out of class—that's something else. There will be malcontents anywhere. I think it's tragic that such a small minority is putting such a great majority in jeopardy.

This is a new generation group—one that's more verbal, and I think to these young people the Army appears to be a large corporation that sort of overwatches the whole United States and applies too much pressure. I'll grant we're not the world's big brother; but it's our position in the world. It's our position in the world to see that nobody exerts any pressure—on us first of all. That's one of the reasons the Army is there—to let America go its own way without any overt pressure from anybody else.

Granted, we're not the world's watchdog, but we are, by signature to many countries, their guardians and we can live up to that or we can pass it down. I honestly see more liberalism in the future of the U.S., but no great changes. Our leaders will have to become aware

that we have an educated public—these people are not going to listen to just anything to cover up the story. They are interested in how government is being run. They're interested in how much money government is spending, and personally I think there will be less government in public affairs in the future. We're going to try to get the federal government away from being attached to so many institutions. This is one of the greatest pressures right now; and this is being brought up more and more in college demonstrations.

American young people want a voice in government—be it at the college level or national level. They won't accept the old ways of doing things just because it's always been that way. You people want answers, they won't accept the status quo.

I'm hoping to get into the FAS Program with the Army—that is Foreign Area Specialists. I enjoy travelling, I enjoy meeting people; I've had some real good experiences working with people from other countries. It's a real challenging program they've got and a chance to do something for the image of the United States,

as a politician.

You know you can be a real politician and be a military man—I mean that's one of the things a politician does. A politician has an image—he has to have or he's a non-entity. And a good officer is, in many ways, a politician because it's his job to show us to our contemporaries—and if you're going to be in the military for any length of time you're going to have some direct contact with some other country. Either you're going to be in school with a considerable number of foreign officers or you'll have an assignment overseas; and you'll do an awful lot by just presenting what you feel to be a proper picture of the United States.

We got the intellectuals and the radicals and the people that wanted to push ahead back in the 1600's and 1700's from all of the other countries, and it's made America into the great country it is today. Our young people are a part of all this; maybe sometimes their methods are unorthodox, but basically they are looking for something to build on—in some cases to rebuild."





Black

Duerk

Young people today are demanding that they be heard and they are using their voice productively. You'll find this is very true in the Army as well. Not too many years ago, your higher ranking officers and NCO's were much older than they are today. Your platoon sergeants today and your platoon leaders are young men, sometimes in their early 20's and their teens. To a great extent these are the people who are running the Army today. On the battlefield it's the young boy that's 19 years old that's making the decisions. It's not always the person who has a great deal of experience, with years and years in the service, it's a guy who came in for two years, he's here, he's got a leadership position and he's doing his job. A majority are no more than 20 years old. And they're out there leading platoons; they're making the decisions and their company commanders and their battalion commanders are turning to them for decisions and directions of what they think should be done.

In the future things will have to level off somewhat. We'll continue to have the young people making the decisions as they have been,

but I don't personally believe there will be any radical changes.

I'm sure this will help a great deal in settling down some of the problem we have in the service. Especially people who are here and don't want to be and make it well known, and therefore cause problems to the extent that things that are needed to be done are not done. I think a volunteer Army will someday eliminate a lot of these problems; things will become much more efficient and there'll be a great deal of money saved.

Regarding the civilian world, there's no doubt that youth will prevail. But I think that everyone in the very near future will be able to see that things are going to level off. The people who are not mature are not going to take over the country as some people seem to think. It will be the young, mature individual—the person who's working for an entire group at one time who's going to be in charge. In other words things are not going to keep going downhill to where an 18 year old boy is running a large militant organization. People are not going to allow militants, no matter what their age or

ideology, to ruin the freedom that we have in our country.

I have seen young people do the jobs that were, in the past, expected to be done by the older people. I've seen how they've done it and I'm proud of it. I hope that when I go back to civilian life, I'll have a chance to be active in civic affairs and have the opportunity to express my opinions. Because a person is young is no reason to condemn him as not having the ability to make community decisions. It is the young people who have the majority. We are basically intelligent and are looking for the chance to do something that will mean something to our society.





Bandits Who Steal People

By Sp4 Richard Huhta

Sp4 John Haydock

‘it takes a VC to catch a VC’

The old adage about using a thief to trap a thief has been put to good use in a new way. "It takes a VC to catch a VC."

So says Captain William R. Phelps, an intelligence officer and leader of the Bandits. For almost a year now, he and his small unit of Bandits, consisting of former Viet Cong who have rallied to the Government of Vietnam, have been chasing the enemy around and down in large numbers. Their target is the Viet Cong Infrastructure (VCI), or underground. The Bandits are so effective that in many areas the VCI has been broken up badly or even cleared out entirely.

It is the VCI that puts the guerrillas and part-time enemy soldiers to work, equips them, and

leads them. Phelps believes that the key to winning the war lies in the total destruction of the infrastructure.

The Bandits plan their strategy from even the slightest tidbits of intelligence. They read thoroughly every report, and often hang an entire operation on a mere hint or tip.

A recent mission which the Bandit team successfully completed involved a Viet Cong leader who wanted to change sides but was afraid to come in alone and give himself up. The Bandits got word to him to rendezvous at a certain place and time. The Bandits would be there to pick him up.

The lead could very easily have been a trap. But the "Bandits" went about carrying out their plans.

With a support platoon from Charlie Company, 2d Battalion, 14th Infantry, Phelps ordered his men to surround the pre-selected complex of hootches where the rendezvous was

to occur. On signal, he and the Bandits breezed into a hut.

They found the Vietnamese waiting there for them and for his chance to rally. The Hoi Chanh (rallier) had no weapon, and everyone acted glad to see him switch sides; especially, his family, which was there with him.

"We are using the oldest psychological system known in the Orient—the family—to persuade enemy soldiers to surrender," said Phelps, commenting on the incident.

But the Bandits use other techniques, too. On another mission, the VCI team flew over an area infested with the enemy using a loudspeaker to persuade the Viet Cong that it was time to chieu-hoi (rally).

At other times, the Bandits may attend weddings and funerals in disguise and pick out Viet Cong in the crowd. They sneak into targeted hootches during the night hours and either wake up the Viet Cong they are after or

Huhta



While a platoon from Charlie Company, 2d Battalion, 14th Infantry, double times to cordon a hamlet, the Bandits move into the center of the complex to search for a known Viet Cong in hiding.

hide and wait for him to return.

On occasion they may leave notes with the parents of known infrastructure leaders. In the letters they state that the Bandits know who the individual is, what his activities are, and that it will only be a short time before they catch up with him.

Phelps was quick to give credit to those who made much of his success possible. He praised the 116th Assault Helicopter Company, which sets the Bandits down almost on top of their targets. Their accuracy has prevented many suspects from reacting or escaping.

The 2d Brigade's 2d Battalion, 14th Infantry has also supported the VCI teams on many missions. The Golden Dragons, with their manpower and tactics, have been able to react to sound intelligence reports through the 25th Division Military Intelligence Detachment.

