



THE FIRST TEAM

Summer 1969



Commander's Message

It's good to be back on my second tour with THE FIRST TEAM in Vietnam, to feel again that special Cav spirit and "can do" attitude that has carried the division so magnificently from the Ia Drang, through the Ashau, to the battles of War Zone C and D.

There are many repeaters in this division, holding key slots and calling important signals for the TEAM. But even more important, there are many thousands of first time members who perform in the same splendid tradition as those who wore the big horse patch before them. We are strong because every man, every soldier, every Skytrooper is dedicated to doing his job, and to doing it well.

The theme of this magazine's features is the 1st Cav's style of teamwork. One article tells of the unsung but highly important heroes of the maintenance field. Without this phase of the TEAM, the Cav's "horses" would not be ready to run. There are also articles concerning our gallant allies and hosts, the Vietnamese, and it is appropriate that they should be saluted as members of the TEAM here in Vietnam.

Thank you for the dedication and spirit which you display every day on the battlefield and in the work shops here in Vietnam. I'm proud and privileged to serve with you on THE FIRST TEAM.

E.B. ROBERTS
Major General, USA
Commanding

THE FIRST TEAM

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Story By Steve Haldeman
Photos By Terry Moon

Front cover by Mike Miller

Back cover by Paul Sgroi

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Grace Under Pressure

By Richard Craig

"A more pronounced degree of bravery...is the ability not to give a damn for possible consequences; not only to ignore them but to despise them."

Ernest Hemingway
Death in the Afternoon

The doorgunner, like a Spanish bull-fighter, is a highly romanticized figure.

Exchanging the roar of Ole! Ole! for the clatter of an M-60 machinegun, he sits alone in his tiny cubicle, his festival-colored helmet moving from side to side as he scans the arena—the earth below—for the enemy.

Should his opponent be foolish enough to challenge our matador with a burst of fire, he responds with the confident, practiced and indifferent efficiency of one who has done it often and never lost.

Perhaps the job is much sought after because of this aura—and perhaps also because the doorgunner does draw flight pay. But for the most part the reasons are less tangible.

Specialist Four Joseph Hovan, a doorgunner with the 229th Assault Helicopter Battalion, extended six months to fly with the Cav.

"I'll be honest with you," he said, "I was with the 1st Aviation Brigade for a year, but I extended for the Cav so I could wear the patch. Everyone talks about the Cav and how great it is, so I decided I wanted to be with it."

One of the strongest reasons for the popularity of doorgunner jobs, and the amount of devotion shown by men in those spots, is the satisfaction men get from aiding the soldiers on the ground. Whether he's flying a command chopper or a log bird, he knows he is directly supporting the men in the field.

Doorgunners see a wide range of helicopter missions—reaction forces,

combat assaults, resupply missions—and all of them dangerous.

Because of the danger involved in their flights, doorgunners are meticulous about the care and treatment of their "bird" and their weapons. The M-60 machinegun is the Huey "slick's" main defensive weapon. It had better work the first time and everytime.

Time on the ground for a doorgunner is spent inspecting the ship, giving it the kind of attention you would expect him to give a living creature, because for him the Huey is an extension of himself, and whatever happens to the chopper, whatever its fate, he knows his fate is the same.

He cleans the windows, checks the rotors for excess play, checks and double-checks his machinegun and ammunition. Much of his duty time may be spent working on the bird while he waits on standby, on call for a mission at a moment's notice.

Perhaps he will fly that day, perhaps not. But the tension, the anticipation of a flight and enemy contact is never far from his thoughts.

When contact does come, most doorgunners will tell you the actual flight is not nearly as bad as the anticipation.

"You fly around waiting for it," said Specialist Four Thomas C. Dixon, "but still, when they start firing at you, you don't expect it."

"I've been in Vietnam for over two years now and I still can't get used to the idea that someone's shooting at me. When they do, you have no choice—you shoot back."

"When I get fired at," said Specialist Four George R. Zimmer, "I instinctively draw back into the chopper for a second or two. I guess it's the normal reaction. It's instinct; there's nothing you can do to stop it.... But then you come out fighting."

"If you're lucky," he said, "the enemy will use tracers, and you try to place your rounds right down the muzzle of his weapon."

In addition to being the main defense for his ship, the doorgunner is very often his pilots' eyes, since the man at the controls can neither see very far to the side nor to the rear at all.

If the chopper has to set down in a tight landing zone, the gunner must tell the pilot how much clearance he has between the spinning blades and surrounding obstacles. As SP4 Zimmer put it: "I've landed choppers in LZ's so small I thought we were going to have to jump out and hack down trees before we could land."

The gunner's flying day usually ends with a stop at a fueling point. There, besides fueling the bird, he must make sure that both pilots' emergency exits are clear, and also that the fuel is free of foreign matter.

When the chopper finally sets down in its revetment, the gunner cleans his machinegun thoroughly, inspects his ammunition and replenishes his supply if necessary. Once finished with his armament check, he walks around the now quiet bird to see if any undetected rounds were taken during the day's missions.

Then if he doesn't have flight-line guard duty or isn't on call, he spends his evening like some other troops—trying to find a cold Coke and maybe writing some letters home.

He might sit around and talk with gunners from a different section, the crew chiefs or pilots. The conversation varies, but usually always comes back to the same subject: "You should have seen us going after that antiaircraft position," or, "That Cobra really worked them over this afternoon, didn't it?"

Invariably, like men in any profession, gunners talk primarily about their work. They live with it 24 hours a day. For their tour in Vietnam, it's more than a livelihood—it's their life.

First Lieutenant Richard L. Buzen, a pilot with the 229th AHB, said of the doorgunner, "He's got to be sharp.... He's got to be cool enough to act in any situation, and act quickly."

1LT Buzen added: "Whenever something goes wrong, it's the gunners who catch hell. We work them hard. We expect a lot from them."

"And we'd be in pretty rough shape without them."

But why do they come back again, extend their service to fly...to return to "the ring?"

As one doorgunner with the 229th AHB said: "I don't know why I came back. I swore months ago that there was just no way I'd extend.... I guess I like flying too much."

