THE JAGGED SWORD

The Magazine of the 1st Signal Brigade,

Spring 1971

First Signal Team Celebrates Fifth Year

The 1st Signal Brigade, which celebrates its fifth anniversary April 1, is the backbone of communications for American and free world forces in Vietnam and stretches from Cau Viet on the DMZ to Cau Mau in the delta of Vietnam and from Chang Mai in northern Thailand near Burma, to Sattahip on the Gulf of Thailand.

It is a many faceted and fluid organization, flexible in its permanent stance. Its signals can reach out across the Pacific via satellites in space or skip from mountain top to mountain top. It is a MARS station, telling a new father of his legacy...it's an urgent call for a medivac to keep an 18-year-old alive. It's a telephone call to finance to find out who fouled up the pay records.

It comes in different shapes and sizes; its a "billboard" overlooking the harbor at Vung Tau or a shrapnel scarred "flyswatter" at Camp Carrol. But most of all its the people who turn the knobs.

Vietnamization is the task of the present and the future. Training the people of Vietnam to operate this most complex system is an imposing job. With each passing day, the faces change. New ones replace the old ones and slowly yellow ones replace the black, brown and white ones.

And the beat goes on...

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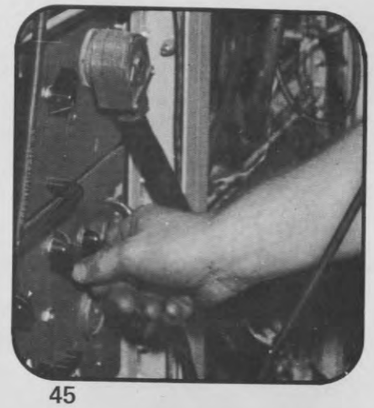

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Brigade Aviation: Anywhere, Anytime

By

1LT Patrick J. Jones

and

SP4 Richard E. Wood

Once airborne, the realities of the war below seem to fade away. Gazing beneath you, the green vegetation seems much more beautiful than it was while you were on the ground and orange-roofed cities dot the landscape everywhere, a reflection of the French heritage.

The air traveller sees the natural beauty in the country of Vietnam, its endless stretches of white beach between Nha Trang and Da Nang, and the rugged beauty of its mountainous isles in the Gulf of Thailand.

But this view of Vietnam is only an incidental benefit from the development of aviation that has characterized the Vietnam war. The emphasis on air mobility has been a major innovation in the American concept of warfare and the 1st Signal Brigade has not been reluctant to take advantage of it.

For the 1st Signal Brigade, aviation in Vietnam has been a lifeline. Many sites are difficult to reach by land and since strong, continuous communications are the backbone of a fighting force, aircraft are ready to speed repair parts or personnel anywhere within the brigade.

The aviation arm of the 1st Signal Brigade provides rapid transportation for members of the brigade to isolated sites throughout Vietnam and Thailand. The ships of the aviation section also fly routine administrative flights throughout the countries, providing courier service and transporting people for liaison visits and inspections.

The 250 men in brigade aviation are not signalmen but play a very important role in the overall signal picture. Many of the pilots and crew members are on their second tours in Vietnam and many have served with combat units prior to their assignment with 1st Signal. Many awards for heroism will attest to this.

"We're an integral part of the communications effort," said Lt. Col. Shelley Watson, brigade aviation officer. The aviator's job is "to do what is required within the brigade" to keep the communications going. "We get emergencies at least once a day in each of the three detachments around the country," said the 15-year veteran of Army aviation. Standby aircraft are always on call for emergencies when they arise and brigade aviators have been called upon at all hours to fly repair parts around the country.

Besides the everyday jobs of flying people and equipment, brigade aviation has some other unusual tasks. Radio relay flights in support of tactical units is just one of these. Another innovation in the use of aircraft is in the retrograde effort. On some sites, equipment is so sensitive that a jarring truck ride to Long Binh for packing will break the equipment. For this reason, a helipad was built in the CSEMA cable yard, headquarters for the retrograde effort, so that flights coming directly from sites and carrying sensitive pieces of equipment will have a place to unload their cargo with minimal chance of breakage.

The brigade has over 40 aircraft it can call on for aerial support. U-21s and a U8F, both twin engine Beechcraft, provide the long haul fixed wing capability. The rest of the brigade's aircraft are all rotary wing birds. They include OH-58 "Kiowa"s and UH-1 "Huey"s, the workhorses of the Vietnam conflict.

The U-21s are sturdy planes and do most of the long range flying for the brigade. Their home base is Long Thanh (north), also the home of the 2nd Signal Group aviation detachment. Each morning flights head for signal units in the first and second military regions and once a week a flight heads for Bangkok. Depending on what and who has to go where, the flight to the northern realms of the Republic may touch down in many different places. Nha Trang, Qui Nhon, Chu Lai, Da Nang and others may all see

Aviation's Role Continues to be Important in Communications

brigade flights arrive. On most days two flights will go north, one to half of the major units and the other to the second half.

The UH-1 "Huey" provides short range support throughout Vietnam. The 2nd Group detachment, which supports the third and fourth military regions, has its choppers at Long Thanh (north), the 21st and its helicopters are at Tuy Hoa and the 12th maintains its aircraft at Da Nang.

Each group headquarters has direct control of its helicopters and uses them for short range flights within its area of responsibility to ferry equipment and personnel. You can usually go north out of Tuy Hoa every other day and going south offers the same possibilities. A round trip out of Da Nang to visit 12th Group sites will hit places like Camp Carrol, Phu Bai, Dong Ha and Chu Lai.

Delta flights range all over the fourth military region and make stops at every kind of installation imaginable. Can Tho and Binh Thuy are major airfields but after that the pads get smaller and more interesting. The Cao Lanh field is nothing more than PSP (metal plating) laid between two swamps. At Moc Hoa, the airfield looks like a park and at Long Xuyen, a racetrack. The Ha Tien pad sits within sight of the Gulf of Thailand while the Chau Doc pad is only a half mile from Cambodia.

The OH-58 "Kiowa"s are the newest addition to the aviation section and the smallest aircraft that the brigade operates. They are used mainly for liaison visits by personnel and can carry small amounts of equipment.

Historically, the role of aviation in Vietnam has been an ever increasing one. Aircraft were first introduced in Asia in the Second World War. C-47s flew the "Hump" carrying supplies to forces inside China after all of Indochina had fallen to the Japanese. The French were the next power in Indochina to use aircraft. During the Indochina war they used aircraft for supply and combat missions. C-47s made supply runs and World War II vintage fighters provided combat support.

The French were also the first to introduce helicopters to Vietnam, as they made use of Sikorsky S-55 helicopters. They were used primarily to evacuate those seriously wounded in battles. But the choppers were used very little for resupply and not at all tactically.

The 1st Signal Brigade aviation section flies almost 6,000 sorties per month. It also handles a monthly average of more than 10,000 passengers and over 180 tons of equipment. These are relatively meaningless figures by themselves but when compared to the French effort here, the figures are more significant: From November 20, 1953 to May 8, 1954, the length of the French occupation of Dien Bien Phu (five and a half months) only 10,400 sorties were flown in support of that fortress (6,700 supply or troop transport missions and 3,700 combat missions). It is apparent that the role of aircraft has increased in importance as well as numbers in Vietnam.

When you're flying at 5,000 ft., it's too beautiful for there to be a war going on below you. In Vietnam today, the nature of the war hasn't changed and the need for aerial transportation is as great as it ever has been. The role that aviation plays in the 1st Signal Brigade has been and continues to be an important one.

Whether it be lugging people or equipment, the aviators of the 1st Signal Brigade are kept busy. Time is no factor, because no matter what time of day or night it is, they're ready to speed anywhere in the country to keep communications on the air.

Out of a Job at Dong Tam

Story and Photos by SP5 Andrew McCullough

Much of the success of any ARVNization program is an intangible which cannot be measured in cut and dried quantities; however, the results of the "Buddies Together" Program at Dong Tam are coming to surface faster than ever before, and these first emergences will doubtless serve as models for other ARVNization programs to follow.

To reach Dong Tam from Saigon, one must travel some 2½ hours southwest on QL 4 deep into the delta of the Mekong River. Located on the edge of the muddy Mekong River, Dong Tam is surrounded by monotonously flat land which is sliced up by large waterways and veined by countless tributaries. Such a place makes one wonder where enough solid land could be to accommodate the thousands of people in the area. But the land is rich in beauty and abundantly productive. It is truly an example of the Asian "Good Earth."

At the Dong Tam Integrated Communications System (ICS) site there is only a handful of American signalmen on the job, and all but one or two will be leaving soon. In essence, the site

is run by ARVN signalmen, and the GIs are still there to assist the Vietnamese of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam's (ARVN) 672nd Signal Battalion only when necessary.

"For nine months that I have been here I've been working myself out of work," says SP4 George Kateridge. "The ARVN have gotten so good that my job as an adviser has become no job, except on rare occasions. Yes, I'm bored much of the time, but it's a rewarding boredom."

SP4 Kateridge is a microwave technician who works at the Dong Tam ICS site, a signal station located in the center of the 7th ARVN Infantry Division Headquarters camp, the old home of the U.S. Army's 9th Infantry Division. His words sum up the situation and express the feelings of most of the men of Reg. Com's 369th Signal Battalion's Company A detachment who are stationed there.

The ARVNization at Dong Tam is all but complete, and its one year history is a study of contrasts, compatibility and respect. Surely, over the past year there have been setbacks, differences of opinion and frustrations, but the result of the program is success. Every American and Vietnamese living and working together there is openly proud of the job he's done, and he'll say so without even being asked. Besides being one of the first ICS sites to completely ARVNize, the men have another reason to be proud. They don't just 'get along', they have become close friends.

The men of the 369th have gotten to know the Vietnamese like few other GIs in country, and they, as well as the ARVNization program, are better for it. For example, SP4 David Shoriak, a microwave technician, is learning to speak Vietnamese and Chinese. He has taken lessons from Sergeant Major Khoi, the multi-lingual NCOIC of the ARVN there. All of the men at one time or another have gone into My Tho, a nearby town, to have supper at the various ARVN signalmen's homes. "To me," one U.S. signalmen says, "the social life we share with the ARVNs is just as important to the program as the work we do with them. The parties we have together here, our visits to their homes, and even when we watch Audie Murphy western movies together...this is the way we get to like each other and the main reason we work together as well as we do."

A variety of jobs characterizes life at Dong Tam. PVT Ira Dobbin (left) and SP5 Don Utsler haul cement to refortify their bunker. At right, SP4 David Shoriak works with the fellow signalmen in the radio frequency section. ARVN and American work and live side by side. At far right, Shoriak practices his Vietnamese with friends in a local store. Below, SP4 Ronald Brown admires a young friend's hog in the village near the site.

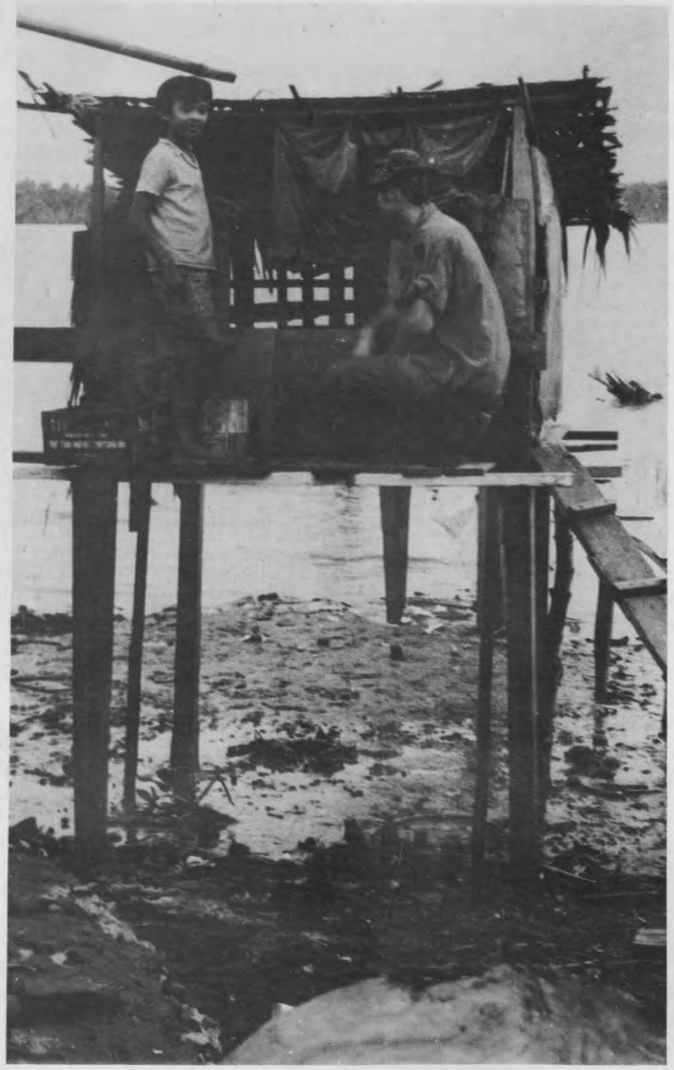
The entire situation at Dong Tam is one of contrasts. Just outside the base camp gates, the villagers are mainly concerned with the basic necessities of life; working from sun-up to sun-down, they hope to have enough food to eat and a few clothes to put on their backs. Theirs is a rough life. But inside the Dong Tam gates at the ICS site, the signalmen spend the greater part of their lives in an immaculately clean, 21st century environment. They are concerned with supplying communications for all the ARVN and U.S. forces in that area who in turn insure the security the people of My Tho-Binh Duc now enjoy.

The security of the area is a far cry from the situation just one year ago, when during Tet of 1969, ambushes on and around QL 4 were a daily affair. Without the communications provided by the men of ICS site 74, the situation today could well be much like that in 1969. This is just one more accomplishment by the ARVN and GIs of which they are proud. It's another contrast, and a good one at that.

Another noticeable aspect of Dong Tam is the diversity of backgrounds of the signalmen themselves. SP4 Kateridge, whose parents are Japanese and American, was a florist before coming into the Army. Microwave technician PVT Ira Dobbin was an electrician's apprentice in Charlotte, N.C. And SP4 Jim Buckalew, a technician controller from Terre Haute, Indiana, traveled for J.C. Penney and Co. as a clothes salesman. A close friend of theirs is SP5 Donald Utsler from Dallas, Texas, the Field First NCO in charge of site construction and fortification. SP5 Utsler is on his second tour here, for which he volunteered. His first tour ended abruptly when he was medevaced to the states after having crashed in a helicopter.