Phelps said, "The Bandits feel as if they are part of the battalion, because they have worked with the men so many times. The Duc Hoa District, which is the 2/14 area of operations, is a main approach for Viet Cong attacks on Saigon."

In the Duc Hoa District alone, primarily in the village of My Hanh, the Bandits have killed, arrested, or induced to rally well over 600 members of the Viet Cong Infrastructure.

On one mission in that area, the Bandits and the Golden Dragons Reconnaissance platoon came in contact with a Duc Hoa District Viet Cong Reconnaissance Platoon. After a short

With the family looking on (left) an old friend is questioned about enemy activity in the area. When the bandits are in hot pursuit (right) of Viet Cong fire-fighting often breaks out.

firefight, the combined units overwhelmed the Viet Cong, killing or capturing all but one man. A short time later, even that one Viet Cong gave himself up to the allied forces.

The Bandits' tactics in the firefight were straightforward and effective. According to Phelps, whenever the VCI Team is hit, the men automatically assault the attacking position. "If the enemy doesn't escape or get killed, he's ours," Phelps explained. "The Viet Cong have come to expect us to move slowly up to their position. We have a fix on the target and try to drop right in on them."

The operation's success belongs to the Bandits themselves. "Being former Viet Cong, they know the tactics used by the enemy," Phelps said. "You just have to understand the enemy to react to whatever he may do."

Phelps cited the example of trap doors.



Huhta



Huhta

"These Bandits know where the VC dig their tunnels and how they cover and conceal the opening. It's very easy for a company to walk right over a trap door because they do not usually know what to look for."

So far, the Bandits have not had a man killed or one seriously wounded during any of their missions—which is quite a record.

A team member found his wife had been captured by the enemy and taken to Cambodia. When news of the incident reached the Bandits, they quickly got word to the Viet Cong: "We figure there are only eight of us. But there are 500 of your wives around. Let's leave the families out of it."

The kidnapped woman was returned without incident; and to this day, not one of the Bandits has had trouble between his family and the Viet Cong.

Phelps got the idea for starting a squad like the Bandits back in 1966 when he worked for Military Assistance Command Vietnam. He was sure it would work, but he never had the opportunity to exploit the concept.

But during this tour, his second in South Vietnam, Phelps has put it to work on a large scale.

As an active group, the VCI Team had their beginning on July 30, 1968, when two Viet Cong ralliers led an American unit to some caches. The two men each had approximately five to six years experience of working with the infrastructure.

After seeing the results from only two former Viet Cong, the Army gave Phelps permission to form a larger group. The Bandits slowly grew, with most of them coming from the Duc Hoa District.



Huhta

Phelps wanted a small force with men from every phase of Viet Cong life—men who in their area could supply ideas for proper tactics.

The Bandits' interpreter closely watches what is being printed by a detained Viet Cong suspect who here is signing a written confession as to the extent of his job and duties as a member of the Viet Cong infrastructure.



Combat:

The punch to finish off what one starts. The enemy knows well about Tropic Lightning's striking strength.

Williams



Adams

Power

Having the knowledge for one's duties is inherent in Tropic Lightning's motto: Ready to strike, anywhere, anytime.

Endurance

Decision-making—an agonizing process. In combat, the job is doubly difficult. 25th's leaders have risen to the task.

Anderson



Skill

The ability to follow through, to drive out an entrenched enemy. 25th Division soldiers have chased Charlie into the open.

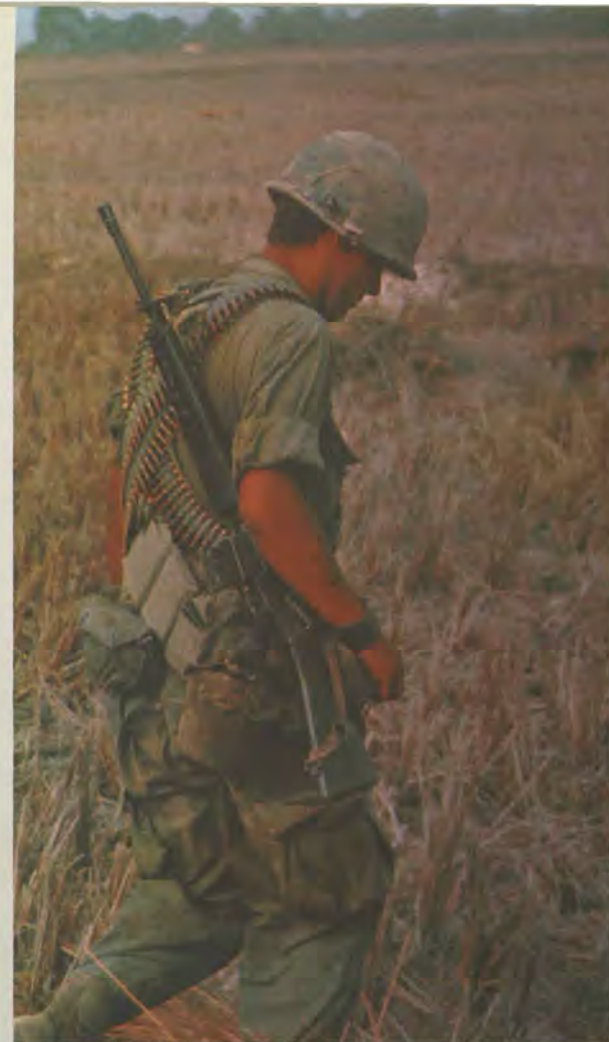
Williams



Williams

Strength

The supreme test. In three and one-half years in Vietnam, Tropic Lightning soldiers have passed the test with flying colors.



Williams

Leadership

Perseverance. The men of the Lightning patch have learned that only a patient man can outlast an elusive enemy.



Vung Tau In-Country R & R

1Lt Randall S. Perry

The coast road extending from the town, by Front Beach, and then curving around a hill toward the harbor is a truly beautiful walk or drive.



Heading out of Vung Tau toward French Beach, you pass many small docking facilities.

Vung Tau is in the midst of a combat zone. A tropical beach paradise; a beautiful sight to see. Riding a Caribou is usually a lack-luster affair, but the flight to Vung Tau is great. The pilot drops to thirty feet and whisks the plane along over pearly white beaches, fishing villages and small boats. Soaring upward he skims over a jagged hill and cuts straight across the bay. Where is the airport? Again he drops down flitting over beaches strewn with swimmers, speed boats pulling skiers and bikini-clad beach bunnies. A hard right bank and suddenly the plane lands.

Sunning and swimming at Back Beach. Who would guess you were only a few miles from rice paddies and jungles?

"All R&R people, you can catch a bus right around the back corner of the building. Have a good time."

These are the only words that you hear from the megaphone operator. From that moment on you realize that this is really meant to be a vacation.

You're on your way through a town that seems almost like any other Vietnamese town. The difference which first becomes apparent is a strong heritage; the French influence. As you come closer to the R&R center the buildings seem to become bigger and cleaner. The smell of fresh ocean water hangs in the air, and you just sit back and breathe. Suddenly the bus stops in the midst of French villas.

