

2/7, CIDGs Blast Enemy Element

By PFC Charlie Petit

PHUOC VINH—The company of 1st Air Cavalrymen knew that an enemy regiment was suspected to be operating in the area and pushed its way carefully through the thick jungle of War Zone C in III Corps.

Their point element made up largely of an accompanying platoon of Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) soldiers, the Company D, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry, Skytroopers reacted immediately when a band of enemy snipers began firing rounds through the lead elements.

"The CIDG's were walking point," said Private First Class Robert Gill, "and they found a freshly-broken trail. We came to an area with a lot of fresh cuttings, like the ones the NVA use when they're building bunkers."

The CIDG's set up an ambush perimeter.

The Skytroopers were settling into a defensive posture when enemy snipers began firing into the allied position from nearby trees.

Simultaneously, a large enemy force opened up with small arms, automatic weapons and B-40's from well-concealed bunker positions.

The battle that followed left 61 enemy soldiers dead. Fifteen more were killed the following morning.

The allied force replied to the sniper fire with every weapon at its disposal. Supporting artillery and airstrikes soon joined the battle northeast of Tay Ninh City near Fire Support Base Jamie.

The supporting firepower employed by the Cav and CIDG infantrymen turned the firefight into sudden retreat by the North Vietnamese.

"We pulled back about 500 meters and

watched the birdmen do their thing," said PFC Gill, describing the airstrikes that followed.

Sweeping across the suddenly-abandoned enemy position, the combined force soon discovered the effect of the allied small arms and machineguns, two airstrikes, plus aerial rocket and tube artillery.

Bodies of 41 NVA regulars were found in the remains of the bunker complex. Eleven of the enemy had been killed by the Cavalrymen on the ground, five by the CIDGs, and the supporting artillery and airstrikes were credited with the rest.

But the two opposing forces weren't through with each other yet. As the allies completed their sweep, contact resumed. The enemy had retreated only far enough to get from beneath the airstrikes.

The battle's second round ended quickly with the Cavalrymen and CIDGs pressing forward against an enemy pounded by both artillery and Cobra-fired rockets.

When the remains of the enemy company broke contact the second time, they left behind an additional 20 dead and two shattered and useless light machineguns.

That afternoon the CIDG platoon was airlifted out. The next morning the Cav position was ripped by heavy machinegun fire.

As if according to script, the action that followed patterned itself after the two of the preceding day.

The Skytroopers, bolstered by artillery and gunships, blasted back with their rifles and M-60s. A sweep from the allies' night defensive position found 15 enemy soldiers killed by small arms and two more machineguns destroyed.

Fighting Dips In Cav's AO

By PFC Charlie Petit

PHUOC VINH — Fighting in the 1st Air Cav's 1st Brigade area of operations in War Zone C dominated the division's activities for the week Jan. 10-16.

Action dipped to its lowest level in recent months throughout the AO. A total of 179 enemy soldiers were killed during the seven-day period.

This statistic indicated a level of fighting approximately half that encountered during November and most of December, before a downward trend started in the last weeks of 1969.

A combined force of Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) soldiers and Cavalrymen from Delta Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry, tangled with a company-sized enemy force Jan. 10 on a reconnaissance mission northeast of Tay Ninh City near Fire Support Base (FSB) Ike.

A two-stage battle that followed left 61 NVA dead in and around a camouflaged bunker complex from which they were driven by the allied units (see related story this page).

Following airstrikes and an artillery barrage, the allied forces moved into the hastily-abandoned bunker complex. Forty-one dead NVA were scattered through the shattered fortifications.

Contact was resumed on the far side of the complex. The North Vietnamese weren't ready to abandon this particular stretch of jungle yet.

The enemy was slammed by artillery and Cav gunships, and the allied force moved across the position again, finding 20 more enemy dead.

Of the 61 killed during the day, 32 were killed by CIDGs and Cavalrymen, with the rest credited to artillery and airstrikes.

The CIDGs were airlifted out. The following morning, the enemy engaged the Delta Company position with heavy machinegun fire.

In an action similar to those of the preceding day, the Skytroopers raked the enemy position while it was hit by supporting gunships, artillery and airstrikes. Fifteen enemy soldiers were found dead in the subsequent sweep.

Most of the fighting during the rest of the week was confined to ambushes and contacts with small enemy elements.

An exception was the assault

on FSB Carolyn Jan. 15. The firebase, north of Tay Ninh City, was defended by the armored vehicles and personnel of Troop A, 1st Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, working with the Cav's 1st Brigade, and a company of ARVN Airborne soldiers.

Following a preparatory barrage of more than 100 mortar rounds, an estimated company of NVA infantrymen and sappers assaulted the perimeter wire at 2 a.m. Before the invaders fled the area, six were killed within the camp and 13 in the wire.

Heavy weapons fire from atop the armored vehicles ringing the camp and the determined resistance put up by the ARVNs drove out the NVA. One enemy soldier was detained, and there was light materiel damage resulting from the assault.

A particularly successful ambush was staged along an enemy infiltration route Jan. 16 by Echo recon, 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry, six miles north of FSB Catcher in the eastern edge of III Corps.

After setting up several automatic ambushes nearby, the Cavalrymen strung claymores at their location and waited.

It wasn't long before one of the automatic ambushes detonated about 50 meters from their position.

The enemy, apparently an NVA company, then scrambled away from the blast — straight into the claymores in front of Echo recon's position. The Cavalrymen set off the mines in the faces of the confused NVA.

Unable to locate their tormentors, the NVA began moving out of the area about 90 minutes after they set off the first ambush. As they moved out, they succeeded in tripping another ambush.

A Nighthawk helicopter and artillery called in by the recon unit added to the enemy losses. Twenty-four NVA were found dead from the ambushes the following morning.

The same day, to the north near the Cambodian border, helicopters from Troop B, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry, killed eight NVA when one of the choppers found a group of 15 enemy moving down a trail.

The pilots were checking the area after one of the troop's LOHs (light observation helicopter) had been shot at earlier in the day.



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Airborne?



(U.S. Army Photo by SP4 Bob Borchester)

The 1st Air Cav is "airmobile" not "airborne" but you would have a hard time convincing these soldiers from Company C, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry, that they shouldn't get jump pay for this combat assault. The chopper had to hover several feet off the ground because of several trees sticking up from the landing zone.

Buddy Program Helping Scouts

By SP4 William K. Block Jr.

TAY NINH — To a new man, establishing the first friendship in his new unit is all important.