The ARVN are equally diverse in background. 1LT Nguyen Trong Hieu, the Detachment OIC, is an affable young bachelor from Saigon. Master Sergeant Tran Ngoc Liem, track chief of the Radio Frequency Section, is an articulate man in his thirties whose wife and children live in nearby Dong Tam. And Sergeant Major Khoi, the NCOIC of ARVN operations at the site, is a world traveler, having been to the mainland U.S. several times, Hawaii, Japan, Taiwan, Thailand and Korea. He speaks three languages fluently.

The men, prior to coming to Site 74, had little in common except for their technical training. Among other things, Dong Tam is a place where ARVN and GIs alike have benefitted. One GI "Communicator," SP4 Ronald Brown, put it better when he says, "As far as dealing with other people goes, I've learned more in one year than I did in my previous 20. They seemed so strange to me at first. Soon, I came to realize that I was the strange one; so, I began to go out of my way to learn their ways. I began to feel they were doing the same thing. I saw there was another way of life much different from mine, but in the ways that count, so much like mine. This is when I started looking for ways we were alike rather than different, and our different ways began not to make any difference any more."



Thanks for the Memories

Story and Photos by SP5 Andrew McCullough

Rose Ann Sturdevant, imitating Bob Hope, begins the show at one of the many Firebases the team visited. Below, a GI enjoys a dance with Sally Edwards.

A feeling of being forgotten isn't an uncommon one for the men who have to live at the remote fire bases deep in the jungles of Vietnam. Many men are out there, and, in comparison, very few get a chance to see live entertainment which plays at the bigger and safer fire bases.

But for 1,800 such GIs, the Christmas season did not pass without a Christmas show. Six Red Cross girls from II Field Force and two men from the 1st Signal Brigade's Southeast Asia Pictorial Center (SEAPC) took it upon themselves to spread some holiday spirit to these otherwise forgotten men of the war...the men who do the fighting.

For eight days prior to Christmas, the team of tireless entertainers took their "miniature Bob Hope Christmas Show" to some 43 locations throughout III and IV Corps. At each base, bronze-tanned, dust-covered men emerged from underground, out of the bushes and down from trees to swarm around the visitors like Indians on cowboys. Sitting on everything from steel pots to howitzer barrels and tracks with quad-50's, they sweltered in the 100 degree temperatures while the "round-eyes" gave them a rousing 30 minutes of holiday cheer.

The guys loved every minute of it. They whistled, howled, applauded, stomped their feet and laughed like only the field GIs know how. They even sang "Joy To The World," as ironic as it seems, and only American girls could get men in such a situation to do that. To see tired, sweaty, war weary GIs sing songs as they look with melting looks into the eyes of the Red Cross girls...this was proof enough to the motion picture team and the girls that their 15 hour work days were not in vain. They entertained where entertainment was appreciated most.

When the men from SEAPC do something, they usually do it in a big way. The entire show was shot on movie film and all the dialogue and audience sounds were recorded to accompany it. After approximately an hour of film was shot of several shows, it was sent to the three national television networks for a three minute showing across the United States on the December 24th and 25th evening news.

But the results of their efforts are only a part of the story. How it all came about and what it took to put the show on is a story in itself.

Evelyn Safford (front) and Sally Edwards (rear) get to meet the troops after a show. Above, SEAPC's SP5 Dennis Tanner introduces the show to members of Firebase Bolen.

1Lt. Robert Demchuk, the motion picture team leader at SEAPC, directed the show and co-produced it with SP5 Dennis Tanner, a SEAPC correspondent, who wrote the entire script the Red Cross girls used. The two men also made all the stage props and taped the music for the production. SP4 Vance Barnes did all the still and motion picture photography for them.

The complete show was put together in two weeks, and actual rehearsal time was only 30 hours. "When we began the first show" said Lt. Demchuk, "the (paint on the) backdrop was still wet."

During the tour, each day began at 5:30 a.m. and lasted late into each night, sometimes into early morning of the following day. Each morning, the sleepy-eyed troupe of 9 would load their equipment onto two "Huey Slicks" of the 120th Aviation Company, and they would be on their way to the fire bases when the clouds hadn't even lifted above tree level. It was a whirlwind tour, to say the least, which included some 50 fire base stops during seven days of travel into the boonies. At 43 bases, shows were given; and at seven other bases, due to the tight schedule, a show wasn't given but stops were made so the girls could say hello to the guys. On Christmas day–the eighth day of the tour–three shows were given at hospitals, one at Long Binh and two in Saigon.

At most of the stops forward, the entertainers were met at the fire base perimeters by dozens of shirtless, tousle-haired men who helped to carry the stage equipment, speakers, camera and tape recorder to the show site inside the base. At other bases, the GIs simply stood around their hootches and stared in curiosity and disbelief at all the femininity walking into their "AO". Since communication is limited to the most remote locations and messages to them have to be brief, they only expected a couple of "Do-nut Dollies" to come around for an hour visit. After the initial shock wore off, they made up for lost time by double-timing to get the equipment hauled in.

Putting on a parody of the Bob Hope Show, the six girls literally turned the guys on. Rose Ann Sturdevant came out first. Decked out in beribboned, camouflage jungle fatigues and posing as Bob Hope, she went through a soft-shoe routine, golf club in hand, telling one line jokes which ribbed officers and EMs, front and rear-echelon troops alike. "I see you have a lot of young lieutenants around here," 'Hope' said: "Just saw one who had trouble saluting and sucking his thumb at the same time." Referring to the men in the rear, "Hope" continued, "The guys at Long Binh are the only GIs in country who have to be treated for frostbite. Too much air conditioning. Yeah, they really got it made. Incoming to them means the round-eyes are coming."

Diane Aceveto and Mary Ann Dixon came bouncing out in miniskirts. Diane posed as a state beauty queen and Mary Ann was the "Miss National Photogenic On-A-Cloudy Day" queen. They were challenged to a dance contest by Shela Shanehan, Evelyn Safford and

Sally Edwards who were posing as members of a hard core Women's Lib group. Every movement made by the cavorting contestants was recorded on film by the "captured" audience of GIs who, at the end of the dances, determined the winning team with their applause.

Afterwards, the girls went into the audience and met the guys personally. Then, they asked various guys to dance with them, a part of the show that got a mixed response. Some of the GIs were shy and backed away, but there were always plenty of men more than eager to participate. Some of the volunteer dancers seemed to melt in the girls' arms, while others did some serious dancing that would put James Brown to shame.

All the while the audience jibed the dancing soldiers. One PFC yelled out to his (understandably) "left-footed" executive officer, saying, "Hey sir...watch out for them toes!"

The show ended as the girls led everyone in singing Christmas carols, following up with a spirited dance-sing along rendition of "Aquarius" as they made their exit.

Sunburned and out of breath, the girls changed clothes in a bunker-turned-dressing room while the equally sunburned and dusty crew dismantled their gear. Once out of the bunker, the girls stopped to pose for a few last minute pictures with the GIs as the crew lugged the equipment back to the chopper; then, off for another fire base where they

The girls put on their skit, above, while three of the girls, Mary Ann Dixon, Diane Aceveto and Shela Shanehan pose with a happy member of the 11th ACR.

would go through the whole routine again. Not until each girl was strapped in her seat was anyone sure they'd leave with all six girls. The girls loved the guys at those lonesome outposts as much as the guys loved them.

No traveling show group is exempt from problems, and the SEAPC-Red Cross entourage was no exception. There were fire bases on the itinerary which had to be dropped because the unit had moved out just prior to showtime; therefore, other nearby bases were contacted to see if they wanted to see the show.

Meals were missed because the group would arrive too early or too late. Caught up in a race against time so all the scheduled shows could be given, the crew left equipment behind which had to be retrieved.

Just before arriving at one base near the Cambodian border, the chopper pilots got word that the base was being mortared. With no inclination to stop, they flew on to the next one. During the performance, an alert came. Most of the ad-libs were cut out of that show. And before coming into a coastal fire base, the pilots had to do an about face and make a quick landing at a nearby engineers' compound. The prospective audience was on a fire mission and no one aboard was up to sharing the airways with uncharted howitzer rounds. When they finally landed at the fire base, SP5 Tanner slowly got out of the chopper and with a bewildered look on his face, he said, "for awhile there, I thought we were flying reconnaissance for the artillery. Wooow!"

But the show must go on, as it were, so on it went. Somehow, in spite of themselves and the situational hazards, the scheduled number of shows were given.

Exactly what kept them going at such a hectic pace is easy to understand. Despite all the hypertensive moments brought on by mid-air rescheduling and mid-show power failures, loss of sleep and, consequently, frazzled nerves, there was always an incentive; the guys in the field.

Shela gave her reason for doing the show, explaining that most of the guys in the field get little (entertainment-wise) for Christmas. "This is the best Christmas I've ever spent," she said. Doing the show for the guys was her way of saying thanks. In so saying, she expressed the feelings of the entire group.

Speaking about incentive, SP5 Tanner added, "When those guys came up to me and shook my hand and said, 'We sure do appreciate you doing the show for us,' I got all choked up. They're a great bunch of guys out there...what more can I say?"

Packing To Go Home

By 1LT James D. Eggensperger

It's a lot of hold baggage.

Late in 1970 when it became apparent that there was no longer any doubt about American troops pulling out of Vietnam, it was also decided that this redeployment would be more orderly, organized and economical than the logistical debacles after World War II and Korea.

The problems to be faced were huge and mind boggling. With the troop and logistics complexes built up as quickly as they had been between 1965 and 1969, the Army supply and requisition system had suffered sorely from the burden it carried. Requests for supplies were lost and there were yards full of containers holding unclaimed or unknown items.

And while the depots were filling with supplies, support operations had to continue, causing duplicate requisitions and some tremendous over supplies.

Then the tide changed and it was time for the men to go home. Units had to be deactivated and war materials reclaimed.

"Police up the battlefield" was the slogan of the redeployment in press conferences, supply rooms, G-4s and the overflowing yards.

To the 1st Signal Brigade the mission took on more significance. All the equipment involved in the retrograde would be fixed station gear--used in communications centers, dial telephone exchanges and high capacity radio sites.

The equipment involved fell into two categories: STRATCOM-peculiar items--those used only by

The process progresses through the stages of cleaning, protecting, boxing and foaming as the delicate equipment is recovered.

STRATCOM around the world--and the everyday Army communications equipment. For the STRATCOM-peculiar items there was a chance to regroup and reallocate in order to improve communications around the world.

In Thailand the 29th Signal Group recovered 10 high capacity long range radios and sent them to Korea to improve and update the high capacity wideband system there.

Other equipment in Vietnam was put back into the Army supply channels for use as directed by USARV or Department of the Army representatives.

As soon as it was determined that a site was being closed out, the logistics section at brigade headquarters would survey the major items on site and request disposition instructions from either STRATCOM-Pacific, if the item was STRATCOM-peculiar, or USARV if the item was common to Army communications.

Vietnam had long been the favorite child and rightly so. There the needs were most pressing and the most lives at stake if communications were not available immediately. But now, Vietnam commo was to be reduced and although some equipment would be left behind to support remaining forces and the Vietnamese Armed Forces, much would be recovered.

With an inventory of over $500 million in signal gear in Vietnam ranging from field phones of the Korean era to satellite terminals whose signals spanned the ocean between Vietnam and Hawaii, the thought of recovering and taking back seemed impossible.

Unique Developments

Something unique had to be done. A logical choice was the appointment of MG Hugh F. Foster Jr. who was very conscious of efficiency in saving money and had recently been commander of STRATCOM-Pacific and knew the situation well.

A separate and special branch of the Communications Assets Recovery Branch (CARB) was instituted to coordinate the dismantling and subsequent shipment of the electronics gear taken from Vietnam.

Electronics gear is by nature fragile, sensitive and needs gentle handling. That was one major obstacle and problem to overcome: All assets must be recovered in working order to implement the communications improvement strategy.

Lots of people were involved. The brigade engineer had a team inventory and crate all real property at the sites, including the buildings, fixed power plant generators and large capacity air conditioners.

Major John Cornejo, the brigade engineer said: "This will probably set a pattern for the future and there is a tremendous savings in money since the work is done with troop self-help."

Then a CARB team would go to the site and the equipment would either be sent to a packing house or the actual packing accomplished on site; in either case the procedure was about the same. After the team laid hold of the recovered gear-teletypes, transmitters weighing up to 6,500 pounds, tropospheric scatter dishes or whatever--they began the packing.

The operation was fascinating. Like a production line, the packageable components would follow each other to be turned into shippable boxes.

It sounded easy but the steps were complex and took some ingenuity. All electronic equipment with tubes has to have air space inside it to prevent excess heat building and interference by frequencies from neighboring tubes; all transistor equipment has tiny wires with minute tensil strengths and minimum area for securing a solder joint.

Either of these conditions causes a problem of movement: the space inside the tubed gear allows movement and, according to the laws of inertia, if the box is moving and stopped suddenly, there is the chance that the insides won't. Tubes and other components can shift or wires can break or bend into short circuits without much provocation. A hard jar on the outer cover of the machine can cause "internal hemorrhaging."

So the retrograded items had to be protected from jars to the cases.

All of the equipment is subject to moisture failure, i.e., water conducts electricity causing shorts; water plus air equals oxidation or ruined equipment.

So it had to be protected from moisture and humidity.

There were many assorted sizes and shapes among the recovered assets which precluded any sort of mass-produced single sized packaging.

So the stored equipment had to have individualized containers.

The CARB men solved the problem by finding some moderately flexible cushioning made of "rubberized hair" mounted on a wire screen and which could be cut into specific sizes for specific pieces of gear. This went next to the equipment itself with some packets of dessicant to absorb any moisture remaining from the equipment's stay in Vietnam.

Next came wrapping in corrugated cardboard cut from big sheets to fit the cushioned gear, making it a package. This taped cardboard bundle was put in huge sacks cut of waterproof material to fit and sealed all round except for one corner where a vacuum would fit to suck out most of the remaining air in the bundle.

Plywood was cut and nailed into boxes for shipping crates but before the package was crated it went into polyethylene covers which protected it from the next step, The FOAM.

This was truly science fiction...the blob.

