



# REDCATCHER!

199th Light Infantry Brigade

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## Never-Say-Die Ambushers Are Ambushed Twice

A reconnaissance element from 3rd Bn, 7th Inf, was recently ambushed on successive nights while lying in ambush positions 4 miles from their battalion fire support base west of Saigon.

According to "Cottonbaler" Private First Class Dominic Malfi from Brooklyn, N.Y. he and his fellow ambushers were surprised by several command detonated booby traps while they themselves were waiting for the enemy to appear. Said Malfi "The VC had taken Claymores, cut them in half, and booby trapped all the high spots in our area. We couldn't avoid getting hit." The Redcatchers took only light casualties.

When the enemy surprised them the first night, the ambush patrol took immediate defensive action but failed to make contact with the enemy ambushers. A sweep of the area in the morning revealed they had been hit with command detonated Claymores.

The next night, however, the Cottonbalers were ready. Returning to the area of the previous night's attack, they set up another ambush and waited for the enemy to show himself. This time the Claymores went off further away from the Redcatchers than they had the night before.

"When we got hit the second time," related Private First Class Dale Metz of Parkersburg, W. Va., "we killed the VC who had been setting off the booby traps as he got up to run away."



EAMMING part of cache he discovered on river banks is Private First Class Wade B. Pylee, Jr. (Story of combined cache hunts with Navy on Page 8. Photo by Collins)

## Combat Trackers In Manhunt Chase

A brand new bunker with camouflage only 10 minutes old and a trail hotter than a branding iron recently led a combat tracker team from the 76th Inf Det assigned to the 199th on a manhunt in the "pineapple" region west of Saigon.

Infantrymen from a company of 5th Bn, 12th Inf were conducting operations south of Duc Hoa recently when they encountered two VC in a bunker. They opened fire, wounding one of the enemy, but both escaped and fled down the dike. A squad tracked the fleeing enemy to the end of the dike by means of a blood trail but lost it in the water of a rice paddy.

The company commander requested a tracker team. The men and one tracker dog plus a scout dog and his handler from the 43rd Scout Dog Plt, were on their way and within minutes the tracker dog took up the trail where it had been lost.

"We crossed the paddy to another dike and brought up our tracker, 'Rigger,'" said Private First Class Grant Coates of Delin, N.Y. Rigger, took up the trail with Coates as cover man. Behind them came the team leader, Specialist Four Lewis Evans from Chicago, the scout dog and his handler and the rear cover man.

They continued down the dike finding firing and sleeping positions. The dike they were on had dense underbrush to the right and an open rice paddy to the left. Said Coates "We knew that the paddy was booby trapped because we could see where someone had left the dike and spent some time in the paddy. There were also other markers like branches and bunches of grass tied knots."

The word was passed back to the company that the paddy was booby trapped but that the dike was clear. While they continued on one of the booby traps in the paddy bounced into the air and exploded, wounding several of the infantrymen and the scout dog.

"We all hit the dirt when we heard movement to our right front. We thought the booby trap had been command detonated so we all opened fire," said Evans. Coates added "I was the cover man so I stood up over Rigger and his handler blazed away. We saw someone running through the underbrush and called for a grenadier who put five or six rounds into the area." No more noise was heard after the firing had stopped.

The next morning a replacement tracker team checked and found one dead VC within 50 meters of the place where the tracker team had opened fire.

"We think we got more than

one, but that's all the bodies they found," said Evans.



SOLDIERS from Charlie Co, 5th Bn, 12th Inf found this cache along the banks of the Vam Co Dong River during low tide. Contained in plastic bags were 56 AK-47 rifles and 24 SKS carbines. (Photo by Sp4 Jere Helms)

*They need some  
light lessons.*

## Heavy Contact Nets 100 Enemy

(A routine three-day reconnaissance-in-force mission was unexpectedly extended by two days when two companies from 3rd Bn, 7th Inf trapped an estimated force of 100 combined NVA/VC soldiers 9 miles north of Tan An Jan 27.

Infantrymen from the battalion's Bravo Co were preparing for airborne extraction after a three-day operation along a bend of the Vam Co Dong River known as the "parrot's beak" when a captured NVA soldier altered their plans.

In the ensuing battles, the Redcatchers, supported by two 9th Inf Div companies, accounted for 42 enemy killed.

Staff writer PFC Bruce Bolinger was with Bravo Co during the engagement. Here is his report.

The action began when Bravo infantrymen surprised an unarmed NVA soldier while he was washing his cooking utensils in the river. The enemy soldier revealed that a combined NVA/VC force of 100 would attempt to cross the river that day.

Two hours later an alerted light fire team helicopter spotted and engaged three enemy, killing two. Bravo Co troops swept the area of contact, killing one more enemy carrying a radio.

Elements of Alpha Co of the same battalion were quickly inserted by air 600 meters south of Bravo's position. When the second contingent of Alpha Co was being inserted, the Redcatchers were attacked by small arms and machine gun fire from heavily fortified and concealed bunkers along a tree line. Bravo Co was too far away to give immediate support, but the enemy had been effectively trapped between the two sister companies.

For the next two hours before nightfall, Alpha maintained sporadic contact with the enemy. Helicopter gunship support had been called in and hit the enemy positions with rockets and mini-gun fire. Between these attacks, supporting artillery pounded the tree line with high explosive 105 mm rounds.

Meanwhile six more companies, including the two from the 9th Div, and one reconnaissance element had been inserted on the west side of the river, completing a large cordon.

Bravo Co had also begun moving toward the enemy-held tree line from the opposite side of Alpha's position, reaching the area just at sundown. Heavy fire suddenly erupted from the tree line and Company Commander Captain Eugene R. Newport pulled his company back to a nearby dike and set up night defensive positions.

That evening the enemy probed the cordon perimeter several times, looking for weaknesses. Bravo Co's Specialist Four Dennis Jessop from Beltingham, Wash., spotted several enemy soldiers not more than 20 meters from his position.

"I was talking to the machine gunner when I heard noises out front," related Jessop. "We knew that some of our guys were out there checking the area and I thought maybe it was them," he said.

Jessop called to them, asking if they had found anything yet. When they kept walking, he knew they weren't. "I threw a fragmentation grenade at them and grabbed an M-16 rifle, but they disappeared," Jessop said. "I know there were at least two and I got one with the grenade," he added.

In all, four enemy were killed along Bravo Co's line that night and three more were wounded when they tried to sneak past the CP group. During the night, Sergeant Jose Munoz from Phoenix, Ariz., Specialist Four Randy Graham from Holdingford, Minn., and Privates First Class Edward Bigelow from Tacoma, Wash. and Steven Phillips from Baltimore, Md., were sent to check the area within the cordon. They came back with an AK-17 light machine gun with a 50-round ammo drum, a large pack containing several mortar rounds, some clothing and assorted cooking utensils.

The next morning artillery again pounded the tree line and two airstrikes were called in. Shortly after noon, Bravo Co formed up on line and began sweeping toward the tree line. They reached it without receiving any fire.

Just then, an OH-6A (LOH) helicopter flying over the tree line was shot down by an enemy machine gun firing from a concealed bunker. After the (Continued on Page 7)