THE HURRICANE

NOVEMBER 1968 NUMBER THIRTEEN
A PUBLICATION OF II FIELD FORCE VIETNAM

A New Sport in Vietnam
see page 12

Color Bearing Units

2d Battalion (Mech), 2d Infantry

"Noli Me Tangere"—"No One Dare Touch Me"—reads the motto inscribed below the blue and gold crest of the 2d Infantry.

Though a relatively new member of the "Big Red One," 1st Infantry Division, the 2d Infantry boasts a colorful and historic past that is reflected on its crest.

The crest signifies participation first in the War of 1812 and then in other wars that saw the valor of the 2d. Black arrows in a silver quiver reflect the Indian Wars while the bolo crossing it recalls the Philippine Insurrection. The blue cross that forms their background and the red cross signify participation with the 18th Division in the Civil War. A giant cactus denotes the Mexican War of 1846 while the five-bastioned fort marks the Spanish-American War.

Wearing that crest in Vietnam today are two representatives of the modern 2d Infantry, the 1st Battalion "Black Scarves" and the 2d Battalion "Ramrods." Their history dates back to a bill signed by President Washington in 1791. However, the regiment derives its birthday of 12 April, 1808, from one of the five regiments combined to form the modern 2d Infantry.

The "Big Red One" was Vietnam's first U.S. division and when the First's soldiers came ashore they were trailed by their newest members, the 2d Infantry. After joining the division in August of 1965, the 2d sailed from Oakland on 25 September and stepped ashore at Vung Tau 21 days later.

That landing isn't reflected on their crest nor are World War II campaigns named Normandy, Northern France, Rhineland, Ardennes-Alsace or Central Europe. However, they are part of the historic past of the 2d Infantry. They form a proud heritage now being extended in the jungles of Vietnam by the men of the "Black Scarves" and the "Ramrods."

"No One Dare Touch Me"

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The front cover this month sports a painting by Koichi Ando that represents the beginnings of a new sport in Vietnam —archery. The story begins on page 12.

Binh Long province is dominated by "King Rubber" as the back cover illustrates. Lieutenant Robert Pfohman has captured the spirit of the province in his story which begins on page 6.

Other stories this month include one about what it's like to ride a Navy destroyer and one about the dangers and thrills of being an Explosive Ordnance Disposal expert. That story begins on page 2.

If you wish to send the Hurricane home for free, put it into a 5½×11 inch envelope as an inclosure to a personal letter. That way, your family and friends back in the States can get a better idea of what goes on in Vietnam.

The Editor


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NAVY P. 22


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PSYOPS P. 32

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53D SIGNAL BATTALION *Photo Support*

EOD

Ordnance Experts Risk A Big Bang

To Make the World Safe for Soldiers

by SP4 Arnold Braeske

photos SP5 Jerry Cleveland

To the EOD men straddling the 4,000 pounds of damaged bombs, rockets, grenades and explosives in the demolition crater, the atmosphere was casual. They joked while they packed white globs of C-4 plastic explosive on the 500-pound bombs, then inserted the fused blasting cap. The only hint of nervousness came with the run for the jeep and the fast, bouncing ride out of the blasting area when the 10-minute fuse had been lit. The actual blast, viewed from more than a mile away, was almost anti-climactic, although its shock waves rocked the parked jeep.

This was a routine piece of demolition for the Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) team attached to the 3rd Ordnance Battalion at Long Binh.

Ammunition is thrown into the small arms burning pit for destruction. The wooden crates are included to maintain the fire, which eventually ignites all the ammo

Four damaged artillery rounds make up part of this "shot"

In less controlled situations, while prodding a dirt road for a hidden mine or gingerly fusing a mud-caked RPG rocket in a ricefield, the atmosphere is more tense—an eerie, inner silence descends even in a noise-filled area.

"You don't get scared," said EOD Staff Officer Captain William Loveall. "You just 'respect' what you're working with. Everyone, officers and enlisted men, receives the same training in EOD; they sit in the same classes, so everyone knows what he's doing. The school weeds out the people who can't handle it."

The end result of four months of EOD training at Ft. McClellan, Ala., The Naval Propellant Plant at Indian Head, Md., and field exercises at Quantico, Va., is a large piece of responsibility.

The 10-man EOD team at Long Binh has responsibility for disarming or detonating dangerous explosive devices in 14 southern, coastal and inland provinces in the Republic of Vietnam. Individual units often do their own work, but this 1st Logistical Command team is the authority on EOD in the southern coastal region.

The "incidents" which the team responds to—1,475 in 1967—are unpredictable in character. For example, during a recent one-week period, the team completed the following missions:

- Removed damaged and potentially dangerous 50 caliber ammunition from three burned APC's at the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment's basecamp in Xuan Loc.
- Cut the fuse, with 15 seconds remaining, on a Russian-made shaped charge placed by saboteurs among 100

EOD

bottles of propane at a U.S. supply yard in Long Binh.

· Policed up potentially armed bombs and ammunition from a downed F-5 jet fighter in Duc Tu, near Highway 1A.

· Stood by, in flack vests, at the 93rd Evac. Hospital during an operation on a soldier brought in from the field with a live 40mm round lodged in the roof of his mouth. The two team members present detonated the round in a safe area after the operation.

· Investigated a reported "suspicious looking" suitcase in the Headquarters Company area of USARV and found it to contain nine Christmas cards.

In January and February, the team was given the job of disarming or detonating the massive number of friendly and enemy explosive devices that were the residue of the Tet Truce Violations. The team also had the grim task of checking the bodies of enemy dead for booby traps at Ho Nai and in Widow's Village following the attack on Long Binh's Plantation area.

Tet also made clear the constant threat of physical danger an EOD team works under.

When approximately 50 Viet Cong saboteurs got into the sprawling 3rd Ordnance Ammunition Supply Depot, the help of the nine available EOD team members was urgently requested. Moving into the depot with APC's for security, the nine men hurriedly cut the fuses, in semi-darkness, on seven of the shaped charges the VC had placed on scattered ammo pads. Some charges had as little as seven minutes remaining before detonation.

The team then regrouped about 100 meters from the berm of an ammunition pad filled with 8 inch and 155mm howitzer shells. It was this berm which saved the lives of the nine EOD men when an explosion ripped through the pad seconds later. The thunderous blast, which threw people out of their beds miles away, ruptured the eardrums of all nine EOD men, tore off their shirt buttons, lifted them off the ground and tossed them yards away. The nine crawled for cover from the shower of fragments that ensued, and escaped further injuries.

In February, 1968, the team members were awarded nine Purple Hearts, seven Bronze Star Medals with "V" device and two Army Commendation Medals with "V" device.

Specialist 4 James Poole, the only team member of the original group that has yet to leave Vietnam, can look at the incident lightly today.

"Eight of us had our right eardrums broken and Johnson (Specialist 6 John W. Johnson) broke his left eardrum. For weeks afterward, people would come into the television room and see eight of us facing the TV set from one direction and Johnson facing it the other way."

"After awhile a membrane grows back again and hearing returns pretty much to normal, though," Specialist Poole added.

Although the explosives handled by the 3rd Ordnance EOD team are always dangerous, some of the team's work becomes routine. EOD is called a number of times a day by units to pick up discarded, damaged or unserviceable explosive items for disposal.

The 93rd Evac. Hospital at Long Binh requests EOD men regularly to retrieve explosive items from wounded soldiers flown into the hospital. Often the wounded will have damaged ammo or Claymore mines on their belts, or hand grenades with pins straightened, ready for throwing.

A routine call to EOD is occasionally more serious than reported, though. Responding to a request for pickup of an ammo box on Highway 1A in Ho Nai, the team arrived to find a case of CS and fragmentation grenades being run over by trucks in the road. The CS grenades were leaking and the pins on the mashed strikers of the fragmentation grenades were nearly out when the team cleared the area prior to disposing of the case.

In all cases of explosives disposal the policy of EOD is to use the "least hazardous" method. The team will either blow the shell or booby trap in place or put it in their holding area for controlled demolition later, depending on the circumstances.

The EOD team receives damaged rounds from units throughout the southern coastal region. These munitions are kept in a holding area until there are enough there to warrant a "shot"

A burning crater full of thousands of raunds of damaged ammunition, up to 50 caliber in size, sounds like a small war going on all by itself

All of the team members have great respect for contrived explosive devices. Although Viet Cong gadgets fall into similar patterns, there are always variations. According to one team member, "A bomb is limited only by the imagination of the person making it. You can create a good-sized explosion with a blasting cap and a coffee can of flour if you want to."

The risks involved in the daily handling of contrived bombs, mines and booby traps apparently doesn't worry EOD men. The Army's "elite" corps of less than 1,000 EOD specialists has one of the service's higher reenlistment rates.