Out of the bus you go and after presenting a properly filled-out pass, you are admitted to the hotel.

You walk across the gardened terraces and stop at the desk. The attendant gives you a room, map and useful information about the town.

The best thing to do is go to your room, throw down your bags and jump out of your jungle wear. Then proceed into the shower, taking either a steaming hot or cold shower, whichever you prefer.

After you are sufficiently cool and relaxed, don a sport shirt, slacks and shoes. Roll a pair of swim trunks into a towel and—not forgetting your sunglasses—head toward the cafeteria. If you're staying in the Vung Tau R&R center





notice is necessary to launch your boat and skis.

Nearing the beach the scent of sea water becomes stronger and you begin to breathe deeper. Before the south China Sea becomes visible, sand dunes stretch endlessly. Encircling the area are small mountains that appear as barren as the dunes. They offer, however, tremendous view points, a king-sized Buddha, and a hilltop restaurant.

The bus's first stop at the beach is the U.S. pavilion. Jump off. There will be a myriad of small stands located along the road. Some of the younger salesmen are a little more aggressive

The large Buddha (left) sits high on a terraced hill overlooking the main harbor (below).

Perry



(enlisted ranks), you'll proceed into an air-conditioned restaurant with all the appointments. Take your seat and wait for the waitress to bring a menu. Eat what you like and as much as you like. It is all free. If you're an officer you'll have to pay for your meals at the Pacific Hotel but the good food is worth the small cost.

When you've finished your after-dinner drink, step out in front of the hotel and catch, the bus that runs every half-hour to the beach.

On the way to Back Beach you'll become familiarized enough with the city to head out on your own later in the day.

If you like to surf, boards are available at the R&R center. Just check one out and drag it along. The waves are not always whoppers but if you're lucky they'll be big enough to carry you and your board. If water skiing is your bag, register by calling the USO from your hotel. There is no charge, but a few days advance



Perry

Two Vietnamese school girls walk along the shaded streets of their city.

and crowd onto the bus if you don't beat them to the door. If you've forgotten a pair of sunglasses now is the time to purchase them. Being a shrewd person you won't think of paying more than 100 piasters. If your bargaining powers are better than average, a determined minute or two will get you a pair for 70 piasters.

Keeping your eyes straight ahead, carefully squeeze by the young ladies and aim toward the cafeteria. After going straight through and out the back, a sharp left will take you to the bath house.

Sporting your new shades and the bathing

suit you thoughtfully remembered to purchase in the PX concession at the R&R center, head straight for the beach or have an ice cold drink at the bar.

If you find after a dip in the warm South China Sea that you've allowed some salt water to pucker your whistle, summon a pineapple girl. She'll expertly carve your pineapple to look like a lemon yellow cotton candy. It's refreshing. The cost should be about 40 piasters.

The first day out you'll probably stay too long so make sure you have some cool ointment waiting in your room.

Before you start out on the town eat a relaxed meal at the center. Afterward, stroll into town. It may first appear as a struggling Las Vegas. On closer inspection those million dollar neon signs turn into strands of Christmas tree lights. It's better than tracer rounds in the boonies. Most of the shops stay open until the 10 pm curfew, as do the bars. Go ahead, venture into one of the bars, but don't let the pretty little girl talk you into paying any more than one hundred piasters for a drink.

If you've skipped dinner and find yourself growing hungry, go to the Grand Hotel for an excellent dinner. The Grand Hotel offers one of the better bars with nightly dancing.

Or for those who would rather have a hot juicy hamburger, there is a Burger Chef restaurant right in the middle of town.

You may want to see one of the nightly shows offered at the R & R center. They begin at 8 pm and accompanied guests are invited. The drinks are cheap and the entertainment is good. Whatever you choose to do, sleep well. Your vacation is Vung Tau has just begun. When you do



Overlooking a rocky point along the Front Beach road sits a French-built villa.

wake up, you can ramble on down to the restaurant, and while munching on a crispy bit of toast plan your day.

One way to see the sights is to hire a horse and buggy. A slow ride sets the pace. If you've got a good driver he'll take you along beautiful coast lines, fishing villages, and past the king-sized Buddha that sits high on a terraced hill, peacefully guarding the main harbor with his infinite wisdom. A short way below little Buddha sits happily. You can easily spend an hour investigating the small shrines and following the walkways with a beautiful view always below.

When you decide to come down from the mountain your driver will whisk you to the Virgin Mary Shrine. It's a magnificent sight and



No matter which direction you look in Vung Tau, there is always silvery blue water, rocks, and sand (left). If you're a camera bug, take a ride in a horse-pulled buggy (top). But don't think you can leave your driver without taking a picture of him.



Perry

should not be missed.

No matter what you do during the day, the best way to wind up an afternoon is at the beach. The temperatures are mild in Vung Tau but the chances are that you've relaxed up a sweat.

There is a beautiful hillside restaurant hotel terraced on the front beach side of the harbor. Known by two names: the Hai-San and the Garden of Eden. Make sure you get there in time to watch the sunset and also to let your eyes



One of the many beautiful girls of Vung Tau dressed in the traditional and colorful Ao Dai.

- The hilltop Hai-San restaurant and nightclub feature a nightly band, whose backdrop is an over-sized clam shell overlooking Vung Tau.

wander from the yacht club directly below to the houseboats and fishing junks to the right. You can see the palm-studded Front Beach extending for about a mile to where a rock wall takes over. High above the wall towering French villas cling to the steep sides of a hill. Looking left across a smooth rock point you will see a couple of skiffs treading through the harbor. Farther out there will probably be three or four toy-sized steamers silhouetted against the evening sky.

The sunsets are truly spectacular. When the brilliant colors fade, blue black lights twinkle everywhere. An over sized translucent clam shell that houses a good band is lit with soft violent hues. Occasionally a candle flickers lighting a contented face. Sip some wine, absorb the cool ocean breeze, float on a string note or dance to the stacotto of a grande piano.

See your travel agent (First Sergeant) today!



WILD ONES

By Sp4 Dave DeMauro



With whining engines and billowing dust, the reconnaissance patrol of the 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry Regulars heads out on another mission. The patrol members strap on their .45 caliber pistols and heavy-duty crash helmets, then mount up on their 175cc motorcycles.