But when the new man is a Kit Carson Scout, who only weeks before may have been one of the enemy, friendship is even more important.

The 1st Air Cav has attempted to relieve some of the anxieties of newly-trained Kit Carson Scouts by starting a Buddy Program, making the scouts feel at home even before they reach their units.

A rifleman from the company to which the Kit Carson Scout will be assigned, goes to the Kit Carson school in Bien Hoa for four days to meet the new scout

and accompany him in the final phases of training.

When the four-week training program is over, the buddy travels with the new scout to the unit and assists him in processing. Then they go out to the field together.

"Our job was to introduce the scout to our company and make him feel like a part of the unit," said Specialist Four George Gidney, one of the buddies from Company A, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry.

"The program helps him work better with us and helps us work better with him," he added.

Kit Carson Scouts are Hoi Chanh, former NVA or VC who have rallied to the Republic of

Vietnam under the Chieu Hoi (Open Arms) Program. If they pass scrutiny of their military knowledge and political beliefs, they are eligible for the four-week scout training course.

Training in English, military terms, ranks, tactics, use of U.S. equipment, booby traps and intelligence and interrogation techniques highlight the four weeks.

Results of the Kit Carson Scout Program, which has been in operation in the 1st Cav since April, 1967, have been impressive.

Kit Carson Scouts have helped Cavalrymen through many tight spots in the field as well as acting as interpreters, guides and intelligence gatherers.

Cannon Rider . . .



(U.S. Army Photo by PFC Dennis Thornton)

A new fire support base means hard work for 1st Air Cav artillerymen as they begin to set up their 105mm howitzer in the middle of an open field. Members of Battery B, 1st Battalion, 21st Artillery, ride their cannon into place during the opening hours of Fort Compton.

Artist Program Deadline Feb. 8

PHUOC VINH — Artists interested in the 1st Air Cav's newly-created combat art program have until Feb. 8 to submit their applications.

Judges will select artists from the applicants to begin a 90-day TDY period with the Division Information Office starting Feb. 15.

"The program is designed to contribute to unit pride and to provide a unique, authentic and permanent record depicting the life of the soldier in Vietnam," said Major J.D. Coleman, information officer.

Artists will record military operations and mission functions of the FIRST TEAM, including training and support activities, logistical operations, administrative work and command post operations.

Applicants should be competent artist-illustrators with a foundation in life drawing, composition and color.

Applications must contain: name, rank, social security number, date of DEROS and ETS, age, educational background and a detailed account of experience in the art field.

Samples of previous work or field sketches must accompany applications. For example, an artist may submit pencil sketches and his detailed account of experience may note that his primary medium is charcoal. The obvious problems in producing a professional portfolio in a combat environment will be considered by the judges.

Essential supplies will be furnished by the Information Office. Surface of finished work will be permanent (canvas or water color paper) and works will not be smaller than 18 by 24 inches or larger than 72 inches in any dimension. Cameras will be available for use by artists.

Each participant will receive a specially engraved 1st Air Cav butane lighter and certificate of appreciation.

The artist whose painting is adjudged best will receive a \$25 U.S. Savings Bond and a three-day in-country R and R. The artist whose painting is chosen runner-up will receive a \$25 bond.

Applications should be submitted to the Information Office, 1st Air Cavalry Division, APO In-Country, 96490, by Feb. 8.

... For God And Country

By Chaplain (LTC) Charles F. Powers
Division Chaplain

Men learn what they live.

If a man lives with criticism, he learns to condemn.

If a man lives with hostility, he learns to hate.

If a man lives with jealousy, he learns to feel guilty.

If a man lives with tolerance, he learns to be patient.

If a man lives with encouragement, he learns confidence.

If a man lives with praise, he learns to appreciate.

If a man lives with fairness, he learns justice.

If a man lives with security, he learns to have faith.

If a man lives with approval, he learns to like himself.

If a man lives with acceptance and friendship, he learns to find love in the world.

Aviator Gets Commission

By SP4 William K. Block Jr.

TAY NINH — Chief Warrant Officer John R. Aye III, an Army aviator with Company C,

229th Assault Helicopter Battalion, received a direct commission to first lieutenant in a ceremony at his battalion headquarters.

Sergeant Major Changes Address

Command Sergeant Major Frank C. Plass, a 1st Air Cav sales representative for the Bill Ellis record "Impressions of a Skytrooper," has changed addresses at Fort Benning, Ga.

Lieutenant Aye was sworn in by Lieutenant Colonel Arthur F.W. Liebl, commander of the 229th Helicopter AHB, which provides direct support for the 1st Air Cav's 1st Brigade.

The new lieutenant was pleased with his new bars.

"This was an opportunity to further my military career I couldn't afford to pass up," he said.

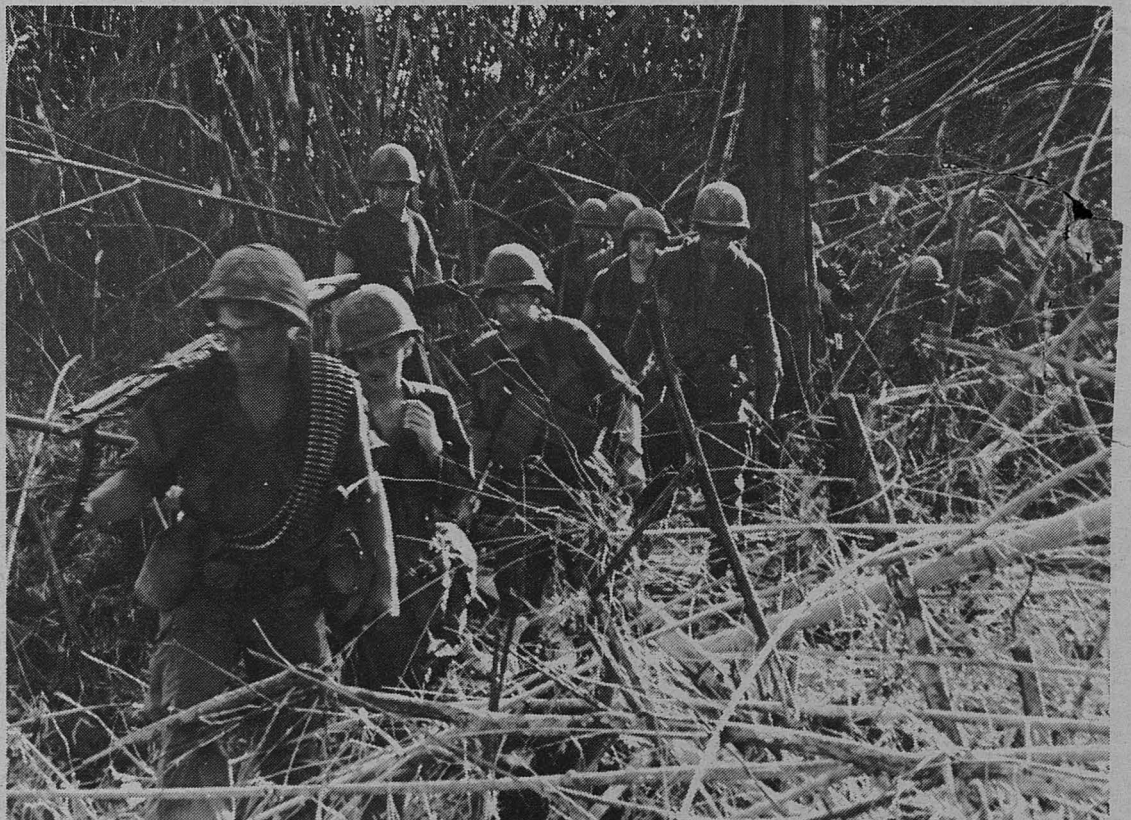
Lieutenant Aye entered the Army in September, 1966. After basic training, he attended warrant officer flight training, first at Fort Wolters, Tex., and later at Fort Rucker, Ala.

