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# THE FIRST TEAM



SPRING 1970

# Commander's Message



It is with great pride, yet also with deep humility, that I assume command of the 1st Air Cavalry Division.

Humility because I am well aware that I follow in the footsteps of some of the Army's most illustrious leaders. These are men such as General Harry Kinnard, who formed the division and brought it overseas to lead it so successfully in the trying days of 1965 at the Ia Drang Valley, Chupong Massif Plei Mei, and Duc Co. Then, General Jack Norton led the division alongside General Hieu's 22nd ARVN Division in the highly successful Battle of Binh Dinh. General Jack Tolson took the division north to the relief of the Marines at Khe Sanh and then on the daring thrust into the A Shau Valley, and General George Forsythe brought the Cav south and initiated the interdiction of enemy infiltration and supply routes in these provinces north of Saigon.

Most recently, General Elvy Roberts has led the division brilliantly in its disruption of enemy supply routes through War Zone C, along the Saigon River Corridor, the Serges Jungle Highway, the Adams Road, and most recently the Jolley Trail. Simultaneously, the division has made major advances in Vietnamization with the ARVN Airborne and 5th ARVN Divisions and has provided full support to the pacification effort in Binh Long and Phuoc Long Provinces.

Such a record demands humility, but I also have a great sense of pride—pride in the past accomplishments of the division, pride in the division of today, and pride in its promise of meeting the challenges of tomorrow. The experienced professionalism of the officers and men of this division has never been higher, nor has the division ever been more complex. The triple goals of destruction of NVA and VC forces, support of pacification, and the advancement of Vietnamization contain sufficient challenge to demand the best from all of us. We shall strive to achieve these goals with the same close teamwork which has marked the FIRST TEAM's success in meeting previous challenges.

As with previous issues, this edition of FIRST TEAM Magazine emphasizes both airmobility and the individual Cavalrymen involved. Many facets of the Cav are covered, starting with the young warrant officer aviators and the special purpose aviation units, crucial to the airmobile concept. The diverse activities of the 1st Cav are illustrated by articles on the Rangers, Psyoperator, and the men of the 'Pacification Company'. Special tribute is paid to the FIRST TEAM's Medal of Honor winners, and the last two stories tell of the enemy's infiltration effort and how the Cav stops it. Finally, excellent examples of FIRST TEAM combat art are seen on these pages.

The articles all illustrate teamwork, teamwork that will preserve the right of the 1st Air Cavalry Division to call itself the FIRST TEAM and enable it to meet all future challenges.

I am proud to join you in meeting those challenges.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "George W. Casey".

George W. Casey  
Major General, USA  
Commanding



# THE **FIRST TEAM**

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## THE COVER

FRONT: "Warrant Officer Aviator" theme as captured by staff illustrator SGT B. B. Stransky

BACK: Aerial Artillery Cobras from the 2nd Bn 20th Arty, caught at dusk by SGT Dean Sharp on the flight line at Quan Loi



Jim is  
for this article

## Of Their Own Accord

Upon the reactivation of the 75th Infantry Regiment on Jan. 1, 1969, the various long range reconnaissance patrol (LRRP) units in the Army were drawn together in one parent unit. The 75th is the direct descendant of the famed "Merrills Marauders" that fought behind Japanese lines in Burma in World War II.

With the reactivation of the Regiment, the name "LRRP" was changed to "Ranger", a name dating from before the American Revolution.

Under the command of Major General Frank D. Merrill the 3000 men of the 5307th Composite Unit (later the 75th Inf) were the first American ground forces to engage the Japanese on the Asian mainland. The unit was awarded the distinguished unit citation for capturing the Myitkyina airfield, the only all-weather air-strip in Burma.