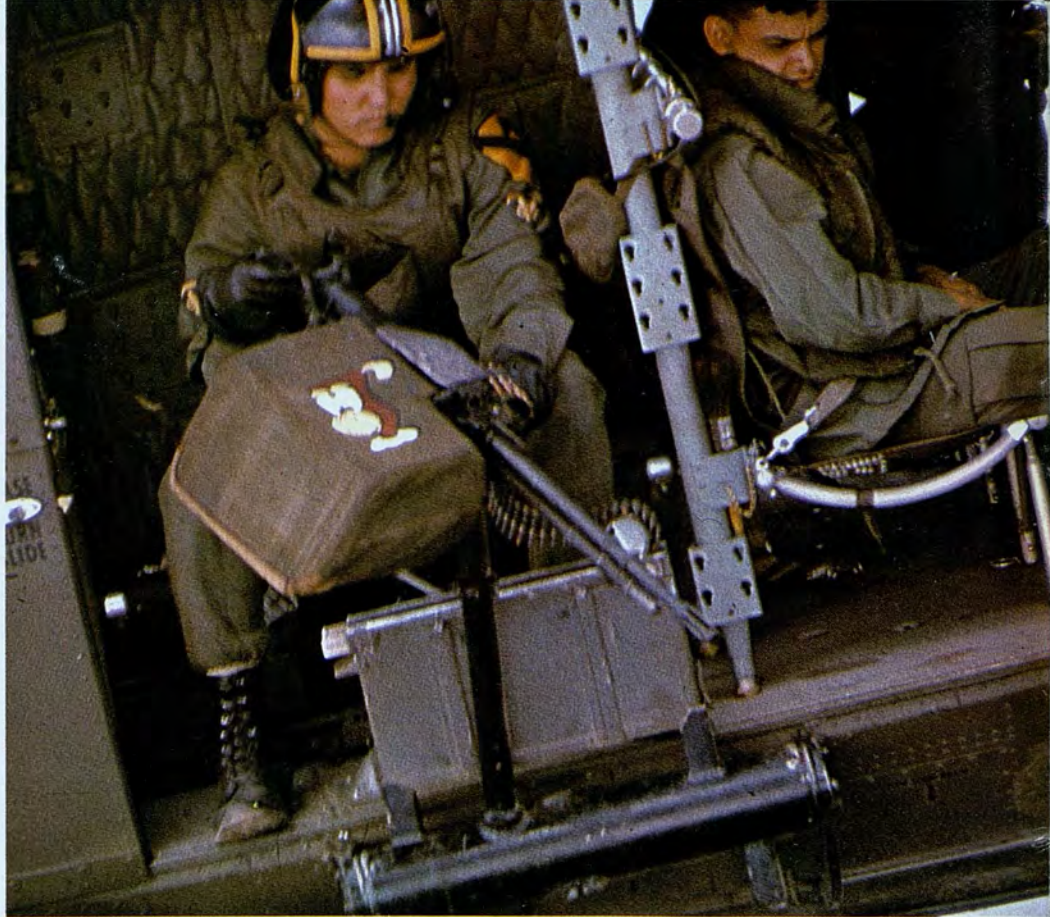
"Sure, I've been in five or six choppers that have been shot up, but I've never been shot down," he said. And he added: "The Cav is a very careful unit."

Why do "11-Bravos," clerks, maintenance men, and draftee "short-timers" extend their service time just to fly as a doorgunner?

But then, why does a bullfighter return to the ring time after time, again and again and again?

Perhaps there is something there for the matador, something he cannot convey to those who have not been in the ring alone—those who have not faced their "moment of truth."

And perhaps there is something there also for the doorgunner as he sits alone...waiting...listening to the hollow roar of wind over the barrel of his M-60...waiting...watching the earth pass below...waiting.



Cab Heraldry



1st Bn, 21st Arty



2nd Bn, 19th Arty



1st Bn, 30th Arty



1st Bn, 77th Arty



2nd Bn, 20th Arty (ARA)



229th ASHB



228th AHB



Echo Co, 82nd Arty



DIVARTY



227th AHB



11th Avn Gp



5th Cavalry



27th Maint



8th Engr Bn



8th Cavalry



12th Cavalry



15th Med Bn



15th TC



1st Squadron, 9th Cav



7th Cavalry



13th Sig Bn



15th S&S Bn

An Tuc Dispensary

1 Part Medicine, 2 Parts Compassion

By Philip Blackmarr

"We will help anyone who comes here without regard to his background or politics. We are here to serve."

(Editor's Note)—The following story was written in mid-April but production schedules prevented its use until now. The 1st Air Cavalry Division, of course, has since departed the An Khe area, taking with it the men featured in this article. Responsibility for carrying on the work begun by the Cav has been assumed by the 4th Infantry Division.

Nha thuong is the traditional Vietnamese expression for hospital and means "house of love." Over the last three years, a few men from the 15th Medical Battalion have labored, sometimes almost unnoticed, to build just such a refuge for the ill at An Khe.

Shortly after the Cav came to Vietnam in 1965, a Medical Civic Action Project was set up to minister to the needs of the 70,000 people of An Tuc District, part of Binh Dinh Province.

Many came to be healed, and in the spring of 1966 the program was put on a permanent basis. An old stone house furnished operating and waiting rooms while division engineers erected wards and 15th Med selected men to guide the venture.

Local help was quickly enlisted, since many Vietnamese were eager for the regular salary offered. Yet out of the toil and trails born together and joys com-

monly shared grew bonds of fellowship, and those who stayed on became the beginning of a family.

A distraught mother brought her afflicted child to the dispensary and, when the child recovered, stayed on in gratitude to help with the cleaning chores. Today she ably manages most of the cooking for the household while the dispensary sponsors her youngster in school.

A tiny Montagnard girl, weak from hunger, was discovered by the side of a road where she had been abandoned. Given food and affection, she too recovered and is now a bubbling cascade of laughter and energy.

The compassionate patriarch of the clinic is Staff Sergeant John D. Rozzell, whose warmly beguiling smile outlives his sternest words of reproach. He watches protectively over his patients, and has managed to improve the facilities and medical services.

SSG Rozzell has been with the dispensary since its inception, extending time after time to guide its progress. He has enlisted financial support both locally and from sources in the United States and has also contributed generously out of his own pocket. In addition, many pieces of equipment have been acquired through his patient scavenging.

The dispensary currently maintains 76 sickbeds with 10 more in a separate maternity section. Last year, more than 2,000 patients were given care and 350 babies delivered. Nearly 27,000 people, or over one-third of the district's popula-

tion, came for treatment ranging from ointments to inoculations.