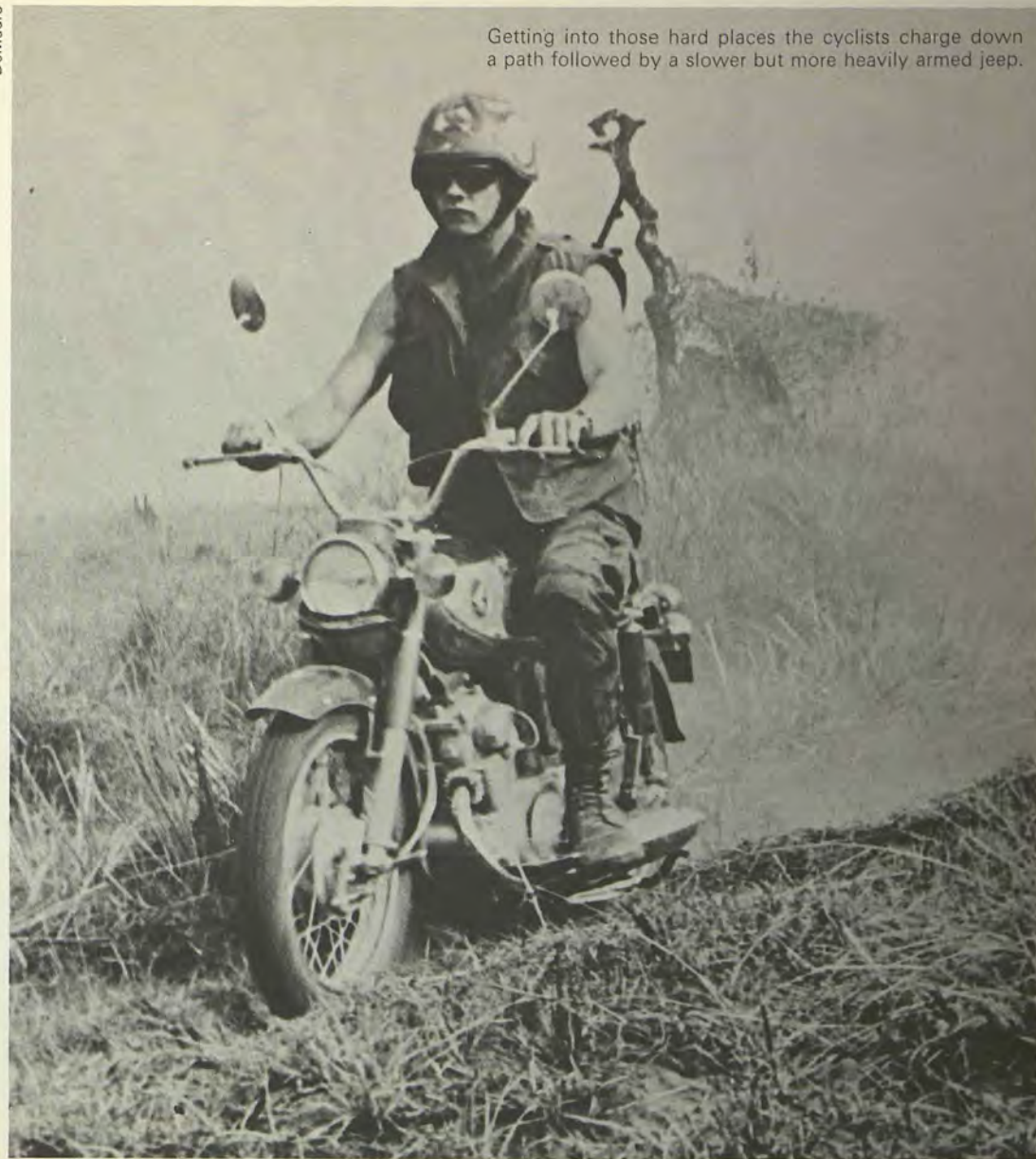
Always searching for new and better ways to pursue an elusive enemy, the Army issued four motorcycles to the reconnaissance patrol in March, 1969. Hopes were high that the bikes would prove successful in high speed reconnaissance of enemy trail systems webbing the jungles and marshes of War Zone C, 65 miles northwest of Saigon.

The Viet Cong and North Vietnamese soldier tries to evade the tremendous firepower of the allies whenever he can. The use of motorcycles is part of the fast, mobile response the allies have devised to find the enemy where he hides.

"The bikes have proven very useful already," said First Lieutenant Stephan Campbell of Falls Church, Va., the patrol leader. "We found fresh enemy activity on many trails the first day we used them. So far we have shown they can be used successfully to find fresh trail activity quickly, locate safe landing zones for combat assaults, and conduct fast sweeps of roads for the safe passage of convoys."

The cycles arrived in Tay Ninh base camp early in March still in their crates. No one was really sure what would be done with them. Then, Specialist 4 James Lindner of Indianapolis, Ind., put in a request for transfer to the reconnaissance patrol, which at that time was still a "leg" unit.

DeMauro



Getting into those hard places the cyclists charge down a path followed by a slower but more heavily armed jeep.

Lindner had raced and repaired cycles in the States before he was drafted and just didn't feel at home without two wheels under him. His request was granted—and the reconnaissance

patrol's "Wild Ones" were started.

When the word about the cycles got around, more bike enthusiasts joined the patrol. Specialist 4 James Tomasko of Lorain, Ohio, Specialist

4 Dennis Verbrigghe of Rock City, Mich., and Sergeant Scott Anderson of Balsin Lake, Wisc., joined Lindner in assembling the bikes.

Suddenly, the trails of War Zone C blew



wide open with the roar of motorcycles. Trail systems were surveyed, landing and pickup zones were checked, and trucks transporting infantrymen were provided security while dropping off rifle companies near jungle woodlines.

Then the patrol met up with Charlie by itself.

“After piecing together our reconnaissance information, we had a good idea where the enemy was hiding,” said Staff Sergeant Floyd E. Huff of Pascagoula, Miss. “We moved in on an unknown number of North Vietnamese Army troops, surprised them, and killed two without taking a single casualty of our own.”

The combat abilities of the “Wild Ones” had been tested and found to be more than sufficient.

To back up the cyclists, two jeeps with M-60 machineguns mounted on them and a three-quarter ton truck equipped with a .50 caliber machinegun follow the patrol wherever it goes.

The Vietnamese dust, rain and humidity takes its toll on the bikes—which were originally designed for street use and had to be adapted for use on the country trails and jungles.

Covered by dust during the day and grease at night, Lindner kept the bikes running.

“The men of the recon patrol have done a fabulous job,” commented Major Joseph Hacia, executive officer of the 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry. And Lieutenant Colonel Robert Carmichael, commanding officer of the Regulars, echoed Hacia’s comments.

“I have been very pleased with their performance,” said Carmichael. “They have proven to be very versatile and fast in checking out trails and probing jungle walls. The information provided has definitely hurt the enemy. We have struck fast and caught the enemy, fighting him on our terms.”



The heavily armed jeep follows the cyclists to give them support if they get into a fight.

Today, the "Wild Ones" of the Regulars' reconnaissance patrol continue to prowl the trails of War Zone C. Looking like something out of an early Marlon Brando movie, they have become a deadly effective team against enemy movements in the area.



The Underground

By Sp5 Charles Withrow





Investigating a well-dug tunnel a soldier first searches for the enemy.

Brayer

“A hiding place where we can rest for a long time may conveniently be found deep in a forest, in a thatched hut near a marsh, in a cave under the ground or in a mountainside, on a lonely farm, or in a small secluded hamlet.”—Mao Tse Tung in *Basic Tactics*.