During his first tour in Vietnam, he flew Huey helicopters for the 282nd Assault Helicopter

Company, supporting MACV operations in northern I Corps. He spent a year as a platform instructor at Fort Wolters, after which he completed the aircraft maintenance officers' course at Fort Eustis, Va.

Currently, Lieutenant Aye is flying combat assault and supply missions in Tay Ninh Province. He also serves as one of his company's aircraft maintenance officers.

Moving On . . .



(U.S. Army Photo by SP4 Bill Ahrbeck)

Led by an M-60 machinegunner, part of the 1st Air Cav's Company C, 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry, moves carefully through dense thickets of tangled bamboo and underbrush near Fort Compton.



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Stretching . . .



(U.S. Army Photo by SP4 Jim McCabe)

A big stretch and Sergeant Mark Taylor of the 1st Air Cav's 2nd Brigade communications section had hooked up the wires on top of the antenna. Members of the 2nd Brigade commo section were erecting new antennas high atop the Tactical Operations Center at Fire Support Base Buttons.

Extra Care Means Better Food at 2/7

By PFC Robert Hackney
FSB JAMIE — Right next to the beans and cantaloupes is a sign that the mess crew Fire Support Base at (FSB) Jamie is proud of: Best Mess — CSM Kennedy.

The vegetable garden is the latest innovation that Mess Sergeant Oscar Chavira and his eight cooks have brought to their jobs.

"Just a little extra care on everyone's part is the difference between an average meal and a good meal," the sergeant said.

No doubt, 1st Air Cav Command Sergeant Major Lawrence Kennedy agrees. After testing the chow at the division's nine maneuver battalion mess halls,

he decided that FSB Jamie, home of 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry, had the best.

Food preparation is a 14-hour job that begins at 4 a.m. Before the day is over, 400 meals will have been served, including 100 to men in the field.

Food supplies are flown in almost daily. During an average week the Skytroopers consume something on an order of 1,512 pounds of meat, 2,800 quarts of milk, 315 dozen eggs, 280 pounds of flour, 1,400 pounds of fresh fruit, 315 gallons of iced tea and 210 gallons of coffee.

Serving 2,800 meals a week keeps the cooks busy, but there is always time for the extra care that makes the difference.

ARVN's at 2nd Bde

'Pupils' Erect Aerial

By SP4 James McCabe

FSB BUTTONS — "It's just a student-teacher arrangement, that's all," said Major John R. Bertie, signal officer for the 1st Air Cav's 2nd Brigade. "You show them how it's done, then they do it."

The students were members of an ARVN Airborne Brigade, newly arrived at the 2nd Brigade basecamp. The subject was the proper method of constructing their radio antennas, to be erected on the roof of the brigade's TOC (Tactical Operations Center).

"As you know, you can throw a wire from an FM radio out the window and get good commo," remarked Major Bertie, "but we're trying to show them that they can cluster their antenna together."

Making extensive use of pantomime to help overcome the language barrier, Major Bertie led the ARVN's through the construction of an antenna step by step.

"You design your antenna to the frequency you're operating on," said Major Bertie. "That's

the lesson we're trying to teach today. We're telling them and showing them so they can do it themselves."

By the end of the afternoon, Major Bertie was able to see the fruit of his labors as he watched

the ARVN's excitedly raise a completed antenna on the TOC roof. Tomorrow, he would help them erect another set of antennas on the 204-foot radio tower situated at Fire Support Base Buttons.

ARVN Commo . . .



(U.S. Army Photo by SP4 Jim McCabe)

A demonstration of how to set up an antenna was part of instruction given to ARVN soldiers in communications by Major John R. Bertie, signal officer for the 1st Air Cav's 2nd Brigade at Fire Support Base Buttons.

Ambush Nets

Four Enemy

By SGT Ronald J. Miller

FSB LEE — "It was a perfect spot to set up an ambush," said 1st Air Cav Sergeant William Berls, a squad leader in E Company, 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry.

After three days of slow progress through thick jungle, members of the Echo reconnaissance platoon discovered a large NVA trail.

"It was wide enough to drive a Honda down," observed Sergeant Berls. "It had bamboo matting in some places."

That night, the men from Echo set up an ambush on the trail. Their efforts were rewarded about 6:45 the next morning when a number of NVA walked into their position.

In the ensuing battle, four NVA were killed and three AK-47's captured. There were no friendly casualties.

Medevac's 'Lucky' Crew Survives

By SP4 Ron Merrill

TAY NINH—When a Medevac bird lifted out of Tay Ninh, none of her five-man crew could know that it was the last time she would fly.

Hours later, when the crew arrived back at the 15th Medical Battalion Aid Station in Tay Ninh, visibly shaken, cut, bruised and on another bird, the story of how the Medevac chopper died unfolded.

The bird must have passed on whatever luck she had left, before going down, to Warrant Officer Richard Leonard and his crew.