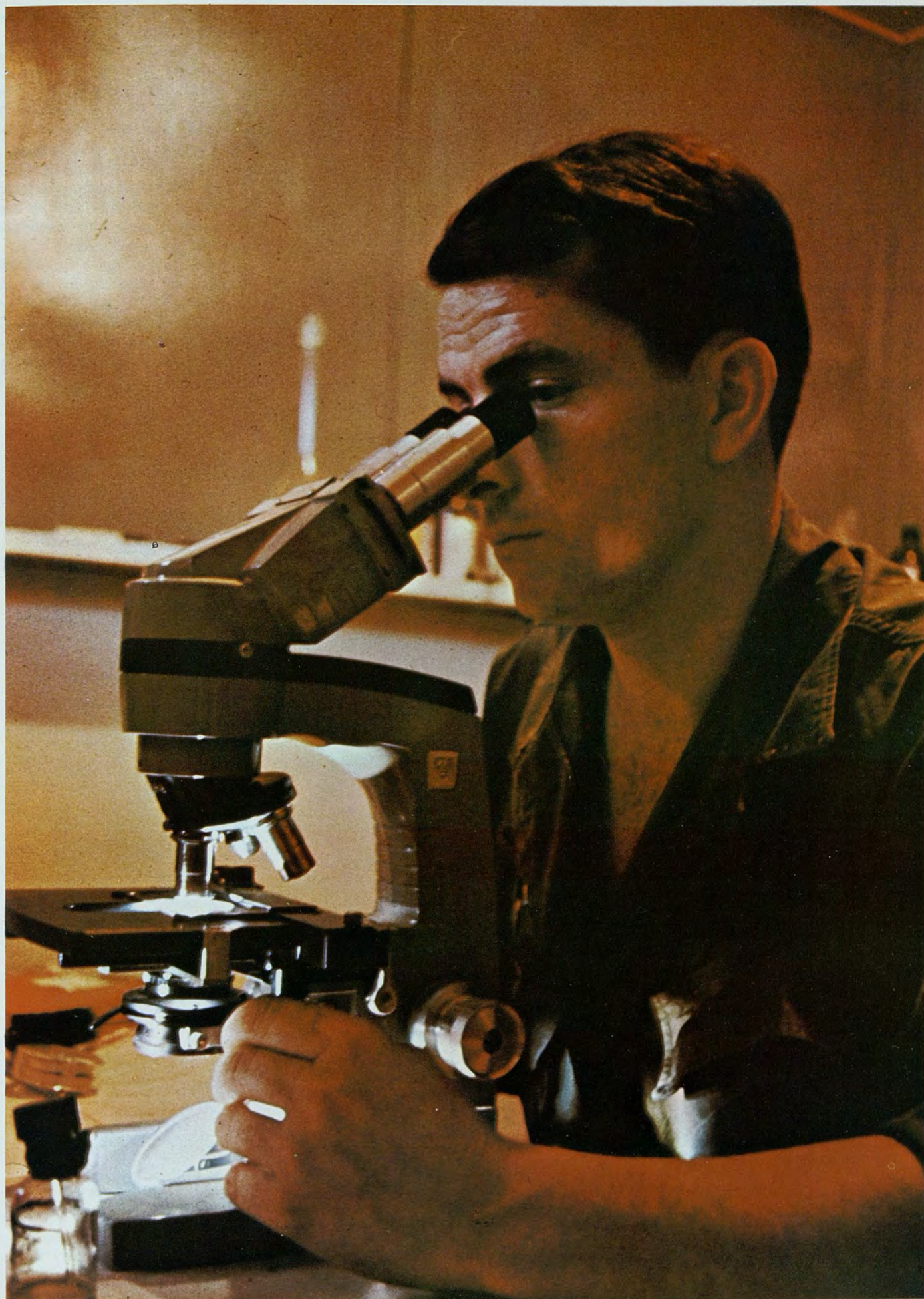
Vietnamese medical technicians diagnose and handle most patients, while midwives assist in childbirth. Emergencies and serious cases are treated either by SSG Rozzell or by Staff Sergeant Elwood J. Duppsstadt. SSG Rozzell noted pragmatically, "I've had 12 years experience in medicine, we have medical texts here, and I have worked with some good doctors."

He says without hesitation that, "We will help anyone who comes here without regard to his background or politics. We are here to serve."

The dispensary's nondiscrimination policy has proven salutary in some unexpected ways. Eliminating politics has helped to overcome the doubts of many Vietnamese. For example, following one instance last fall when the dispensary was hit by rockets, word filtered back that the Viet Cong apologized for the accident.

On the other hand, no one is permitted to exploit the generosity offered here. Honesty and respect are demanded and expected.

SSG Duppsstadt has charge of the dispensary laboratory. Originally, he had little more than a microscope at his disposal and even had to prepare his own test stains. From this meager start, however, he has managed to assemble a creditable set of scientific instruments. He also conducts the dispensary's vaccination and inoculation program, stressing plague and cholera shots for all and, most



recently, oral polio vaccine for children.

The wards are supervised by Sergeant First Class James T. Humphrey. He quickly becomes a familiar figure to patients as he makes his rounds, checking, addressing, gently reassuring an elderly woman, and keeping patient progress reports.

Recently, two new wards were completed, one to house the maternity section and the other for patients with communicable diseases. These additions have brought the dispensary to its present 86-bed size and close to the goal of the 100-bed capacity needed to qualify as an accredited hospital.

The dispensary today is more than simply a clinic and place for the sick. It sponsors several children in school. It offers first aid training and instruction in hygiene and basic English. It has even



People of all ages come to the dispensary for aid.

begun an experimental program in modern agricultural methods.

Since its founding, however, it has been understood that one day the dispensary should be given to the Vietnamese people for whom it was built. On April 3, that goal was realized when Lieutenant Colonel Guthrie L. Turner, Jr. division surgeon and commanding officer of the 15th Medical Battalion, presented the facilities to the deputy chief of Binh Dinh Province at dedication ceremonies for the newly completed wards.

When SSG Rozzell leaves, he will take with him a very tangible link with the "house of love," for he has adopted two orphaned girls who came into his parish. Certainly, too, a very real testament to his ministry will remain in the An Tuc Dispensary.



The commanding officer of the 15th Med Bn dedicates newly completed wards at a colorful ceremony.



SSG John D. Rozzell lovingly comforts a Vietnamese infant.



A mother and her newborn child, one of 350 babies delivered last year.

From Trucks To Transistors

By Tom Benic

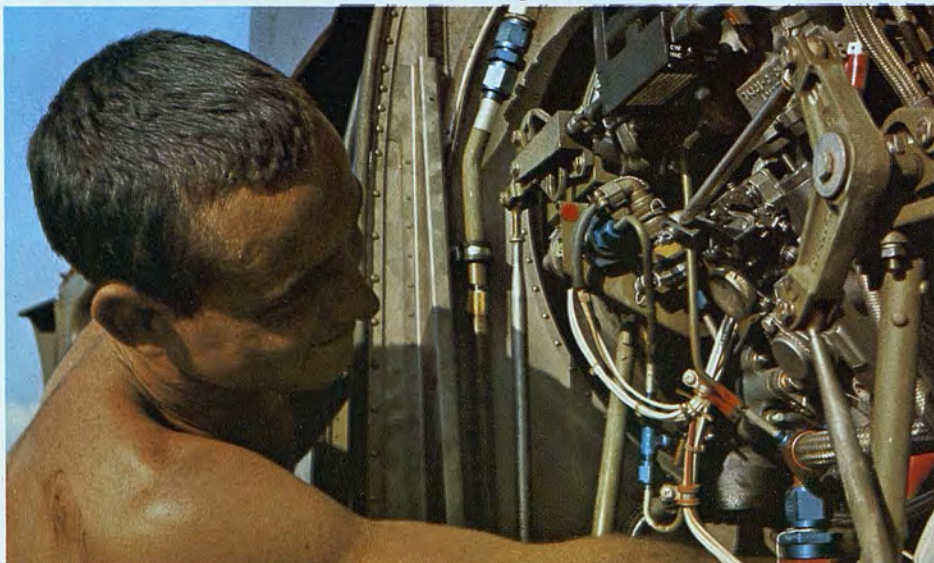
Maintenance isn't exactly the sexiest job in the Army.

But it's necessary. Someone has to keep the choppers flying and the trucks rolling. Artillery pieces occasionally break down. The communications system wouldn't last long without maintenance; nor would individual weapons, generators, mortars, bulldozers—almost everything that makes a fighting division combat ready.

"Let's face it," said Major John

Ramsden, executive officer of the 27th Maintenance Battalion. "You have to get out and sell maintenance to the units. You have to keep pushing. You must be aggressive, or the units become lax about maintenance.

"Then they find out too late how important it is."



The division's maintenance job is shared by two battalions totaling nearly 1,900 men.

If it doesn't fly, 27th Maintenance Battalion handles it. If it does fly, 15th Transportation Corps keeps it that way.

