MAY 1970

TYPHOON

FRONT COVER: Shrouded by camouflage coloring and jungle foliage, PFC Don Ericson waits silently for the enemy. The Rangers of Charlie Company, 75th Infantry were on an ambush patrol ten miles west of Phan Thiet (story on page 2). Cover by SP5 Carl Million.

OPPOSITE: From his mountaintop oupost a few miles from Nha Trang, a CIDG has a panoramic view of the coastal city. The outpost is part of the defensive perimeter around the land side of Nha Trang. Photo by SFC W. Scherp.

BACK COVER: American and ARVN CA teams work on a pump system at the water point in Plei Thung Heng village. Vietnamese are now continuing the many CA projects started by Americans (story on page 18). Photo by SP4 James Cavanaugh.

TYPHOON

Vol. IV, No. 5 May, 1970

I FIELD FORCE VIETNAM

LTG Arthur S. Collins Jr., Commander
LTC Robert J. Berens, Information Officer

5th Public Information Detachment
MAJ Guy R. Sodano, Commander

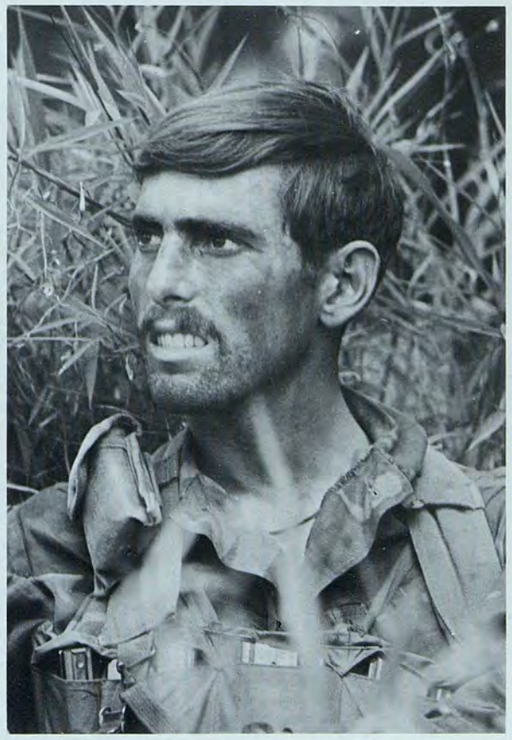
Editor: CPT Lewis H. Hay; Managing Editor: SP4 Lawrence D. Maloney

Typhoon Staff:
SP4 Joe Farmer, SP4 Michael E. Maattala, SP4 Richard C. Soehngen

TYPHOON, an authorized publication, is published monthly by the 5th Public Information Detachment, APO San Francisco 96350, under the supervision of the Information Officer, I Field Force Vietnam. Opinions and views expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Department of the Army. All photographs are U.S. Army photos unless otherwise credited.

SP4 Calvin Davis

SSG Ron Lesley



SP4 Gary Wayt

PFC Don Norton

Everyone Knows His Lines

By SP4 Mike Maattala

By mid-morning, they slowly begin emerging from their faded tents. Faces artfully camouflaged, they are like actors stepping from the wings for another performance. But these men play to no audience; one of their main objectives is to remain undetected. They are members of Charlie Company, 75th Infantry, Rangers.

Life in this camp a few miles from Dalat in southern II Corps has few conveniences. Red dust continually swirls through the air, deepening the rusty coat which covers everything. A tape recorder scratches its way through a Beach Boy's song—the dirt is omnipresent.

It is a major effort to retain any feeling of cleanliness here. There are shower facilities on the other side of the air terminal—a walk of a few hundred meters. But the planes and choppers can stir up a dust storm in seconds, and there is no escaping the clouds which sweep through the camp. The men become resigned to the fact that the dirt is part of them.

During the day, the heat makes wearing even a T-shirt uncomfortable. But at night they have to zip into their sleeping bags like cocoons to keep the cold and mosquitos out.

For two meals a day they are their own cooks. Experimenting with different mixtures of "C" and LRP rations, they try to draw some flavor from the sterile green containers. Supper, their one hot meal, disappears quickly from their plates, for they've learned to wave the flies away and take a bite in one fast sweep of the fork.

There are no movies or clubs here. If the Rangers are lucky, they might be able to crawl on the back of the company truck and head into Dalat for a night on the town. Otherwise, when the sun sets they gather around the fire in back of the tents. Music blares through the night air, and requests are made to the man handling the sounds for old favorites.

As the fire dies down, silence sets in and they inch toward the warmth of the flames. Finally they slowly head for the darkened tents—to fall asleep quickly or maybe to lie there silently, thinking about home, tomorrow's mission, or even why they're Rangers. . .