The foam came out under pressure, giving off a lot of heat, and immediately expanded. It enfolded the plastic covered package in a cocoon of tannish goo and quickly covered the gear as if in a wave of quicksand. Soon after the envelopment, the foam became a rigid, form fitting layer to protect what was held in its innards.

When the convolutions of hardened foam had been cut away with a saw, the top of the plywood crate was nailed down and the whole package labeled-as it had been previously on the inside--and put into a container van with a bunch of its DEROSing buddies and sent away to further duty.

While realizing a tremendous saving, the 1st Signal Brigade is aiding the Army and its parent organization, STRATCOM, to improve the communications around the globe as it heeds the call to police up the battlefields and send home its hold baggage.

From Ground to Sky to Ground Satellite Communications

By 1LT James D. Eggensperger

Since man has gone to the moon and back a couple of times already, other operations in space are relegated to a rear seat in the public eye.

But there are other things going on in the blue above which also stretch credibility and capture the imagination.

Like a roller coaster for electrons or a parachute ride at the fair, radio signals are sent high into the sky daily, received by satellites circling the earth, passed through the spheres' electronic innards and spewed out to a ground station thousands of miles from where they started.

Four times a Titan 3C rocket has blasted off from Cape Kennedy carrying a frame loaded with up to eight of the 107-pound relay satellites and put the frame into orbit about 22,500 miles from earth.

The satellites were deposited into their orbits like fish eggs being spawned; they were expelled from the metal frame as the basket floated along in space.

Back on the ground, terminals receive and send the signals to the military "birds". All but two of the 29 ground stations in the system were designed to be portable though the task seems improbable. Some of the larger terminals sport 60-foot discs for transmission and reception of signals.

As the satellites drift across the sky and eventually go out of sight, (out of direct line radio sight) about 13 degrees above the horizon, a servomechanism that controls the antenna is fed already-computed information and swings the antenna around to a new azimuth and elevation angle where the ground terminal acquires a new satellite which receives its signals.

The set of 22 operational silver spheres making their tireless revolutions has fascinating characteristics, including a couple of physical phenomena which have marred the reliability and continuous usage of the system.

When two satellites drift too close together--which happens since they travel at different speeds--the ground terminals can't distinguish between them

Ba Queo Satellite Terminal sits in an isolated corner of Tan Son Nhut airbase. Recently the terminal operators set a world record with over 2,800 hours continuously scheduled operation. Photos by the author.

and communications to that bird is lost.

Another communications break occurs when the earth or moon comes between the sun and the satellite, cutting off the energy for the satellite's solar batteries.

However, the interruptions are anticipated and the terminals are not scheduled to be "up" during these times or the terminals can be assigned other satellites.

In fact, the Ba Queo terminal at Tan Son Nhut Air Base near Saigon recently set a record for 2,500 hours continuously scheduled operation without a terminal equipment failure.

According to Master Sergeant Charles Wiman, a long-time veteran of the satellite program and Satellite Communications NCO for the 1st Signal Brigade, the advent of satellite communications in Southeast Asia was in August 1964 when an experimental model Mark IV (X) terminal arrived in Saigon as part of the early research and development of the systems carried out under the Satellite Communications Agency at Ft. Monmouth, N.J.

A month later a second R&D model, a Mark IV (I), was located next to the first one and was used to transmit, as the first one was, to other experimental models in California, the Phillipines, Hawaii, the USS Kingsport and even to its neighbor terminal.

In April 1965 the first model, the (X), was moved to Korat, Thailand, and second Mark IV(X) was brought to Saigon from another network link in Asmara, Ethiopia.

During all of this time the R&D terminals were working with only two satellites, SYNCOM II and III, which had been launched solely for use in the R&D program although they carried some operational traffic late in the program before they were phased out.

A new generation of terminals, model number AN/MSC-46, was introduced to Southeast Asia when one came to Nha Trang in November 1966, and a similar model went to Ba Queo the following month. Both originally were five voice channel models but were later upgraded to have a 12 voice channel capability.

Finally, in July 1967 the two Vietnam terminals were taken out of research status and put under the operational control of the Satellite Communications Control Facility, a division of the Defense Communications Agency.

As soon as the system began to carry DCS traffic, it lost its status as a research tool. Another station was added to the SEA group in March of 1968 when a terminal with one voice and two teletype circuits capability was put in U Tapao, Thailand, and immediately put into operation with Guam.

The Nha Trang terminal was deactivated December 1970 and sent to Ft. Monmouth as a training facility.

The 1st Signal Brigade has been one of the forerunners in the satellite field with its terminals and has aided in field-proving the idea that satellite communications can work.

R&R: Getting Away From It All

Bangkok

By SP4 David Goetz

Bangkok, the closest of the R&R sites, is a city where East meets West...delightfully so.

The sprawling capital of Thailand is a city that bustles with vitality of commerce in a modern city without losing the flavor of the traditional Orient. Bangkok also boasts a vigorous and extensive entertainment district. All this coupled with easy accessability, an hour and a half by airline from Vietnam, has made Bangkok a very popular choice of Americans for their five days and six nights of "rest and recuperation."

Historically Bangkok, famed as the setting for the book and movie "The King and I," took on importance late in the 18th century when Rama I, King of Siam (as Thailand was known until 1939), moved the country's government from Thon Buri to the present site. With the help of river trade Bangkok has since developed a cultural tradition and sports a distinctive flavor and atmosphere.

Two Views of Hawaii

By SP5 Keith Harmon

Besides being that special place of beautiful reunion with wife, family or friends, Hawaii has long been a paradise "away from it all" for mainlander Americans who've scrimped and saved for an island vacation. To servicemen who would probably never visit Hawaii otherwise, R&R provides a chance of a lifetime.

The R&R Center at Ft. DeRussey, nestled snugly between the white sand beaches of Waikiki and the high-rise hotels that shelter tourists from every part of the world, has provided a vacation program for soldiers in Vietnam that would make the best travel agency jealous.

If you are a family man, Ft. DeRussey takes away the hassle of meeting relatives in a strange place. You may not notice half the effort that goes into making your R&R enjoyable, but your wife will tell you how much help the R&R Center was during her wait there. Unlike anything else

By SP5 Andrew McCullough

The encroachment of modern civilization ended at a rickety picket fence supported by a vine covered sand dune a mile and a half down to our right. And a NO TRESPASSING sign on a private lot marked its obtrusive beginning a little more than 300 yards to the left. We walked the span of the beach (of Oahu), then settled down in the middle.

We thought before there were no places left in the world like this.

Hawaii...and there are only two people in the whole, wide, beautiful world. You and her...alone..on an empty-plus-two white sand beach bordered by grassy sand dunes landward and smooth-worn black and brown coral seaward.

It was the last hour before tropical sunset on a settle-down, still foaming sea. The moon was faintly visible in the red-orange sky of a lingering afternoon; the sea would withdraw, hiss in withdrawal, then explode upon itself...boiling, rush in.

Soon after landing on one of the 35 monthly charter flights, the weary GI gets quickly into the swing of things with a host of other tourists from all corners of the world. The representatives of the R&R center do their best to get you oriented to local custom, your money changed (by attractive local girls) and introduced to the myriad tours and tourist programs that are available to newcomers. Then off they usher you to one of the many fine hotels in the city. These hotels, which have discounts for R&R personnel, offer a wide range of facilities and services including swimming pools, 24-hour coffee shops, restaurants and lounges.

The American on R&R pumps some $2 million monthly into the country with the average GI spending $300.

GIs spend their money in many ways--touring the many beautiful landmarks, governmental buildings and palaces of Bangkok. In addition there are the ancient timeless ruins of Ayudhya, once a capital of a powerful Asian nation, or the clean white beaches south of Bangkok at Pattaya. In addition the town has parks, the floating market and several private and public zoos.

Eating is an experience in

story cont'd on pg. 19

the Army does, there's no waiting in line at the R&R Center; everyone bends over backwards to get you started on your R&R.

A convenient advantage of the R&R Center is the location of Ft. DeRussey, which fronts a beautiful white sand beach and is within walking distance of the heart of Waikiki. In the near future the Center plans to build its own beach front hotel which will provide luxurious accommodations to R&R servicemen at military prices.

Beyond a doubt, deciding what to do and what to see in a setting as fascinating as Hawaii with just one week of vacation is one of the most perplexing problems for first-time visitors. This is precisely where the Center best excels. Tours offered by Ft. DeRussey provide the most convenient and inexpensive way to see the many attractions on Oahu. For a dollar each, the R&R Center will provide transporatation to and from the island attractions saving anywhere from two to five dollars apiece at each place. Tours range from a complete circle of the island by bus to an informative tour of Pearl Harbor.

However, if you find tour schedules a bit too restrictive for your R&R schedule, then a

story cont'd on pg. 18

Time there is no better than
when two with each repose
and drift into a heaven there
of sand in wind and sun
in timeless ecstasy...

A cool drink for two and the sea, a man and a woman, again together for what seemed since eternity; an isolation which enveloped two people...as they renewed a love which never died, but grew.

None other, they
share love which should be
near when needing is
the yes of giving with
a kiss two souls are one...

There was a crowd on the other side of the island. There were lines of people, people-filled streets, and people preoccupied with making money and those determined to spend it. Vietnam has the same, and so does every mainland state. This one week in the entire year--R&R in Hawaii--was the time to escape the hassle of everyday and enjoy in complete privacy the one you love.

They oh then were
God and dreaming in
that gloryworld of which
for each the other is, and
thinking down come here a
heaven has (!)
for them and they oh then were

Days on R&R come and go like none other: Hours are minutes and the last day's sunset catches you unaware. But they are not lost, those days of wine and roses, laughter, rest and love. Though brief, they remain an unforgettable memory that makes the remaining days of separation a bit more bearable than those gone before.

Time when we two
yes and touching was
without the other each
within a missing grew
together fast how flew
the time when we two.

Hawaii: A Special Island

rental car would be the best investment you could make. Inside the main building of the R&R Center are two car rental agencies, and a couple of dozen smaller agencies are across the street.

A good source for all sorts of information valuable to tourists are cabbies and all you have to do is ask.

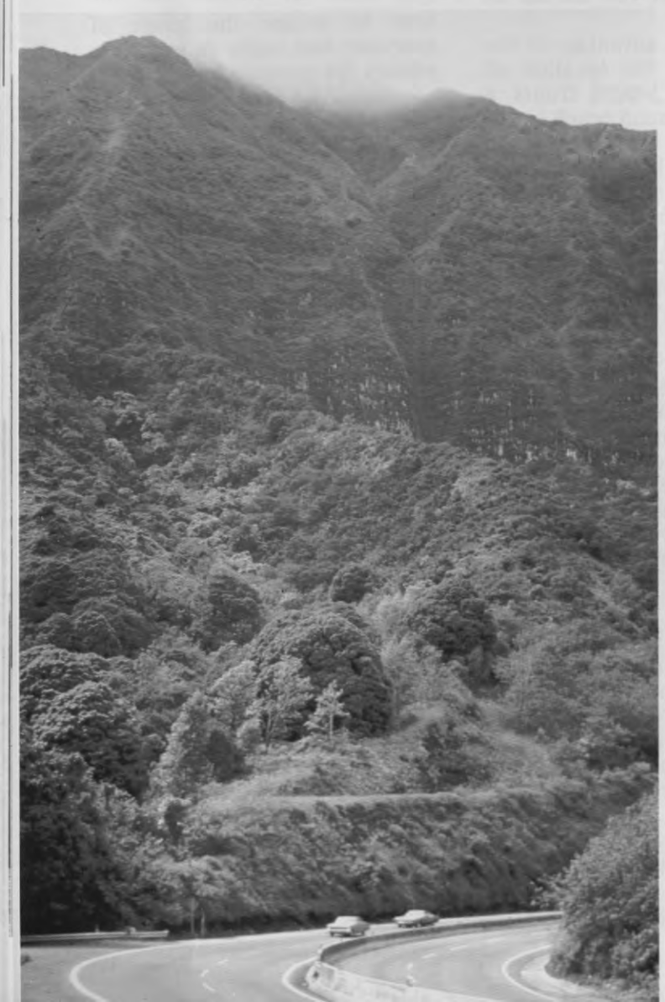
One thing to remember about Hawaii is that it's a good place to visit even if you are single. American beauties are there in abundance; college students (the University of Hawaii is in Honolulu), surfers, pseudo-surfers and tourists. Bright colored bikinis brighten the streets of downtown Honolulu as well as the beaches as "round-eyes" show off their newly acquired sun tans.

Honolulu's restaurants are superb, although expensive. You can get almost any kind of food in the world, or you can dine on good ol' roast beef and potatoes in the best of style. The R&R Center can offer helpful tips regarding restaurants, and you can save up to 15 per cent at most restaurants and stores by using an R&R Discount Card issued to every GI. (Here again, the cabbies are usually most helpful since they know the best places in town and also know the restaurants that tourists most frequently prefer.)

The night life is what you want it to be. If Guy Lombardo plays your kind of music, then you can sway under the banyon tree nightly at the Moana on Waikiki. But if you like a faster pace, nightclubs for the young such as Alice's Restaurant feature the best in rock bands in Honolulu every night until 4 a.m.

In short, Honolulu has it all. Big city, island beauty, Polynesian culture blended with the hustle and bustle of big-spending tourists, the beach and surf, and of course, all those mainlander girls soaking up the rays.

There's only one hang-up. Like all good things, R&R comes to an end too quickly. Soon it's time to say goodbye and time to be sad again. Alas, from the time you first set foot on the island of Oahu you knew it was impossible to cram eight months of living into one week. But, aaaaaaaah, wasn't it fun trying?



Bangkok: A place of Beauty and Bargains

Bangkok. The tasty and spicy dishes of Thailand will long be remembered as will the infinite variety of seafoods. Steaks and other "western cuisine" can easily be found and restaurants catering to specialty or national foods abound in the city. Chinese food is also common in the city as the result of a large resident Chinese population in Bangkok.

Shopping is also a memorable event; as in Vietnam barter is the name of the game. A big smile and friendly banter can help bring the price of many of Thailand's specialty items into line with your budget. Semiprecious stones, jewelry, carvings, bronzeware, clothing, silk products and a host of other locally-manufactured items can be found minutes from your hotel.