The luck turned out to be quite a lot. Seldom does a 1st Air Cav Medevac crew refuse to go into a contact area, even with the shooting still going on, to pick up the wounded. This was no exception.

Warrant Officer Leonard radioed the soldiers on the ground as he made his final approach: "We are coming in to your location at this time, so give us everything you've got."

The enemy "greeted" the Medevac ship.

"Well," said Specialist Five Bill Keller, with 30 days left in-country, "those AKs talked to us all the way in, and then their big brother just flat out told us to leave the neighborhood."

As the Medevac bird moved into the contact area, it started receiving small arms fire. Just after Mr. Leonard pulled into hover—the thick jungle necessitated using the hoist—a Blue Max Cobra pilot flying aerial rocket artillery (ARA) radioed, "Medevac! Medevac just got a direct hit with a B-40!"

The B-40 is a recoilless rifle rocket grenade and is what Specialist Keller termed the "big brother."

The round hit above and behind the Medevac's crew chief, Specialist Five Rodney Wiley, in the transmission housing. The steel gearbox not only kept most of the shrapnel away from the crew but also prevented the fuel cells from rupturing and igniting.

"I saw the round coming toward me, but all I had time to do was duck my head, then I was thrown out of the ship," recounted Specialist Wiley.

Specialist Four Dave Parks, the ship's

doorgunner who holds the Silver Star, said, "I just did a lot of praying" on the approach in. He couldn't use the gun because "I didn't know exactly how far out our ground troops were."

Once the stricken bird slammed to the ground, however, and the crew got out, Specialist Parks was manning his machinegun on the hasty perimeter with the infantrymen.

"I'm a machinegunner and just because my gun looks a bit different from a grunt's M-60 doesn't mean it won't work on the ground."

Specialist Keller immediately checked out the crew and then went around to the wounded from the ground company, Company D, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry, and treated them.

"Bill was really great," said Specialist Parks. "He never stopped moving the whole time. He just went from one guy to another and talked some of them back to life."

Another Medevac, this one from Phuoc Vinh, tried to come into the same area, but it also received heavy enemy gun

fire. Mr. Leonard waved it away because "we were too crowded down there already."

The second Medevac bird took hits on the way out, enough to force it to land in a nearby clearing. A third Medevac carried out its crew.

By nightfall, a small army had gathered around the Medevac pad at Tay Ninh, awaiting the outcome of the afternoon's events.

A few hours later, in the pitch darkness of the jungle, stumbling out into a small clearing were a Medevac crew, some wounded infantrymen on stretchers and an escort of 14 ground troops. This time, there were no complications with the Medevac mission.

Back in Tay Ninh, Specialist Keller looked at Mr. Leonard and said, "You know something? It took about a week and a half to get through this one afternoon, but tonight it takes only a millionth of a second to relive a nightmare."

"Yes, we were lucky today," sighed the commander of the bird whose tail number added up to 13.

FLYING ANIMAL FARM HELPS REFUGEES

BIEN HOA—A flying animal farm began the New Year right for several villages of Montagnard refugees.

Cows, chickens, pigs and goats went on the only airplane ride of their lives aboard a C-123 after the 1st Air Cav, Civil Operations for Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) and the South Vietnam government combined forces to help the refugees help themselves.

The seven cows, 750 baby chicks, 20 pigs and seven goats will be used in animal husbandry cooperatives, divided among 23 individual self-help projects in 15 resettlement hamlets in Phuoc Long Province.

One plane load of animals was flown to Don Luan refugee center and the other went to Bo Duc for later distribution to the villages.

"We tried to arrange transportation for more than two weeks," said Captain Howard Huntley, refugee officer for II Field Force.

Lieutenant Colonel Charles R. Wallis, 1st Air Cav civil affairs officer, personally supervised loading operations at Bien Hoa's 8th Aerial Port.

The pigs and goats were placed in large boxes and secured with cargo nets, chickens were boxed up in wooden crates and the cows were tied inside the planes.

"This is a part of a program sponsored by the Vietnamese government to make the villagers, who are forced to move by the war, self-sustaining again once they're resettled," explained Joe Langlois, CORDS coordinator in Phuoc Long Province. "Too often now, if they don't work a day, they don't eat."

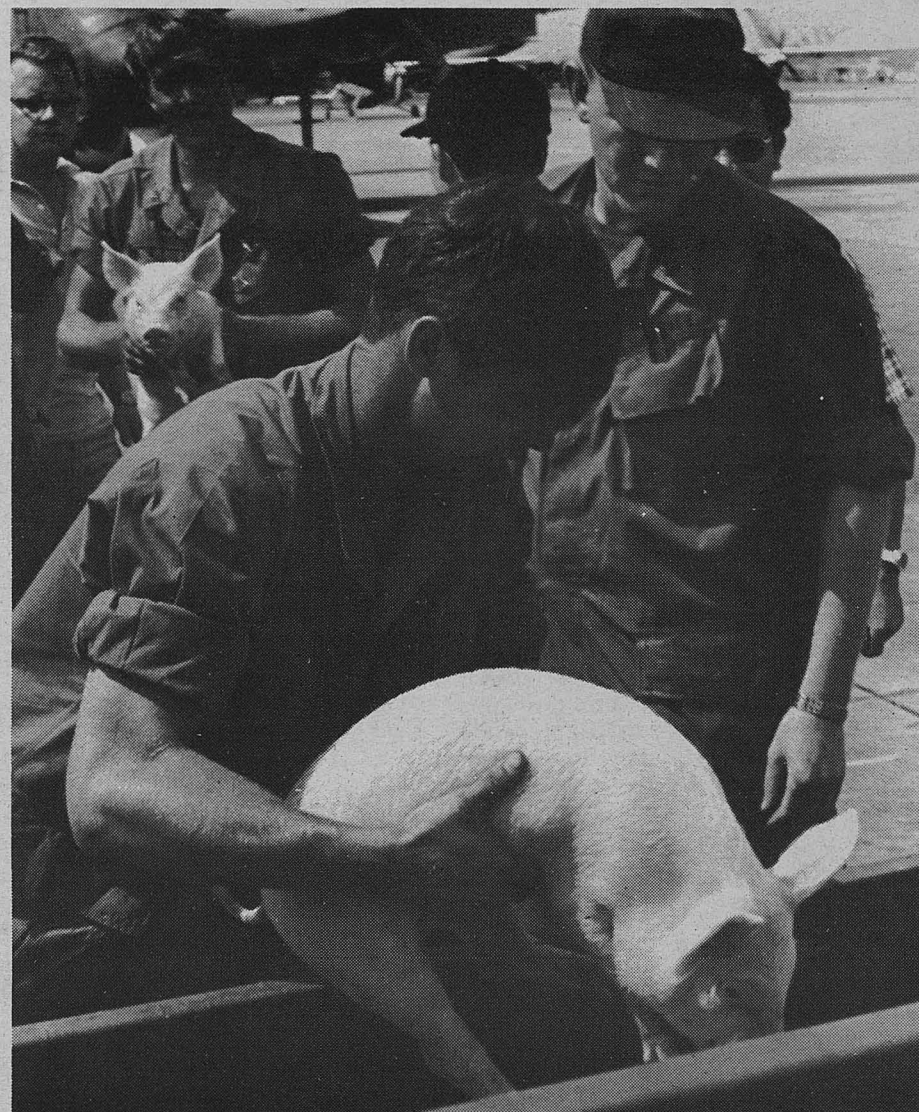
"About 11,000 villagers will be affected by this program," Langlois added. "The animals are purchased in the Bien Hoa area with funds from the Ministry of Social Welfare and the Ethnic Minorities Ministry, giving an economic boost to the farmers who sold the animals as well as the refugees."