The United States fighting men in Vietnam are the best ever. They are equipped with the finest weapons ever made. Continually they engage and defeat their foe. Yet the enemy is always there. He keeps coming back.

How?

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of this war to comprehend for those who do not fight it is how the VC-NVA can continue to present an

effective, cohesive fighting force against a better-equipped, better-trained force.

A great deal has been made of Charlie's ability to hide himself among the civilian population. The peasant-by-day, soldier-by-night theory is true enough, but the NVA regular and the member of the VC military hierarchy are full-time soldiers waging a full-time war.

An army needs a place for its operations. It needs supplies and medical facilities. In short, the VC-NVA need sophisticated “hiding places”. Sweep operations by the 25th Infantry Division have uncovered base camps from squad to regimental size in South Vietnam. Understand-

ing how these camps continue to exist while ARVN and U.S. soldiers continue to search, find and destroy enemy sanctuaries, requires a knowledge of the history and terrain of the country and the nature of this war.

Long before the first American soldier engaged the Viet Cong in Vietnam, tunnels were instruments of war for the guerilla. During World War II when the Vietminh aided downed American pilots, tunnel systems were used to hide the fliers from the Japanese who occupied Indo-China.

After World War II, the French controlled Hanoi. When the Vietminh swarmed out of a massive tunnel complex which the French knew nothing about into the heart of the North Vietnamese capital, the Europeans were dumbfounded. Although that insurrection was quelled (for the time being), Mao Tse Tung's “underground cave” idea was established in Vietnam.

During the past two decades, the guerillas have built tunnels throughout Vietnam. Even at times when the insurgents had little to worry about from the government search and clear missions, underground positions were established as insurance against the day they might be needed. For the guerilla in Vietnam, combat has been far less time-consuming than his digging. The results of years of work are tunnel systems that often allow escape for the enemy after he appears to be trapped.

“It's frustrating to say the least,” said one 25th Infantry Division lieutenant whose men chased an estimated VC platoon into a section of the Hobo Woods, “to corner the little man, call in artillery and air support, then close in carefully only to find he has vanished beneath your feet.”

Of course, whenever a tunnel complex or

underground base is found by the allies it is destroyed. But in Vietnam tunnels propagate at a fantastic rate. When one is blown or crushed it's a safe bet there are others being dug.

- Often trap door entrances to bases or tunnel systems are located in the midst of heavy foliage. Placed next to a bamboo clump with a camouflaged covering and hollowed bamboo for air vents, an enemy tunnel can go unnoticed by even the most discerning eye. It is possible for a soldier to walk within a few feet of an entrance and just keep on walking on top of the enemy. Tanks have discovered tunnels by suddenly "sinking" into them.

Also difficult to spot is the beach hole. Buried under a foot of sand and supported by timber, the beach hole can best be located by detecting breathing tubes. Often breathing tubes are continuations of bamboo frames on fishing huts.

The dense vegetation around the Saigon and Oriental Rivers affords natural cover for river-bank and underwater tunnel entrances. Defoliation of the vegetation around these rivers has denied the enemy many ideal locations for river-bank tunnels. But underwater entrances are nearly impossible to locate for anyone who does not know exactly where he is going beforehand. Sometimes swimming underwater is the only way to reach such entrances. After B-52 strikes, craters fill up with water and are used to conceal tunnel openings.

Tunnel entrances and passageways are notorious for booby traps. Only the most experienced GI is competent to search the enemy's subterranean sanctuaries. The problem is to transfer the lessons of experience to new men who come to fight this war.

A huge underground kitchen is part of a Viet Cong home.

The Tropic Lightning Tunnel Rat School at Cu Chi base camp offers classes designed to show the best techniques of detecting, searching and destroying enemy hiding places. Most of the students in the Tunnel Rat School have watched or participated in exploration of enemy hiding places with their units. Many volunteer for this training. They realize that since they will be searching tunnels, it is in their best interest to be proficient in their work.

"The average tunnel rat stands about 5'5" and weighs about 120 pounds," said Specialist 5

Ambrose Moore, an instructor at the school. "The small man is a natural to be selected by his unit to check out tunnels, but size is not the only consideration. The tunnel rat has to know what he is doing. That's where my job comes in."

The school teaches that the enemy has two main thoughts in mind when he builds his tunnel. He wants natural camouflage and a good field of fire. He may put his tunnel entrance in an animal pen, beside a dung heap or under a stove in a hootch.

Steinhausen



The tunnel rat must be aware of all possible locations, for when he returns to his unit from training, he becomes the teacher, giving pointers that may save the lives of his buddies.

There are mechanical aids for the tunnel rat when the time comes to go exploring. Smoke grenades or smoke generators have been helpful in searching tunnels. By pouring smoke into a tunnel entrance, other entrances (in this case exits) can be found. Smoke has also produced many watery-eyed tunnel dwellers.

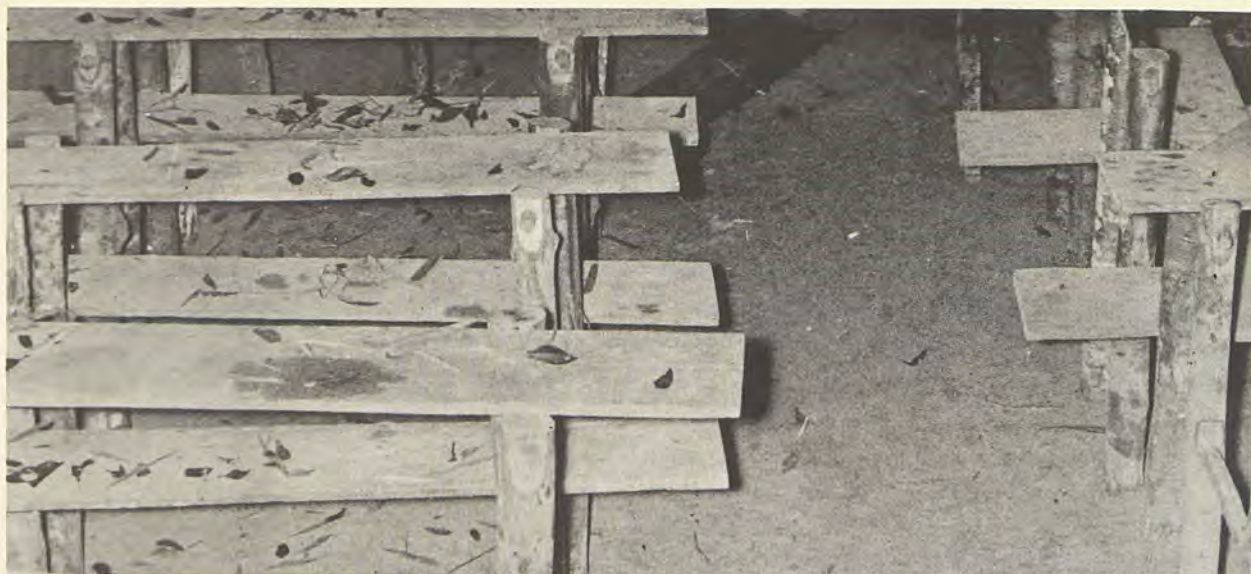
But the burden of finding out what is really down there has to fall to the tunnel rat. Caution is the byword. Equipped with a flashlight and a .45, the tunnel rat crawls or wriggles in search of passages that could be to his right or left or beneath him. He looks carefully and feels the ground in front of him before he moves forward. Any movement without sufficient checking could be the one to set off a booby trap.