Nightlife is also abundant as there is a seemingly never ending variety of places to dance and listen to music. The range of musical fare goes from native Thai music to hard rock at blaring discotheques. Many of the hotels offer the top names in European and American entertainment. Prices for entertainment, as for most things in this Oriental paradise, are quite reasonable.

It is no secret that the Thai capital is noted for its beautiful women. On some occasions the visitor from Vietnam may befriend one of the local girls and enjoy sightseeing the out-of-the-way places only a native knows.

Bangkok is a city of friendly people that holds an ancient and rich culture. At the same time it is characterized by the pace of the 70's with more than a dash of western influence. Bangkok is indeed an ideal place to get away from it all.

Buddhism in Vietnam

By SP5 Andrew McCullough

He did not consider himself to be a god, and he did not pray to or worship a deity. Yet, he became a god who is worshipped by tens of millions of people. The god is Buddha, and upwards to 12 million Vietnamese fashion their lives by his philosophy. Although no longer the national religion, Buddhism is a way of life for four out of every five people in South Vietnam.

Buddhism is a religion for individuals; that is, it encourages all followers to attain salvation through self-discipline and quiet, individualistic and meditative living. The philosophy rejects luxury and gluttony, but it does not advocate excessive aceticism. Buddha did not believe in extremes; rather, he taught a "Middle Way" to the ultimate goal of Enlightenment.

Just as the goal of Christianity is life after death in heaven with God, Enlightenment here on earth is the main objective of Buddhism. Enlightenment is reached when one has eliminated all craving of desire and attachment to life, when he suffers no more because he has become completely selfless. There are eight rules by which one must live to attain Enlightnment (or Nirvana, the state in which one exists after becoming enlightened). They are: Right belief, right aims, right speech, right actions, right occupation, right endeavor, right thinking and right meditation.

Like all major religions, Buddhism has many sects; but there is no central authority which formulates an orthodoxy, such as the Vatican of Roman Catholicism. However, there are two great divisions of Buddhism, the Hinayana and the Mahayana. Most popular of the two in Vietnam is Mahayana Buddhism.

Although Buddhism is essentially a world-rejecting theology, Mahayana Buddhism is more liberal than Hinayana Buddhism, as the Mahayana theology encourages an active concern for others. The holy men, Bodhisattvas, have reached salvation, or Enlightenment. It is they who teach the Mahayana priests and inspire them to serve their fellow men. Perhaps this helps to explain the growing activities of Buddhist leaders in politics.

Buddhism holds that political authority is of such a nature that it cannot satisfy the primary needs of men. But one of the most important and admired virtures a man can have, according to Buddhism, is tolerance. Gentleness is advocated, and a warlike spirit is highly discouraged.

Their participation in governmental affairs is not a compromise of their beliefs; instead, it seems, they are enacting their beliefs through their own middle way. Rather than fight, which is abhorrent to them anyway, they have chosen to be tolerant of others' beliefs and to participate in the government of their country.

Three pillars of their religion are love, sympathy and tolerance. One of their most frequently quoted proverbs is, "What is good wins by its own accord...do not preach, but show by the example of your life what is right." At the same time, the Mahayana Buddhists believe that man is not a helpless creature and he must strive for a better world. Despite emphasis on individual salvation, meditation and the quiet life, Buddhism can hardly be considered a passive theology confined to the monasteries. Instead, it is a vitally important and unifying force in the country today. Buddhist faithfuls are taking an active part in their society...and South Vietnam is better for it.

The world of Buddhism in Vietnam is a mixture of beauty and other worldness. Architecture is only one form of expression in the religion of the Vietnamese masses. On these pages pictures of shrines and temples in Nha Trang and Saigon exemplify the sophistication of the age old religion.

Going to Class in'Nam

By SP5 Dan Cotter

Beginning at the beginning is the theme of the program at the Southeast Asia Signal School No.1 in Long Binh.

Providing sophisticated top-level communications from tactical through long haul systems had been the prime responsibility of the 1st Signal Brigade. But supporting allied operations in Indochina goes far beyond the operation of tropo sites or tactical mobile communications vans. The leaders of the brigade realize this and have developed, often on the spot, training programs to meet the communicator's needs and to insure communications in the unique environment of Vietnam.

The role of such training in a better and more reliable communications system spotlights the job being done by the brigade's Southeast Asia Signal School.

The Signal School was organized in May 1966, a month after the brigade came into existence. The school's creation was the result of a decision by the then commanding general BG Robert Terry to provide training at a centralized location in place of individual battalion schools. Originally situated in Saigon, the school was moved to its present location in early 1968 to become a self-sustaining complex and to provide expanded and more adequate facilities for its students.

Under the operational control of assistant chief of staff, plans and training, Headquarters 1st Signal Brigade, and command of the 160th Signal Group, the Signal School offers 18 courses ranging from tactical circuit control to telephone systems repair, each one having particular applicability to the communication needs of the Southeast Asian conflict.

The responsive focus of the School's curriculum is exemplified in its establishment of the only Army cable-splicing course in the world. The role of aerial and buried cable in the communications network of the Allied Forces in Indochina has proven to be an increasingly important one. In response to the need for personnel skilled in cable handling the Signal School created the splicing course which presents the intricacies of matching multi-pair cable. The three week course is the school's longest and graduates up to 40 students each term.

All major combat units in Vietnam including such tactical units as 101st Airborne, the 1st Air Cav Division, the Americal Division, and the 1st Marine Division send students to the school for the courses which last from 4 to 21 days. The Signal School's physical plant includes spacious billets, a stateside latrine, and a full range of recreational facilities.

Each of the Signal School's courses is conducted by a permanent faculty of U.S. Army instructors. One of these instructors is SFC James Liverett. Liverett is branch chief in charge of the operator and repair courses on the AN/GRC-106 Radio, the main component in the Army's newest single side band radio teletype system.

SFC Liverett's career has been centered in Army instruction. He spent nine years at the Southeastern Signal School at Ft. Gordon, Ga. and also saw duty at the U.S. Army Signal School in Lengries, Germany. When asked to evaluate the quality of instruction offered by the Southeast Asia Signal School SFC Liverett doesn't hesitate. "It's the best you could ask for. We've got well qualified instructors and eager students. The ARVN soldiers are especially enthusiastic. They know they have to deal with the language problem so they work all the harder at it. They often ask us to spend a little extra time with them. We are happy to do it because it really pays off."

SFC Liverett explains that the nearness of the war makes a real difference in the attitude of the students. "They know that they must be combat-ready just as each piece of equipment in the school must be combat-ready. Each man knows he must learn and learn well because the knowledge he gains here is extremely important especially in terms of the Vietnamization of the war."

The enthusiasm of the ARVN soldiers who attend the Signal School is matched only by the skill and competence of the ARVN interpreters who bridge the language barrier which quickly arises in a classroom replete with technical terms.

SFC Oscar Smallwood, NCOIC of the VHF and Carrier Course, boasts of his two interpreters, SFC Huynh Nguu and MSG Luc Si Lam. "They are both outstanding," says SFC Smallwood. "Soon they'll know more about these radios than I do and I've been teaching their operation for years. MSG Lam interprets for both the TRC-24 repair and operator courses which provide the student with training in the VHF systems configuration and planning factors for a communications site. He handles both of them like a real pro."

The Signal School is especially proud of one ARVN soldier. SFC Nguyen Van Ty is the only instructor at the School who is not a member of the U.S. Army. The school's pride in SFC Ty is well justified. He is himself a product of the school's program in telephone key systems, a course which he completed as honor graduate.

"SFC Ty's fluency in English and his thorough knowledge of the course makes him a very valuable man," says the school's operations sergeant, MSG J.G. Fisher. "We have been able to retain him as an instructor under 'the Buddies Together' Cung Than Thien program and we're very happy about it."

The problem of training the ARVN in the methods and modes of the complex communications system which has become vital in the Southeast Asian war is one of the many problems which the Signal School seeks to solve in the accomplishment of its mission. Last year the school graduated over 3,100 students. While most were Americans, a good number were ARVN and the rest were representative of U.S. allies in Vietnam.

In each case the proficiency of the individual soldier has been the prime concern of the Signal School and its personnel for on the successful completion of each student's mission rests the reliability of the communications network which spans Southeast Asia.

One of the school's outstanding instructors, ARVN SFC Ty, is shown at right explaining equipment to two 1st Signal Brigaders.

The faculty of the school features both ARVN and American Instructors. Students come from ARVN, US and Free World Forces throughout Vietnam.

The Great Commo Switch

Story and Photos by 1LT James D. Eggensperger

A balloon-tired Rolligon becomes a floating platform when driven into a klong (canal). Members of the 302nd Signal Battalion take the bumpy ride over the edge of a road near Don Muong air base.

Robbing Peter to pay Paul is all right for everybody but Peter unless done discreetly.

In Thailand the 29th Signal Group has been on a communications diet designed to keep the body of its systems whole and hearty while giving up some poundage to a needy relative.

In the middle of 1970 there was a plan developed at headquarters, Strategic Communications Command Pacific (STRATCOM-PAC) in Hawaii requiring some juggling of communications assets in the Pacific and aiming to improve the overall communications there while maintaining the quality and number of circuits.

Specifically PACOM, short for Pacific Communications Improvement Plan, called for deinstalling about 20 high capacity microwave transmitter - receiver sets and shipping them to Korea. These excess radios then would be used to improve the Korean Wideband Network, the system which provides the capability of phoning from one end of the country to the other and likewise carries long-range teletype links.

Since communications facilities in Thailand were replaceable by other systems such as cable, and with somewhat of a decrease in requirements, the time looked ripe for helping the Korean system which had not had the benefits of the technology enjoyed by Thailand and Vietnam when it was installed.

A survey team from STRATCOM-PAC came to Thailand and the 29th with suggestions on which systems to eliminate or how to replace their functions. Some of the suggestions came from planning by CEEA-T (Communications Electronics Engineering Agency-Thailand), a separate command of the 29th which became the organization with primary responsibility for the PACOM project in Thailand, and some were based on staff studies at Pac headquarters.

Major Monroe Taranto, the commander of CEEA-T,(who has been in on the planning since the beginning) said, "After consultation and some modification, a plan was developed. The goals of PACOM were to improve the overall Pacific communications posture and to improve the quality of Integrated Communications Systems without a reduction in the circuit capabilities."

The CEEA-T role was unique in that it provided total engineering and installation work for PACOM instead of leaving some of the work to contractors with government monitoring.

CEEA-T was originally chartered as a government agency to monitor and accept contractor installation of the communications systems, but has developed to much broader functions and a wider scope of activities. They have gone ahead and begun developing some new engineering and systems management techniques.

"The engineering began at desk and field where we established management control for all projects. We then carried the projects to the installations, which usually were not done by the military in Thailand." Major Taranto said.

Taking 20 high capacity radios out of a system like that in Thailand, which has just over 25 sites itself, was bound to bring on some problems and engineering assets headaches.

At Mukdahan the Air Force had pulled out and left the site there without a mission and the entire site was deinstalled. At Korat and Udorn air bases the high capacity radios were being used in short on-base systems.

The planning for the PACOM--complete planning including written instructions on how to install or deinstall certain radio links--was done in the Systems Engineering Division of CEEA-T which is headed by Stanley A. Braun a man who speaks with a touch of a German accent and who gives the impression that he has everything under control and that anything is possible using sound principles and good logic.

Under Braun the engineering branch during the last part of 1969 and early 1970 had completed a plan called MART Multiplex Assets Reconfiguration-Thailand, which gave them a head start on the PACOM plan.

Within the goals established for MART they worked to redesign the existing system in Thailand to conform to changing subscriber requirements and the shift in activity from the north of the country toward the south.

MART, according to Glenn Vinson, another DA civilian and the man in charge of the Management Support Division of CEEA-T, "was completed in-house and worked to change some of the terminations of the ICS to update and improve them. Smooth accomplishment of MART resulted in CEEA-T being tasked as it was to perform the PACOM."

In addition to the MART plan updating the ICS in Thailand it had the added function of improving the technical control of some of the smaller, tactical equipment being used as back-up and supplemental gear paralleling the ICS. Although it was being used in a configuration calling for high quality transmission, there had been no provisions for this gear to be monitored or put through a quality assurance controls.

And soon on the heels of the completion of MART came the PACOM plan.

PACOM asked that some of the radio links be replaced with cable and others be switched to

smaller capacity or other type radio equipment. But to complicate the job was the fact there was no money available for purchasing new equipment or even parts to be used in the installation.

Braun said, "The main actions were about the same as the MART reconfiguration and in addition we had to solve the problem of reconfiguring the system from on-hand equipment."

In the end there were about 12 sites involved in the shifted systems while about 20 added to the equipment pool and shifting of assets.

The people who had the rather immense job of accomplishing the planners' decrees were from the Test and Installation Division of CEEA-T and the 40th Signal Battalion and some from battalions of the 29th.

Sergeant First Class Alvin Thomas is head of the specialized group of men who take care of the installation and activation of any kind of radio work within the agency. They were the ones who deinstalled all of the 18 FRC-109s which were finally given to Korea out of Thailand as well as put in the replacement radios and shifted other 109s within the Thailand system.

They put in a new 109 shot between Bang Pla about 23 miles south of Bangkok and Bangkok to handle the increased load coming from the south and reengineered and installed a shot from the Bangkok switchboard to the SEATO switchboard.

SFC Thomas and his team of 18 men are further divided into four four-man teams to be combined or sent their separate ways as the needs are dictated. At one time or another SFC Thomas has held about seven MOSs and seemingly is capable of most any kind of signal radio operations. He moves his hands in many patterns while he is talking, painting ephemeral pictures of what he proposes to do. An SFC heads each of his teams.

A detachment from the 40th Signal Battalion was tendered to 29th for the PACOM cable work which was beyond the capability of the cable teams in the battalions.

George C. Kemple, chief of the CEEA-T Wire Engineering Division had high praise for the work done by the men of the 40th, a distinct honor coming from the man with 28 years cable experience.

The team of about 19 men, headed by Lieutenant Steven Buchness, installed 18,000 feet of cable between Don Muong Royal Thai Air Base outside Bangkok to Bang Kaen, 18,000 feet between the Korat Dial telephone exchange and the Korat ICS site and another 13,500 feet between Udorn DTE and ICS.

The ingenuity and expertise used by the TI team and the 40th were fascinating.

At Bang Pla the oversaturated ground around the DTE forced the CEEA-T team to build a framework of logs beneath the cable running from the ICS building. They found that the weight of the cable plus the steel conduit encasing it would sink into the mud during the rainy season and pull the cable right out of both buildings.

