

CAVALAIR

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Lt. Teddy Hampton, right, and Sgt. Manuel Ybanez stand alert during search mission with Co A, 5th Bn, 7th Cav.

By Sp4 Jerry Condon

«We'll shoot anything that moves,» radioed the angered lieutenant. «Tell everyone to lay down and be quiet.»

Moments earlier, four Viet Cong had escaped the scout dog platoon leader and his sergeant following a close-range fire fight in dense jungle north of An Khe.

The pair was seeking the source of previous enemy sniper fire in the jungle as elements of Co A, 5th Bn, 7th Cav checked out scattered huts and bunkers near crop fields further to the rear.

The sweep mission, tagged Operation Golden Bee, was the first combat test of a company-size unit of the newly arrived Cavalry battalion.

Lt. Teddy D. Hampton and Sgt. Manuel Ybanez, both of the 25th Inf Plt (scout dogs), began their tedious search on a hidden path while dog teams awaited further instructions at the jungle entrance.

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FIRST ARMY SD PLT TO
SEE S&E ACTION
AND TO ARRIVE IN
VN JUNE 66
JBS

Angered Lieutenant Leads Search For Cong

(Cont'd from page 1)

Four pajama-clad enemy soldiers had popped out of an adjoining trail just 10 meters ahead of the tiny «recon» patrol.

«It was the first time 'Charlie' has walked right into us,» Hampton said afterward.

«Two of them had automatic weapons, probably AK-47's, and the other two had carbines.»

Hampton and Ybanez hit the ground and opened up with their M-16's and grenades as enemy bullets bounced in the trees around them.

One Viet Cong clutched his chest and sank to the ground, but was carried away by the others as they escaped into the thick jungle.

Soon the company commander, Capt. A.J. Wise, brought two squads into the area and blanketed the jungle

with M-79 and automatic weapons' fire.

Then Capt. Wise sent a 10-man search party after the guerillas, but the two dog handlers soon spotted drag marks and blood on a path the foursome used as an escape route.

Hampton and his sergeant hurriedly grouped three dog handlers and a radio operator around them.

After confirming by radio that all friendly troops in the area had ceased search efforts and remained stationary, the patrol set out with a rusty-brown and black german shepherd named Prince in the lead.

Prince, handled by PFC Darrel G. Melton, was wounded earlier by one of the tens of thousands of punji stakes scattered throughout the area.

As the scout patrol followed a blood trail left by the retreating guerillas, Prince

alerted his followers to enemy booby traps and led the patrol through a maze of complicated paths.

The rear man of the Viet Cong foursome haphazardly planted punjis behind his group as they raced through the torrid jungle.

More than an hour later the patrol surrounded three sleeping huts and a bunker complex where the four had stopped «to pick up food, packs, and a new supply of punji stakes,» according to Lt. Hampton.

The little village contained cotton supplies, corn rations, musical instruments, batteries, and miscellaneous trinkets.

«They're headed toward an aid station across the river,» the lieutenant remarked. But night closed in and the weary platoon leader decided to wait until morning to continue the chase.

German shepherd scout dogs were used to track fleeing enemy soldiers and seek out trails and paths.

According to Lt. Teddy D. Hampton of the Cavalry's 25th Inf Plt. (Scout Dogs), his four canine teams uncovered «scores of enemy trails, 18 huts, 18 bunkers, hundreds of rounds of 7.62 machine gun ammunition, and a number of tools and utensils.»



Sgt. Manuel Ybanez of the 25th Scout Dog Platoon tests his dog Pal in a tunnel-probing maneuver near An Khe, Vietnam.



Scout dogs are friendly with strangers (above), except if handler is threatened. Rex (left) is a "retired" vet who has donated blood three times to save lives of wounded dogs.



The "buddy system"—a 25th Division GI keeps his German shepherd dry while fording a stream in Vietnam.