"They volunteer to be Rangers for several reasons," said Major William Holt, CO of Charlie Company from The Dalles, Ore. "They understand fully the risk and probability of contact involved. But they also realize that by working on a six-man recon team, they have a good chance of going through an entire year with a high level of exposure in the field and come out with a low casualty rate. There is also something intangible that keeps them going out. It's the feeling of comradeship, of sharing danger, and of being part of an elite group that performs its mission very well."

The mission of Charlie Company is to find someone else named Charlie. Inability to do so has long plagued U.S. forces in Vietnam. They have always had a more sophisticated weapons system and now they are finally matching the enemy at his game of hide-and-seek. Explained Major Holt, "Most of the areas in which we operate are part of Charlie's sanctuary. When darkness comes, it's like his own backyard—and now the Rangers are going into it.

"Each team's strength is in its smallness," he continued. "Previously, the enemy expected Americans to come in large numbers, slowly and noisily. He knew exactly what we were doing and his lack of discipline indicated that we weren't considered much of a threat. Now everything is oriented toward remaining undetected, from our insertions and movements to our night holds. When and if our presence is discovered, Charlie abruptly changes his security and discipline. Of course, by then our teams have probably identified the units in the area and moved on."

Charlie Company has been running missions from this Dalat area camp for most of February. Plans call for them to return to their operational base in Phan Thiet by the end of the week, so today's mission should be one of their last.

Members of Team 16, one of the three teams going out today, gather around their team leader, Staff Sergeant Ron Lesley, Greenville, S.C., for a quick briefing. It is a strange tableau—a combination of youth, eccentricity, and professionalism. Only one man is over 22, and that is the Kit Carson scout, Do Van Bay, who is 27. Rear security man, Specialist Four George Philabaum, Claysville, Pa., is 19.

A few of the men wear embroidered sweat bands. AK-47 rounds strung on shoe laces hang from the necks of others. Most of them wear black leather gloves with the fingers cut off—to protect their hands from the hot barrel of a weapon while still providing their fingers with the proper touch.

They feel strange knowing that within an hour they will be 20 clicks out in the woods, as they have come to call the jungle, six men connected to the rest of the company by only a small radio. They think of past missions and of what this one might

bring. And if one of them is relatively new, he doesn't really know what to think at all.

The short discussion between the members of Team 16 breaks up, and their scout suddenly becomes the object of harassment. Bay's birthday is coming up, and they accuse him of being an old man. It is the type of kidding that signifies friendship and respect.

Bay came to the Rangers eight months ago, after he Chieu Hoi'd from the Viet Cong. Walking pointman for Team 16, he has won two Bronze Stars for valor. The men trust everything he does, for they have seen him work in the field. He is the best man they have at setting ambushes. Private First Class Mike Thompson, radio operator from Naples, Fla., pointed out, "Bay can look at any trail and tell us how many people were on it and when."

There are three other Kit Carson scouts with Charlie Company and their effect on the company's mission is evident. Noted Major Holt, "Those teams with scouts have had a considerably higher percentage of contact than the others, indicating their ability to interpret what they see in their native environment. If one of them finds a couple of bunkers, he can tell us the whole layout, pointing out where the others will be. Our men can see the same bunkers, but won't be able to 'read' the signs as well."

After a small delay, Team 16 shoulders its gear and heads for the slicks. As they move through the camp, few comments are heard from the men staying behind. It is not a reverent silence; it is just that the whole scene is now commonplace to everyone. An occasional "Keep your head down" is tossed at them as they pass by.

From now until the end of their mission, their reflexes take over. Like polished professionals, they carry out movements automatically without having to wait for a signal from their brain. But this skill was not always there, and they remember when their Ranger experience began. . .

After processing in-country, Ranger volunteers are sent to An Khe for a 15 day pre-Ranger training course conducted by Charlie Company. They learn rappelling and methods of emergency extraction, study the patrol methods of a six-man team, and learn survival and map-reading techniques. Physical training is heavy, and they must pass PT and written tests every week or be dropped from the course. They are also taught how to "work" artillery and gunships. At the end of the course, they go on a patrol in a non-friendly area—their one chance out in the field before they join the Rangers and begin the real thing.

After their insertion, Team 16 is on the move for an hour before they select a spot to set up an ambush. There is no noise except for the soft snapping of Sergeant Lesley's fingers as he attracts his men's attention to place them in just the right spots. Finally settled, each man waits in his own private world, maintaining a quite alertness. Sitting in ambush, Team 16 is a formidable match for the enemy, and he knows it. The men of Charlie Company have found VC documents containing warnings about the Rangers.