As Master Sergeant Jack G. Sumrall, a veteran with 21 years of EOD experience, phrases it, "If you were a gambler, or just liked to gamble, you'd want to play for the biggest stakes you could."

Hurricane Province

Binh Long

The Fortunes of a Province Hang on "King Rubber"

by Lieutenant Robert Pfohman

photos by SP5 Wayne Walker

Though the name "Binh Long" may translate from Vietnamese as the "Land of the Peaceful Dragon," to the 75,000 people of Binh Long province, it means rubber. When the rubber market thrives, so does the province, but the war and world conditions have combined to hurt the market.

Thirty years ago French plantation owners entertained their guests to sumptuous dinners amid lavish surroundings—somehow strangely out of place—surrounded by a sea of rubber trees. Nowadays, many of the French planters have returned to France and the few that have stayed on to manage the dwindling number of rubber plantations are forced to take refuge at night from marauding VC bands.

A hundred years ago what is now Binh Long province used to be a thick rain forest growing wildly in the humus rich, red laterite soil. The area was sparsely inhabited until the first French planters, experts in tropical agriculture, introduced rubber trees imported from Malaya and South America near the turn of the century. Native workers were persuaded to leave the cities with the promise of steady employment and generous benefits. They cleared away the jungle to make way for the trees, which were first

From the air, Binh Long province looks like a thick, green carpet out of which a giant lawnmower has taken great swaths. This is Quan Loi Division of Terres Rouges Rubber Plantation.

photo by MAJ Norbert Kozriatek

Binh Long Province

tapped in 1905. Some 30 years of prosperity followed as the French milked the land. World War II brought a quick halt to the wealth. Since then, the large plantation owners have struggled, with only fair success, to protect their investments.

Today, two large French-owned plantations manage nearly all the rubber in the province. Terre Rouge Plantation and CEXO together cultivate more than 50,000 acres of rubber trees. Approximately 2,500 acres of rubber are owned and operated by 25 Vietnamese planters, but they do not process their rubber into the finished product like the more sophisticated French plantations that have modern equipment. Instead, the Vietnamese planters transport their latex to Saigon to be sold.

The large French plantations have complete processing facilities for their rubber. Liquid latex is pasteurized in centrifugal pumps and transported in tank trucks to Saigon. They also make smoked ribbed sheets which are quality graded to conform to international standards, and crepe rubber sheets which are compressed into bales and shipped to Saigon for storage and eventual shipment to the United States and Europe.

The rubber plantations make Binh Long an important province for South Vietnam's economy. Rubber made up approximately 70 per cent of the tonnage of Vietnam's total exports in 1966. Binh Long province accounted for nearly half of all the rubber produced during that year. The following year its share of domestic rubber production increased to more than 60 per cent.

The French plantation owners have lost money steadily in the last few years; in fact, just the cost of processing rubber and transporting it to the market has sometimes exceeded the market price. Several factors have contributed to the unprofitability of growing rubber. Perhaps the most important is the low world market price. Also there have been some instances of accidental defoliation of rubber trees and there has been a high Vietnamese export tax. This was just reduced recently. The lack of adequate security in some areas has caused several plantations to close. It has become increasingly more expensive to maintain the complicated French machinery needed to process the raw rubber into the finished product, since all of this machinery has to be imported from France. In order to keep supplies moving along highway 13, the U.S. military has found it necessary to clear away the rubber trees on each side of the road for 50 meters to minimize the likelihood of enemy ambush. Though the plantations are still in operation, production is at a minimum, just enough to keep the factories from closing down completely.

The Quan Loi division of the giant Terre Rouge Plantation has a lovely country club, complete with swimming pool and nine-hole golf course. At first sight it awakens in one the romance of the French plantations—and what a romantic life it must have been. But there is now a busy airfield where the golf course used to be and Vietnamese Special Forces occasionally wash their clothes in the Olympic-size swimming pool. An artillery battery is deployed on what used to be the first tee of the golf course. It is sad.

The planters have expressed their displeasure at this invasion of their land but they have not objected strenuously because if the American military units were to leave, the plantations might be forced to close down.

The 1st Brigade of the 1st Infantry Division (BIG RED ONE) has its base camp at Quan Loi. The brigade opened up Highway 13 more than 10 months ago and has managed to keep it open ever since. The once good road is in bad shape because of the constant pounding of truck convoys shuttling supplies to the brigade from Long Binh.

The French also use Highway 13 to transport their finished rubber products to the warehouses and docks

The splendor that once was France still lingers on in parts of the province (left). Nearly 20 per cent of the villagers are not ethnic Vietnamese, but are mostly tribesmen of the Montagnard group (right)

King Rubber

in Saigon. They return to the plantations with trucks loaded with rice for the workers, because the planters give their employees rice, housing, hospital care and schooling besides a small wage. This rice is very important because the plantations directly support more than one-third of the people in the province. If the plantations closed down there would be a tremendous refugee problem—and they would be forced to close down if the American troops left. Then there would be the same situation as there is in neighboring Phuoc Long province, where all supplies are flown in at a tremendous cost.

Tan Loi is a small hamlet housing workers from the giant Quan Loi Division of Terre Rouge plantation in An Loc district. It is secure during the day; long truck convoys snake their way through the hamlet each day carrying supplies and ammunition. There is a Revolutionary Development (RD) Cadre Team assigned to the hamlet as well as a Regional Force Company. Nevertheless, the enemy sneaks into the hamlet at dusk a few nights each week. The villagers are riding the fence as to their true loyalty.

The crux of the pacification problem in Binh Long province is that it is a daylight-secure operation only. The enemy controls the night. Some areas are not secure even during the day.

The three districts which make up the province are an excellent study in how the security situation affects the pacification program. Pacification efforts are successful when the enemy main force units are out of the province preparing for an attack on Saigon. When they return, the countryside closes up once again and remote areas are not even daylight secure.

Loc Ninh district is the northernmost district in the province with 50 per cent of its border on Cambodia. The district capital has long been a prime VC target because of the political value that would be gained in capturing a district. Late last year the enemy launched a multi-regimental attack against Loc Ninh and kept fighting long after military logic told him to quit.

Chon Thanh district in the south, in comparison to Loc Ninh, has an aggressive pacification program going. This district is known to be a rest area for enemy troops, who do not want to spoil it by looking for trouble. As a result, officials are able to conduct a successful program. Since no rubber is grown in this district, the villagers have turned to the charcoal industry as a source of livelihood. But this too has created a problem. So many kilns have flooded the market that the bottom has fallen out of the charcoal industry.

Lumber also is an important industry in Chon Thanh district but the tree cutters are afraid to go into the forests—where some of the finest hardwood stands in Vietnam are located—because they are afraid of the enemy. Plans are being formulated to band the tree cutters into a cooperative and then secure an area for cutting.

Approximately 20 per cent of the people who live in Binh Long province are not ethnic Vietnamese. These are mostly Stieng tribesmen, part of the Montagnard group. The enemy has frequently harassed these Stieng since their villages are near main infiltration routes.

Though they may not have running water for showers, the hundred-odd Americans who make up the provincial advisory staff are dedicated to the task of winning the loyalty of the villagers living in the countryside. It is a tough job to guarantee loyalty when the enemy is free to come into the villages at night to terrorize those who have sided with the GVN during the day.

To overcome this natural reluctance on the part of the villagers, four RD Cadre teams plus three Troung Son teams are at work throughout the province. The Troung Son teams are specially trained groups of Montagnards which conduct pacification operations among their own people. Four hamlets have already been certified as New Life Hamlets. Richard Parkinson, province senior advisor, is no newcomer to Vietnam, having served in Vung Tau and Phuoc Tuy. He proudly points to the fact that Binh Long is the second province in III CTZ in number of completed self-help projects.