While searching enemy hiding places, the tunnel rat knows he could find virtually anything. Other than booby traps, he is most concerned with coming face to face with the inhabitant of the tunnel.

It is not uncommon to find storerooms filled with hundreds of pounds of rice, weapons of all kinds, personal gear or documents. Underground hospitals have been discovered by tunnel rats.

After detection and exploration of a tunnel system and after all usable material has been extracted, the tunnel is destroyed. Today most U.S. units are equipped with the new "tunnel destruct demolition set". With this kit, nitro-methane liquid explosive is pumped into the tunnel and then the entire complex is blown.

The largest tunnel system found by the Tropic Lightning Division was an infiltration



One of many class rooms that were found near Dau Tieng in a huge bunker and tunnel complex.

Steinhausen

route through the Iron Triangle. The complex was uncovered during Operation Atlanta in 1967. Tunnel rats searched some five miles of underground passages. Three days and nights were required to travel the length of the tunnel, which began in the Iron Triangle and wound its way toward Saigon. There were side tunnels all the way along the route.

This particular system, like many other VC tunnels, had been destroyed in various places by B-52 strikes. But each time the tunnel rats were halted by a cave-in, they surfaced, began digging in an area nearby, and picked up the tunnel again. The five miles of tunnel were dotted with storerooms containing an enormous amount of provisions. A virtual arsenal of weapons was captured or destroyed.

In early 1969 a complex that could support an enemy regiment or larger was discovered three miles from Tropic Lightning's Dau Tieng base camp. The complex included a complete mess hall, a classroom and medical facilities.

Considering only the problems of detection, exploration and destruction of tunnels by the allies is, of course, ignoring one of the most important aspects of this tunnel-fought war—what the enemy must go through to prepare and live in his hiding places.

With few exceptions, each farmer-fighter has his individual tunnel. The local VC lives in a village and is often a member of a platoon there. When allied forces sweep through the area, he runs to his hole where he keeps his weapon and enough food to last him three days to a week.

A former VC who had rallied to the government under the Chieu Hoi (Open Arms) Program explained, "Only I knew where my tunnel was. Each tunnel was known only to the man that built it."

It simply isn't safe for the VC to tell even his best friend where his tunnel is located. The local fighter had to feel confident that he would not be betrayed when he was forced into confinement for as long as a week in a hole that often did not afford enough room to stretch. One never knew who would be the next to change sides and lead ARVN or U.S. troops to caches and hiding places.

The enemy will work exhausting hours for as much protection as possible against allied artillery and "old ladies" (B-52s), the greatest fear of all. He may dig for three weeks and then find his unit is forced to move to a new location where he will begin digging anew.

When digging is finished, he then has to spend much of his time underground, sometimes the largest portion of both his waking and sleeping hours.

There is no doubt that Tropic Lightning has forced its enemy to live under trying conditions. Yet the NVA continues to be a formidable foe. They are elusive and aggressive. The professionalism that the 25th Infantry Division cultivates has to recognize that the NVA is also a professional. He is no local yokel, no "Charlie". He is "Sir Charles, the mole."



Brayer



Searching a tunnel can be very dangerous. A Tropic Lightning soldier cautiously peeks around a corner. Instead of finding a hiding enemy however, a small weapon storage nook was discovered. Weapons are sometimes stored by the enemy for long periods. Often they do not fire after becoming covered with dirt and corrosion.

Brayer





Berger

Williams



Men in war. An overworked phrase. But life and death on the battlefield is more than a reality. It is a total dependence on others to perform as expected. The faces around you. Maybe that one's nineteen years old; he can't be older. The sarge over there. He's seen three wars. Each has written its history on his face. Everybody works together. One slip-up in a contact and everyone is in danger.

The leader. Sometimes you really hate his guts. He always wants more. But when it gets thick he's there. Cool, calm, orchestrating victory. Maybe sometimes it



Berger.

gets to you. The heat, the stench, the danger, the constant alert. Move up. Three of them in that hedgerow. Snipers! Down! Artillery. Air strikes. Gunships. We did it. Let's head for the pickup zone. Men in war. No cliché.

Berger



Heavy Hitters

By Sp4 Ralph Novak

... heavy weapons—a small
unit's built-in slugging power



The flash from a 4.2 inch mortar
silhouettes a mortarman as he covers
his ears.

Karlgaard

Like a baseball manager, a modern infantry battalion commander has to have a versatile, flexible lineup, with the offensive strength to get the edge on the opposition and the defense to keep that edge.

The infantry commander has an equivalent of baseball's pinch-hitter in air and artillery support. Valuable as they are, however, no pinch-hitters have ever won pennants without a strong starting team in front of team.

The infantry—where most of the players wear number 11B—plays the same role as the baseball team's regulars, taking the field every day to get the basic job done.

Today's infantry commander, in leading his men, has the talent and tools of a championship team, thanks partly to the wide variety of heavy weapons that supplement the infantry's basics, the rifle, machine gun, hand grenade.

Claymore mines, .50 caliber machine guns, Light Anti-tank Weapons (LAWs), 81mm and 4.2-inch mortars, and 90mm recoilless rifles are all an everyday part of the modern infantry battalion, making it a power-hitter in anyone's league.

This built-in slugging power has played a large part in the 25th Infantry Division's success. The nature of the enemy and the terrain in the division's operations area have given the Tropic Lightning soldiers a clear opportunity to take advantage of the heavy weapons' potential. They've made the most of the opportunity, the resulting blasts of fire-power knocking down more than fences.

One of the 25th Division's 1st Brigade units has made typically good use of their heavy hitters in recent operations out of fire support bases near Tay Ninh.

The unit has especially profited from its



Flame shoots out the rear of a 90 millimeter Recoilless Rifle.

4.2-inch mortar section and its 90mm recoilless rifles.

A company commander, Captain Ramon T. Pulliam of Chattanooga, Tenn., calls the heavy mortars "a battalion commander's hip-pocket artillery." Commander Lieutenant Colonel Leo L. Wilson of Salina, Kans., describes them as very potent and very flexible weapons.

The 4.2 incher—the "four-deuce" in normal GI conversation—weighs 672 pounds assembled, and is thereby less easily moved than its baby

brother, the 81mm mortar, but the 4.2 carries its own weight and more in the battalion arsenal.

The 4.2-inch mortar out-strips the 81mm in range, 5650 meters to 4736, fires a bigger round that has a bursting radius of 50 meters compared to the 81's 15 meters, and can be used with high explosive, white phosphorus, illumination, or chemical agent rounds.