At Udorn the teams from the 40th ran into a couple of snags when their instructions called for crossing a runway at the Udorn air base and when they had to cross two klongs–remnants of canals which used to serve as main highways but which have been cut up and blocked so as to leave many wide, water - filled semi - canals throughout the country.

To go across the klongs the team made miniature suspension bridges for their cable and its casing. The suspensions called catenarys are not normally done by signal cable layers and repre - sented a mild detour from normal SOP.

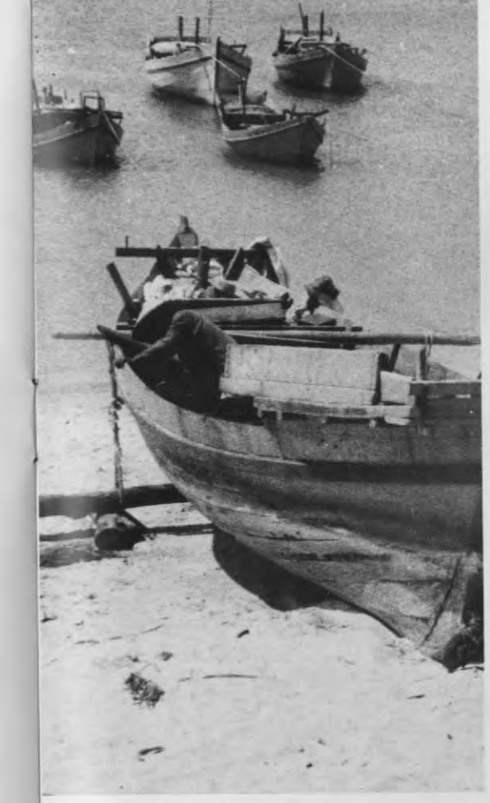
Going across the main runway at Udorn proved more of a stumper. They couldn't dig up the path; the existing cable casings had no room in them for the 300 pairs needed for the shot. They couldn't string aerial wire. So they made a valiant effort to "push" under the asphalt. Pushing is a normal procedure for paved roads and cement structures and works like horizontal well drilling as the cable is put under the structure from the wall of a pit.

The push went about halfway across the runway before they struck rock, but still the effort was valiant and was further than anyone on the team had ever pushed.

Finally, to solve the problem the team searched the area and about a hundred yards up the runway found a drainage culvert which had plenty of room for their cable. They detoured up the runway from the push site and completed the connection.

As the communications mission of the 29th in Thailand continues and is maintained but gradually winds down, the work is going on to use more assets better and to improve the other Pacific systems.

Catenary suspensions provide the support for stringing cable and casings across Thai klongs. Two cablemen from the 40th battalion balance precariously while tightening the bracing cables.



Bells Ring at An Thoi

Story and Photos by SP5 Roland N. Halliday

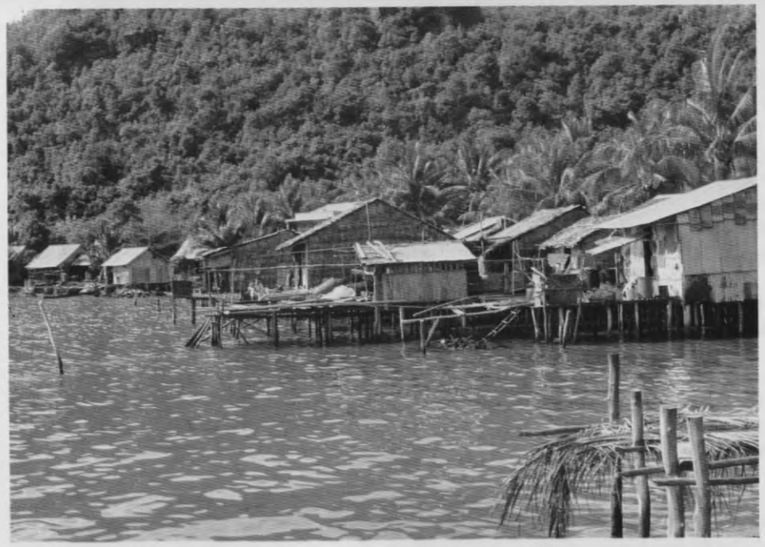
Steep tree covered mountains rising from the seashore and hidden valleys favor the isolation of An Thoi fishing village. The upheaval of war has disrupted the peacefulness of this tropical paradise, located on the southern tip of Phu Quoc Island, 35 miles from the coast of Vietnam in the Gulf of Thailand. Scores of American and Vietnamese military, their dependents and refugees packed into the area, but something good came of it through the efforts of five signalmen of the 39th Signal Battalion's 327th Signal Company and the Vietnamese who built a public school as a community development project.

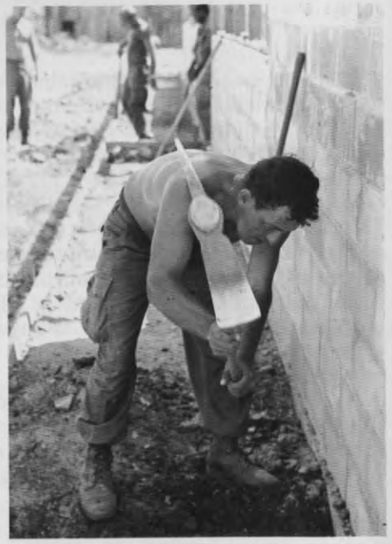
An Thoi's setting has endowed its residents with a livelihood from the sea. The local villagers are proud and live in the traditional manner of the mainland. Rising each morning with the sun is the fisherman's heritage.

General repair of fishing lines and nets, and stowing away equipment occupy a fisherman's time before setting sail. Work often requires much help and it is not uncommon to find whole families involved in the daily effort. As in the case with many Vietnamese villages, people have little material wealth so food on the family table takes precedence.

Besides fishing, various sea products provide additional sources of income for the people of An Thoi. Nuoc Mam, a staple condiment and a pungent fish sauce very popular among Vietnamese, is one of these products. Other sea products, pepper farming and raising pigs are the village's highest revenue-producing commodities.

Like other villages, An Thoi's market place is a busy scene. Here residents exchange goods and mingle while visiting friends to catch up on the latest news. Many of the fish products are





BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE...SP4 Baxter (top left) checks his work on the school building at An Thoi with a level while future students of the school pause to watch the work (top right). SSG Woodmansee (above right) gets involved in his work. At left, a serene An Thoi fishing village as seen from the Gulf of Thailand.

The finished building is now being used as a school by all the village's residents, old and new.

exchanged while rice and more pigs, the two most valuable items, are brought in from the mainland.

The war has brought many new faces to An Thoi. Scores of Vietnamese military personnel with their dependents have moved there. Located here is the headquarters for the Vietnamese Navy's IV Military Region Coastal Command and Army of the Republic of Vietnam QC (military police) personnel who maintain a large prisoner of war camp nearby.

Alongside the village a tropospheric scatter detachment of the 327th Signal Company provides all major communication for military forces on the island. SFC Lawrence W. Webb, site NCOIC, described the atmosphere at the signal site as a "comfortable living area which the men have worked on between shifts, blending it in with the surrounding. On occasion the men enjoy the beach, movies are brought in each day, there is plenty of reading material, but no PX or complaints."

Dependent housing has been built by U.S. Navy Seabees for Vietnamese military here. In all, 294 family units have been built and are now occupied.

The school came about when Lt. Col. Howard J. Douville, special sector MACV senior advisor visited An Thoi last fall and recognized the need for a public school to supplement the village's single parochial school. Following some initial investigation as to the feasibility of building a school, full support was pledged by the Seabees and BG Jack A. Albright, then deputy commander of the 1st Signal Brigade. Seabees drew plans for the structure and provided most of the supplies that were needed.

Only minor problems were encountered as five signalmen from the tropospheric scatter site, a Seabee and Vietnamese military and civilians put their hearts into the project and completed the work on the much needed school. Lt. Col. Douville asserted, "This has been the best cooperative effort between military personnel and civilians working together that I have observed."

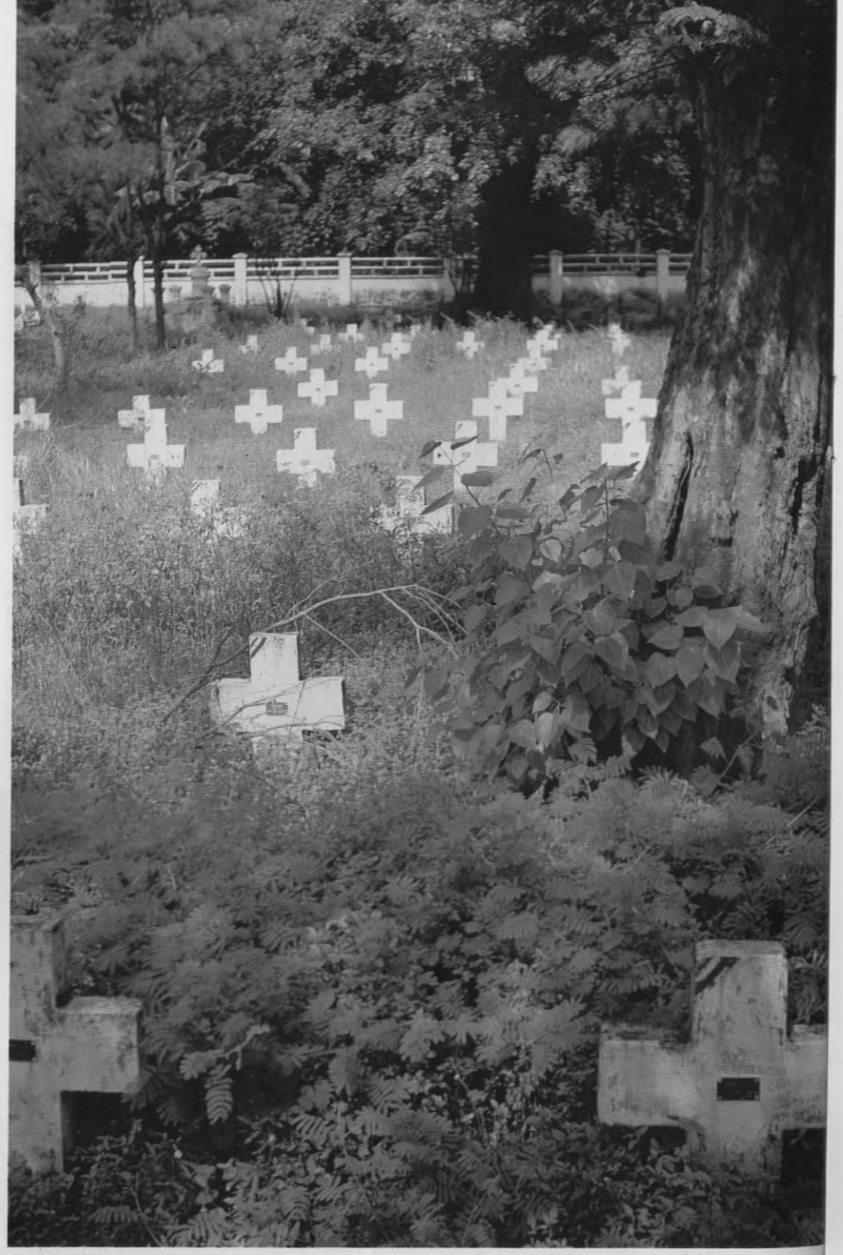
Headed by SSG George Woodmansee, the signalmen described the project as an investment in the future of An Thoi. Long after the war, the school will still be there, having been responsible for training the merchants, fish product distributors and maybe even the future teachers of the school the signalmen helped make possible.

For the most part, the five signalmen who volunteered for the project had never had any prior building experience. "I learned a lot; before this I never laid a cement block in my life," explained SP4 John A. Baxter. "The work moved right along and at the day's end you felt as though you had accomplished something."

As the product developed, so did the friendships between Vietnamese and American project workers. "Sometimes after a day's work we would get together with some of the Vietnamese and enjoy a few beers together talking about the day's work on the site," summarized SSG Woodmansee.

The other signalmen, SP4 Thomas L. Lowe, SP4 Charles W. Davis and SP4 Luis Herrera, agreed their efforts went to a good cause. Pride in their work marked their progress and although they may have been amateurs, they did a great job on the finished product.

Shortly before completion on the school and just prior to his departure from Vietnam, BG Albright went to An Thoi for the dedication ceremony for the school. The faces of the Vietnamese present showed their appreciation. In January the school bells for An Thoi rang, welcoming the first class.



Vung Tau:

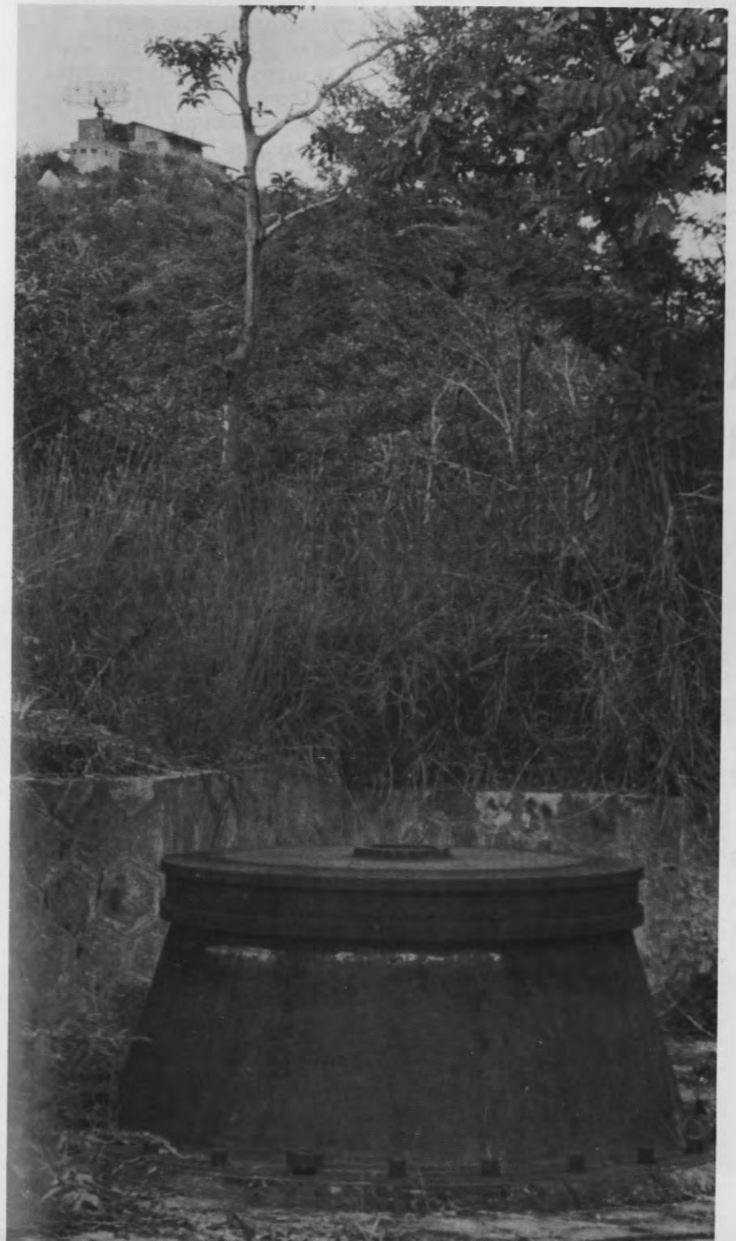
Many Years of War

By SP5 Keith Harmon

The deuce and a half chugs up the narrow, winding asphalt path that leads to the rocky mountain top. It passes the squatters, peasants who've thrown up lean-tos and shacks along the mountain road. The truck spews a thick cloud of exhaust as it finds a lower gear to make the steep incline. It kicks out small rocks and gravel as it brushes against thick overgrowth that continually makes the narrow road more narrow.

