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25 Jun 67 Ivy Leaf

'Cacti' Unit Turns Back NVA Force

DUC PHO—The sudden flash and sharp crack of enemy mortar explosions shattered the silence.

The incoming rounds signaled the beginning of a three-hour battle which many men of the Recon Platoon and Company B of the 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry will long remember.

The "Cacti" had been sweeping an area where there had been recent clashes with units of a North Vietnamese battalion. It was late afternoon when the infantrymen set up their perimeter for the night. Ambushes were set along enemy routes.

At 2:30 am the first mortar rounds landed and contact was made for the third time in three days.

The NVA hit the "Cacti" with everything they had. It was estimated that 100 to 150 rounds of 60 and 82mm mortar and recoilless rifle fire were hurled at the infantrymen. The enemy supported by two machine guns, then assaulted, attempting to penetrate the perimeter.

Artillery immediately began to pound the charging enemy and was lifted only long enough for gunships and "Spooky" to have their chance.

"My platoon was on ambush when the first rounds landed," said Lieutenant Walter Twyford. "We moved back to the perimeter as fast as we could. The men on the perimeter were running low on ammo when we arrived after slicing through the enemy on the way in."

The Recon Platoon, also on ambush, moved back to reinforce the perimeter.

Dug-in behind rice paddy dikes, the "Cacti" fought to hold off the furious assault by the NVA unit. The enemy charge carried them close enough to throw grenades over the paddy dikes.

Gunships from the 1st Squadron, 9th Air Cavalry delivered their ordnance within 20 meters of the infantrymen with flawless accuracy, driving back the enemy. With the enemy momentum broken, the "Cacti" swept the enemy back.

A total of 30 NV.A were killed and three detained. Sixteen weapons were seized, including a 57mm recoilless rifle and three light machine guns.