Part of the animal husbandry projects was two agricultural classes recently completed, which gave the basics of care, feeding and breeding of the animals to the Montagnards.

CORDS, a military-civilian agency associated with the U.S. State Department, also runs fishing and farming cooperatives in several parts of Vietnam.

"I've been in finance for 10 years but was glad to have an opportunity to work in this program," said Sergeant First Class Bill Williams, a member of the refugee section staff. "They're really trying to do something to help the little guy in Vietnam."

*Photo-Feature by
PFC Dennis Thornton*



1st Air Cavalrymen Private First Class Fletcher Shepard (top row, far left) lowers a pig into a large box at the 8th Aerial Port in Bien Hoa for shipment to Montagnard refugees at Don Luan and Bo Duc. With another pig is Specialist Four John Tibbs as Joe Langlois (far left), CORDS coordinator of Phuoc Long Province, supervises.

Held by Sergeant First Class Bill Williams (top row, center) with help from an ARVN soldier and the cow's former owner, one of seven cows destined for Montagnard refugees is lifted into the truck. The animals were bought with funds from the Republic of Vietnam and used to start animal husbandry projects in the villages.

Lieutenant Colonel Charles R. Wallis (top row, right), 1st Air Cav civil affairs officer, takes a look at cows to be shipped to Phuoc Long Province refugees. The Cav provided transportation via C-123 for the animals.

A Montagnard youth (bottom, far left) leads a cow away from a C-123 airplane at the airstrip near Don Luan. About 11,000 refugees will eventually benefit from the self-help animal husbandry project in 15 hamlets of Phuoc Long Province.

A Vietnamese civilian (at left) hands a goat to 1st Air Cavalryman Specialist Four John Tibbs at Bien Hoa airport. Goats, chickens, cows and pigs were distributed in Montagnard refugee villages.

"The Oblong Box"



Sally Geeson is an 18-year-old bundle of charms who is rapidly making her way up the ladder of success in show business. You can see more of her in American International's new "horror" film, "The Oblong Box."

Reb's 'Stuck On' 1/9 Blue Platoon

By PFC Dave Roberts

QUAN LOI — "It's like buying a car — if you stay with a product just so long you develop pride in it," said Staff Sergeant Richard B. Herron.

Sergeant Herron liked the 1st Air Cav "Blues" (aerial rifle platoon), so he stuck with them. He has spent 40 of his 54 months in Vietnam with Troop B, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry.

Nicknamed "Reb" long ago by his platoon, Sergeant Herron literally jumped into the Cav in 1964 as the first man ever to rappel from a helicopter, sliding down a rope suspended from a chopper hovering high above the ground.

Awarded the Army Commendation Medal for his rappelling by Colonel John B. Stockton, creator of the first Blue platoon, "Reb" came to Vietnam in 1965 when the colonel became the first 1st Sqdn., 9th Cav., commander.

The sergeant had been here before, serving in Vietnam in 1961 with the 5th Special Forces before a serious leg wound

forced his return to the States.

After handling jobs from door-gunner to maintenance man, Sergeant Herron settled with the Blues' quick reaction force concept.

He was with the Cav at Happy Valley, Ia Drang Valley, A Shau Valley, Khe Sanh and now in III Corps, narrowly escaping death in seven helicopters shot out from under him and outliving four of his pilots.

For heroism in battle, Sergeant Herron has earned four Silver Stars, four Bronze Stars with "V" device, three Air Medals with "V," three Army Commendation Medals including two with "V" and five Purple Hearts.

The sergeant has spent 30 of his 40 months in Bravo Troop with the Blues.

"At one time, I was platoon sergeant for both the Blues and the Scouts," he said. "I'd go out with the Scouts, find a mission and then go back to take the Blues out."

The war is nearly over for "Reb." He leaves the Army in two months for civilian life.

Sergeants Practice Army Togetherness

By CPT Richard Shelton

TAY NINH — Sticking together is often a necessity for the 1st Air Cav infantryman in Vietnam.

1st Air Cav Sergeants Paul F. Hain and Jess L. Griffin have been practicing togetherness not only in Vietnam but through their entire tour of active duty.

It all began at Fort Bliss,

Tex., in July of 1968 when two Iowa draftees found themselves assigned to the same basic training battalion.

Hain had entered the service on July 10 and Griffin followed the next day. They had never met before.

When they reached Fort Polk, La., for advanced individual training (AIT), the pair was assigned to the same squad in training to be infantrymen.

"We both felt like we were going to end up in Vietnam but had no idea what unit we would be going to," said Sergeant Hain.

As if planned, the two infantrymen flew to Vietnam on the same plane and, assigned to the 1st Cav, escorted each other through the FIRST TEAM Academy.

Then they were separated for the first time in their Army careers when Sergeant Hain served with 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry, for three months before becoming an intelligence clerk in the 1st Brigade headquarters at Tay Ninh.

After an initial six months with the 1st Battalion Cavalry, Sergeant Griffin interviewed for and accepted a job in the 1st Brigade S-2 shop and worked with Sergeant Hain for the remainder of their tour.

Long before the pair began to get "short," the sergeants had become fast friends and were beginning to anticipate the possibility of coincidental assignments continuing.

When DEROS time came, they found themselves on the same "freedom bird."