The weapon is more complex than the 81, requiring an artillery-style fire direction center.

It also has, however, what the First Brigade unit's 4.2 section commander, First Lieutenant James V. Williamson of Edgewood Arsenal, Md., calls "that extra punch the battalion commander is going to need once in a while."

As other members of the mortar section prepare the projectiles for firing the mortarman sets the deflection of fire.



Johansen

"The 81s can do some things we can't, of course, such as firing at nearby targets because they have a shorter minimum range, or being able to come close to our men because their bursting radius is smaller," Williamson says. "But I have to admit being partial to the 4.2."

Williamson, who went through a rigorous six-week training program on the 4.2 at Fort Benning, Ga., after completing Officers' Candidate School, is in charge of four six-man crews that include a squad leader, a gunner, an assistant gunner, and three ammunition bearers.

"The 4.2-inch mortars fire the best illumination anyone has," Williamson says. They are also the arch-enemy of North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong mortarmen.

"Whenever we're not firing, we have our guns set on counter-mortar," Williamson says.

"We have them laid in on the most likely places Charlie would use to mortar us from."

When a 4.2-inch mortar lays in on something, that something is in trouble.

The weapon is accurate "at least to within 50 meters", Williamson says. What it's accurate with is a round the size of a 105mm howitzer shell, a round that can be fitted with fuses to detonate the explosive over, on, or below the ground.

Pulliam lists these advantages of the 4.2—"It's an excellent weapon against point-type targets, it's good for putting a smoke screen around a patrol; it's good for reconnaissance by fire; it's as fast as—and sometimes faster than—the 105mm howitzer in getting out a large volume of fire.

When one of their battalion's Patrol Base



As the projectile rapidly leaves the mortar tube these Wolf-hound mortarmen attempt to protect their ears from the thundering charges.

Nadal

Mole City (later Fire Support Base Sedgwick) was attacked at midnight last December 22, by a reinforced North Vietnamese regiment, two companies' 90mm teams played a major role in smashing the enemy attacking force back across the Cambodian border minus 168 of its men.

Then on January 6, one company formed a blocking force outside Phuoc Luu, eight miles west of Trang Bang and was hit in another early morning attack.

The 1st Brigade unit, having spent the night digging in and building overhead cover, incurred only one minor casualty while it and another unit blasted the enemy force, an estimated reinforced Viet Cong company. Pulliam maneuvered his two 90mm teams throughout the battle, directing them against enemy positions and personnel with devastating effect.

"When you have the men who know how to use it—the kind of men I have in my company—the 90 can be a very fine weapon," Pulliam says. "Its range (900 meters against a point-type target), its ability to fire all kinds of rounds: HE (high explosive), cannister (anti-personnel "buck-shot"), or High Explosive Anti Tank (heat capable of piercing armor 24 inches thick), makes it a weapon with ideal flexibility."

Pulliam always takes his 90 teams on patrols, and uses them extensively for reconnaissance by fire.

The 90 is heavier than the bazooka, which it replaced," he says, "But that's the only area where it loses out in the comparison."

It's because of such weapons as the 90mm recoilless rifle, the 4.2-inch mortar, and the other parts of the battalion commander's family arsenal, that today's U. S. infantry units more than stand out in comparison with those of any other time, or any other army.



Novak

Boots, Bullets or Soup

By Sp4 Ralph Novak

What do the men, equipment and machines of an Army infantry battalion have in common (other than an olive drab outer covering)? Their continued health and welfare are all dependent on their unit's resupply section.

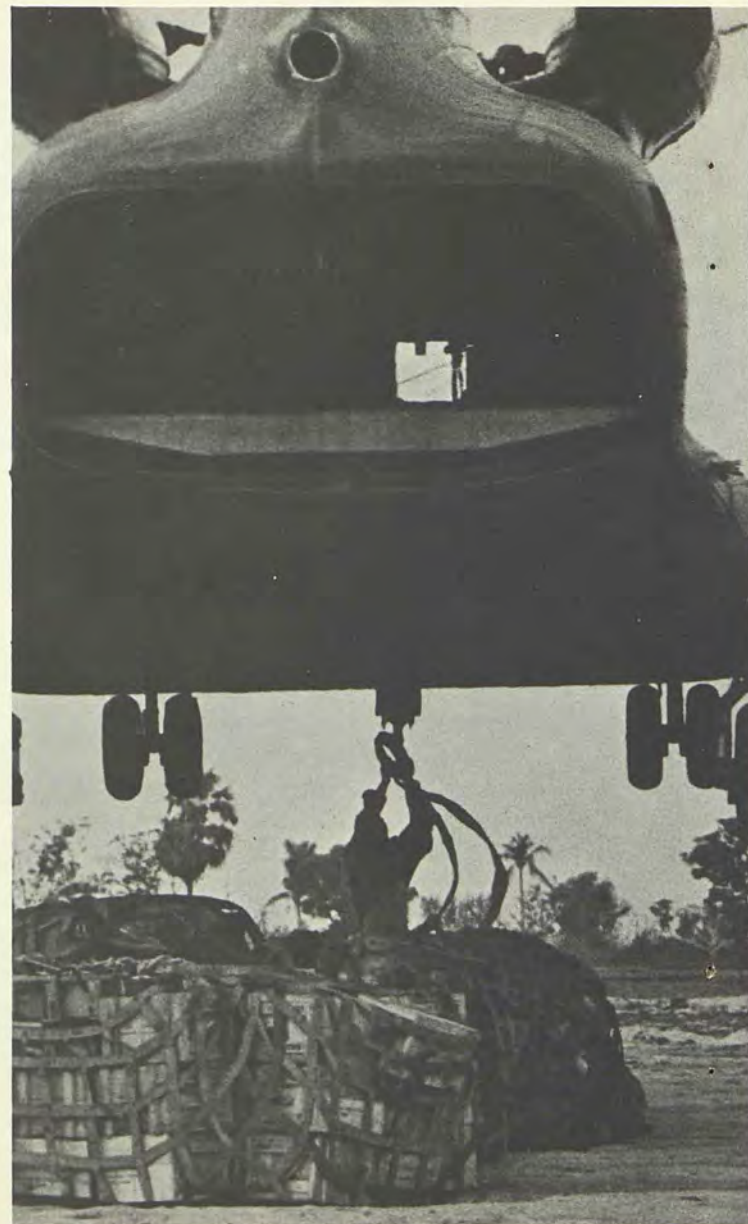
Resupply—the S-4 section in Army jargon—collects, processes, and distributes food, ammunition, building materials, clothes and everything else from soup to nuts, with the bolts to go with the nuts.

The resupply element of the 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Manchus is a typical group of army scroungers and scrappers who respond to requests from field troops as if time, hustle, and supplies were allocated in infinite quantities.

Tropic Lightning soldiers busily unload a truck (left) and prepare a sling load of supplies for shipment.



Novak



25th Inf

If a company commander out in the field called resupply right now and said his men needed a pallet of Playboy bunnies, the S-4 crew might be stymied, but Hugh Hefner would do well to be on the alert, just in case.