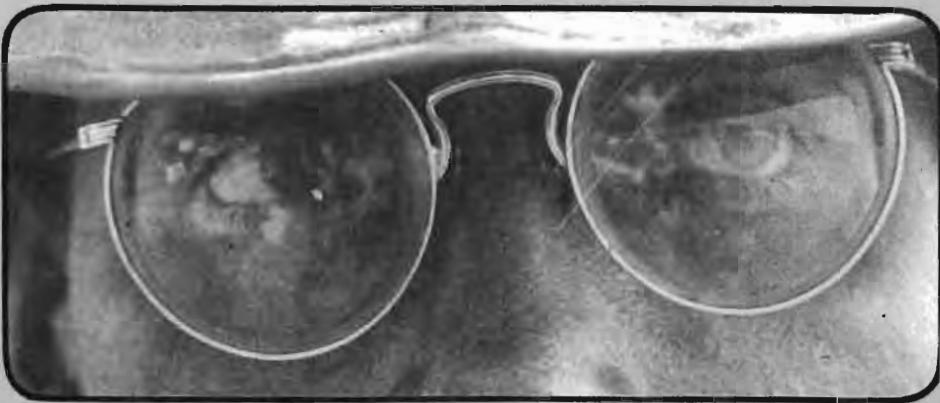
The name "Ranger" dates back to "Rogers Rangers" of the French and Indian War. That unit, organized by Robert Rogers and composed of residents of New Hampshire, acted as the chief scouting arm of the British against French and Indian forces. Its object was to gather intelligence by scouting enemy forces and positions and taking prisoners.

The mission today is nearly the same: to seek, to find, to report. The Rangers are an elite unit. Their motto, Sua Sponte, "of their own accord", is in keeping with an all-volunteer force.

Staff photographer SP4 Bill Ahrbeck accompanied Ranger Team 73 on a mission. The Rangers he went out with were SGT Joseph P. Harner II, SGT Richard H. Wynn, SGT David B. Matthews, PFC Mike D. Banta, and PFC Timothy H. Joeckel. This is the report SP4 Ahrbeck brought back.



Photos and Story  
By SP4 Bill Ahrbeck



*X Tiv*  
"The Rangers know what they're trained for, they know that they're specialists, the elite . . . one could sense the tight discipline of men wholly committed to a common purpose."

Walking into the Ranger compound reminded me of going to spring football practice for the first time. One could sense the tight discipline of men wholly committed to a common purpose and finding strength and brotherhood in that commitment.

People everywhere were moving quickly, easily, joshing one another cheerfully, but a sense of purpose pervaded the atmosphere. The Rangers know what they're trained for, they know that they're specialists, the elite; they generate much the same unity and togetherness that a ball club does.

The assignment had been arranged through the Ranger executive officer, so I went to see him. He took me to meet the people I'd be going out with.

The team was just laying out its gear, getting ready. Joe, the team leader, even looked like a ball player—a natural leader, solidly built. He'd been on 40 missions while a ranger, and this would be his last before going home. He introduced me to the other men.

Rick, a thin-lipped, bespectacled fellow, of average height, was the assistant team leader. Enthusiastic about his work, he'd been on 20 missions. As are all Rangers, he was possessed of a shrewd, practical intelligence.



*An experienced Ranger can put on his makeup in his sleep. Carbon paper and green camouflage stick make a man barely visible against the jungle foliage.*

The RTO, Dave, proved to be a terrific help in familiarizing me with procedure. He explained the radio freaks (frequencies), emergency procedures, methods of escape and evasion. A lanky, slow-speaking Georgian, he was the extremely conscientious type, nervous in the right sort of way.

A team tries to go out with plans for meeting all foreseeable contingencies—Dave went over it all patiently.

The rear scout, carrying both a slung M-79 (grenade launcher) and an M-16 was Mike, an Alaskan. He was an ex-grunt (most Rangers come directly to the outfit from the First Team Academy in Bien Hoa) and quietly competent. He looked like a bear, stocky with a heavy beard. This was to be his fifth mission.

Although they're all trained extensively in first aid, there's still one man whose



*After packing its gear and applying camouflage makeup, every Ranger team gets a few last-minute words from the company commander. Once loaded up with paraphernalia and four-days-worth of LRRP rations, each Ranger carries about 60 pounds worth of equipment.*



primary responsibility is as medic. That was Tim, tall, thin, wearing glasses, from the Rocky Mountain country around Denver.

It would be a six-man patrol. I was to walk third behind the team leader and the RTO, checking 180 degrees to one side. There was no question that I would be a functioning member of the patrol, not tagging along just to get a story. As Dave told me, "You're putting your life in someone else's hands. While you cover your area of responsibility, someone else covers your blind spots." I covered his rear, he mine. It's not like a full company, there aren't 90 other people to help look around. It's just you and five other guys.