"We didn't consider that too unusual, until we noticed that we had been assigned to the same unit at Fort Carson (Col.)," said Sergeant Griffin.

"It's a good thing we did become friends," remarked Sergeant Hain. "If we hadn't, I'm afraid we would be getting a little tired of bumping into one another."

Chaplain Loses Pants At Church

By SGT Dennis Harding

FSB BUTTONS — It's not every day that a 1st Air Cav battalion chaplain takes the log bird to the field for church services and returns without his pants.

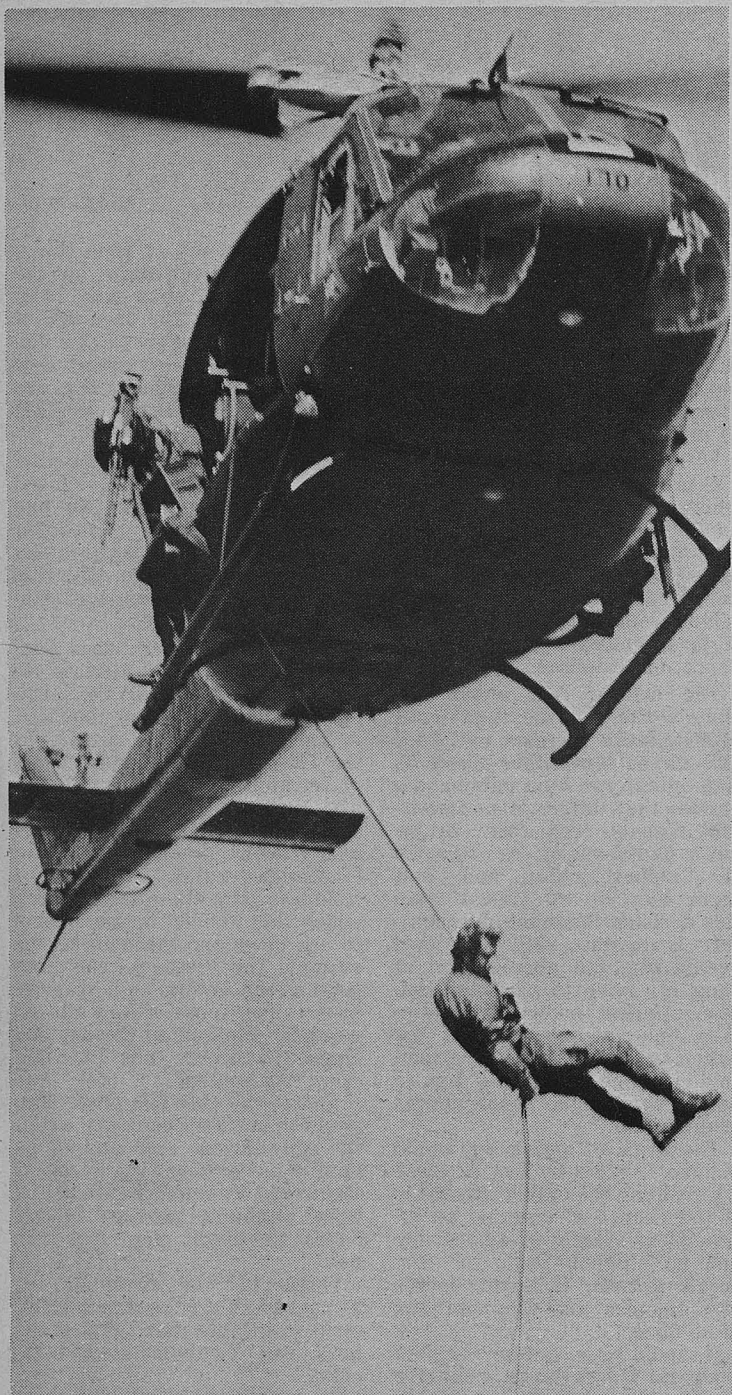
Captain Harvey Shaffer, chaplain for 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry, was conducting services for Company A, 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry, near Song Be.

"I noticed that the fatigue trousers of one of the men was torn from his left knee clear across the front and down to his other knee, quite air-conditioned," said Chaplain Shaffer. "I decided to change pants with him since I was returning to (Fire Support Base) Buttons after the service."

But Chaplain Shaffer's good deed almost kept him from getting back to Buttons.

"As I walked toward the chopper to depart, the pilot saw the condition of my clothes and refused to let me board until he discovered I was the chaplain," he said.

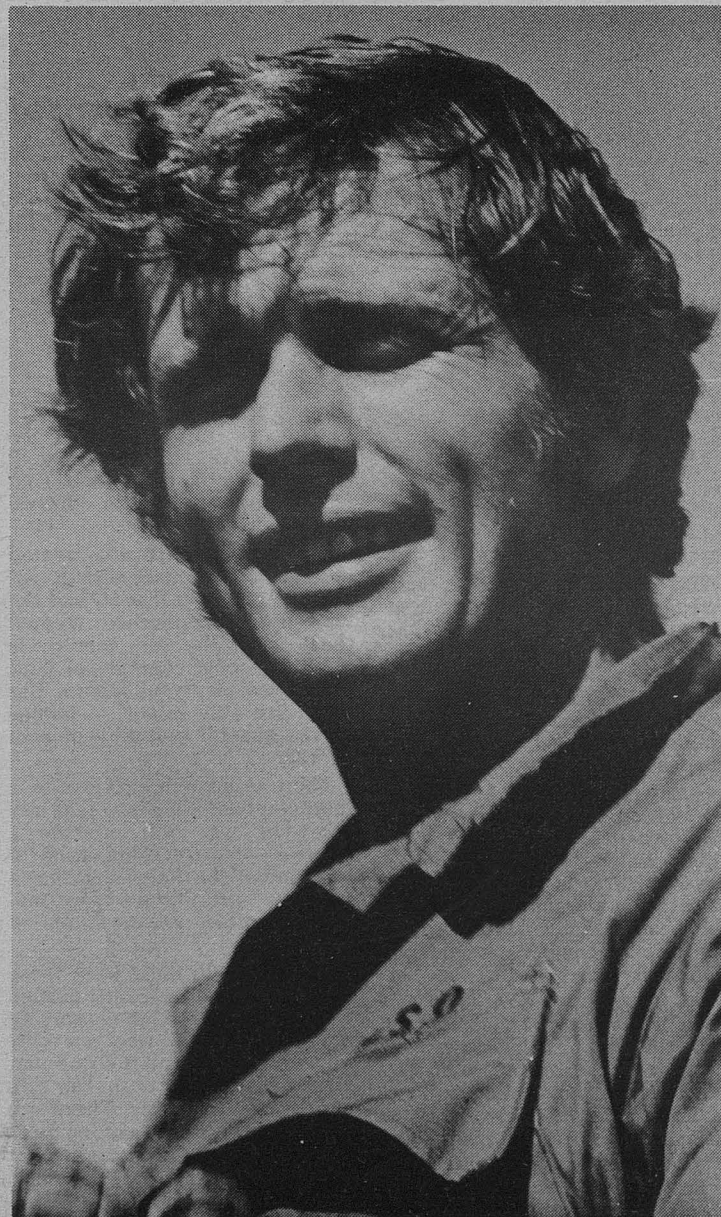
"After arriving, I had to walk through the basecamp to my quarters," smiled the chaplain. "I have never received so many 'cat calls' in my life. I think the next time I'll carry an extra set of pants with me."