"You can't ever relax out there," said Private First Class Don Norton, Team 16's, M79 man from Azusa, Calif. "You might feel tired and sluggish—until the adrenalin starts flowing—but you never realize until you get back into camp how beat you are. You just don't have time to be tired in the woods."

Once in the field, the Rangers retain flexibility. Though their normal mission lasts four days, they frequently will request to stay out longer if they feel the situation warrants it. They can do so without resupply.

But four days is usually the maximum for a Ranger mission. "If they stay out longer, it is harder for them to keep the alertness necessary for their mission," said Major Holt. "It is only natural for a man's edge to wear down with the passage of time."

Walking in the middle of his team, Sergeant Lesley easily controls the men to the front and rear. During a break, while the rest of the team ease the heavy packs from their backs and get off their feet for a while, Sergeant Lesley is moving about the area checking for signs of the enemy.

Sergeant Lesley has led Team 16 for nine months, taking over the job after his third mission with the Rangers. He packs about 55 pounds of gear in the field. A car-15 hangs waist high from a strap around his neck. Also connected to his body in some way or another is an impressive array of equipment: 28 magazines of ammo, two claymores, ten hand grenades, one white phosphorous grenade, a first aid kit with morphine, an emergency radio, water and rations.

If you're a 21-year-old team leader, awards like the Silver Star, Bronze Star for valor, and Purple Heart have a lot of meaning for you. But

Photos by SP5 Carl Million

After spending several days in the field, Rangers of Charlie Company, 75th Infantry, look forward to a shower, a change of clothes, and a cold drink.

you value even more the knowledge that your team believes in you.

"When you get to know him back in camp," explained Specialist Four Worth Bolton, Wilmington, N.C., "you find it hard not to like him. Then you see him out in the field—what he does and why—and you feel good going out with him." "He's not bossy, in or out of the field," added Private Norton. "He tells you what he wants done, and you don't mind doing it because it is never anything he wouldn't do himself."

When a man is made team leader, it is assumed that with his school training, experience, and leadership ability, he will say and do the right things. He operates independently in the field and though monitored by Major Holt and Captain Gerald Colvin, operations officers from Bennington, Vt., he makes the final decision. Many large actions are based on his estimate of the situation, such as calling in tactical air support or even moving a company. When he makes a decision, he is managing expensive equipment and, most important, human lives.

Late Tuesday afternoon, Team 16 files back into camp. No enemy was located this time. After a soothing shower, they settle down on their cots, and comments about the mission are exchanged between swallows of cold beer. The tension is gone, but the seriousness of the mission lingers.

"Once back from the field," said Captain Colvin, "the men are highly critical of themselves. After they are debriefed by Major Holt and myself, they go back to their tent and talk the whole thing over. It is their own type of personal group evaluation.

"They discuss their mistakes," he continued. "Frequently they will have different impressions of what was seen out there. One man may have spotted three enemy soldiers, and someone in another position may have seen five. By straightening out the discrepancies, they are able to understand the reasons for certain actions by their teammates. Even the team leader is not exempt from criticism, though they won't question his giving of orders."

This evaluation takes place even on company level. Every week the Rangers hold a "leaders' meeting," which was introduced by Major Holt when he arrived in November. This meeting is attended by platoon sergeants, team leaders, aircraft pilots, and artillery people. After a briefing, the meeting is opened for discussion. The men are free to ask questions, and from the interchange of information everyone receives an overall picture of the operations. A team leader who wonders why he did not receive certain support may feel differently when he realizes support had to be given to men in several areas simultaneously.

When its comes to "reading" the signs of the jungle and locating the enemy, Kit Carson scout Do Van Bay has proven that he is one of the best.

The arrival of a stack of mail breaks up the discussion in Team 16's tent. The men gather in a group, glancing at new pictures and exchanging letters with a casualness that shows why one man's personal problems are considered everyone's. It becomes that way when a group lives and works together like they do.

Word spreads that the chow line is set up and the men head for the smell of hot food. Moving through the line quickly, they pause at the end to pick up a quart of cold milk and then head for the low-set boards which serve as tables. The frozen strawberries melt quickly in the heat and mix with the carrots.

After supper a football appears, but it is low on air and wobbles slightly as it is passed from man to Rangers improvise by using a syringe to fill up the football. With a slow, patient effort, the ball is inflated to its normal shape.

After a few more minutes of passing the ball, they have enough men for a game. Still sprinting and throwing, they move to a clear plot of ground next to the terminal. Some of them have been in from the field for less than two hours and still wear their camouflage coloring. Sergeant Lesley is chosen as one of the captains, and sides are established. On the first series of plays, he quarterbacks his team to a touchdown, passing to Specialist Bolton. Even playing football, it is obvious that leading comes naturally to him. Whether running a play or setting an ambush, he controls the action.