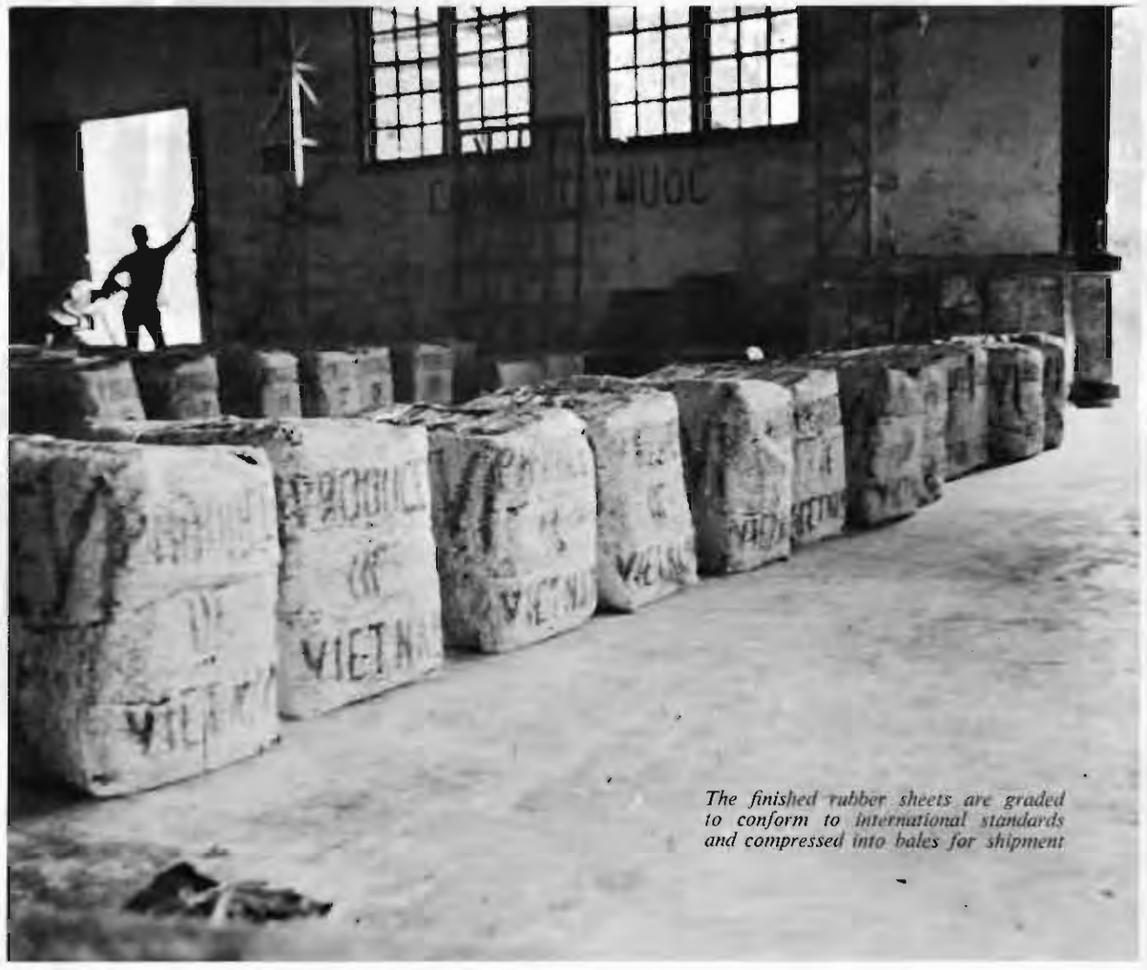
The New Life Development program is aimed at increasing the effectiveness of governmental services, and thereby winning the support of the people. Advisors meet with village councils and government officials to plan various self-help programs. By improving the welfare of the villagers, the GVN's image is brought into a more favorable light.

The 2d Civil Affairs Company has assigned a platoon in An Loc to coordinate civic action projects with nearby military units. Currently they are coordinating the immunization of all cattle in the province.

There is an Air Force Military Provincial Health Assistance Program (MILPHAP) team at work in the provincial hospital in An Loc. It is one of eight AF MILPHAP teams currently working in province hospitals throughout Vietnam. With three physicians, a medical service officer and 12 medical corpsmen, it provides direct medical support to the Vietnamese health officials. The 90-bed hospital, stocked with modern equipment and supplies, handles all kinds of cases.

There were nearly 3,000 Montagnard and Vietnamese refugees last year. Many were the result of planned movements to more secure areas, though some were caused by the fighting. The tenuous security situation has prompted the regrouping of outlying hamlets to more secure areas. For example, three-fourths of the Chon Thanh district population now lives within a five kilometer radius of the district town. Officials point out that there is no really serious refugee problem at this time, as long as the plantations stay open.

Because the plantations are open, there is a measure of stability and prosperity in the province. But until the war is over and "King Rubber" again holds court, life in the "Land of the Peaceful Dragon" will be insecure.



The finished rubber sheets are graded to conform to international standards and compressed into bales for shipment

Rubber is not grown in the southern part of the province, forcing the villagers to turn to other industries for their livelihood. This young man uses mud to construct walls on an incense factory his family manages

How to Win A Gold Medal

Vietnamese Youngsters Hope to Score With Their New Bows and Arrows

by II FFV IO

photos by SP5 Joel Whitsel

If Vietnamese youths can learn to shoot a bow and arrow as well as their Montagnard neighbors, there could be a Vietnamese archery team in the 1972 Olympics, when archery becomes an Olympic sport for the first time.

Army Sergeant First Class Richard E. Wright, an archery enthusiast now in Vietnam, is undertaking a project to develop an Olympic Junior Archery Program in III Corps.

Sergeant Wright has set up an archery workshop which began training sessions in September. Approximately a dozen Boy Scout leaders and other youths will participate in the program. When the first session is finished, a more complete program will be prepared to train other interested youth groups. Depending on its success in Bien Hoa province, plans are to expand it throughout III Corps and eventually all of Vietnam.

Since archery as a competitive sport is new to Vietnam, Sergeant Wright found himself with a problem providing training equipment because of the short supply. It was much too expensive to purchase U.S. made equipment, but temporary assistance was provided by local special services officers in the Long Binh area.

In the meantime, an interesting sidelight of the archery program came up which involved the development of an industrial means to locally produce archery equipment for use in the program.

Although this industrial capability is still in the planning stage, Sergeant Wright is trying to get samples made to show that equipment can be locally manufactured. "We're trying to make bow strings, targets and leather accessories from resources available in Vietnam so they will be within the reach of the average Vietnamese. By developing an industrial means it will enable the program to be completely Vietnamese, once the program gets underway," he said.

The industrial aspect is being coordinated through Miss Ellen Swan, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) crafts advisor to the small industries development center, located in Saigon. Miss Swan is helping Sergeant Wright locate sources for developing leather archery accessories such as arm guards and finger tabs. If the prototypes which are being worked on are acceptable, they will be incorporated into the program.

Archery

While searching for Vietnamese resources from which to manufacture archery equipment, Sergeant Wright found several interesting things. Duck feathers are used for the fletchings (or feathers) on arrow shafts in Vietnam. "The feathers are used on arrows to create a drag which stabilizes the arrow in flight. We use turkey feathers back home but since they aren't readily available we're using duck feathers here. They're actually much better," he said.

Rattan, a durable grass reed used in the manufacture of furniture, is being used for arrow shafts. The bow strings are being made from dacron, already used in the textile industry in Vietnam.

The biggest problem encountered so far has been in developing a suitable bow. Sergeant Wright explained that he wants to develop a "self bow," or a straight bow. "It's just like an Indian bow without any curves. A couple of years from now we may go into the manufacture of fiberglass bows but in the meantime we're trying to develop a suitable wood for the bow. Back home we use Osage orange wood and hickory but here we have to experiment with different woods that have the same characteristics as these," he said.

A Vietnamese NCO from III Corps Headquarters made a bow out of bamboo. According to Sergeant Wright, it works just fine. "I shot it and it has all the markings of a good bow. This gives a good indication of the interest the boys are taking in the overall program," he noted.

Everything that is being developed is immediately written up to be included in a technical manual. For example, a Vietnamese craftsman built a device which threads bowstrings. Designed by Sergeant Wright, the device makes an easy process out of an otherwise exacting one. Also, a fletching jig has been constructed to put feathers on the arrow shafts to speed the construction process.

The archery handbook, when the translation is completed, will outline the Junior Olympic Archery Program including types of equipment, safety aspects and coaching methods.

Sergeant Wright is coordinating the program with members of the International Recreational Association (IRA) in Saigon. The IRA is made up of individuals who travel to different areas in Vietnam teaching games and sports to youth advisors and teachers who attend their open-air workshops. He hopes to persuade the IRA to include archery in its curriculum.

Sergeant Wright has had experience in organizing programs like this in the past. Before he came to Vietnam he was assigned to Culver Military Academy in Indiana as an ROTC advisor. A friend suggested that he take up archery hunting. He did -and thoroughly enjoyed it. "It's the only way to hunt," he explained.

Sergeant Wright taught himself to shoot in three months by practicing every night in his back yard. He volunteered to be an adult supervisor of the sport at Culver. The school later was one of the first in the nation to make archery a varsity sport.

If present trends continue, Vietnam will have an opportunity to partieipate in competition in future Olympic games —as well as Asian competition—using locally produced equipment.

SGT Wright shows the Vietnamese how

ARVN Artillery

A Big Bang From Isolated Outposts

story and photos by SGT Gary Livengood

Thirty-six thundering guns from the 18th ARVN Artillery Division are currently providing a "big bang" for enemy forces in South Vietnam.