An old man, probably once a fisherman, squats at the front of his hootch puffing on a long, thin pipe. He doesn't notice the rumble of the truck or the laughter of the GIs. He's seen the same thing before...many times before.

Perhaps he recalls, as a young man, watching strange-looking Europeans making a temporary home on his mountain which overlooks the bustling South China Sea resort community of



... An Old French Cemetery ... A long forgotten cannon

Vung Tau. They were French soldiers who set up gun emplacements and fortified bunkers to take advantage of the mountain's strategic look out over the coast.

In later years he may remember Japanese soldiers making their way up the road which snakes to the mountain crest. Perhaps he remembers how the Japanese also established gun emplacements and stone bunkers used during the Second World War to protect Japan's stronghold on Vung Tau's deep water port.

Then again, maybe the gray-haired old man recollects the return of the French after the Japanese had been crushed by the allies. The French this time made little use of their bunkers and cannons constructed in the late 1800's, but nonetheless still found the mountain to be a suitable location for a stockade and guard posts.

When the French were later expelled from Vietnam, the old fisherman might remember how not too long ago Vietnamese military men set up a tiny garrison atop the rocky peak. The Vietnamese soldiers sympathetic to the Hanoi government led by Ho Chi Minh found it advantageous to discard the bunkers erected by the French and Japanese and built instead fortified caves leading into the solid rock near the mountain's top.

Years later, when American and allied forces began arriving in large numbers at the scenic seaport of Vung Tau, they found it imperative to drive the Viet Cong troops from the steep fortress which had already been the home of the French, the Japanese and the Vietnamese who sided with North Vietnam.

The mountain, captured by Americans who scaled its steep cliffs, is commonly referred to now as "VC Hill", a moniker given the mighty natural fortress by the Americans.

Since that time, VC Hill has served as the home of the 369th Signal Battalion and an Integrated Communications System (ICS) site operated by Company A, 369th.

VC Hill was also the location of an Australian radio station which helped provide communications between an Aussie transportation unit in Vung Tau and its mobile units which drove daily from Vung Tau to the Australian infantry base camp in Nuy Dat.

More recently, however, an American radar setup has replaced the Australians on one of VC Hill's rocky knolls.

But the armies of as many different countries as have called VC Hill "home" have not left without leaving their permanent calling cards scattered atop the rugged hill and throughout the Vung Tau peninsula. Left standing are the intricate concrete bunker complexes the French built in the 1800s, and the barren cannon mounts which once held giant guns that protected the coastline and harbor.

On a neighboring mountain peak, French cannons have been left to rust on their perches which overlook the mouth of the Binh Dinh River. The four cannons remaining are part of a bunker complex which at one time included five cannons and several concrete bunkers for the protection of troops and the storage of ammunition.

Although the cannons are now nearly covered with high grass and thick brush, they obviously played an important role in protecting the resort areas along the beaches that had attracted Frenchmen for more than 100 years. Cast in 1875, the huge guns, which still bear the name of the manufacturer, were mounted about 1920, according to French government representatives in Saigon.

The Japanese built bunkers later used by the VC

"...capturing on film an almost forgotten war."

About half a dozen French bunker complexes remain in their crumbling states near Vung Tau. They are rapidly deteriorating, being cracked by plants growing between building and foundations and by the relentless heat and moisture which has played year after year upon the military remnants. American, Australian and French photographers make their way to the VC Hill fortresses to capture on film the remains of an almost forgotten war. How many more years the bunkers and cannons will stand in their places before being destroyed by nature is unknown, but near an American naval site on VC Hill, EOD teams use French concrete bunkers as a place to detonate unwanted explosives. The blasts are taking their toll on the near century old fortresses, and the once impressive bunkers are rapidly becoming nothing but a pile of rubble.

The Japanese built fortified bunkers on about a dozen sites near Vung Tau. At least one of them still stands on the mountain peak which now serves as headquarters for the 369th. At the VC Hill complex, the Japanese built huge bunker complexes and, like the French, armed them with cannons that faced the South China Sea. Although no Japanese guns are left behind today, the gun mounts and the stone and mortar bunkers remain in almost perfect condition.

The Japanese constructed their military sites around 1940, local Vung Tau residents say, at a time that Japan was expanding its military hold over much of Southeast Asia.

The Japanese bunker complexes vary greatly in design and size, however, depending on their location. Near the water's edge are the remains of small three or four-man fortifications which were apparently used to repel landing crafts and enemy personnel seeking to come ashore. These bunkers were well built for versatility and practicality, and they offer excellent protection as well as maximum fire advantages. The small bunkers contained ammo and personnel for small mortars. Some were fortified on all four sides with thick walls and covered with a thick roof so that the only opening visible from the sea was a narrow, semicircular slit for small arms and machinegun fire. Entrance to these structures was sometimes gained through tunnels which began 50 meters or so from the bunkers.

Much of the Japanese fortifications are in ruin today, possibly the result of bitter fighting in which the Japanese soldiers had to literally be blasted from their strongholds by the approaching allies.

Still left standing, too, on VC Hill are several caves which lead into the mountain's solid rock center. Some of the caves appear to be man-made, and since their entrances are blocked off, no one really knows where they lead or how far into the mountain they thread. The mouths of two of these caves open right into the signal compound.

Although the mouths of the caverns are fronted with stone and mortar entrance-ways much like the stone and mortar construction patterns used by the Japanese, the inhabitans of VC Hill believe these caves were the prize possessions of the Viet Cong during their relatively brief reign on the mountaintop. Signalmen who've been inside the caves before they were sealed off claim Vietnamese graffitti decorated much of the interior, probably with remarks of someone getting "short"...or the usual graffitti left behind by soldiers everywhere.

Probably one of the most ignored and poignant remnants of bygone military conflicts in Vung Tau is a French military cemetery at the base of VC Hill. Cluttered with fallen limbs from trees and overgrown with weeds, the tiny cemetery is the resting place of about a hundred French soldiers who never made it home. A white cross bearing the soldier's name and date of death marks each grave which has been placed in neat little rows in a shady area next to a Vietnamese civilian cemetery. On the left arm of each cross are faced red, white and blue stripes, symbols of the French flag. The cemetery was closed around 1920, French government officials say, and no burials have been made there since.

Another phase in the long military history of Vung Tau is closing, leaving behind another chapter to the uncompleted annals of military conflict at this tiny seaport. A planned withdrawal by American troops from the signal site, leaving the communications mission in the hands of Vietnamese signalmen and civilian contractors under supervision of American advisors, is scheduled in the near future. After that, it is hoped that yet another chapter can be completed with the total take-over of the signalman's mission by the Vietnamese Signal Department, allowing Americans to return home.

Capturing the War

Capturing the war on film by providing a visual record of the American and allied operation in Vietnam has been the mission of Southeast Asia Pictorial Center (SEAPC) for several years. Through the efforts of SEAPC's photographers the Department of the Army is aware of the myriad facets and faces of the war in Southeast Asia. Many photographers are responsible including men like SP5 Alan Rockoff, who has spent three years in Vietnam, to men who are newly arrived. The work shown on these pages is a collection of some of the characteristically best of SEAPC. These pictures tell the story of the free world forces in Southeast Asia. These pictures were taken in both the Republic of Vietnam and Cambodia during the period 1969 through mid 1970.

SEAPC Photos of the Field by SP5 Alan Rockoff and SP5 Chris Jensen

The Talkers' Shooters

Story and Photos by
1LT James D. Eggensperger

When this story came up, my desk-trained soul had to steel itself for the tasks that are daily work for the protectors of the 1st Signal Brigade, the 194th and 61st MP Companies.

I looked at the assignment hesitantly, not knowing just what might come up, but knowing I wouldn't get bored.

The week before I went to Pleiku to visit a 194th detachment, a convoy had been hit near there and a couple of trucks were blown away on QL 19. Rumor had the enemy activity increasing since most of the Americans had left Pleiku; the 194th detachment was the unit with primary responsibility for the area north of the compound which they share with the headquarters of the 43rd Signal Battalion and detachments of the 361st battalion and 362nd Signal Company and the 71st Evac Hospital.

Capt. Gayden Thompson, an Infantry officer and CO of the 194th, had told me his men had run a couple of patrols to the north of the Pleiku perimeter and the NCOIC, Sgt. Ronald Pearson, a solid looking veteran with nearly four years in Vietnam, was happy to cooperate and get me out with his men in the field.

Sgt. Pearson said, "We don't run many patrols any more. The ARVN are taking over most of the patrolling around here."

Nonetheless, we gathered weapons and tiger fatigues and started making it through the bushes and weeds typical of the central highlands. The going wasn't tough, even for me, the deskman, but there weren't any sidewalks there either.

I kept up the pace which was moderate but careful.

We went out to a stream crossing on the river where we found an old Montagnard woman with a huge cache of wood on her back. She skittered out of the bushes, crossed the stream and puffed up the hill to her village in her bare feet. Her daughter on the other bank eyed us distrustfully.

One of the guys fell into a hole along the bank and had to be rescued and another skidded down the bank of a gully resulting in some minor abrasions, but those were the major mishaps.

The rest of the trek we were unencountered but for a couple of rambling brahmas with bells on their necks; we got back near the ford and crossed paths with a couple of contemporaries of the first wood hauler.

Like unfrightened, curious deer, they watched our progress and turned back to their fuel gathering as we went out of sight. Back at the perimeter I was relieved, but also let down by my first foray into the field.

No contact was disappointing but safe. I felt even though the MPs were almost flippant about the prospects of contact (maybe they knew we wouldn't get any), they knew their business and were ready to take care of what would come up. This was their job (though it was kind of

road clearing

sentry duty

even patrols

disconcerting when the medic handed me a pen advertising a funeral home he had worked at as a civilian).

Talking to them later, I found they enjoyed getting out but didn't want to patrol daily. Guard duty nightly and filling sandbags during the day was enough work.

I ran into a member of the patrol, SP4 Randy Marbry, a couple of months later at Long Binh and he told me how he had just come from a convoy escort that was ambushed with two other convoys on the road to An Khe. Fortunately, none of the men was hurt in the action; I had some pangs about missing it.

It wasn't long before I was 6,000 feet above the sea over the hills and valleys of the Central Highlands, somewhat south of my first trip, heading for Pr'Line (contracted from Primary Line) Mountain, west of Cam Ranh Bay and headquarters for the 61st MPs.

I was a little more anxious. There was more enemy activity near Pr'Line than Pleiku and the 61st had recently been in contact on ambush patrols near the site.

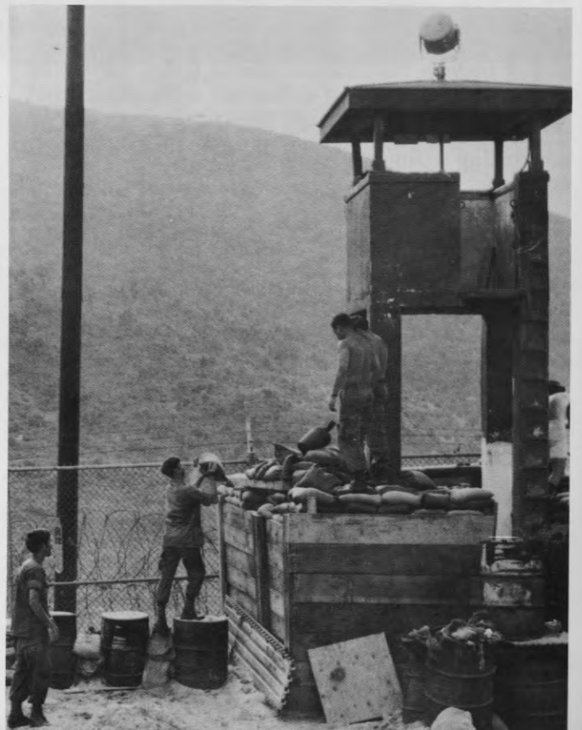
Flying in from the coast was beautiful. The valleys and hills were spectacular, but I couldn't help but think they were also perfect hiding for companies or even battalions.

My chopper came down fast from its high approach, homing on a smoke grenade at the Pr'Line pad and the first thing that caught my eye was a huge "61st MP. Co." on the side of the gate guard house. Cocky, aren't they?

First Sergeant Norberto de Gracia picked me up at the gate and said there was a convoy leaving shortly to make the trip to Dalat, seven miles down a winding mountain road. I thought, "Great chance for some pictures and a fast introduction to the 61st."

The company commander, Capt. Richard Forney, who had just recently taken over after a year in Korea, bounced down the mountain with me in the back of the deuce-and-a-half and gave me a travelogue as the truck jostled us.

Inspecting Searching Maintaining



The armed Vietnamese with the assorted uniforms I saw along the road were members of a Regional Forces unit which shared the compound at Pr'Line with the 61st headquarters.