This splitting of the work load is unique to the Airmobile Division, the most expensive military machine ever conceived. Other divisions can lump all maintenance under one roof but the 1st Cav simply has too many helicopters.

Both battalions are fiercely proud of the job they do.

"We're the best maintenance battalion in the United States Army," said MAJ Ramsden.

"We know more about helicopters than anyone else," said Sergeant John Replegle, a production control NCO in the 15th TC.

They both mean it. The statistics speak for themselves.

- Of 17,000 M-16 rifles issued in the Cav, only 100 (about .5 percent) are in the repair shops on a given day.

• Four out of five Cav helicopters are ready to fly at any time. The majority of the rest are down for scheduled repair.

• Less than two percent of all Cav vehicles, artillery pieces, M-60 machine-guns, and PRC-25 field radios are ever "deadlined" (out of action) at a given time.

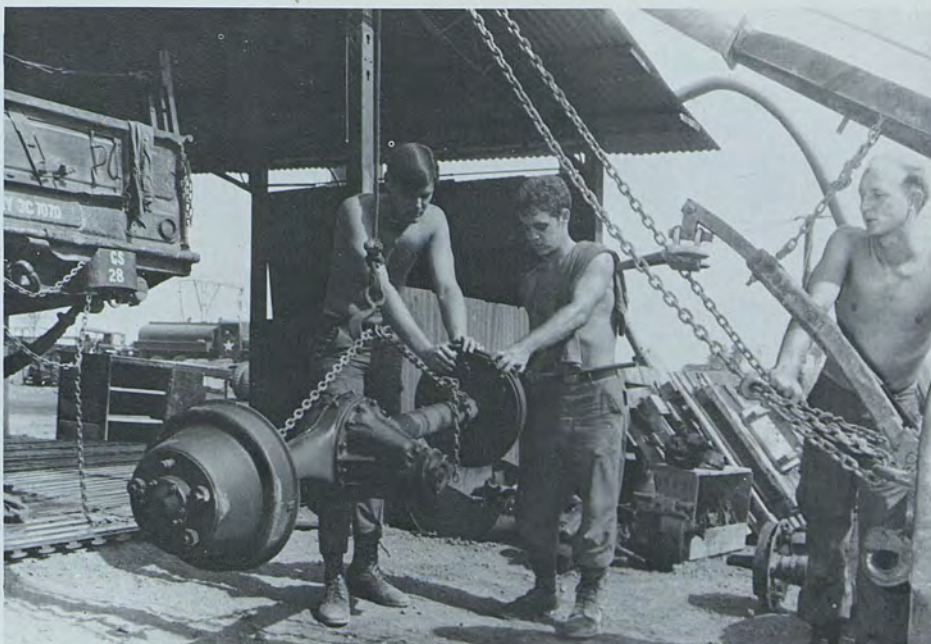
• The 15th TC's avionics section guarantees same-day service on most electronic systems—communication, stabilization, navigation—provided the parts are ready.

Parts—now there's the rub.

"Requisitions don't count," said MAJ Ramsden. "You can't fight a war with a piece of paper. You have to get the hardware in the hands of the troops."

It's not that there's an acute shortage of parts in Vietnam, but rather the demand for a part "right now" is so great.

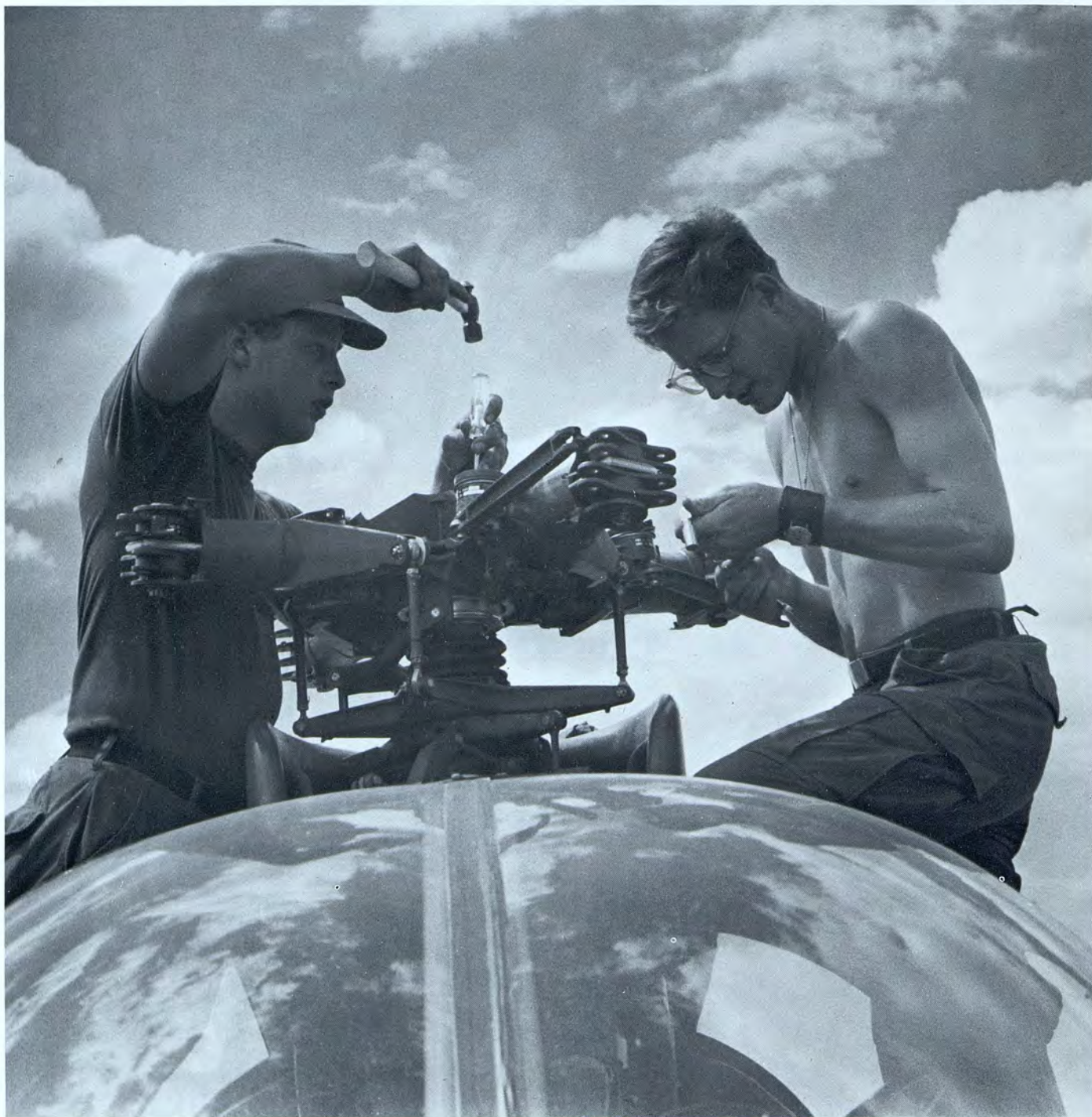
When your 105mm howitzer is out of action you don't simply order a part then wait, you go out and get that part.