We would each carry a pack with meals for four days, food being the standard dehydrated LRRP rations. I carried eight meals, ten quarts of water, seven frags, six smokes, 35 magazines,



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*A quick swallow of water offers temporary respite from the punishing routine of the reconnaissance mission. From the most obviously burnt piece of bamboo to slightly disturbed branches and leaves on the jungle floor, every sign of enemy activity must be thoroughly checked.*

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*Stealth provides the Ranger with his ticket to survival whether he's listening to the noise of the enemy moving through the jungle, or calling ARA down on their location. Usually, the only time he'll be moving through the open is on the dash to a waiting helicopter.*

two D-rings and a rope for the McGuire rig, and more. No one took a poncho—they're too noisy when the rain hits the plastic. Maps, mirrors, colored signal cloths, extra carbon paper and camouflage stick. On my back, it felt about the same as what is humped by an infantryman with a line company.

It was the day before the mission that I met the guys. We packed up the Claymores and went through, again, the things I'd have to know, and it was a lot.

The following morning we got the word that we'd be going out at noon, three hours ahead of what we'd been told. We pulled our packs out of the Conex and lined 'em up ready to go.

After re-checking, we carried the stuff over to the jeep that would take us to the bird and came back to put on the camouflage. Carbon paper and dark green camouflage stick made our faces dull, mottled. Then we had our sodas.

Every Ranger team that goes out on a mission gets one soda per man, paid for by the company from a fund. There's a soda right before one leaves and when he comes back. It's no big thing, just a simple, almost ritualistic way of saying "good luck while you're out and the next soda you get you'll be back okay." It tasted good.

We then heard from the Captain, who wished us luck, as he does to all teams just before they go out. Several other Rangers, from other teams, stood around talking to us with deliberate nonchalance. A lot of tension was in the air, but it was ignored, almost stylistically. The Rangers aren't like a line company, everyone going out and coming in together, but there's a tremendous sense of brotherhood.

In the bird going out to the insertion zone was just like any other CA (combat assault) except the passengers wore camouflage fatigues instead of the plain green variety. We just sat quietly, swinging feet over the edge or looking at the horizon.

Our mission was reconnaissance, to look for signs of enemy activity and, if possible, find out how the enemy was deployed. Unless it was impossible, we would avoid contact. That, however, would not prevent us from acting as forward observers for artillery, air-strikes, and gunships and ARA Cobras if the need arose.

As the Huey came in over the insertion zone I heard some vague crackling noises, but we didn't find out until later that the LOH (light observation helicopter) scouting the area for us had taken sniper fire. Far above, nearly out of sight, a Cobra circled slowly.

As we got off the bird the reality of how alone we were hit me hard. It was really empty, we were entirely by ourselves. There weren't six or a dozen other birds one comes to expect on a CA. Just us.

We moved from the clearing immedi-

ately into thick bamboo—thick green bamboo with plenty of dry, crunchy material underfoot.

Our mission had started, each man dependent on the others. We walked in a file, looking for the little things, disturbing the ground as little as possible.

I was looking, stepping, looking, stepping. The Alaskan told me that on his first missions he'd gotten headaches from rolling his eyes around so much.

The sound discipline was almost unbelievable. We moved onto high ground and checked out a trail, setting up a perimeter to monitor the thing for awhile. I coughed, lightly, once, and could hardly hear it myself. Dave looked at me like I'd signed our death sentences. I didn't cough again. These guys really do it right, everything.

We moved on, checking the trails, and there were a lot to check. That's when we got the radio message that the LOH accompanying our insertion had taken ground-to-air fire. We weren't quite alone, after all.

We took a break and monitored another trail to see if anyone was coming up the hill after us. Our perimeter was set up like a wheel; we were the spokes, our feet at the center and the packs for cover. We heard the sound of a .30 caliber machinegun clattering at one of our birds. The enemy was perhaps 500 meters away.

Joe directed ARA from a nearby Cobra onto the area from which the sound of the machinegun had come. After an hour or so, with nothing more happening, we moved off again. Once again, we heard the sound of an enemy weapon, this time the single discharge of an AK-47, as though for a signal shot. We kept moving, slowly, and Joe decided to find a spot to set up for the night. We had never moved out of thick jungle. After setting up, we called in a few rounds of artillery, to have it adjusted in case we'd need it later. The first round hit across a stream in a gully, the sound somewhat muffled by heavy foliage.

