

When the Teams were deployed in that first year, they were placed in many different situations. It was then that the depth of their training really became evident. When they had been in school, the instructors had successfully introduced them to all types of environmental and geographical areas.

The Tracker Teams' history of affiliation in the Viet Nam War is defined. What is confusing to objective assessment is the geographical locations within their affiliations. Division elements were often moved all over the length and breadth of South Viet Nam, and naturally, the Trackers accompanied their Divisions or Brigades. Even the Team members themselves have difficulty relating to the experiences of an earlier or later Team within their same Division or Brigade because of the position of AOs where they were utilized. The Army also would use "pieces and parts" of various Divisions and Brigades for specific operations. What follows here is a generalization for Tracker deployment and not an in-depth discourse on the diversity of their encampments.

Some of the Teams were placed with the famous First Infantry Division - "the Big Red One". It was an old and proud group. As before in the various commitments, the Big Red One was in force in Viet Nam. The First Infantry was home to the CTT #5, CTT #13, and finally after the Activation and Organization Order of 6 February 1968, the 61st IPCT. The group had a diverse area of operations. Their initial home HQ was in Di An - which was basically a swamp. The Labs that these Teams brought over from Malaysia worked throughout the War.

The Teams worked along with support groups from the 1st Infantry Division. They were awarded a Meritorious Unit Citation for their work from April 1967 through November 1, 1968. This was in addition to 52 individual medals awarded to the Team members in this period of time alone.

There were two original Teams sent to the 25th Infantry Division (Tropic Lightning). This was followed by CTT #14 in October 1967, and reorganized and activated as 66th IPCT in Feb.

1968. Their AO was from the Cambodian border to just outside of Long Bien (which was shared with the 9th Inf. Division).

They were billeted in Cu Chi, and unaware that they were on top of one of the largest underground complexes and tunnels that went all the way to the "Iron Triangle". It was later learned that the VC regular elements staged the attack on Tet from this subterranean refuge. The applications of the Teams affiliated with the 25th Infantry Division were not just for that Division alone. They were "loaned out" to elements of 1st Infantry at Tay Ninh, as well as the "non-existent, impossible" operations in Cambodia. There were times when they operated with the 4th Infantry Division near the Cambodian border, as well as with units of the 9th Infantry Division and the 101st Airborne.

They had an interesting diplomatic and political dilemma in the area close to the Cambodian border. There was a rubber plantation under French ownership. CTT #2 had been following a large body of VC and what they thought were NVA for a couple of days. They were taking their time and proceeding slowly because of snipers and other "surprises" set up for them by the fleeing enemy. They ascertained that they were following at least a battalion, if not a regiment. They were able to surround the large group within the confines of the plantation. The CO of the 1/27th and 2/27th, who were the Team's Infantry support, called in for airstrikes. They knew that the enemy was found and fixed and able to be exterminated.

Imagine that CO's frustration when the airstrike was called off because the French ownership had demanded that these plantations had to be preserved at any cost! Further, any time an action by the U.S. and her Allies took place in a plantation area, two hours later a chopper would arrive with a French national who carefully noted any damage to the rubber trees or other parts of the plantation. It seems that the U.S. government had to recompense the French for any loss of trees AND their calculated life span output of a rubber tree!

The 25th Infantry had the largest number of Teams, and that was also a "double edged" proposition. It left young junior NCOs on their own, because there were not yet enough Tracker Staff Sr.NCOs and

OICs to go around. The School at BJWS was turning out Trackers as fast as possible, but they wouldn't disregard thoroughness for speed in doing so. When these Teams went to the 25th, they were to have had another Lieutenant who had drown in Malaysia.

The 4th Infantry ("Ivy") had three major sectors of Areas of Operations. The 1st of the 4th was sent to the area of the South China Sea. The 2nd of the 4th was responsible in the Central Highlands. The 3rd of the 4th was working the Mekong Delta. The headquarters for the 4th were located in Pleiku from '66 through '68, then Dak To, Pleiku, and An Khe at the time the Division was "stood down". The first CTT to be sent to the 4th Inf. Division was CTT #4, later CTT #10 was sent to reinforce the Team. In 1968, after the Activation and Organization, the Teams affiliated with the 4th became the 64th IPCT. The 4th Inf. Div. had come into Viet Nam in 1966 and set up their first HQ later named Camp Enari. The 3rd Brigade of the 4th Inf. continued to work with the 25th Inf. Division. There were many times when Tracker Teams worked for both of these Divisions simultaneously.

Near the end of the War, there was a special Team created at Fort Gordon, GA, which became the 78th Infantry Detachment Combat Tracker and was attached to the 1st of the 10th Cav. at An Khe. An Khe was also the titular HQ for the 4th Inf. at that time. The 1/10th Cav. was primarily reconnaissance, and they were given the 78th IDCT to augment the recon activities. The 78th IDCT came under the jurisdiction of the First Field Force, which was a joint effort, made of elements from various Divisions. The Trackers were back in the Central Highlands with this deployment.

The 9th Infantry Division was working the Delta area at the beginning of Tracker placement. The first Team to go with them was CTT #6 which was in place when CTT #14 was added. The second Team brought the full complement to strength status. There was an Officer In Command, a Sr. NCO and four 5 man Teams with the Ninth. General Westmoreland and Admiral Sharp remarked on the fact that the Tracker Labs were able to hear sampans and alert the

Teams to enemy presence at night. The authorization orders reorganized these provisional teams to the 65th IPCT.