The 18th ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) Division, commanded by Brigadier General Giai, operates from Xuan Loc in Long Khanh province. The division provides artillery support for four provinces—Long Khanh, Binh Tuy, Phuoc Tuy and Bien Hoa. These make up the eastern section of III Corps Tactical Zone (III CTZ).

Giving the division its firepower are the 181st and 182d ARVN Artillery Battalions. The battalions each have three firing batteries having six 105 mm towed howitzers. A headquarters battery, providing administrative support, and a service battery, providing maintenance support, fill out each battalion.

Added mobility and quicker response come from dividing each battery into three platoons of two guns each. Dividing the batteries allows for more area coverage.

In contrast, U.S. artillery units seldom split their firing batteries.

"The gun positions are usually stationary," declared Captain David G. Eaton, senior U.S. advisor for the 182d Battalion, "but they can be airlifted if the need arises."

Major highways, cities and supply routes fall within the area of responsibility for the battalion's four inch guns. Every square foot of winding Route 20, an important supply link from Dalat to Saigon, is covered with artillery fire, noted the 29-year-old advisor. The captain, a member of Advisory Team 87, continued, "If there is an ambush or contact anywhere along these routes we can have rounds on the way minutes after receiving a call for help. These targets are already precomputed; all we do is obtain fire clearance, adjust the gun and fire." Clearance to fire is requested through the Combat Support Coordination Center (CSCC) at division headquarters. All allied units must coordinate with the CSCC prior to a fire mission. States First Lieutenant Dennis Kolaski, an assistant division advisor, "The ARVN's check all land and air areas in the vicinity of the contact site before giving an OK to fire. This is accomplished in a matter of minutes."

ARVN and U.S. artillery procedures and methods closely parallel. The ARVN's undergo the same type schooling, from fire direction control to laying the piece, as the U.S. men on the 105's. The ARVN Artillery School is located at Duc My near Nha Trang.

Enlisted men usually receive three months instruction while officers receive from six months to one year. Many of the senior ARVN artillery officers have attended the United States Army Artillery School at Fort Sill, Okla.

Training for the ARVN's doesn't end here though. Teams are organized and travel to each platoon posi-

Artillery

tion where they give the men refresher training. This constant retraining and refresher process lasts for 15 days at a time.

Does the incessant training pay off? Captain Eaton says, "ARVN artillery is outstanding. The men are extremely professional and very fast and accurate."

"An example," said Captain Edgar Wright, assistant battalion advisor of the 182d, "was a few weeks ago when the basecamp of the 182d came under an enemy mortar attack. Before the third mortar round had landed our men were firing counter-mortar fire."

This rapid response is indicative of all artillery units within the division, states Captain Robert J. Hill III, senior US advisor for the 181st ARVN Artillery Battalion. "The ARVN's fire immediately upon suspected enemy tube positions. When the U.S. 2d Battalion, 35th Artillery came under a mortar attack recently, our firing batteries had counter-mortar fire on the way 20 seconds after the first enemy shell landed," he said.

"Immediately returning fire has a psychological effect on the enemy," continued the captain. "When shells start dropping close to him right after he has launched his attack, he's likely to think his position is pinpointed and hustle out of there. Many times the ARVN will fire an illumination round immediately to light up the suspected enemy position."

Using the same type of rounds as US units, such as high explosive, illumination, white phosphorous and beehive, the 18th Division fires hundreds of thousands of projectiles a year. During 1967, the 182d launched more than 121,000 of the four-inch diameter rounds at the enemy, and the first three months of 1968 saw more than 21,000 rounds winging towards the enemy in mission support. A battalion averages approximately 400 rounds fired per day.

Formidible fortifications are the byword for the outposts. ARVN soldiers are there to stay and won't be pushed off.

"The two-gun platoons are proving highly effective in supporting operations," comments Captain Wright. The guns are stationary and strategically placed to insure maximum effectiveness and area coverage so their firing radius will overlap with that of the other platoon emplacements. The 105mm guns can fire to ranges of nearly 11,000 meters.

Platoon 1A of the 182d Battalion sits atop a plateau 200 feet above sea level and approximately 150 feet above the surrounding lowlands of Vo Dat. The big guns provide protection for the "rice bowl" of Long Khanh province. This valley region is famous for its IR-8 "miracle rice."

When the 30-man platoon is not actually engaged in a fire mission, it keeps busy maintaining the guns, improving its positions and attending classes on platoon drills, according to First Lieutenant Nguyen Huy Phung, commanding officer.

Life at ARVN platoon positions is much like that of a U.S. unit. The ARVN emphasize sports participation at their remote area sites. Recently the advisory team members of the 182d purchased volleyballs and nets for each platoon to help with the recreation program. In more permanent areas television and various types of entertainment are offered at enlisted men, non-commissioned officer and officer clubs.

Morale is not considered a problem with the Vietnamese "cannoncockers." The reason, according to Captain Eaton, is the men don't go on long field trips, they have their families living in the outposts with them, a generous leave policy exists, and the units have a rotation program that moves a soldier after they have been at one place six msnths. The result is a efficient supporting force of "cannoncockers," ready to do battle at the drop of a mortar round.

Feeling immense pride and admiration for his men, Captain Wright declared, "The men know their jobs and know them well." As long as the enemy pokes his head up in South Vietnam, he's sure to have a ringing in his ears as the ARVN's play their favorite game—"booming Charlie."

ARVN soldiers alerted by an urgent fire mission put rounds out quickly. Speed has become a trademark of these fighters

photo by CPT Les Lashko

NUI BA DEN

The Mountain of the Black Virgin is a Powerful and Mysterious Symbol

story and photos by SP4 Arnold Braeske

A giant green cone, a massive piece of tree-covered granite, soars up out of endless ricefields and jungle into the clouds. To millions of Vietnamese who live in its long shadows, it is a political symbol, a source of cloudy legends, an enigma. To pilots and strangers within its sight, it is initially a navigational marker and then—a gnawing mystery. The few pilots who glide over the peak when its clouds have lifted briefly still feel this strange atmosphere.

Below, on the tip of the cone, is an isolated, treeless, two-acre camp spotted with huge boulders and rocks. Bunkers and small, permanent buildings nestling within the rocks bristle with antennas. American lookouts, sitting on rocks dangling over the slope, stare up at the visitor briefly, then resume their watch of the treeline below. They watch for the enemy prowling on the mountain below them. The mountain is Nui Ba Den (Black Lady Mountain, or Mountain of the Black Virgin,) a 3,000-foot pyramid of trees and solid granite 18 miles from Cambodia in Tay Ninh province.

The camp on its summit is an American radio retransmitting station maintained by U.S. soldiers and signal men from 15 different units.

This combination of visual prominence and American occupation of the top make Nui Ba Den a powerful

The Symbol of the Black Virgin

symbol. To millions it means that the Viet Cong are not capable of winning the war.

Nui Ba Den's importance as a symbol has a long history. Before a U.S. Special Forces unit took the top in a helicopter assault in May, 1964, the Viet Cong had camped on the same ground. Before then, the mountain and its pinnacle had belonged to the Viet Minh, the Japanese and the French.

The mysterious aura which permeates Nui Ba Den today is the product of two factors—the mountain's legend and its physical appearance.

Legend has it that prior to 1700, when Nui Ba Den was still in Cambodian territory, a Cambodian chieftain lived on the mountain with his son and a 13-year-old daughter, Nang Denh. A Chinese Buddhist monk, wandering through the region, came to the chieftain and asked for a place to live and to spread the teachings of Buddha. Nang Denh's father built the monk a temple called Chua Ong Tau (Chinese Monk's Temple) whose ruins can still be seen on the foot of the mountain's eastern slope. The pretty, young daughter in time became a devout disciple of Buddhism and, when her father proposed her marriage to the son of a neighboring chieftain, the girl went into hiding on the mountain. Soldiers dispatched to find the girl eventually found a section of her leg in a stone cavern on the mountain's slope. Having vowed herself to the Buddhist non-acceptance of married life, the girl had apparently killed herself rather than break the vow.

Years later, a priest who practiced Buddhism on the mountain for 31 years claimed to have seen her walking on the mountainside. He built her an altar, the Shrine of the Black Virgin, which still stands on the mountain's slope today.

The mountain's appearance has this same air of the supernatural about it. When low-ceilinged clouds blanket the floor of Tay Ninh province and rain slashes across its rice paddies, helicopters will be landing in clear weather on top of Nui Ba Den. When the entire horizon ringing the mountain is clear and cloudless, Nui Ba Den will have a big puff of cotton cloud on its top and the soldiers in the peak's camp will be huddling from the rain under ponchos and in buildings.

Living on "The Rock," according to Captain Lee G. Scripture, the camp's former commanding officer, can only be described as "hard." All supplies for the soldiers on the mountain—food, water, mail, ammunition, building materials—have to be brought up to the camp by helicopter.