That round let us know how many people there were out there, because as soon as it hit we heard movement, breaking limbs and trampled leaves.

At first, momentarily, we hoped all the crackling noise was a fire started by the artillery, but it kept getting louder and we soon heard the distinctive sound of AK-47 signal shots.

Joe called in more artillery and the movement got louder. It sounded like an army to me, but Joe estimated it to be 20 to 30 people moving directly toward us, driven by the artillery. We moved back to put a trail between us and the enemy, then waited with the artillery going in, the enemy coming closer. We could hear them shouting to one another.

When you're with only six guys, you know that if your unit makes contact it's going to be right where you are, and one man's firepower makes a hell of a

difference.

We moved into a circle, still waiting. Suddenly, very quietly and carefully, Tim, the medic, stiffened his hand, palm down, and almost inaudibly said, "Don't move...get down slowly. I see someone." Tim raised his rifle and opened up, and we quickly followed suit, putting out suppressing fire in all directions. Joe got on the horn and started calling in Blue Max (ARA Cobra from the 2nd Bn, 20th Arty). There was so much noise from our own weapons and Max's rockets, miniguns, and chunker (40mm grenade launcher) slamming the thick brush around us, jerking the air with the concussion, that the noise of the enemy force, so loud before, was completely drowned out. I glanced overhead and watched the tall bamboo jump and quiver with the impact of our own shrapnel.

Our mission in the area was, partly, to avoid contact, and we hadn't done it. It was impossible. Under such circumstances it is SOP to get out of the area, and the sooner the better. Our pre-planned pick-up zone was about 400 meters from our position. We radioed to have the bird ready when got there. The ARA lifted, the enemy apparently withdrawn.

Joe and Tim went over to check the spot where the enemy had been standing. Tim said later that he'd seen the man standing by a tree about 20 meters away with what looked like an SKS rifle slung over his shoulder. He was in a ragged shirt and flop hat, and was looking straight toward our position. There was no trace of him; the tree he'd stood by was full of M-16 holes and a rocket had struck the ground almost where he'd been. As he returned Joe mumbled something about vaporizing him and we moved out.

Staying tight and moving in a crouch down a sparsely-used trail, we encountered no one and took a somewhat circuitous route to the PZ.

The bird came in and we were aboard, being lifted out, the two door-guns pouring suppressing fire into the jungle in case we hadn't come to the clearing alone.

Flying home, tired and dirty but not nearly so much as we'd have been had we stayed out the full four days, everyone felt the exhilaration of the sudden release from the punishing tension of combat.

Once on the ground, we piled into a jeep and headed for the compound. The word had gotten around that we'd been in contact. People gave us slightly bemused, slightly appreciative looks.

First thing off the jeep we each had the traditional soda. It was the best I've ever had.

For these men that I knew so briefly, yet so well, it had been just another mission. In a few days, they'd be back out there, doin' it.





fort is made to encourage the enemy soldier to leave the Communist ranks and join the government. For those that remain, the object is to demoralize.

Contacts in the field are almost invariably followed up with loudspeaker and leaflet missions. Unless they rally entirely of their own accord, enemy soldiers are not used for leaflet photos or loudspeaker missions, but specific leaflets are printed up.

After one recent contact with the 5th VC Division, a unit whose supplies had been heavily depleted by Cav cache discoveries, probable enemy locations were hit by a leaflet reading, in part:

*"You are now in a desperate situation. Your leaders can't protect you or provide you with food and materials any longer."*

*"They have recently let a huge amount of ammunition and weapons fall into the hands of the ARVN and Allied Forces. Included were 45 122mm rocket rounds, 125 B-40 rounds, 75 75mm recoilless rifle rounds, 10 anti-tank mines and 240 kilos of explosives."*

*"Without weapons, ammunitions, how will you fight?"*

*"Now, why hesitate? Get away from the death that's close by, rally to the Government of Vietnam to live a peaceful and happy life. Or, allow yourselves to be captured. You will be well treated."*

Said Olliff, "It's all perfectly true, what we tell them. We simply make it clear what they're up against. Even if none actually rally, if we can get them to avoid contact we will have reduced the enemy's combat effectiveness."