Cav vehicles go rolling along thanks to the skilled work of its maintenance men.



Radio repairmen keep the division's lines of communication open.



Thorough knowledge of helicopter repair keeps Cav choppers airmobile.

"We have an officer and three enlisted men at the Long Binh Depot who do nothing but expedite parts for the Cav," said MAJ Ramsden. "If their part's not there, our people will fly to Da Nang, Cam Ranh Bay, Qui Nhon—any supply depot in Vietnam to get it."

And if it's not in Vietnam?

"In that case, we'll get the G-4 at USARV (U.S. Army, Republic of Vietnam) to identify it as a serious problem and the part will be shipped out of the

States as top priority."

Computerization of the supply system is in effect at both 27th Maintenance and 15th TC. They know exactly what parts are on hand at a moment's notice and nothing is spared to get that part to the "customer" in the field as fast as possible.

But the key to maintenance isn't supply. If you can locate the problem before it becomes critical, the need for parts can be substantially reduced.

27th Maintenance feels it has perfected

a "closed loop" program, in which old equipment that is constantly in need of minor repair is identified and replaced before it breaks down completely.

"We simply go to USARV and get a new piece of equipment for the old," said MAJ Ramsden.

The program was used last year to replace 762 electric generators in the Cav—about 80 per cent. Other equipment is being replaced at an increasingly swift rate.

Helicopters are also replaced before they become too much trouble. Despite interim inspections every 25 hours of flying time and comprehensive inspections every 100 hours, helicopters do reach a point when they should be sent back to one of the depots for a complete overhaul.

That "DEROS date" comes earlier in the Cav.

"Our Chinooks take four times the punishment of 'hooks' in other divisions" said SGT Replogle. We drive them hard. After 1,800 hours in the air, they need a rebuilding job."

As with any service organization customer satisfaction is the mark of success.

"We treat the units we support as customers who don't have to come back to us for service," said MAJ Ramsden.

"We make them want to come back."

It's the maintenance personnel who have this task. It's something the computerized supply system, the quality equipment, the massive reference library—impressive though they are—simply cannot do. The system can't sell itself.

MAJ Ramsden stressed the importance of the forward detachments located at the brigade level—the "blood and guts of the maintenance system."

15th TC is in the process of cutting its main strength at Bear Cat in half and instituting 19 forward detachment teams that will give close support to the units they service.

It's here at the forward detachments that daily face-to-face communication with the customer enables maintenance

to isolate the problem early before it becomes serious.

"The individual soldier is the key to our success," said Sergeant Major James D. Rainey, who personally gives an orientation to every man who comes to 27th Maintenance. "We try to make people feel they are the foundation of our operation," he added. "And they are."

This dependence on men and not material is carried all the way down the line.

"We have an exceptional group of men," said Staff Sergeant Derrill Akins, a direct service platoon sergeant for 15th TC. Pointing to four men atop a Chinook repairing one of its transmissions, he added, "Everyone of them is a pro. The system couldn't work without them."



Precision is standard procedure. This new rotor blade must strike the ribbon at exactly the same point before it's A-OK.



27th Maint Bn has compiled an outstanding record in weapons repair.



A Huey helicopter is "towed to the garage," Cav-style.



Artillery pieces have to be "up tight" before they can bombard the enemy.



Humping
Through III Corps:
A Pictorial Essay











The Yank Of The Lanyard, The Roar Of The Gun

By Al Persons
And Dave Wolfe



Through the sunlight-flecked shadow of tall trees "Charlie" watched the grim and determined soldiers advance cautiously toward him.

At the first sound of rapid, staccato fire, the grunts dropped from sight and returned the volley through the brush. Beneath the angry buzz and whine of bullets a man spoke closely and quickly into a radio.

"Yankee Three, this Yankee-two-six. Fire Mission."

"This is Yankee Three. Send your mission," the radio rasped its reply.

The man under fire gave an azimuth and asked for "One-round of smoke, high air.... Will adjust." When the white puff burst to his left, the forward observer adjusted another smoke round over the enemy and then told Yankee Three: "Drop five-zero; fire for effect."

The screech of incoming rounds drowned out the pepper of small arms fire. The shells slammed in, one after another, two and three at a time, again and again. When it stopped there was only silence and black and gray smoke in the shafts of sunlight. The troops picked themselves up from the ground and moved forward again.

That is the business end of the 1st Air Cavalry Division's artillery — bringing "smoke" and "steel" on the enemy. Within the Cav, the artillery is known as the grunt's best friend. For no matter where he goes, he is always followed — like a loyal friend — by the artillery. It's always near at hand.

Supporting the Cav's infantry are four tube artillery battalions: the 2nd Battalion, 19th Artillery; 1st Battalion, 21st Artillery; 1st Battalion, 77th Artillery; and the 1st Battalion, 30th Artillery (155mm).

Normally, these four units operate via long distance calls on enemy emplacements, lobbing shells over miles of terrain to hit unseen targets pinpointed by forward observers with infantry units.

But on occasion, as in the enemy ground attacks on Landing Zone (LZ) Grant in February and March, and on LZ Carolyn in May, the forward artillery units have a very visible target.

In those three battles, NVA regulars were hoping to overrun the LZs. No one likes to think what might have happened if the 1st Bn, 30th Arty had not been there to lower its guns and fire point-blank into the wire. The artillery played an inestimably vital role in beating back

the enemy. In such a fight the cannoneers have fought side-by-side with the grunts, and when day came they were among those who received Silver Star Medals.

Working in support of "the soldier's best friend" are four other artillery units which help make the hot steel knife of long-range artillery even sharper.

The Aerial Rocket Artillery of the 2nd Battalion, 20th Artillery, delivered in person by the diving Cobra helicopters, is a sight dear to every trooper's weary eyes.

Long-range vision in darkness or light is provided for the artillery by the 268th and 273rd Radar Detachments, who can spot a stealthy enemy when and where he least expects it; and he only finds out he's been discovered when the "air-mail special-delivery" package arrives.

Although not organic to the Cav, the tubes of the 6th Battalion, 27th Artillery add their husky voices to the sounds of vigorous defense at several FIRST TEAM bases. These eight-inch and 175mm guns permit the Cav to deploy more mobile artillery to remote jungle outposts.

Last, but by no means least, is Battery E, 82nd Artillery, a truly unique artillery unit. It has no guns; no tube artillery of any sort. But it has the mission of supply and observation that is as essential to artillery as gunpowder.

*"Any grunt will tell you that the Cav
artillery is probably one of the top
morale boosters for men humping in the
boonies . . .*





*...for wherever they may be, the
artillery is only seconds away."*

Echo Battery is probably the most versatile artillery unit in the Army. Besides its regular duty of bringing needed parts and supplies to gun crews in the field, Battery E's aircraft have been known to "moonlight" as logbirds and MEDEVAC ships.

Cav artillery is many things. Its operations reach from basecamps and LZs over wide expanses of jungle. But few people outside the artillery realize the amount of work, danger and courage involved in "Redlegging."

But any grunt will tell you that the Cav artillery is probably one of the top morale boosters for men humping in the boonies — for they know that wherever they may be, the Cav artillery is only seconds away.