Presently we arrived in Dalat, to pick up mail, rations and other supplies. MPs and signalmen at the site trade off going on the convoy and getting off the mountain for a while.

While staying on the site I had some fascinating hours of conversation with SSG Henry D. Matthews, a veteran of 44th Infantry Division, later going to the 1st Cav and finally, in early 1968, starting his extended tour with the brigade security force.

He told me that when he started with the brigade they were responsible for 23 sites in country as opposed to the current 15.

Among his verbal war trophies was the time he and 24 men landed on a hilltop called Nui Ba Ra, near Song Be in upper Military Region 3. They were to establish a perimeter and secure the hill so that a site could be built.

During the next three days his forces suffered 18 casualties. Near the hill the Chinook in which he was riding took rounds and went down.

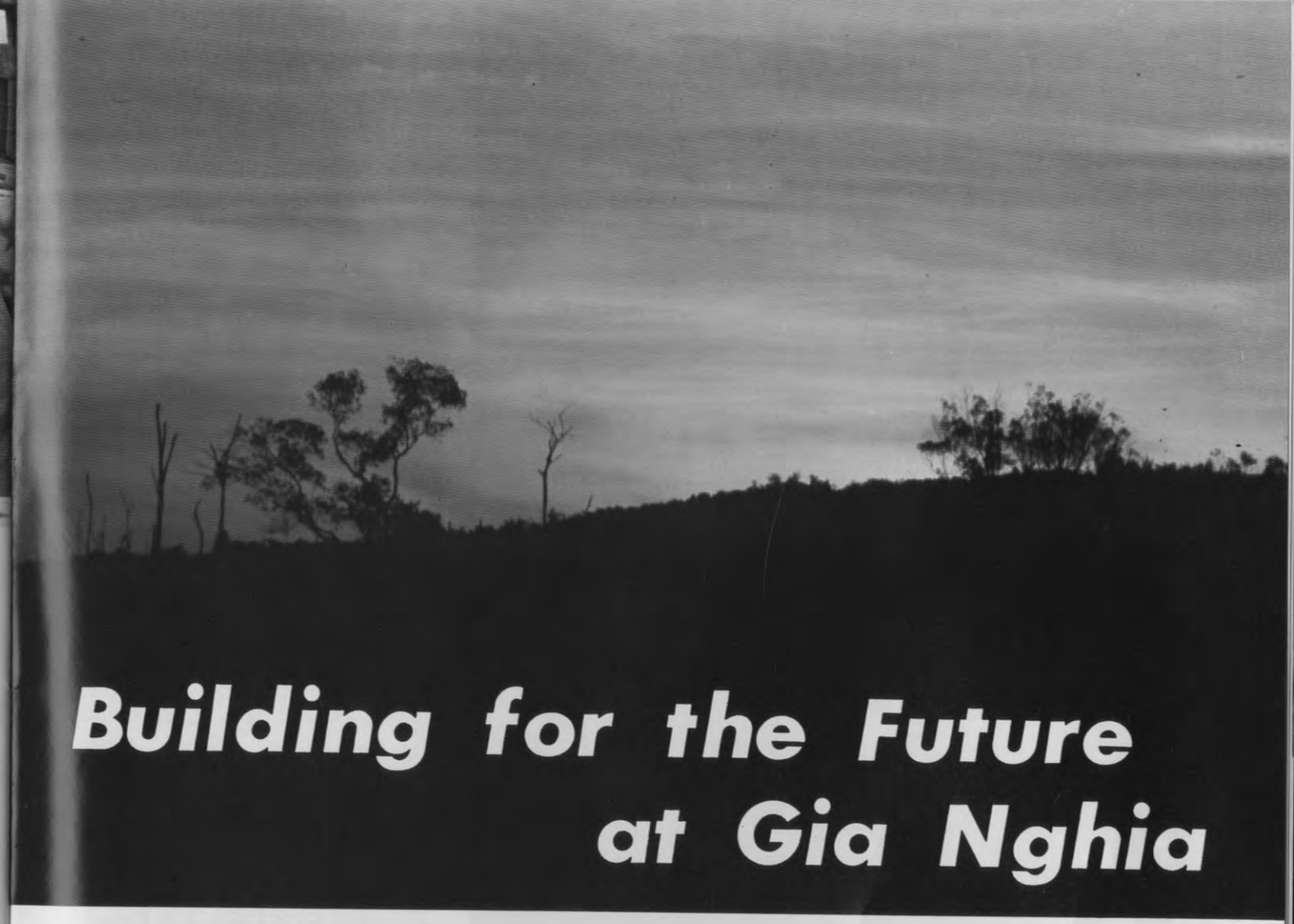
SSG Matthews was with the 194th when it was the only company security force in the brigade and then in March 1970, when the 61st was reactivated and came to Vietnam–(it started in Algeria in 1943 and was in France between 1955 and 1966)–he made the transition.

Taking fire from the hills along the road is not unusual, especially on the trip down the mountain to Bao Loc enroute to Cam Ranh Bay. There is a spot on the road running to Dalat that is named "Claymore Alley" because of ambushes in the past.

At all the sites they pack sandbags, rebuild bunkers, put in claymores and cut or burn the perimeter foilage. Occasional harrassment and interdiction fires can break up a sound sleep at almost any site as they all have mortars.

My reward curve was low for the assignment, but just a result of the fortunes of war. There has been contact since I left some of the detachments but no one hurt.

What was adventure for me is a daily job for the men who are the talkers' shooters.



Building for the Future at Gia Nghia

Story and Photos by 1LT James D. Eggensperger

A placid community lake...the children of Montagnard Rural Forces play during the day while their fathers and a group of former VC, shown forming up in the early morning, help reclaim the area for the GVN. These are all elements of the advisory team's efforts in Gia Nghia.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: "You're going to Gia Nghia? Best of luck," said an incredulous officer. "Beaucoup VC," came the reply from a Vietnamese house girl. But with these forewarnings and slight misgivings I headed into the mountains near the Cambodia Border.

In from the ocean, up over the hills and down into a valley until the border is just beyond the horizon, lies the capital of Quang Duc province, Gia Nghia.

The only reliable method of travel into or out of the province is by air; the roads without and within can't be considered secure without massive road clearing efforts and plenty of air support.

A detachment from the 556th Signal Company lives at the MACV site at Gia Nghia.

"The cooperation and spirit of the signal detachment is commendable. It has provided us with communications at more intensive periods of enemy conflict in the province," said Lt. Col. Ralph Julian the head of the MACV team supported by the detachment from the 556th.

Lt. Col. Julian said, "I also use the team as a source of information and technical assistance for the Vietnamese signal team that the 1st Signal Brigade is establishing here." It is planned that the Vietnamese Signal Department will take over the communications chores into Gia Nghia.

Towards adding to the morale of the men on the compound there is a channel in the system reserved for receiving AFVN on a relay from Ban Me Thuot and the signal is rebroadcast on an FM band so that it can be received on a normal FM radio.

The detachment also serves as a gate into the Military Affiliate Radio System (MARS) which enables GIs to call to a MARS station near their homes in the states and place a call to their home enabling them to talk to relatives or friends.

The group of isolated signalmen is an integral part of the MACV province team which is working within Quang Duc as part of the Civil Operations and Rural Development Support (CORDS), a subcommand of MACV which is helping the GVN provide the Vietnamese peasant and the Montagnard family with a new way of life and hope for the future.

Lt. Col. Julian is the Province Senior Advisor. He came to Gia Nghia in June 1969 and before the first six months of his 18 month tour were up, he extended to make the total 24.

He has a huge job: having the responsibility for advising the Province Chief on ways to bring Quang Duc into full productivity and give it a working, stable populace.

He and his 13-man team are working with the Vietnamese Province officials who are trying to administer the province so that it will become self sustaining with a stable, pacified population.

It seems as though the cards are stacked against him and his Vietnamese Colonel counterpart. Of the 34,000 inhabitants of the province, an estimated 65 per cent are Montagnards, hill tribesmen whose life style has remained almost unchanged over the centuries. A good portion of this Montagnard community travels back and forth across the Cambodian Border. In addition, very few Vietnamese can speak any of the three Montagnard dialects.

"It is challenging and interesting work...not the normal. The results are most gratifying when there is some solid achievement seen," Lt. Col. Julian reflected about his past 16 months. "There were frustrations but they were to be expected.

"Being an advisor is a very difficult and ticklish association that must be handled with understanding, cooperation and determination in order to accomplish the goals within the pacification program," he spoke slowly, thoughtfully and gently but with a firm purpose.

His job runs a gamut. He must be knowledgeable in everything from being a forward observer (one night he was on the tower directing his motar crew) to rice diseases.

Lt. Col. Julian a 1951 graduate of the University of Montana, is a wise man who is dedicating himself to improving the life of the people of the province, but he isn't telling them that his way is best, he's showing them.

A good example of a

Gia Nghia is described as a place of brilliant sunshine and balmy breezes blowing through the trees. It is also a rich agricultural area with a great future for Vietnam.

progressive project is the introduction of a hybrid rice into the region. The highland rice grown by the farmers of the province is planted using pointed sticks and left to the benevolence or malevolence of the gods of the highlands.

A major detriment of the old rice is that it is photogenic-needs a specific ratio of light and dark to mature and thus is a seasonal and annual corp. The new rice is multicropped and non-seasonal.

In addition to introducing the new rice, the Vietnamese specialist and the province team's agriculture element are trying to integrate irrigation and fertilizer into the highland farmer's operating regimen.

In the past the Montagnards would move on to an area, cut down the trees and burn everything to clear the land for planting. This would be their field until the soil was depleted and then they would pack up their village or hamlet and move and repeat the process.

The province chief and the American province team are trying to eliminate these nomadic customs and induce the wanderers to settle and create permanent farms.

Demonstration plots comparing the old rice with the new and fertilized with non-fertilized plots are established in the district by members of the team to graphically display the advocated program and aid in convincing the people that this is the best solution for their own welfare.

Montagnards who have been forced to labor for the VC and subsequently surrendered to allied forces go to a Chieu Hoi Center where they are given food and clothing and processed for approximately 60 days. They then become official "Hoi Chanhs" and are released to return to their villages or to relocate in a friendly area.

At the Gia Nghia Chieu Hoi center there is a company of about 40 Hoi Chanh who have joined the Armed Propaganda Team (APT) which travels about the province encouraging VC defectors and proselytizing friends and neighbors on behalf of the Government of Vietnam (GVN).

Companies and platoons of

Regional and Popular Force soldiers, plus some People's Self Defense Forces comprise the only allied fighting units in the province. The RF and PF companies regularly go on operations looking for the enemy and are assisted by American or Vietnamese Air Force helicopters in their combat assault missions.

"There has to be education in all phases, especially with the Montagnards," Lt. Col. Julian explained. "The attitude of the people continues to be wait and see. Although there has been more cooperation lately with GVN projects, PSDF or rural development projects have not reached a degree of proficiency or efficiency that could be developed under peacetime conditions," he went on, speaking carefully to get the most out of every word.

"We are working for total motivation, using a soft sell approach in a convincing manner by people of their own tongue and cultural background.

"We must wait for the long term benefits, not just the short term, to see what the results will be. There is still much to be done in education, youth services, agriculture and social welfare.

Because of the area's remoteness it is difficult to recruit qualified Vietnamese to work in Quang Duc. People are needed to stay in those isolated areas for the time needed to establish program continuity and real pacification.

Lt. Col. Julian sees the youth as the hope for his province and probably for Vietnam. The younger farmers are more receptive to the new methods and are most easily diverted from the old ways.

And he has dreams. The area was originally developed by President Diem to have facilities similar to those at Dalat which were developed by the French.

It has the climate and other favorable characteristics to be as good in peace time conditions, but in war it is hard to work changes and get results.

It is easy to imagine the dark haired colonel as the patriarch of the peaceful valley with its fragrant flowers and brilliant sunshine and balmy breezes blowing through the trees.

Troubleshooting a circuit on tactical radio gear is Sgt. Steve McCown at a firebase in Northern First Military Region.

When You're Out... You're Out

By 1LT Patrick J. Jones

When it happens, there's no hiding it. Everyone can tell. The words stop, sentences snap. A break in communications is unexpected, it's sort of like the battery on your car going dead.

First of all, it changes the whole world. What minutes ago was a promisingly quiet night is now a blur of frustation. Sometimes you have the "feel" for what's wrong and sometimes you don't. You've been in this same place for months now and every day you've stared at this ugly collection of knobs and wires, hoping that it would just keep running–at least until you got off duty. But the line is dead-undeniably, unquestionably dead-and, unfortunately, right now.

When can you say you have "over" inspected or trouble shot too much? Never, I suppose; but if there is a limit, you would surely find it. After a while it gets to be like knowing your car. You can tell its characteristics and anticipate its peculiarities. When it makes a different sound, you alone hear it. Tonight it's making no sound and that's the loudest sound of all...

When a communications outage occurs in a combat zone, a chain of events follows that transforms a simple malfunction, whether it be mechanical or human, into an occurrence which attracts considerable attention. Of course, it all depends on to whom and for how long it happens.

Some circuits are more important than others. But in any case, reaction to the outage is swift. The subscribers and the "other end" are the first to know. They receive garble or nothing at all, and they let everyone know about it. If they can reach you by phone or another radio, they do. If your boss was on the line when communications dissolved, you know about it even sooner.

Interest in a communication outage is not confined just to the local level of command. The 1st Signal Brigade has an organized reporting system which keeps track of outages of communications links. When an outage occurs it is first reported to the battalion systems control, (BATCON) and from there it is passed on up the Group Systems

Control Center, more commonly known as SYSCON.

From there the bad news is relayed to the Army Communications Operations Center (ACOC) at brigade headquarters. Depending on the importance of the circuit and the troubled site's closeness to alternate means of communications, this notification may take anywhere from one minute to a half hour.

At the different sites all around Vietnam, the reaction to an outage is different. At an isolated Corps Area Communications System (CACS) site, the people there are usually the last to know about their problems and are also the last to panic since their circuits are usually only administrative lines for tactical units which have alternate tactical communications lines.

At more important sites with more important circuits, an outage is a call to feverish activity. Repairmen and operators swarm all over equipment looking for the problems. As word of the individuals notified increases, so does the interest in getting it back to traffic.

The SYSCON of the 160th Signal Group, in Long Binh, monitors the communications at the MACV and USARV complexes.