Even on a clear day, the clouds float level with the mountain peak camp. The smoke from a trash fire replaces the haze which usually coats Nui Ba Den's summit

Circling above the cloud-capped mountaintop, resupply helicopters watch for holes to appear in the mist. Within a few minutes the top may again be lost to sight

Because of the crucial nature of their work and the threat of the Viet Cong on the slopes below, the men on top of Nui Ba Den put in long, arduous working hours.

"The men work hard all day—12 to 14 hours. At night they pull guard for another 4 to 6 hours. It's hard work but it's vital and something you can take pride in," Captain Scripture explained.

Mail, camaraderie between the men, and what Captain Scripture refers to as "probably the best food in Vietnam" make up partially for the discomforts of the mountain. Occasionally, when the weather and security permit, the camp's little messhall moves outdoors for a barbecue.

One of Nui Ba Den's riflemen from the 25th Infantry Division stands guard on the mountain's precipice.

The units stationed at the camp are as varied in composition as the Army. Since it's a retransmitting station, a good many of the camp's men are Signal Corpsmen, but riflemen, military police, Long Range Reconnaissance Patrols (LRRP), and Special Forces troops are there in strength to provide security. In addition, outside rifle units are rotated up to the camp, along with MP's, for shorter periods.

The presence of Viet Cong on the slopes of the mountain is very clear to the men in the camp. The VC stage occasional probes of the perimeter at night, seemingly to gain military intelligence. Twice, in May and August of 1968, the VC attempted unsuccessfully to take control of the mountaintop camp.

After many years of living on the mountain the Viet Cong have dug extensive honeycombs of caves and tunnels beneath Nui Ba Den's thick tangle of undergrowth. The effect of their presence, according to Captain Scripture, is primarily psychological, though.

With the camp's present fortifications, manpower and allied artillery support from the valley floor below, the Viet Cong seem content to let the situation remain static. Additionally, the American forces on Nui Ba Den continue to expand the size of the camp down the slopes. The blasting of bangalore torpedoes can be heard regularly during the day, clearing the brushline farther down the mountain.

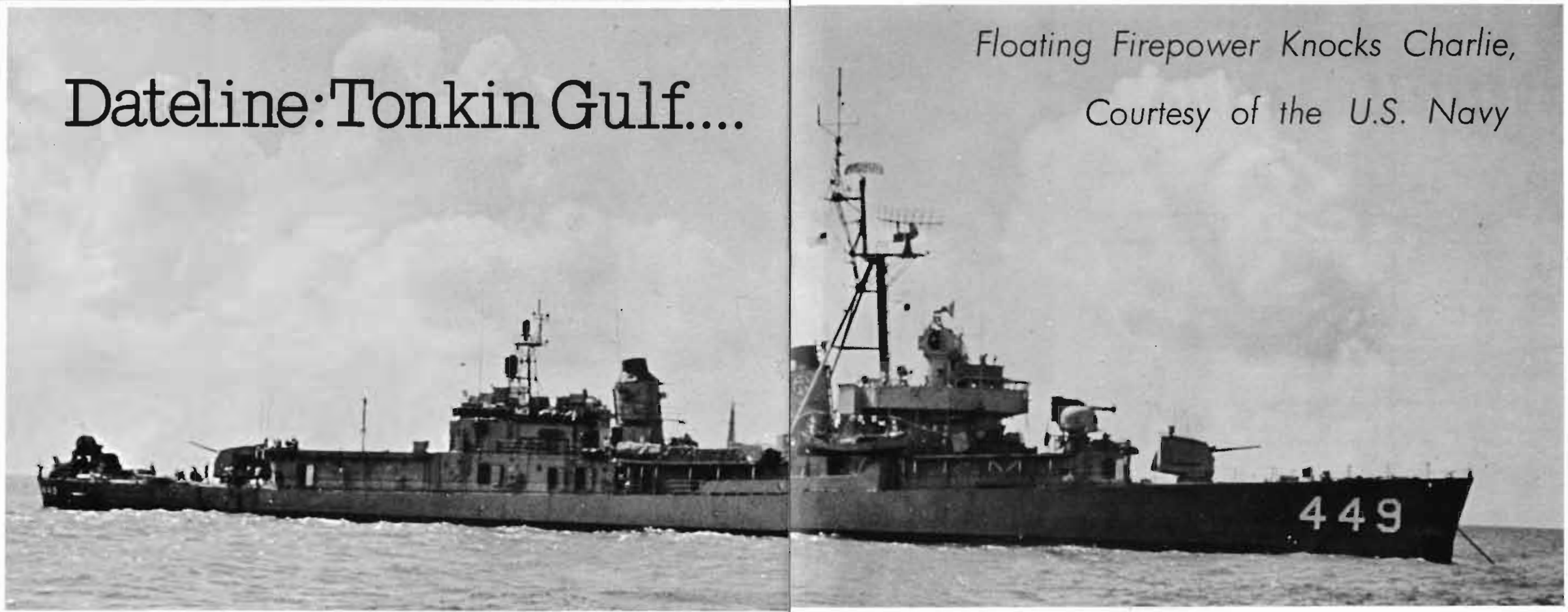
Night on top of Nui Ba Den carries with it a multitude of sense experiences. The air, cool during the day, becomes cooler still as a wet mist descends on the peak. On a clear night, the lights of Saigon and Long Binh, 50 miles away, can be seen to the southeast. Tay Ninh City's lights flicker seemingly miles below, seven miles to the southwest. B-52 strikes, common in this area of communist infiltration from Cambodia, flash like dotted trails in the darkness below.

On foggy nights, when the camp is in the clouds, visibility is limited to a few feet. Through the night, allied harassment and interdiction artillery fire (H and I) pounds sporadically into the mountainside below the camp. Intermittently, the clouds may clear and leave the night starry again.

The significance of this strange mountain is great. Its meaning as a legend, a marker, a geological oddity, its religious undertones and, today, its political and military value, make Nui Ba Den an Everest and a Matterhorn at 3,000 feet.

Dateline: Tonkin Gulf....

Floating Firepower Knocks Charlie, Courtesy of the U.S. Navy



story and photos

by SP5 Ronald Pejsa

It was August 5, 1965. Communist aggression in South Vietnam was reaching new heights. Not only was Charlie striking at more and more civilian areas, but he also fired upon a Navy destroyer for the first time. The U.S.S. Maddox (DD731) was steaming on a routine patrol in the Tonkin Gulf when its' green radar sereen picked up rapidly closing white blips, warning the alerted crewmen of an imminent torpedo attack. Quick reaction by the U.S.S. Ticonderoga, a naval aircraft carrier in the area, enabled its rapid-strike interceptors to sink two of the three attacking PT boats and leave the third one engulfed in red and yellow flames. The Maddox escaped serious injury, but this initial enemy assault brought a marked increase in naval gunfire up and down the rippled Vietnamese coastline. Henceforth, firepower and mobility of naval vessels would have to be reckoned with by North Vietnamese and Viet Cong from the Tonkin Gulf to the South China Sea.

One of the most effective destroyers to fire against heavily concealed enemy shore batteries, bunkers and isolated base camps in the south has been the U.S.S. Nicholas (DD-449). A eombat-proven veteran of World War II and the oldest naval destroyer on active duty, the Nicholas is armed with two 5-inch guns and a highly sophisticated anti-submarine detection and destruction system.

The sleek destroyer normally fires its coastal bombardment with coordination and aerial adjustment provided by a Marine liaison team from the III Corps Tactical Zone. The Marine-Navy teamwork makes the naval operation go. "Without their aerial spotter we would lose 90 per cent of our effectiveness," according to Ensign William Brooks, duty officer in the ship's combat information center.

When the spotter arrives on station over predetermined or suspected targets, he radios the ship and relays firing data. Crewmembers in the tightly cramped, red-lit combat information eenter hastily plot the grid data and relay it to the ship's electronie computer. Onee final computations are made, the firing data is radioed to the guns. When the gun is locked on the target, it remains there until the mission is fired. If the ship rolls in rough or choppy water, the barrel moves up and down electronically, compensating for the movement and keeping the gun on target.

In its last three-day operation off the coast of Phuoc Tuy and Binh Tuy provinces, the destroyer obliterated more than 50 meters of wooden fortified trenchline, eight heavily camouflaged hootches and three concrete reinforced bunkers. "These guns are some of the best I have ever spotted for. They really pin the tail on the donkey," according to Marine Sergeant Michael S. Tressler, spotter for the ship.