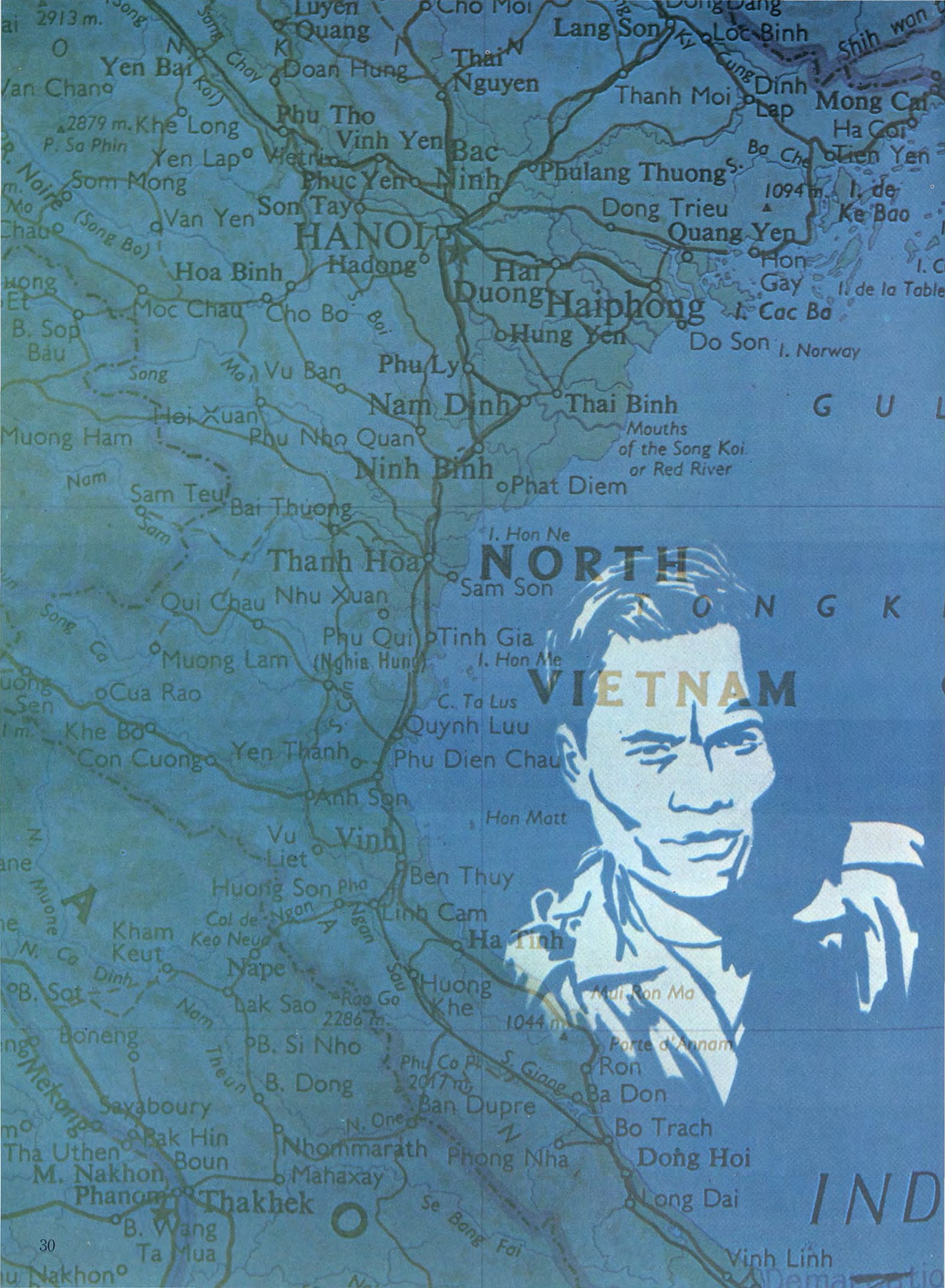


A Crane lowers a 155mm howitzer into a new landing zone (left), while a 105 silently awaits the arrival of a companion artillery piece.



"After a year in Vietnam,
I bet the first thing
you want is a good
home-cooked meal!"





HANOI

Haiphong

NORTH
VIETNAM

IND

Flight To Freedom

By Allan Schlosser

"I knew that by turning myself in I would never be able to see my family again," Hong explained. "Even if the war ended tomorrow, I could not return to North Vietnam."

On a rainy April afternoon in 1967, Svetlana Stalin, only daughter of the late Soviet dictator, Joseph Stalin, stepped off a jetliner at New York's Kennedy International Airport and announced she would seek political asylum in the United States.

Halfway around the globe, in Vietnam's Binh Dinh Province, without history-making headlines or press conference fanfare, a North Vietnamese infantryman that same day reached a decision which to him seemed every bit as momentous.

Tran Quoc Hong had decided to defect.

"I knew that by turning myself in I would never be able to see my family again," Hong explained. "Even if the war ended tomorrow, I could not return to North Vietnam."

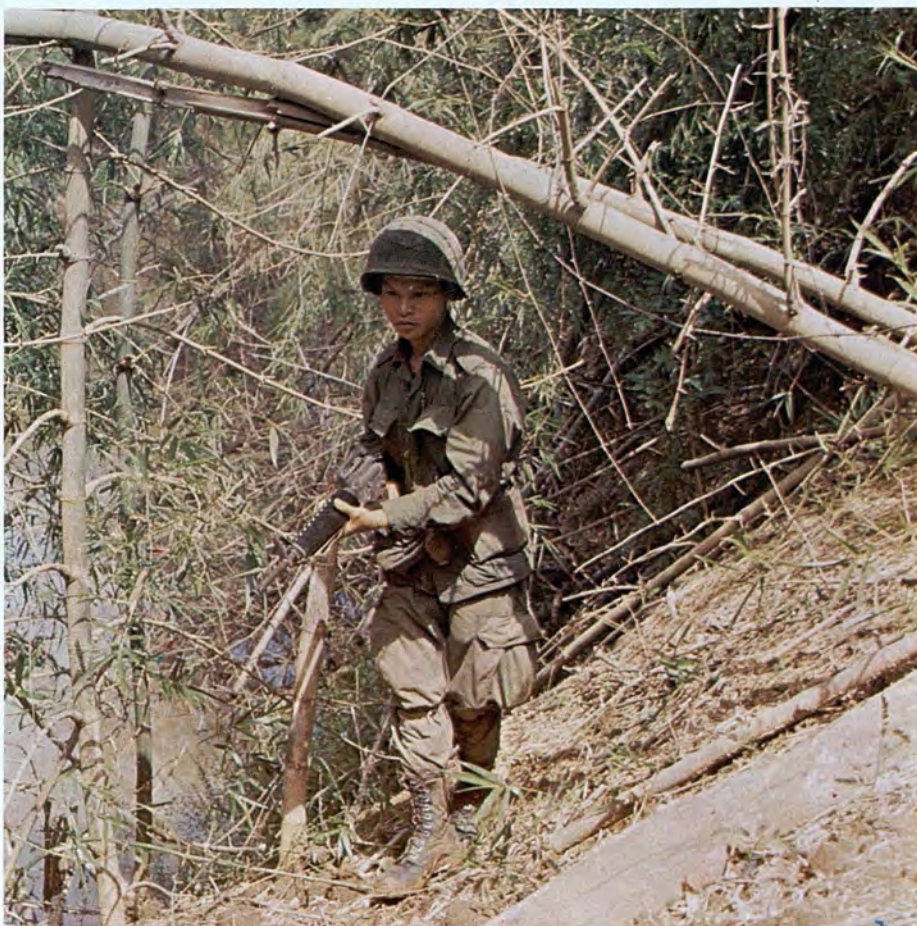
This agonizing step, which most Americans think of only in statistical terms, undoubtedly represents the most painful decision this young Vietnamese has ever made.