(U.S. Army Photos by SP4 Len Fallscheer)

Tarzan

Tarzan swung into Cav Country the other day. Actually, it was Ron Ely, who plays Tarzan in the television series, on a USO tour visiting Skytroopers at firebases throughout the AO. Ely, a former professional football player, found rappelling from a helicopter a routine job. After all, Tarzan swings on vines through the jungle everyday.



Song My: 'The Only Innocents'

Editor's Note: The following article, "The Only Innocents," appeared in the Nov. 29, 1969, issue of "The Economist," a British weekly magazine. The commanding general of II Field Force desires widest dissemination of the article, which forms the basis for a command information topic to be distributed by the 1st Air Cav Information Office. It is reprinted here for the convenience of commanders so they may include it in their program.

The question that matters about the massacre at Song My is whether this abominable act is to be laid at the door of war as such, or of this war in particular.

About the event itself there is no longer much room for argument. Some facts still remain obscure: How many people were killed? Who of the Americans present took part in the killing and who did not? Was it done on orders, or subsequently condoned and if so, by whom?

But that an atrocity was committed, of a sort that calls for an exemplary punishment, most people have already made up their minds — and that is what matters. An atrocity committed by Americans cannot be excused on the ground that the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong have done much worse.

So they have, but the Americans have tried to fight the war by different rules, and when some of their troops violate these rules, the punishment they receive should be designed to deter other men under discipline from doing such things again.

The massacre itself is now a matter for the machinery of justice. But President Nixon knows that the execution of two or three guilty men will not be the end of it.

The sense of outrage has been slower to show itself in America than in Britain. But it has come this week. Mr. Nixon is being told that the fact that such a thing could have happened at all invalidates the whole American position in Vietnam.

Whether you believe that depends on whether you think that there is a special relationship between this atrocity and this particular war.

The answer will be clear enough if the investigation shows that what happened at Song My was not just an atrocity but part of a policy of atrocities; if there exists a general order which requires, or encourages, the killing of civilians who happen to support the other side.

If that were so, the Americans would have taken over their enemy's practice. The number of civilians killed by the Communist forces in Hue in February last year has now risen to 2,737 by a body count at the mass graves and to 2,900 by the Communists' own apparent estimate.

The number of such deaths in the whole of South Vietnam, by assassination or random terrorism, has been running at an average of several hundred a month. Let it be repeated that this does not excuse the Song My massacre, though it may help to explain the state of mind of those who took part in it the month after Hue.

The Americans would deserve to be told that they had lost the war if they believed that they could not win it without the physical elimination of anyone who helps the enemy.

But the fact is that no such general order has been uncovered by any of the newspaper and television journalists who swarm through Vietnam. It is clear that people do get killed in "free-fire zones," which are supposed to be empty of civilians but often are not.

The regulations which govern what the soldiers are permitted to do in inhabited areas — in what circumstances they can use artillery, or call in aircraft, and whom they have to get permission from — are not always honored; there may well be more horror stories yet to come.

The program called Operation Phoenix, for the detection and arrest of Viet Cong officials, has undoubtedly involved some plain murder. Yet the most remarkable thing about Operation Phoenix is not its occasional murderous short-cut but the fact that most of the arrested Viet Cong officials serve less than a year in prison.

The bloodiness of this war is undeniable; but it is hard to detect on the American side anything that could be called a policy of atrocity.

So the question remains, what happened at Song My? Atrocities take place — when they are not a matter of policy — for one of two different reasons, and sometimes from a combination of two.

There are men in whom the acquisition of a uniform and a gun awakens a pleasure in inflicting violence. There are others, and no one can be sure he is not in this category, who break under the pressure of war — when they see their friends killed, when self-preservation seems to be the only thing that matters, when they are just too tired to think.

It is probably fair to say that the Americans, on whom military discipline has never sat easily, have a rather larger number of people who fall into this second category than they would wish.

It is also fair to add that the two categories together, the sadists and the men who break, are liable to commit a rather larger than average number of atrocities when a war is being fought between people of two different races.

The way the Japanese treated their American and British opponents in World War II, and the way their opponents treated them when the tide turned, is the best recent example of that. There are plenty of others. But these are only minor variations on the general fallibility of men at war.

There is something close to a mathematical certainty that any army at war will produce a number of atrocity-makers of one kind or the other; and that a long war will produce some major brutalities on the scale of Song My.

Of course, in most wars there are not many reporters around to tell about it. The censorship stops the handful who not only know but care; and the side that wins does not write up his own atrocities afterwards. There are no armies without old soldiers who know about something beastly.

The second most tragic thing about the killing at Song My,

next to its innocent victims, is the discovery by American liberals that their soldiers are no better in this respect than anybody else's.

For the past quarter century, since the United States emerged from behind the protection of British seapower, a number of Americans have indulged in a curious idyll. They have believed that their country could be a great power and yet not suffer the usual casualty rate of errors and brutalities and atrocities among the men who actually have to use the power.

They really thought that Americans would be better at it. The realization that they were wrong has left them broken men. It would be understandable if they now chose to be pacifists — a man may react to the horrors of war by rejecting violence altogether. But this is not how most of these Americans have reacted to the shattering of their long idyll.

Some of them have jumped from the discovery that Americans are no less bloody-minded than anybody else to the belief that they are worse than the rest of us, which on the statistics is plain nonsense; or that this particular war has brought out the brute in human nature more than other wars do, which is merely naive.