Part of the job of resupply is routine: rounding up and dispatching the 60,000 or so pounds of food, ammunition, and supplies that go each day to the unit's five line companies via CH-47 Chinook helicopters and truck convoy.

Another part of the job—and the part that's the highest test of the capabilities of any and all elements of a unit—is being able to face a combat emergency.

The 1st Brigade unit's S-4 section was confronted with such an emergency last December 22, when a reinforced North Vietnamese Army regiment attacked two companies of the unit entrenched at Patrol Base Mole City, 15 miles southeast of Tay Ninh and only 1.5 miles from Cambodia.

The NVA attacked just after midnight, opening a seven-hour battle. During those seven hours and for the next forty after that, the unit's S-4 officer, Captain Louis Dinetz of Highland Park, New Jersey and his men worked at Tay Ninh base camp to get as much as they could, as fast as they could, to their comrades in the field.

They sent out 50 pallet loads of ammunition—including 400,000 rounds of small arms ammunition—much of it on Huey “slicks”—while the battle raged through a night that was a taste of eternity for those who endured it.

Dinetz remembers December 22: “We got a call about 12:45 a.m. that they were being hit,

A waiting Chinook is being loaded with supplies ranging from C-rations to large sacks of mail.





25th Inf

and less than 30 minutes later we were all out at the helicopter pad breaking ammo down into 1000-pound loads for the slicks. When it got light, we started getting loads ready for the chinooks. We were out there all day doing that, and that night we worked breaking down more ammo so the slicks could take it out if they were hit again. Few of us got to sleep until the following morning."

"When we first got to the pad, we called the

companies, and the men they sent just came pouring out, as many as could fit in jeeps and trucks. We had a lot of help that night, and through the next day. We needed it."

Preparation plays a large role in the S-4's ability to meet emergency requirements as well as the everyday demands of an infantry battalion.

"A large part of this job is trying to stay one step ahead of the tactical situation," Dinetz says. "We have to try to figure out what our com-

panies are going to do even before they know what they are going to do themselves."

Bagley remembers December 22: "From about 1 a.m. the night Mole City was hit, and for a long time after that, we kept working. All our equipment was ready to go, so we got out to the chopper pad within 30 minutes of the start of the attack. When we heard their ammo dump had been hit, we knew we had to get extra ammo out to them, so we started breaking the stacks down as fast as we could for the slicks to take them. It was a long, long night."

Dinetz also praises his section's truck drivers, for "working hard whenever they're needed" as well as for doing a good job of keeping their equipment in shape.

The physical distribution of supplies is only part of the job, however. Rationing out what's in short supply, a touchy but often necessary task, can be as hard as getting the material in the first place.

The 1st Brigade unit's S-4 field representative, First Lieutenant Daniel C. Green of Pittsburgh, Pa., says that "one of the hardest things we have to do is tell someone we can't issue them something when they know we have it."

Lieutenant Green remembers December 22: "Our men were out there right away, and most of us worked for nearly two days straight. They did a fine job in a situation where there was a lot of pressure.

"Everyone was pretty somber out there on the pad, and between loads, a lot of them would sit, their heads down, listening to the radio we had monitoring the battalion frequency, hearing almost a play-by-play of the battle. People wanted so badly to do something to help that they were literally fighting to ride on the slicks to push off the ammo when they got to Mole City."

For emergencies, the unit's S-4 has a predetermined "night kit"; a carefully chosen selection of special supplies—extra ammunition, c-rations, building materials enough to make solid bunkers with over-head cover.

The attitude of the resuppliers is summed up by Sp4 Anthony Colon of Brooklyn, N.Y., who's in charge of ammunition resupply, from making out the requisitions and picking up pallets at the Tay Ninh Ammo Supply Point, to making sure the pallets are correctly loaded at the helicopter pad.

"The job isn't that hard, most of the time," he says. "There's a kind of pressure in that there's a limit to how much ammunition we can get



Novak



and people always seem to want more. You just learn to find what you need, one way or the other."



The supplies (left) hanging beneath a large Chinook chopper will soon arrive at a division fire support base. Resupply troops unload mortar ammunition at a helicopter pad (above).

DUSTOFF. Technical Definition: aeromedical evacuation. Practical Definition: the difference between life and death to a wounded American in the field.

A daybreak sweep by Tropic Lightning soldiers leads to contact with a platoon-sized enemy force. For a brief moment, the friendly troops are pinned down. Two are wounded. The overwhelming Tropic Lightning firepower quickly silences the enemy positions. But two soldiers still lie wounded—seven miles from Cu Chi base camp and its efficient 12th Evacuation Hospital.



The platoon leader has signalled the command-and-control helicopter flying above to send a dustoff for his wounded men. This sets in motion a chain reaction that will have a helicopter ambulance from the 159th Medical Detachment at Cu Chi on its way within minutes.

The C-and-C ship radioes the Dustoff Control Center at Cu Chi, operated by the 25th Medical Battalion. The radio operator sends a "dustoff scramble" message to the ambulance crew at the 159th and immediately calls for artillery clearance or check fire in the area where the dustoff will be flying.

In minutes the ship is heading into the dawn-bright sky.



25th Inf



Moore



Karlgaard

MEDEVAC



THE TEAM



Perry

Perry

Burns



Burns



A normal dustoff takes 20 to 25 minutes from the time the initial request is made to the time a patient is in base camp hospital. The ship spots the touchdown area. A smoke grenade is popped to identify the location. Dustoff ships have been known to land almost anywhere—even the middle of a jungle—to rescue the wounded. No precious time is lost in getting the patient to the treatment center.

In earlier wars, men wounded in the field had no dustoffs to rely on. Any wound could very well have meant death. In the Civil War, eight out of every 10 soldiers who were injured in combat died of their wounds. Not so for Americans in Vietnam today.





Medevac missions are not always performed with 'Dust-Off' helicopters. Sometimes in an isolated area an emergency message will be sent to a nearby helicopter. In this case a light observation chopper, flying in the area was called and landed to pick up the injured soldier.

Increasingly, the forces of the Republic of Vietnam are taking a large share of the war effort in the 25th Infantry Division area of operations. For quite some time the Vietnamese, particularly former Viet Cong, have worked as Kit Carson scouts, interpreters and advisors with the Tropic Lightning troops.

In recent months the Vietnamese soldiers have gained equipment and experience alongside their American counterparts in combined operations. On these operations command decisions are made equally by Vietnamese and American officers. Usually the units themselves are split equally, giving the officers from each of the allied nations the opportunity to lead.

Through these operations of Vietnamese and American units the enemy has been routed numerous times. As one member of the Regional Forces said, "We learn good tactics from U.S. troops. We fight; we kill Viet Cong."

Combined operations give both Americans and Vietnamese a worthwhile learning experience. The Vietnamese gain new insight in maneuver tactics, logistics and control. The Americans learn to respect this rapidly developing ally, understand this war better, and feel a new pride in assisting in the development of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam.