The adopted son of a university professor in Hanoi, Hong was drafted out of college five months before, in November 1966, and sent to an NVA training center in Quang Binh Province, where he was given three months of "basic training." After completing this infantry training, he was assigned to the 18th Regiment, 325th NVA Division.

His unit's mission was to infiltrate into South Vietnam and help launch an offensive against American military positions in Binh Dinh Province.

Hong said he and his comrades traveled by convoy through Laos via the Ho Chi Minh Trail, then walked the rest of the way. Two months and two days after setting out, he got his first taste of 1st Air Cavalry Division firepower.

"The Cav located our position in the An Lao Valley," he said. "Fighting was heavy, and we had to retreat because of your artillery." Although previously harassed by B-52 strikes, the An Lao





confrontation was Hong's baptism of fire.

Recalling the fierce fighting in Binh Dinh Province, Hong talked about his first impressions of the helicopter.

"I had seen helicopters before," he said. "One time I saw General Giap's (Vo Nguyen Giap, North Vietnamese Defense Minister and architect of the Viet Minh victory over the French at Dien Bien Phu) near Haiphong, but I had never seen so many helicopters used so well as when we fought you near Bong Son. Many of my friends were killed there by your Cobras and gunships.

"I knew that if I continued to fight, I too would die. Then one day I read one of the 'Chieu Hoi' leaflets dropped from your helicopters. It said I would be well treated if I surrendered. So I decided to give up."

"We were working in small groups to

hide from American air power. That night, with the leaflet in my pocket, I slipped away from our night position and followed the helicopters to a Cav base camp. When I approached the camp, I was afraid. I thought your sentries would shoot me. I walked toward the barbed wire, shouted 'Chieu Hoi!' and waved the leaflet."

To the young soldier's surprise, he was well treated, just as the American leaflet had promised. After ten days of screening by Military Intelligence, he was put to work interrogating detainees and translating captured enemy documents.

After doing an outstanding job for Military Intelligence, Hong was encouraged by G-5 (PSYOPS and Civil Affairs) to become a Kit Carson Scout. Under this innovative program, "Hoi Chanh" (ralliers) are trained as scouts and then assigned to Cav infantry units.

Because they are intimately acquainted with Viet Cong and North Vietnamese strategy and tactics, and because they know the territory, they are invaluable allies in the war against the Communists.

Not only did Hong graduate from the Kit Carson course, but you might say he graduated "with honors." For today Tran Quoc Hong, the boy with the leaflet, is the commander of the Cav's Kit Carson Scouts.

Hong is an instructor at the Cav's Kit Carson Scout Training Center, where his responsibilities range from demonstrating the proper use of the M-16 to teaching an English class, from explaining American customs to convincing a homesick trooper to stick with it.

Hong has come a long way. His living conditions and military equipment are far superior to anything the NVA could offer. His salary has increased more than a hundredfold. And more important, so has his self-respect.

“...I had never seen so many helicopters used so well as when we fought you near Bong Son. Many of my friends were killed there by your Cobras and gunships.”



The Man In The Black Flannel Hat

By Joe Kamalick

It was night and the enemy had broken contact and evaded, but the Cav had casualties that had to be evacuated.

"How that bird got in there I don't know. But the Blackhat laid right down on the ground while the bird hovered over him.... He used flashlights to guide the pilot inches forward and to the left to avoid the trees. We looked at the area the next morning and still couldn't figure out how he did it."

The man was talking about a Blackhat, an air traffic controller in the boonies.

A Blackhat is easily identified. Besides the obvious black baseball cap which he wears instead of a steel pot, the Blackhat has mannerisms which distinguish him from others in the field.

Most of the time he is standing, often on a water can, bunker, or anything that offers a better view. He usually has a radio-telephone pressed to his ear, and is constantly watching the sky for birds — big, noisy, metal birds.

Not infrequently, he exhibits uncommon poise in a combat situation. He can be seen standing straight up in the middle of a hot LZ, moving his arms overhead to "conduct" a chopper in for a landing, apparently oblivious to the fire and to the people hugging the ground around him.

Their job? They give navigational assistance to pilots — wind direction, weather conditions, terrain features — and control the flight paths of aircraft in their respective areas.

"Cav pilots are great," said one Blackhat, "but in order for them to be aware of all the other birds around they'd need six sets of eyes."

Sound ridiculous? Then consider the fact that in the first 48 hours in the life of a new LZ, approximately 200 heli-

copters will land and take off. Admittedly, not O'Hare Field, but enough heavy traffic to make the situation dangerous unless someone on the ground knows what he's doing.

Because of this traffic the Blackhat has to be boss.

One afternoon over a Cav LZ a helicopter pilot chose to ignore the Blackhat's approach directions. The Blackhat chewed the pilot out, royally, over the radio. The pilot recalled that

the Blackhat was "embarrassed as hell when he found out I was a general, but I'll tell you one thing, he was right — and he stuck by his guns.... Next time I did it his way."

Their motto? "First in and last out." And that's because they are among the first troops into a new LZ on the first "slicks" of a combat assault, and are also the last ones to leave. They have to be "first and last" if full and safe flight control is to be maintained.







A Blackhat guides a mammoth Chinook into a landing zone (left), while (below) one of his colleagues keeps a log bird out of the trees.



Anatomy of a Cordon and Search

By Steve Haldeman

A Communist mortar impacts inside the perimeter of a 1st Cav firebase. The inhabitants scramble for cover in a ditch, a bunker—anything to get down. Five more mortars spew rocks, dirt and shrapnel in the same area.

But one of the greenline guards spots the tube flash of the mortar in a nearby village. This sets into motion plans for a cordon and search of the village in an effort to dislodge the enemy gunners.

This planning burden falls on the shoulders of the members from the Provost Marshall's office. They must quickly synchronize eight separate teams and tactics into one, fast-moving, hard-striking, efficient cordon.

A ground maneuver element is picked for the combat assault. They will assault into the area around the village and encircle the village in the pre-dawn hours.

At first light, the infantry company has shortened the circumference of their offensive perimeter and are detaining villagers moving in and out of the town. Identification cards, to be scrutinized later by the South Vietnamese National Police, are given a cursory check.

These National Police Field Forces (NPFs) are airlifted with the American forces into the area. It is their job to help check the village and its inhabitants. Friendship and courteous conduct are used at all times with the villagers. This insures a continuation of good relations.

Linking with the NPFs are the Regional Forces and Popular Forces. They are South Vietnamese who assist in the search. Their knowledge of the people in their locale is invaluable. They know new arrivals to the village or if any of the local villagers have been gone for some unexplained reason.

Also assisting the NPFs and Popular Forces are American Military Police and ARVNs.