The pin-point firing of these guns saved Sergeant Tressler's craft from serious damage. "While flying over a heavily foliaged area, we began receiving heavy automatic weapons fire. Immediately we ealled in a readjustment of our fire and within seconds the ship dropped six high explosive air bursts over the exact area. Trees, hushes and dirt could be seen flying everywhere. Needless to say, the guns were silenced," according to Sergeant Tressler.

The guns are fired by a five-man crew which works within a gray steel protected firing turret. The booming guns vibrate the entire section of the ship upon which they're located. Crewmembers wear ear plugs to protect themselves from the deafening blasts but their eyes are shielded from the blazing muzzle flashes by the steel turret. Hot casings are thrown out a rear turret hatch to keep the rapid-firing guns going. The guns can fire more than 20 rounds a minute.

The rear gun, located over the enlisted men's sleeping area, allows few people to sleep during fire missions. Besides eausing sporadic vibrations, which cause the gray ceiling paint to ehip and fall upon the bunks and floors, the noise and vibration also rocks the bunks. The bunks are stacked three high, and each hunk always seems to have its share of gray chips upon the completion of a fire mission. When the front gun fires, however, the blasts can hardly be heard or felt in the aft quarters.

When it is not firing, the Nicholas performs a variety of other tasks. Escorting aircraft carriers and providing cover for search and rescue helicopters are two other important functions.

Firing missions is by far the most popular job, however. "We're fighting a different war than the Army or Marines. We never see Charlie or know what it's like out there unless we're told by someone else. The men want to feel they're doing something worthwhile, contributing something to our effort. When we fire missions we feel we are. Nothing gives us more pleasure and satisfaction than to wateh a seeondary explosion inland somewhere caused by our guns," according to Petty Officer 3d Class G.P. Verdi, a loader on the 5-inch guns. When the men see a secondary explosion, they shout and throw their white caps into the air. Many of the men—cooks, laundry men, radar operators – after completing a normal work day often volunteer to help hump

Naval Guns

ammo during evening fire missions.

The transfer of supplies, referred to as UNREPS (Underway Replenishment), takes place every second or third day. Different supply ships rendezvous with the destroyer—one ship supplies ammunition while another slow-moving supply vessel furnishes foodstuffs and fuel. Being the faster of the two ships, the Nicholas always catches the supply ship and they continue to steam alongside each other at about 12 knots (15 miles per hour) while the resupply takes place. The mated ships normally remain about 35 feet apart while materials slide across rapidly exchanged tow lines. Any insecurely fastened tow line, or careless tightroping of materials, would result in the supplies falling more than 30 feet into swirling green, white-capped waters. A complete resupply lasts between one and two hours. All crewmembers not required to be in their sections don their bright red life jackets and pitch in until the resupply is completed. UNREPS are the only way for the ships to receive supplies without docking.

Upon completing the resupply, the Nicholas shows that even though she is the oldest destroyer on active duty in the Navy, she also is the fastest. She drops her "Roadrunner" flag from the mast, beep beeps her deep fog horn, and pulls rapidly away at about 35 knots (40 miles per hour). The Nicholas was awarded the Roadrunner flag in Pearl Harbor after being selected the fastest destroyer in the Pacific Fleet.

Living conditions on the Nicholas are markedly different from those on land: bunks are always covered by clean white sheets, dust, dirt and sand are rarely found in any quarters, three hot meals are served each day. The food is generally excellent and varies from blueberry pancakes at breakfast to cooked-to-order steaks for an evening meal. Well-trained cooks are able to "personalize" their cooking because of the relatively few men they must cook for. Meals are planned for about 125 men.

Evenings are spent watching movies and playing cards. The ship receives recent movies such as "The Graduate" as well as old-timers such as "Ringo and His Golden Gun" from supply channels. Poker and pinochle are the most popular card games while, oddly enough, a poker variation called "Spit in the Ocean" is gaining in popularity.

While living conditions are generally better than those on land, the men have special problems. Once they're out to sea, they normally are gone for at least a year, sometimes never touching land once in that period of time. Boredom is a constant enemy and mail is received irregularly. If you get restless, there is nowhere to go except to another area of the ship.

The U.S.S. Nicholas ended its Vietnam tour recently and has been replaced by other destroyers. Their continued coastal poundings will continue to remind Charlie of one of his mistakes. He made it on August 5, 1965.

On the way! A high-explosive round from this five-inch gun is fast on the way to an enemy base camp in Binh Tuy province (left) This anchor, one of two used on the Nicholas, weighs more than a ton (above)

Nighttime Terror From the Sky

Firefly Flights Deny

Waterways to the Enemy

story and photos

by SP5 Mike Marcellino

"DI DAU? DI DAU?" (Where are you going) Ho Si screamed, panic stricken, to his brown mud-caked comrade.

"TOI SO DEN MAY BAY, TOI CHAY TRON!" (I'm afraid of the helicopter's light, I'm getting away from it!) replied Nguyen Van as he floundered on hands and knees along the muddy bank of the Oriental River.

Ho Si, Nguyen Van and eleven others of the Viet Cong suicide squad moments ago were packed in a sampan drifting slowly down the river toward their hideout within sight of Saigon's city lights. They had made it clean until they came to a bend in the river where the Firefly's light spread imprisoned them. The enemy, nearly reaching their objective after a two-week trek from their base camp on the Cambodian border, were stopped cold and pinpointed amid the dark sameness of flooded paddylands with the word . . . .

Firefly's primary firepower comes from this gunship, which flies at treetop level just outside the circle of light. When Charlie is spotted, the ship opens up

The seven spots on the light ship illuminate illegal movement.

"Mark!" said W1 George D. Boyd. The pilot of the "deck ship" broke silence as he spoke to his teammates over the intercom. "Steady, hold it right there." The Viet Cong were no longer alone. Their secret night move of men and supplies was paralized by three "fire spitting dragons." The Dragons, a heavy fire team of the 334th Armed Helicopter Company, were three Huey helicopters armed to the teeth. "I've got a sampan here and two Charlies," Boyd announced, "and I'm going to make a pass for positive identification." With these words the other two aircraft commanders poised their ships for the kill. The light and control ships hovered and circled while the low ship's pass scraped the treetops.

This search and destroy drama from the air has occurred hundreds of nights during the three years that the 334th Army aviators, the "first with guns in Vietnam," have run these multi-fire power assaults by the light of Firefly.

The Firefly, a cluster of seven glaring eyes, marked the sampan's course. The cluster, made of the same light that guides the landings of the C-130 "Flying Boxcar," was mounted in the light ship, (a "Charlie" model Huey), while in the control ship above an aerial observer studied his maps by red filtered flashlight. This American advisor to local elements of the 25th Vietnamese Infantry Division cleared the target and the fire team tore up the water-going "Cong" with rockets, mini-gun, M-60 and 50 caliber machinegun fire. The Firefly mission operates with these three tiers—the command and control ship at approximately 1,000 feet altitude, the light ship at about 500 feet and the gunship "on the deck."

Nightly this fighting team cranks up from its pad at Bien Hoa Air Base, radios the tower and lifts off enroute to search the enemy's water hideouts. A Firefly team mission might take them first down "automatic alley" (so-called as a past source of intense enemy anti-aircraft fire) . . . then along the Cambodian border west of Duc Hoa . . . and to Saigon's southwestern "skirts" . . . and finally whirling, three-in-line, homebound at dawn. For the 334th's pilots and crews it is a "hard day's night."

Some "hard day's nights" of Fireflying fill void skies with rainbow colors—patterns of helicopter warning lights, shafts of a seven-cluster spotlight and tracings of rocket, machinegun and minigun fire. Or for weeks Firefly can be silent, searching—except for the wind gush and "chung-a-chump" of chopper blades.

These Fourth of July colors light the sky because the 334th (then designated the 197th) pioneered and developed the

Day activity at Bien Hoa Air Base, home of the 334th, is reflected in the searchlights. The spots were designed to be C-130 landing lights

Flickering in the Night

The "high" ship, flying above the other two, provides effective suppressive fire

emergency standby and Firefly night missions in the spring of 1965. Since then the 334th has trained other aviators in the tactics and procedures of this search and destroy night mission to inhibit Viet Cong water traffic. The demand for the light fire team plus "lightning bug" has increased to the point that the 334th now puts three teams up above the III Corps Tactical Zone.

The three Firefly teams primarily support the 25th and 5th Vietnamese Infantry Divisions. But each night the Raiders, Dragons and Playboys are ready to "peel off" their intelligence targets and answer calls from allied ground forces in contact with the enemy. The pilots and crews don't mind the extra workload because they take pride in putting the cold shoulder on Viet Cong and NVA night movements.

In August the intelligence advisor to the 5th ARVN Division cited the effect of the 334th's Firefly missions in the Division's area of operation. "Working north and northwest of Phu Cuong (Binh Duong province Capital) the Firefly has denied the VC and NVA use of their main waterway infiltration routes, the Thi Tinh, Song Be and Saigon Rivers. Blocking the night traffic on these rivers has forced the enemy to use land routes which ties up more people and slows down movement," he said.