Cav Psyops are just part of a team effort. Other members of the team are the South Vietnamese Political Warfare teams and the personnel of the Medical and Integrated Civil Action Projects, all of which have a bearing on Psyops. If one of the brigades needs extra aircraft for a particularly large mission, the Air Force's 9th Special Operations Squadron will carry leaflets in a C-47 transport.

Within a few weeks of the Cav's recent move to the remote Bu Gia Map area, more than 80 ralliers appeared at the division's new bases, most notably FSB Snuffy at Bu Gia Map itself.

The ralliers, both guerrillas and their families, had only needed encouragement by Psyops, added to the sudden proximity of allied bases, to decide to join the government. Most significantly, after thus taking advantage of the Chieu Hoi program, the ralliers willingly volunteered to lead the Skytroopers to enemy weapons caches.

Reflecting on Psyops results and progress, Captain Michael Falkowski, a Psyops officer, said, "There has been a drastic reduction in the number of forced laborers working for the enemy, far fewer farmers are producing food for them, and the soldiers themselves are

**These Montagnard tribespeople still show the fear and exhaustion resulting from living in the jungle under the VC. Having just rallied, they had only a short wait before being given land, food, and the opportunity to live in relative security.**

response to Psyops. The initial reward may be the arrival of a single villager, member of a roving band of subsistence farmers who have spent the bulk of the last several years in the service of the Viet Cong. That one person may have found the initiative, courage, or desperation to leave his fellows to seek the refuge of the government.

"We find that these people are almost invariably eager to help in the preparation of leaflets and tapes aimed specifically at their friends, relatives, and captors," said Lt. Olenczuk.

A typical Psyops mission derived from the women quietly smoking her cigarette at Provincial Headquarters in Song Be.

Lt. Olenczuk had received word that a rallier was in Song Be. He and Specialist Five Jeff Olliff, a member of the 6th Psyops Battalion field team at Fire Support Base Buttons, jumped into a jeep, picked up Sergeant Hung, a brigade interpreter, and headed for town. At the Chieu Hoi Center ("Chieu Hoi" means "open arms" and symbolizes the welcome given ralliers) they were directed to Provincial Headquarters.

Once there, Sergeant Hung sat down with the woman and asked her if she'd like to help her friends join her. She could neither read nor write but was happy to make a tape recording for broadcast from the air. She added that she had often heard the voices of ralliers that she knew, talking from American helicopters, and friends had read leaflets to her. The assurances contained in the

tapes and leaflets, coupled with the hardships and dangers of remaining in the jungle, had convinced her to rally.

After recording a brief message, she laughed good-naturedly and did her best in finding the location of her village on a map. A photo of her and the text of the tape were swiftly cleared through division G5 and II Field Force and sent on to Bien Hoa. Within 24 hours of that time the leaflets were drawn up, printed, and on their way. As they were dropped from the Huey, the tape was played over one of the 1000-watt speaker systems employed by Psyops.

"With this new press here at Camp Gorvad," said Captain Baker, "our reaction time will be even faster."

Each of the division brigades, including division artillery, sets up its own missions and, in most cases, cuts its own tapes and orders its own particular leaflets.

Considerable ingenuity is often called for in dealing with specific problems. A case in point is the approach taken with Montagnard tribespeople living in Phuoc Long Province.

The difficulty is that there is no written Montagnard language. Considerable care must be taken in preparing brief picture-messages instructing Montagnards how to rally, telling them to report VC activity, and informing them that the government offers them protection and a decent living.

Cav Psyops also has a complex mission aimed at enemy troops. Every ef-

HEY- I'M NEW HERE. WHAT'S IT GOING TO BE LIKE SPENDING MONTHS IN THE FIELD?

HOW SHOULD I KNOW?  
I JUST GOT HERE A WEEK AGO MYSELF.



## THE FIRST TEAM

### STAFF

Charlie Petit, editor  
Glenn Thompson, layout editor  
Dennis Thornton, copy editor  
Douglas Crow, art design

Photographers  
Bill Ahrbeck  
Bob Conway  
Greg Cormany

Len Fallscheer  
Vic Fitzwater  
Jim McCabe  
Dean Sharp  
Editorial Consultants  
MAJ J. D. Coleman, Information Officer  
MAJ Melvin R. Jones, Information Officer  
CPT Vincent M. Vukelich, Deputy Information Officer