

# Cacti Green Have Quiet Day

By 1LT James M. Cooke  
DUC PHO — Just another day in Vietnam.

Just another patrol. A hot day of walking and looking along the section of beach north of here known as the Gaza Strip, a desolate area of abandoned hamlets bleaching under the glaring sun.

For the infantrymen of Company C, 1st Battalion, 35th Infantry, it was a familiar scene. They had walked this beach, struggling through the loose sand and snaring themselves on the thorny hedgerows many times.

There were many of them who had been here in April

when the Viet Cong ruled the area as malevolent despots. Until Ivy Division's 3rd Brigade arrived, the law was VC law as it had been for 20 years.

Many men died here. Over there, one remembers, six VC with automatic weapons attempted to ambush an Ivy Division platoon. They died right there, unsuccessful.

It has been a long day, but now the sun is almost gone. Time to move to the night location. Take off your boots and lie down—100 more meters.

The company commander, First Lieutenant Helmer Kraut (Hopewell, Va.), notices a rice bin. Not much of a hiding place

for Charlie, but then it pays to be curious sometimes.

It does this time. A grenade arcs out of the bin, glancing off 1LT Kraut's helmet. Men scatter. 1LT Kraut switches his rifle from the safe position and starts into the bin. The enemy has other thoughts. He's getting out.

The M1 fires once, twice . . . five times. Startled, 1LT Kraut raises his M16. A desperate, quick burst.

One VC killed in action. No friendly casualties.

Not a big day. Just a routine patrol.

You should have been here in April.

Jim Cooke