The Firefly pack maneuvers in tune so precisely they are like a helicopter merry-go-round mounted with fire spitting dragons. They go round and round while lashed to an imaginary center pole made of men's sound judgement, experience and on-the-spot communication. The 334th pilots call the light operator the key man in Firefly. Following the erratic winding of rivers and canals is up to the lightman's strong arms and sharp eyes. He fights the rushing air stream that wraps around the helicopter and buffets the hand-operated light. One aviator who has

photo by SP5 Jerry Cleveland

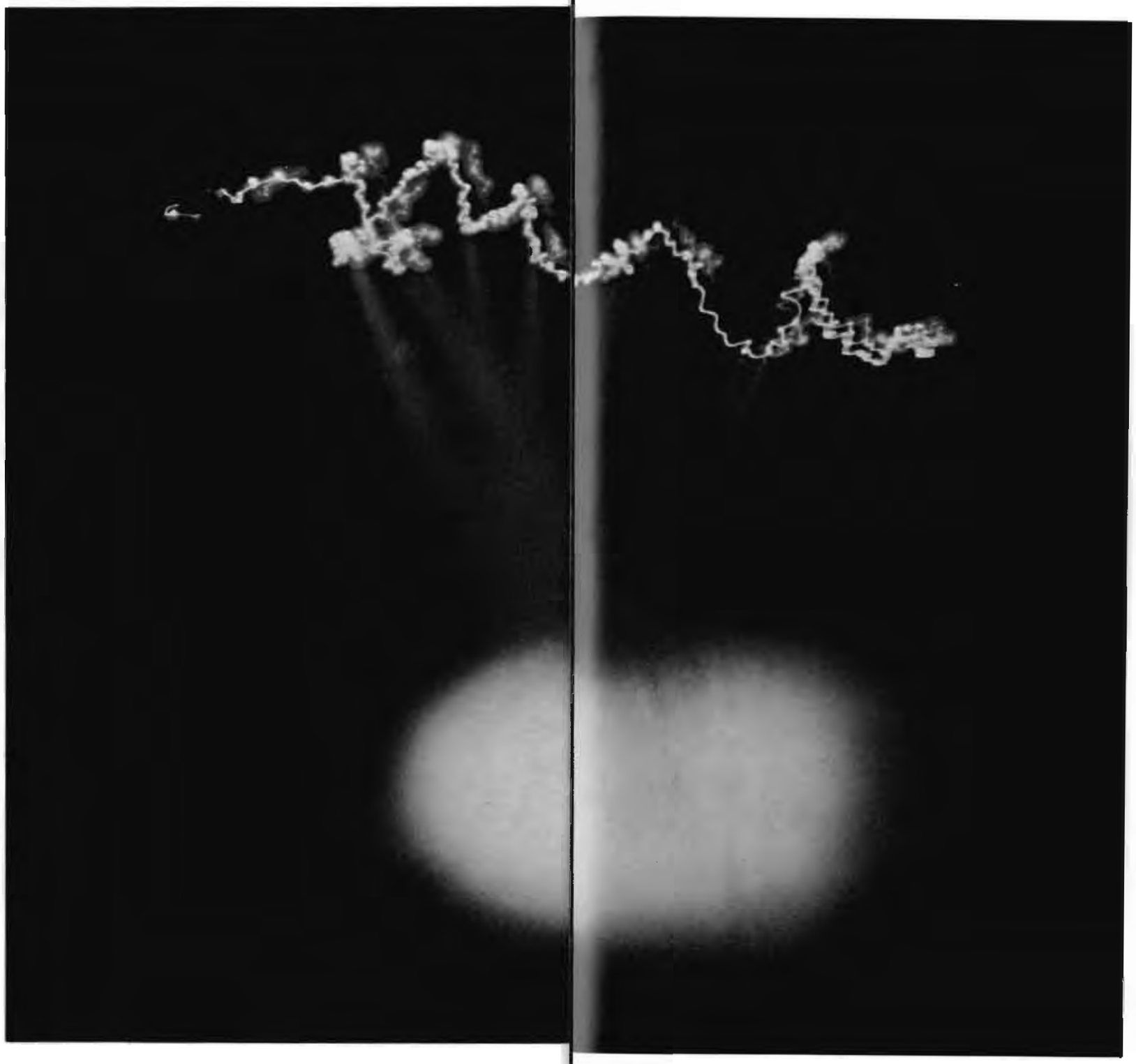
Firefly

been on the light for 14 months, SP5 William Hyter, described the effect "bug light" has on the enemy. "When Charlie has been caught and looks up into the light it's like looking into the sun for them. It's automatic . . . if the VC get caught in the light while in the open they know it's the end for them." Hyter recalled that "once we caught about 30 VC unloading sampans. People started going in all directions except one guy who just looked up at us . . . the light is a strange thing sometimes."

Also in a hot seat is the aircraft commander on the "bug." He guides his ship, maintains altitude and spots targets. The light and low ship pilots, beside flying with tightrope precision, also contend with a backlash effect from staring at the Firefly's built-in sunshine. Both aircraft commanders are vulnerable to the spell that can consume their psyches—vertigo. WI Gary L. Lucas, a light ship flyer, gave a vivid description of the phenomenon. "Firefly vertigo is like driving through a dense fog, eyes on the road, and you see two white lines . . . your speedometer reads 80 and you're looking for ants."

WI James J. Kaye, another light flier, has his own ideas about the effect of the light sickness. "Looking at the center of the moving light can cause target fixation and when it happens you're in a vacuum!" Pilots that have been through this "non-balance period" in night flying by spotlight remember the strange times when they looked at their instruments and refused to believe their eyes. But the danger will not ignite if the pilot sticks with his instruments. If he does run into trouble he "grabs" the safety valve—the co-pilot.

The Firefly lights and stings sampans like it has the Queen Bee's lifetime stinger. But one night in mid-May a sampan nearly bit the hand that feeds



In this unusual time shot, the beams of light stream from the red line of the helicopter's flight and are gathered on the ground in a pool so the gunners can see

the fire. WI Thomas D. Rains led the team north-bound along a river between Duc Hoa and Go Da Hau, about as close to Cambodia as they are allowed to get. A ten-month Firefly veteran, Rains recalled taking moderate automatic weapons and small arms fire. "We brought the control ship down and hit the enemy with 50 caliber fire. Suddenly the tracers ignited something . . . there was a tremendous blaze and gushing—a rocket shot up at us. It missed the control ship by about 50 meters."

While under fire, the low ship had spotted a three-by-three-foot section of a 40-foot cabin cruiser that was all but buried in the brush. The cruiser, tended by a sampan, was tied up in the middle of nowhere. (The South Vietnamese government regulates night canal and river traffic and designates proper docking areas for all civilian watercraft.) Because of the craft's odd location and the incoming fire on the helicopters the two craft were fair game. But, according to Rains who has logged more than 800 hours of night flying, the situation was not so simple.

"We were hesitant about firing again after three rockets had come at us (the low ship commander estimated the sampan was crammed with 10–15 rockets.) But there were no friendly troops in the area and with a fuel shortage we couldn't stay on station and wait for friendlies to secure the cache." As a result, the Huey team let loose and destroyed the target while taking no significant hits itself. The boat exploded, sending the sampan and debris falling piecemeal into the middle of the stream.

These night missions demand more of the men and their ships than daylight assaults. For the crewmen and pilots this means long hours of maintenance "with the Hueys on their backs." Pilot training with the 334th Firefly teams is a difficult, tedious three-month process in which the fliers rotate on the low, light and control ships.

By a trial and error question barrage from a seasoned fire team leader a new pilot learns the land he will search. Little by little, landmarks, city lights and waterways stick in his mind. He learns to "hug the heel" in the low ship while keeping visible contact with the light spread and in the light ship he finds the knack for a three-in-one job of "turning, spotting and flying." "Before your training period is over you fly each ship," explained WI Cyril T. Boys, "because you must understand the problems of the other two aircraft commanders to pilot a Firefly ship."

After three months and 300 hours of "hard day's nights" a pilot in the 334th earns his aircraft commander's orders. His "night wings" are the wings of the quick, versatile and unpredictable deterrent to enemy night movement—Firefly.

Charlie's Pen Pals

Psyops Squadron

Gets the Word to the Enemy

by Lieutenant Robert Pfohman

photos by SP5 Wayne Walker

"Every litter bit helps," according to the men of the Air Force's 5th Special Operations Squadron as they coat Vietnam with a light snowfall of psychological leaflets.