As the searchers move through the village, nothing passes their scrutinizing

eyes. Wide-eyed children tag along at the boot heels of the unfamiliar soldiers poking around in their homes, and an occasional fast-spoken argument interrupts the surface tranquility.

Everybody and everything is suspect. It doesn't take much to hide a mortar tube and a couple of rounds.

Slowly and systematically each hooch and potential hiding place is checked with as much care as possible so as not to invade the privacy of the owners.

"What's in this hole?" asks the Viet-

namese interpreter of a villager warily guarding his cellar.

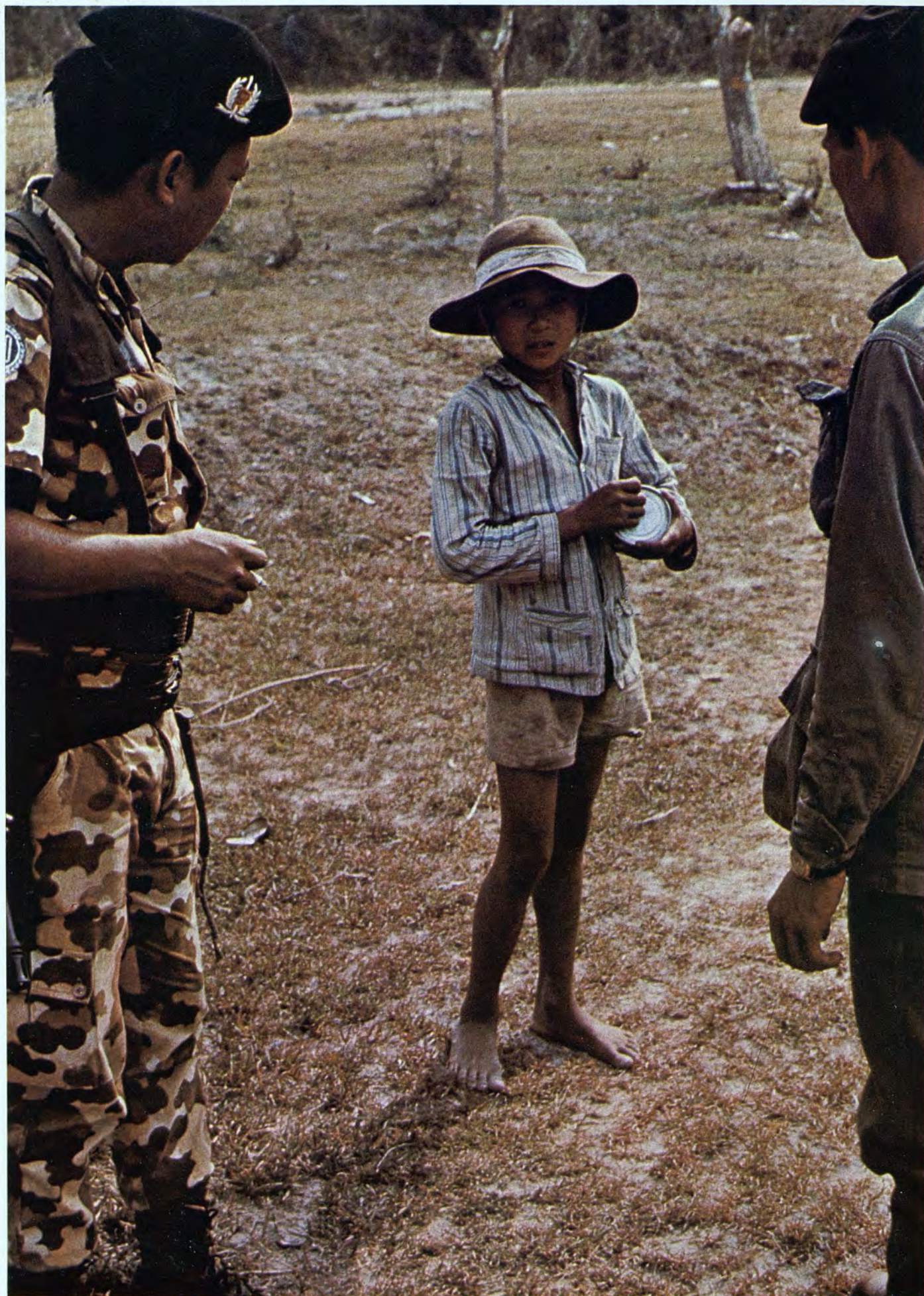
"Nuoc Mam," (seasoning made from dried fish), answers the villager emphatically.

Still, into the hole disappears the black beret atop a National Police Field Force officer. Nothing is left to chance. When he reappears, the shake of his head confirms the villager's statement.

The Popular Forces probe around bamboo stalks with sticks, trying to unearth an underground cache. Nothing



Each home is thoroughly checked for weapons or other traces of the enemy.





MPs and Vietnamese authorities unearth the detonating wire that will lead them to the Viet Cong booby trap.

can be allowed to slip past the trained eyes of the searchers.

While the sweep of the village continues, the villagers are instructed to congregate at the schoolhouse. Mass confusion is tempered by instructions filtering down from a helicopter's loudspeaker. Manning the loudspeakers are men from Psychological Operations (PSYOPS). Instructions for coordinating the assembly and the reason for the search all rain from the men in the helicopter who are fighting "the other war."

Also present at the schoolhouse is the district chief. He aids in quelling the fears of his people and urges them to cooperate.

In all of this activity, an eight-year-old boy with a slouchy, green hat approaches one of the American MPs. Full attention is given this lad. He may be the clue to the entire reason for the search—the harassing mortar tube.

He says the VC come to the village almost every week. They approach from the south, duck out of sight, then re-

appear to the west, in line with the firebase.

Most of the search force quickly regroups at the south end of the village. Every now and then a piece of equipment or a radio component turns up. The trail is getting hot. A few more physical clues and hints from the local people lead the search party to an area outside the village proper.

There, an inch or two of bright blue electrical wire is noticed as it contrasts against the green grass. As the wire is plucked from the earth, the search becomes more intense. At the one end is a 100-foot roll of additional electrical wire. A command-detonated booby trap is somewhere in the area.

Following the wire to the other end, it disappears into an ant hill. An hour of delicate digging yields the booby trap—a wired artillery round.

This evokes more questioning at the schoolhouse. IDs are more carefully checked and specific questions concerning the booby trap are asked.

However, no clues as to the whereabouts of the mortar tube are in the offing. But, some American lives have been saved by the discovery of the booby trap.

As the villagers start filtering back to their homes, the NPFFs, ARVNs, and MPs begin to gather for their return to their respective posts. A radio-telephone operator from the MPs calls the infantry unit's commander—the cordon is completed.

Rucksacks are picked up, weapons are given a once-over, and the grunts move out. Tomorrow might bring another cordon and search or a firefight. But today, in this cordon, American lives have been saved. The mission is a success.



Gently probing an anthill for the booby trap is a National Police Field Force officer.



Every potential hiding place is checked, including this charcoal pit.



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A girl like Marilyn Genz, a TWA stewardess who recently visited Skytroopers at their firebases. Attractive and cosmopolitan, she grooves on the good life. The Cav is her favorite division and the FIRST TEAM her favorite magazine.