Others have fallen back on asking — and the self-regarding nature of the question is revealing — what this war is doing to the Americans who fight in it.

The answer is that it is doing what most wars do to the more or less predictable percentage of fighting men who break under the strain. The difference is that this time there is television on the spot and a free press at home.

If the Vietnam war were a contest between the Americans and the North Vietnamese to see which of them were the better people, the unsurprising con-

clusion would be that there is not much in it.

It is therefore worth repeating that this war is not a competition in psychological excellence. It is a struggle to decide which of two radically different systems of government the South Vietnamese, and perhaps the other Southeast Asians as well, will be living under for a very long period to come.

It is not irrelevant, in judging which of the two systems the South Vietnamese would prefer, that the Communists have rejected the idea of competing in an election which they themselves would help to supervise. It is a negative piece of evidence, but it tells a story.

The central fact about this war is that, if the Americans lose it, South Vietnam and Laos and maybe some other places as well will be run by a party and a system that differs in no important respect from Mr. Brezhnev's in Russia or Mr. Husak's in Czechoslovakia; and that there may be no appeal from this decision for many decades.

It is against this fact that events like the abomination at Song My have to be measured. The suffering involved in continuing the war — including the suffering inflicted by American soldiers gone berserk — has to be set against the consequences of giving up.

The price of giving up would include the loss by two or three generations of South Vietnamese of the chance of creating an independent system of democracy and an efficient basis for economic growth. It is the devil's own calculus; but the sum has to be done.

It would be a harder sum to work out if last year's massacre at Hue, for example, was being anxiously discussed this week in "Nhan Dan" or "Pravda;" if Hanoi radio was interviewing the men who did it; if Truong Chinh had said it was abhorrent

to the conscience of North Vietnam.

What happened at Song My is a terrible commentary on the cruel, or weak, men who committed the act. The fact that it was belatedly but inevitably discovered, and the reactions now that it has been discovered, are a better commentary on what the war is being fought for.

They illustrate the mile-wide difference between a closed society and open one. No one would argue that President Thieu's government is a model of democratic practice. Wartime governments in hard-pressed countries seldom are.

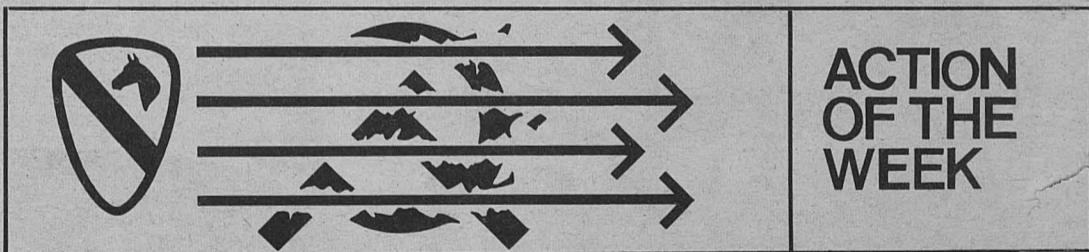
But South Vietnam does possess — in its constitution, in its hesitant tolerance of the principle of opposition, and above all in the fact that it is a ward of the United States — the means of becoming a democracy. If the war is lost it will pass into the silence that covers the political and economic stagnation of the Communist world.

This is why the question with which this article began seems to use to be one that can be answered. The Vietnam war, like most great events, is a tragedy in the strict sense of that abused word. It imposes an inescapable choice between one terrible thing and another.

Those who find this choice imposed upon them can only weigh the alternatives and decide, as calmly as is possible, which is the worse. It would be easy if it were a choice between bloody hands and clean ones. But it is not.

Whenever one commits an army to war it is statistically almost inevitable that some of its men will do something atrocious.

An unforgivable act was committed by certain Americans at Song My. Its authors must be punished. But it does not change the issues that lie behind the war.



By SP4 Ron Merrill

FSB IKE—A fierce two-day battle resulting in 102 enemy dead erupted Jan. 5 when elements of the 1st Air Cav's Battalion, 5th Cavalry, trapped an estimated reinforced battalion of North Vietnamese soldiers in a bunker complex 18 miles northeast of Tay Ninh City.

Reacting to intelligence data received the day before, the recon platoon of Company E, one platoon of Company D and Company C were combat assaulted into the area.

The battalion's Bravo Company began working its way up from the south on foot.

Late in the afternoon, the recon platoon, moving in from the southwest, made contact with the as-yet-unidentified enemy force. The Cavalrymen were led to the location by a string of trails and fresh cuttings.

But Charlie Company, moving in from the east and the platoon from Delta, trying to link with it from the west, found the enemy between them. The enemy force was surrounded on three sides and engaged in heavy contact.

From the time the recon platoon made first contact and Bravo Company closed the gap on the south, gunships from Company D, 229th Assault Helicopter Battalion and aerial rocket artillery from 2nd Battalion, 20th Artillery, kept the enemy inside its bunkers with rocket and mini-gun fire.

The forces dug in as darkness fell. It proved to be a long night with the North Vietnamese repeatedly probing for an avenue of escape.

An intense artillery barrage was maintained to the north of the NVA position to prevent their escape in that direction.

"We threw frags and lobbed M-79 rounds all

night," recalled Captain Leigh Fairbanks, Company B commander, "The bunker complex was only 20 to 30 meters in front of us."

The following morning, saddled up "light-to-fight," Delta's 2nd Platoon and Bravo and Charlie Companies, began their move into the bunker complex from three sides.

The encircled communists put up stiff resistance, and it was decided to pull the three companies back to let the Air Force soften up the area.

Several airstrikes resulted in dozens of secondary explosions, one billowing into the sky to a height of 400 feet.

Still meeting scattered resistance, the Skytroopers swept back into the enemy position and found the bodies of 87 NVA killed by the combined U.S. firepower.

That night the Cavalrymen remained in the area to prevent the remaining NVA from leaving. They extracted just prior to two airstrikes the following day.

Bravo and Charlie Companies returned Jan. 8 to assess the effect of the airstrikes. They found 15 enemy bodies in the massive wreckage left by the strikes.

During the operation, a large assortment of weapon including SKS rifles, RPG's, grenades and claymore mines were captured and destroyed.

It was later learned that the unit was part of the 9th VC Division, made up largely of NVA regulars.

There were also indications that this regiment-sized bunker complex, boasting triple-storied bunkers with interlocking tunnels, has been used as a jumping off or staging area for attacks on U.S. and ARVN firebases in War Zone C.