Primary mission for the elite group, formerly called the Air Commandos, is to make sure the enemy gets the word that the Army's 6th Psyops Battalion at Bien Hoa prepares. Using several types of aircraft, the unit hacks at enemy morale with leaflets and loudspeakers, telling about the Government of South Vietnam's Chieu Hoi Program. (That program, begun in 1963, offers full citizenship to enemy soldiers if they defect. This amnesty program, based on similar ones in the Philippines and Malaysia, has been a success.)

The 5th Air Commando Squadron (ACS), established in late 1965 as the first unit in Air Force history whose mission is devoted entirely to psychological warfare, flies several types of missions to deliver the messages. The 6th Psyops Battalion, however, is responsible for establishing targets, and preparing the leaflets and tapes. Planning the load also is important: different themes go to different targets. For example, different "pitches" are clearly necessary for a badly mauled enemy unit and a fresh one. Under some conditions, funeral music played over the loudspeakers is more effective than any text.

But when the preliminary work is done, the 5th goes

Psychological Operations

Piloting the "Gabby" mission is Major Gerald F. Pitstick. The C-47 drops more than four million leaflets onto enemy picnic areas each trip, keeping Charlie on a never-ending police call

to work under difficult and often dangerous conditions to tell the enemy where he has made his mistake.

And they have been successful. According to Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth D. Hill, unit commander, "we get these people in the mood to give up. We're constantly talking to them with tapes or leaflets. It's been pretty successful so far," he said.

One type of mission the 5th flies is called, appropriately enough, "Gabby." The old and reliable C-47 "Gooney Bird," veteran of 30 productive years for the Air Force, is used on the mission. Four million leaflets are dropped on each flight and, living up to the mission's name, tape recordings appealing to the enemy's better judgement are played over powerful loudspeakers.

The target areas for Gabby are chosen from requests from ARVN and allied field commanders. Though they are pre-planned, they constantly shift because the units move. The 5th flies two missions a day in III and IV Corps Tactical Zones with Gabby, each mission covering eight to 12 targets.

A quick reaction capacity, planned to take advantage of minute-to-minute changes in the tactical situation, is used on missions when immediacy of appeal is considered to be of maximum importance. When a high-ranking enemy officer Chieu Hoi's, he is asked to make a statement of appeal to his comrades. If he agrees, a message is taped or printed on a leaflet and a "Fasttalk" flight is set up. The flight can be over any target area in Region III in minutes with 50,000 leaflets in addition to taped broadcasts.

The U-10 airplane used on these missions is a specially designed high performance aircraft with a slow flight capability. Known as a short take off or landing (STOL) aircraft, it can take off in 225 feet of runway. It is fully maneuverable and controllable at 38 miles per hour. With a skilled pilot at the controls, it can perform steep turns without losing altitude. The aircraft can remain aloft nearly four hours with a crew of two and more than 50,000 leaflets aboard.

According to Colonel Hill, "the leaflets look like a cloud layer as they stream back from the plane. Once an artillery unit called to tell us that they had a bunch of leaflets littering their area," he said.

The Fasttalk airplane is always ready to go, and can scramble on 15 minutes notice. "We get a priority clearance since we're on an urgent psywar mission," he noted.

"Speak" is the name given to another U-10 mission. It differs from "Fasttalk" only in that the Speak missions are planned up to a week in advance.

"Moonshine" missions are C-47's which provide night illumination primarily for troops in contact, perimeter defense and suspected enemy activities such as convoys or sampans on canals at night.

Colonel Hill pointed out that only the most select crews fly Moonshine missions. "These are the old, cool heads that have flown in World War II and Korea. These aircraft commanders have the highest experience level. They have to be sharp because this type of mission is very difficult," he noted.

The aircraft are on alert from dusk to dawn, ready to go on a moment's notice. The III Corps Direct Air Support Center coordinates the target area and time over target as well as the contact with the ground commander.

The aircraft carry more than 100 flares, fused to ignite at different altitudes. The level depends on atmospheric conditions and the amount of light needed on the ground. The pilot has to compensate for winds aloft in order to drop the flare on the target. According to Colonel Hill, they can keep a sizable area well lit for more than four hours. "However, if there is going to be a fighter strike and the pilots want more light, then we'll really light the area by dropping two to three flares at a time. With two million candlepower each, one flare could light up a night game at the Houston Astro Dome like it was daylight." Moonshine pilots usually fly two loads of flares a night.

Though the average altitude of a Moonshine mission is 5,000 feet, sometimes conditions force them to fly as low as 3,500 feet. According to Colonel Hill this is dangerous. "One 50 caliber round of ground fire could penetrate the aircraft. It could rupture fuel lines, hydraulic lines or set off a flare," he said.

The 5th ACS has a distinguished lineage, going back to the days when special warfare was still only theory. Originally started to explore the possibilities of applying special air operations to special warfare ground operations, tests proved so successful that the 1st Air Commando Wing was established at Hurlburt Air Force Base in Florida. A Special Air Warfare Center was established near Eglin AFB, the Air Force's answer to the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center at Fort Bragg, N.C.

The 5th Special Operations Squadron keeps in close touch with Charlie with this low-speed plane, talking to him and constantly sending him messages.

The load layout is important to the overall success of the mission, since a different message goes to each target

These early Commandos developed new ways of applying air power in support of special warfare operations. During these early days techniques of infiltration and exfiltration by aircraft of men and supplies were perfected.

Using conventional C-47 and U-10 aircraft with highly skilled crews, these early Air Commandos practically wrote the book on special air warfare.

They trained under the most rugged conditions. Using STOL aircraft, they practiced takeoffs and landing on short runways without normal landing aids. All operations were carried out under maximum performance conditions. Landings were made in places that would make conventional pilots shudder. In 1961, the Air Commandos numbered approximately 1,000 highly dedicated, skilled people.

Colonel Hill has helped train special air warfare crews in the United States, Panama, Spain, Greece, Turkey and West Germany. He fondly recalls training crews in Panama. "We had to build a runway in a very remote area. Since there was no place to land we dropped construction equipment from the aircraft to villagers waiting on the ground. We used an airborne loudspeaker to give them instructions on how to build the airstrip. This was one of the first times this idea was used with such success," he said.

During this time they developed the basic principles of aerial psychological warfare. They used loudspeakers and leaflets to tell the villagers how to build runways and to announce Medical Civic Action Programs (MEDCAPS) scheduled for the village.

The unit's name was changed from Air Commandos to the 5th Special Operations Squadron recently. The squadron is now nearly ten times its original size, and its roles have been diversified.

During the squadron's first 16 months of operation in Vietnam, two billion leaflets were dropped and more than 7,700 hours of loudspeaker messages were delivered, encouraging the enemy to Chieu Hoi.

Their success is often measured in the number of ralliers—and there have been thousands since the 5th has been in operation. Many of these former enemy soldiers have admitted that the leaflets and blaring loudspeakers were the final thing that made them come in.

THE ORIGIN OF BANH GIAY AND BANH CHUNG

A Vietnamese Legend

King Hung Voung the Sixth was ready to pass on the throne after many successful years as King. As the father of twenty-two sons, he had to decide which son would become the new king. After much thought he decided to send his sons on a journey, and the son who returned with the best recipe and food dish that the king had not tasted would be the new ruler.

There was one prince named Long Lieu who was the sixteenth in rank. Long Lieu's mother had died during his birth, and he had never had anyone to confide in and discuss his problems. He had no idea about how he would ever find a dish that would be suitable for the king.

One night while the prince was sleeping a genie appeared and told him she understood his worries. The genie explained that she had been sent to help him. She told him that man can not live without rice, so for that reason he should get some rice, some beans, some fat and lean pork meat and spices. She told him to get some banana leaves and from split bamboo cut some lacings. All of these materials symbolize the abundance of the earth.

The genie told Long Lieu that one cake should be made from rice alone, and then shaped into a round plain cake. The other cake should consist of a stuffing of bean paste and bits of pork placed between layers of rice. Then it should be wrapped in banana leaves and pressed into a square shape. It should be bound in bamboo lacings and cooked for one day.

Within a year all the princes returned with various foodstuffs they had collected during their travels. Each was confident that his dish would be the one the king would choose and he would win the throne. On the appointed day the dishes were brought before the king. Twenty-one times the king shook his head in disapproval. Long Lieu presented his two cakes. The king accepted a piece of the first cake and tasted it. He then picked up a piece of the second cake, and before long both cakes were gone. The king believed that Long Lieu had divine support when he found the recipes for these dishes. Prince Long Lieu was named heir to the throne and officially the round loaf was named Banh Giay and the square one Banh Chung. The ministers were ordered to give the recipes to all the Vietnamese people and the cakes have become the two favorite dishes in Vietnam.

as told to SP5 Phil Stuart

King Rubber in Binh Long

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