CTT #7 and #8 were attached to the First Air Cav in 1967. They were originally part of the support of the 1st Cav's HHQ and were within the same jurisdiction as the L.R.R.P.s Long Range Reconnaissance Platoons. However, LRRPs were to move slowly and were a recon unit that employed stealth rather than speed. The LRRPs could also act as Hunter/Killer when necessary, but their mission was to be clandestine making themselves a part of the environment. The Tracker Teams were different. It was their job to become "up front and personal" with the enemy. They would think nothing of going into an enemy HQ - and considered it "blowing holes" through the enemy camps. The LRRPs were human "listening posts" who would spy on the enemy and just as quietly return to base with the new information. They were a courageous and efficient specialty.

The Trackers, who were attached to the Cav in '67, were "given over" to the First of the Ninth Squadron. The 1/9th with their own audacious reputation was a perfect match for the Tracker Teams. The 62nd IPCT was the authorized attached unit after 15 February 1968. Throughout the War, the 1/9th and the Trackers assigned with them had an excellent working relationship. The G-2 (Divisional Intelligence Unit) of the Cav kept in close contact with the Trackers and would value the opinions of the Teams who had been sent in on Missions.

The First Cav's HQ was at An Khe at this time and subsequently moved to Pleiku. The 1/9th had its own helicopter assets and because of this, the Trackers were sent on more than one mission on some days. The Cav also was protective of their Trackers. In this Divisional association, the Trackers were considered an important enough unit that they were very infrequently left anywhere at night. Usually, they were extracted the same day that they were inserted. If return to base wasn't feasible, they were at least camped in a secure area.

The 23rd Division (Americal) used the Trackers in a different aspect. They were joined with Scout Dog and Handler as well as having a Mine and Tunnel Dog and Handler under the umbrella of the 63rd IPCT. The Tracker history with the 63rd starts in 1968, and was an authorized attachment from the beginning of the association. The Americal was initially headquartered in Chu Lai, and like most of the others, proceeded to work almost all of the areas. They were later camped south of Danang, after the Marines had left I Corps. The 63rd Tracker Teams were also at work with the 1st Division and the Trackers from the 196th IDCT.

The first Teams of CTT #3 and #10 were under the banner of the 196th Light Infantry Brigade. The 196th had been raised at Fort Devens in 1965 and had been scheduled to be deployed in the Dominican Republic. The War was heating up and the unit was rushed to Viet Nam and put in position in the Western Portion of III Corps. They were used in major operations, Task Force Oregon and Operation Attleboro just to name two. The 63rd Tracker Teams were then augmented by the Teams who had initially been sent in to work with the 196th LIB.

CTT #9, who came from BJWS in Oct. 1967, was assigned to the 101st Airborne. The Teams were sent to the 101st HQ in Phu Bai, near Hue. The February 1968 authorization placed three Tracker Teams with the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Brigades of the 101st. One of the Teams was located at Camp Eagle. These Trackers also were in the field from the Central Highlands to the DMZ. It's interesting to note that when the Teams first came to the 101st, they were to go through the usual routine of a week's testing and "training" by the 101st Staff. After the first morning of this "exam", the Team's Lieutenant was told that the Trackers knew more than the Airborne could teach them. The next day found the Trackers at work in the field. The reorganization name for the 101st's Tracker Teams was the 557th IPCT.

There was another group sent to the 82nd Airborne. This was the 77th IDCT. They were 77th from their beginning, but many of

their members were originally CTT alumni. After their time with the 82nd Airborne, the 77th was placed under the 5th Inf. Mechanized.

A little known fact from this time was General Creighton Abrams' acquisition of a Tracker Dog. The General would go into the area where his old tanker friends were working, the 11th Armored Cavalry, and take some time off with them. He heard that one of the Tracker Labs of the 61st -1st Inf. Div. was no longer useful in the field. The General decided that no one should do anything with this dog until he got back to them. General Abrams became the new owner of that Tracker Lab, which he renamed "Devil". It is probable that the name of the Lab was changed to "protect the guilty" in this case. At any rate, the General always had "Devil" as his companion and relied on the Lab's judgement of people. If the Lab didn't like someone, the General would not take the time with that person. If Devil did like someone, the General would be a gracious host.

The 77th, unlike the other Team's control authority, were under the direct control of G-3 - or Staff. In the original documents that show the new organization and activation of the Combat Trackers, two important things should be noted. The use of "TEAM" in their working description was never changed. While the groups were designated IPCT or IDCT, each were made up of two or more Combat Tracker Teams. The only other Army designation of Team was Special Forces at this time. The second unusual paragraph gave promotional, leave and award control with the Commander of the Division or Brigade to whom they were attached. However, all other control was ultimately in the jurisdiction of G-3. We are still researching this aspect of the History.

The 173rd Airborne was also in Viet Nam from 1965. The Tracker Teams authorized was the 75th IDCT as of Feb. 1968. The 173rd was a major force in many of the battlefields of the War. They were initially headquartered in Tay Ninh and had the "Iron Triangle" to work, as well as general oversight of Bien Hoa and its environs. They were part of many Operations, and the 75th IDCT were part of the recon for these actions. The IDCT groups consisted of two

Teams and a Sr. NCO as overall NCOIC and were headquartered at An Khe in II Corps". There was no provision for a Tracker Officer for the Infantry Detachment groups.

The 199th Light Infantry Brigade was the last of the assigned units for the Trackers. In October 1967, the CTT #11 was attached to the "Redcatcher" whose Area of Operations were headquartered in the North-East corner of Long Bien. They patrolled the area of Long Bien, Saigon and Bien Hoa. The 199th was a new Brigade specifically organized for the Viet Nam War. After February 1968, the authorized unit of Trackers attached to the 199th was the 76th IDCT.