Everyone wants to know what has happened and what is being done to correct it. In the case of a power outage, the first few seconds are comparable to a "chinese firedrill" which is nothing short of a mad dash for the circuit breakers and generators.

At the BATCONs, SYSCONs and all circuit control centers, the scene is similar. Reaction is quick. They don't reach for equipment but rather for grease pencils and circuit diagrams.

Will they be back to traffic soon? Important circuits must be rerouted. A quick attempt is made to determine the problem. Is it a power failure, bad equipment or personal error?

Discovering that your site is off the air can be accomplished in many different ways. Some systems have built-in warning devices which are designed to pinpoint trouble spots with flashing lights and buzzers. Others require time consuming trouble-shooting to track down the elusive problems. With a power failure, notification is immediate, the lights go out. Operators and circuit controllers are the first to respond. In most cases there is at least one experienced man at each site who knows the equipment as well as he knows his own car. He has been with it long enough to know the cause and effect situations and can find a snafu that can develop on any part of the system.

Most of the CACS equipment do not have alarm systems to indicate that things aren't going as planned. Sometimes it takes a call from a subscriber or a higher command to let you know that you're off the air.

Some systems, such as the TRC-29 tactical microwave unit are designed with red and green lights designed to let the operator know when the receiver or transmitter is on the blink. Any operator will tell you, though, that those lights could be flashing on or off, or any other combination in between, and still not realistically depict how some of the circuits on the system are working.

At the ICS facilities around the country, electric equipment (EE) buildings are vital in keeping the systems operable. These EE facilities house equipment which serve as circuit control centers. They provide a type of "super order wire" system when an outage occurs.

Some circuits are designated as being more important than others. There is also a list maintained on some circuits which have been designated as "critical" by MACV. These circuits have the highest priority of restoral or reroute if something happens to them and they cause the highest degree of hysteria when they go off the air. If one of these circuits is off the air for over 60 minutes, a field grade officer is expected to be at the installation to oversee the attempts to get it back to traffic.

At the daily early-morning briefing given to the commanding general of the 1st Signal Brigade, the ACOC gives information on each outage, including time and reason for outage. Corps Area Communications and Secure Voice Systems are presented in the briefing if they're out for over thirty minutes. Corps Area tropo and microwave outages over 10 minutes are also briefed.

A power failure at a site for over 60 seconds also makes the big briefing board. This briefing provides the commanding general with an accurate picture of how units within the brigade are doing their job.

The unhappy tale of an outage goes from the BATCON to the SYSCON to the ACOC and eventually appears before the commanding general in the daily briefing. Many interesting and highly implausable excuses have been offered for outages.

Some include:

* Cleared while checking (A popular explanation for--We don't know what happened but it came back on the air by itself).
* Spiderwebs in jacks.
* System out when the tide subsided (Popular with barge shots).
* PA&E turned off power without notifying site (PA&E denies this everytime).
* Natives took 2,200 ft. of cable (Montagnards love the copper in those cables).
* Marines pulled the phone off the wall (Believable isn't it?).
* Personnel took down wrong antenna.
* Personal error at distant end (It's always at the other end).

The physical appearance of each control center is similar except that the complexity multiplies as the command level increases. Charts at the brigade ACOC cover the walls in two rooms. The group SYSCONs monitor a proportionately smaller number of circuits and problems and consequently have a smaller control center. Down at the battalion control, corps area control (CACON), or agency control (ACON) level, the facilities are less elaborate and the number of grease pencils expended is smaller; yet, all look similar to Dr. Strangelove's War Room. Charts overlaid with acetate and plexiglass reflect the frustrations of the day. At the ACON of the Signal Support Agency Long Binh, Capt. Roy Pinto, agency S-3, echoed the sentiments of all control center personnel as he explained his color-coded charts; "The blue ones are not ours but we log them in because they carry our circuits; it's the black ones that we really worry about."

Each control center is manned 24-hours a day. The centers are focal points of activity whenever a problem arises. Down at the BATCONs only a handful of people sit by the phones...hoping they don't ring. At the SYSCONs and the ACOC the activity is always at a quicker pace. Their job is slightly different; they not only relay the outage information on to the brigade, but also they serve as a filter on information going up the reporting chain. Technical experts can be found at the SYSCONs who understand the equipment at the level below them. They can usually tell when an excuse offered (reason for outage - RFO) for an outage is really no excuse at all, and many times they can look at the symptoms of a problem and know what the problem is.

The system is not designed to tell ACOC the whole story, though, and not all outages are reported to higher headquarters Internal, low-priority CACS circuits are merely "internal problems" and are solved within the operational procedures of the local level. And then there is the "Catch-22" aspect of outage reporting. If your phones are out of order, then you have a problem; but if you can't call in and report your problem because your phones don't work, then PRESTO! You don't have a problem.

The system that the 1st Signal Brigade uses to keep track of communications outages is a time tested method much more sophisticated than crystal-ball gazing, and more dependable than palm reading. It is extremely efficient and in today's vernacular, it tells it like it is, or more realistically, like it isn't.

To every signalman, an outage is an unwelcome affair, like stale cookies from home or a "Dear John" letter.

"Zero defects" has been an Army goal for years but as long as there are monsoons, water buffalos and American GIs the best it can expect is 99.9%.

When an outlying unit reports a circuit out, circuit controllers like SP4 Charles Stepp of the 369th Signal Bn's Company B, attempt to pinpoint the trouble at a circuit control facility at one of Vietnam's many ICS sites.

Signals on the A Shau

Story and Photos by
SP5 Andrew McCullough

FSB Birmingham offers a majestic view of I Military Region, below, and an abstraction of antennas and sand bags at left. 1st Signal Brigaders, above, SP4 Lopez, front, and Sgt. McCown survey the A Shau from the top of their bunker

Anyone who has been to these mountains knows the contrast of atmospheres: the yawning peace of lushly vegetated valleys and cloud-shrouded mountains that dissolve into the sky...and the holocaust that is war, its grim devastation and very occurrence bigger than the mountains themselves. War...and peace; here, there are hours of both.

Mention the name "Birmingham" and the towering smokestacks of steel mills come to mind. But at Fire Support Base Birmingham, the only steel pipes punctuating the skyline are the smoking grey barrels of the 101st Airborne Division's support artillery.

Birmingham, located at the southern tip of the A Shau Valley and only 40 miles from the DMZ, is a permanent fire base of the 101st Airborne Division's 1st Brigade. It is situated atop a small, camel-back mountain of red clay and boulder-size stone. On the higher of the two peaks, half buried in the ground and smothered under hundreds of sandbags, is a VHF radio bunker, the home and duty station of three men of 63rd Signal Battalion's 596th Signal Company. Theirs is a somewhat unique situation for signalmen as they live and work directly with one of the toughest and most active infantry units in Vietnam today...and they are just as susceptible as any of the infantrymen at the site to getting hit by one of the frequently incoming rockets or mortars.

Sgt. Steve McCown of Knoxville, Tenn., is the NCOIC at this remote site. Twenty-four hours a day, he works, eats and lives with two other men, SP4 James Lopez of Baltimore, Md., and SP4 Michael Been of Bloomington, Minn. Although they perform as a mobile team which provides VHF radio communication for tactical infantry units, they are permanently located...as permanent as the fire base itself, at any rate. As various 101st infantry units move in and out of the base, McCown, Lopez and Been 'stay put' and keep the 12-channel AN/MRC-69(V) Radio Terminal Set operative to provide communications with Camp Eagle, located southeast of their site and FSB Bastogne, another base of the 101st.

While not the most exciting of existences, their mission at this fire support base is a vitally important one; vital to the men at the base as well as to those men who search for the enemy in the surrounding bush.

Artillerymen pound away at the enemy for more than 30 hours nonstop, and when their ammunition runs low, one call by the battery commander, and resupply is on its way...

A platoon of "grunts" runs into the enemy; they are out-numbered and their lives are on the line. The colonel gets the word and radios in for air support. Deadly and accurate, Cobra Gunships, nemesis of the enemy, come quick. A battle is won. Lives are saved.

One approach to the split-level fire base is by a tattered ribbon of road. This road is traveled occasionally by the signalmen, but they'll tell you in a minute they don't like the trip. The twelve mile stretch has been unaffectionately labeled "Sniper Alley" for good reason, and they don't like to press their luck. And, sniper fire isn't the only unsettling concern on this road. Late one afternoon a barrage of 42 mortars were fired Birmingham. Not one hit inside the base perimeter, but some 8 to 10 hit the road. Even the grunts call it "unhealthy".

The section of Vietnam near FSB Birmingham is probably the most active section of the country, one of the most interesting areas of Vietnam and among the most beautiful areas anywhere. It is a land of conflict and contrast. Names that sound pleasant to the ear, such as the Perfume River, A Shau Valley and the Imperial City, stir the imagination...but no more than the places themselves.

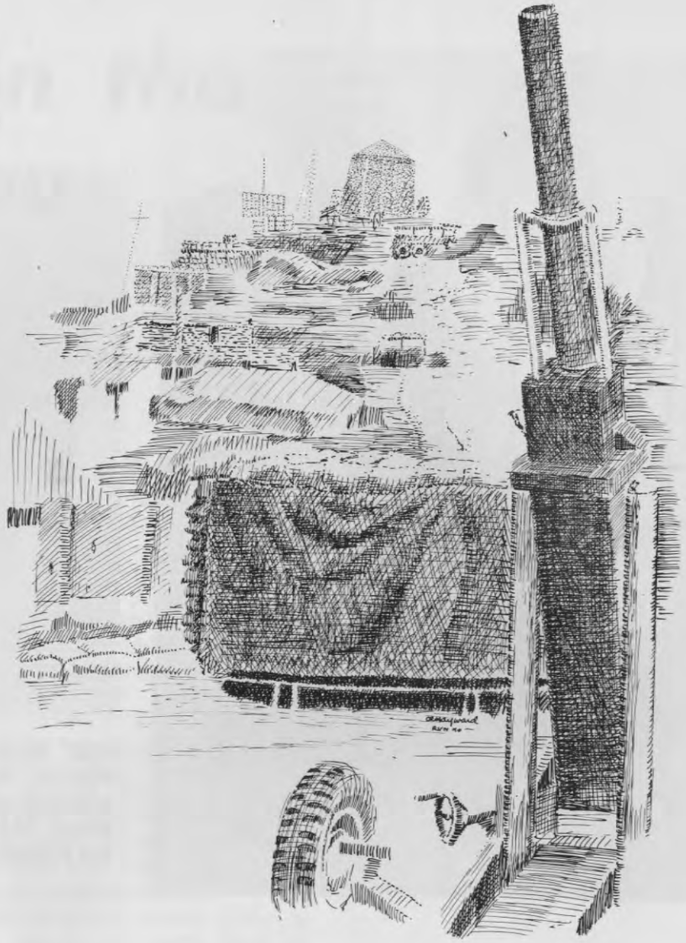
Below and off the western side of the base flows the Perfume River, outlined by a meandering shoreline that wanders aimlessly in two directions; the picturesque beauty of the river seems to provide the essence of its name. On the eastern side of Birmingham only a few miles away stands a stately Buddhist monastery, which somehow seems out of place in such turbulent times. Across the road halfway between Camp Eagle and Birmingham is a leprosarium with a high, grey stone wall that stretches for acres...and protectively separates a disease ridden people from a land

diseased by war. Not far away is a Montagnard village, the home of a primitive people caught in the middle of modern destruction.

One of the signalmen's favorite pastimes is relaxing on top of their bunker. It's easy to see why. Atop the signal shack bunker is a good place for circumstantial rumination, a place where friends can sit, rap and reflect as they gaze at the panoramic view.

The bunker-top conversation wanders as aimlessly as the river below it, and like the river, it flows on and on. "This place is like I thought Vietnam would be," says Sgt. McCown, "it's beautiful country even though there is war all around. Before coming here, I wrote my wife and told her I hoped I'd be sent to a fire base. She didn't understand, but it's much better than being at a rear base, a headquarters where you don't see anything but cement and clay. A grunt might think I'm talking crazy, but with my kind of job, he'd probably feel the same way." Then SP4 Lopez injects, "It's kind of nice out here, and kind of dangerous, too; but I'll take it...just to get away from the rear." And the least talkative of the three, SP4 Been, in a few well chosen words, sums up the general concensus by adding, "We're on our own, kind of free, you know?"

It is understandable why the men like things the way they are, despite the fact that their corner of the war is not among the safest pieces of real estate in Vietnam. Over the months they have collected various accouterments of civilization for their quarters. Since they live inside the large bunker with their equipment, they have air conditioning. To break up the monotony of the long days, they have a television, a radio and tape recorder. Add to this an ice box, coffee percolator, hot plate, flourescent lights, "kitchen" table (yellow, no less), a small fold-out writing desk and cabinet shelves, and you've got more than a livable existence. Also, just outside their door is a 2-man shower stall, and just down the hill is a mess hall in which is served some unusually good food. Not bad at all for a war zone site just 40 miles from the DMZ.



The three signalmen do not always lead a sheltered life, however. Because of the rains, the men pull maintenance on their bunker, which means nothing less than going down to the riverbank, then filling and stacking sandbags...for hours...in torrents of rain. Also, much to their consternation, the signal shack is eternally springing leaks; thus, they are eternally rearranging sandbags and plastic sheeting.

As just about everywhere in Vietnam-Birmingham without exception–there are roughly 180 soaking, dripping wet days popularly known as the monsoon. When the rains come, they never seem to leave. The grey skies stay full and they smother the Birmingham hill for seemingly interminable periods of drizzle and pour. This hilltop seems to have been made for rain, and the rain and wind are always together here. Bunker corners and boulder edges, in their stand against the elements, give a living sound to these daily visitors. Cornersweeps and sideblasts: a chill uncommon to the lowlands pervades the air. If a person wanted to know exactly what the rain was all about, such would be an ideal place to learn.

A year can be a long time for anyone stationed in a bunker atop a hill deep in the hinterlands of Vietnam. But these men, here to do a job which they do well, are not complainers. They are even slightly apologetic at times. "You know," says McCown, "every time I think I got it made, I find someone else who's got it better." While he was talking, two grunts were loading their worldly belongings into a jeep. They would be home in a matter of days. One man turned to McCown and says, "Hope to see you back in the world, Steve. By the way, how many more days you got left?" McCown just stood there and grinned. "214," he said.

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