Darkness finally brings a halt to the football game. Back in his tent, Sergeant Lesley leans over a map showing tomorrow's area of operation. It will be the Rangers' last mission from this camp, for they are returning to Phan Thiet the following day.

On the eve of another performance, life in the camp proceeds as usual. A card game progresses in one of the tents, beer cans pop open periodically over noisy laughter, and music blares from a speaker near the fire. It is hard to distinguish the men going on tomorrow's mission from those remaining behind, except that those scheduled for the field are a bit more restrained in their speech and actions.

For these Rangers, there is no need for any last minute rehearsal because they have played their roles numerous times before. Everyone knows his lines. ■

Just Don't Call Us

By SP4 Mike Maattala

At six o'clock in the morning, a phone call at the 25th Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Detachment would probably mean work. And this call sounded urgent. A soldier had returned to An Khe from leave and discovered a shoe box near his bed. He was convinced it was some sort of a booby trap or time bomb.

After calming the soldier's fears, and NCO and EOD specialist loaded their demolition kits onto the detachment's three-quarter ton and sped off to help the worried trooper. Arriving at the soldier's barracks, they cautiously approached the small box. The EOD men discussed all the possibilities and agreed that it would be safe to open the box. Very carefully the crew's senior man lifted the lid. Inside, he found one pair of size nine regular low quarters.

Humorous false alarms such as the "shoe box scare" are not unusual for EOD men both in the States and in Vietnam. But more often, their duty day consists of time-consuming hard work, retrieving or disposing of a variety of serviceable and unserviceable ordnance. And on less frequent occasions, of course, they must perform the important and deadly serious duty for which they were trained—disarming dangerous ordnance.

EOD can easily claim a spot as one of the Army's more elite fields. A strictly volunteer MOS, its 1100 Army-wide slots, though never totally filled, are occupied predominantly by careerists. And once a soldier has mastered the skills learned in his long and difficult training, he reaps benefits not found in the average MOS. He'll work in small 10 to 12-man detachments, no matter where he's stationed in the world. He'll qualify for the EOD Badge, symbolic of the professionalism, skill, and courage of the field. In most cases, he'll make E-6 well within three years. But probably most appealing of all, he'll receive an extra $55 a month in hazardous duty pay —whether stationed in the States or in a combat zone.

"Everyone has his own reason for volunteering for EOD," said Master Sergeant Wayne Lord, El Paso, first sergeant of the 85th EOD Detachment, Pleiku. "It's certainly challenging work—in some cases you might call it an extreme challenge. But your training teaches you to be sure of yourself."

The Army's EOD teams in Vietnam are very sure of themselves and have proved capable of managing a number of duties besides those of their MOS. Each detachment maintains its own administrative and supply operations, in addition to pulling maintainance on the detachment's vehicles. Every "incident" or call involving policing, disarming, or disposing of ordnance must be carefully and completely logged. At the end of the month, the entire log is sent to the 533d EOD Control Detachment in Long Binh, the operational headquarters for the Army's 13 EOD detachments in Vietnam. As a result of these varied duties in every detachment, the men receive a broad military education, an important feature for the majority who will stay in the service.

These extra duties, though important, are merely necessary evils for the EOD man. He justifies his existence in the Army through his skills in ordnance. And the role that ordnance plays in his life readily stands out in his speech and surroundings. Detachment day rooms and bars are decorated with all manner of inert mortars, rockets, and other war trophies. A bar stool might be fashioned from a large rocket tail fin, and a disarmed war head might serve as a doorstop. The conversation rarely strays too far from the war and the EOD mission.

The missions of an EOD detachment differ from day to day. Few detachments perform regular daily operations such as road clearing. Such tasks are usually carried out by engineering units. The EOD men simply wait—on 24-hour alert—for calls that can take them to a nearby road or to the depths of the boonies. There they may face and render safe a vicious assortment of mines, booby traps, rockets, grenades, and mortars.

The variety of calls is almost endless. After an installation is hit by enemy rockets or mortars, an EOD team is sure to be summoned for crater analysis to identify the ordnance used in the attack. Another call might take the team to a fire in a house of prostitution, where someone carelessly left his ammunition.

Most EOD work, however, entails back-breaking work, picking up unused or unserviceable ordnance and

Heroes

carrying it to the unserviceable ammunition point at the installation's ammo dump. There, a surveillance team salvages the ammunition which can be further used. The unserviceable ordnance is then stored at the dump. Periodically, the EOD team takes this ordnance to the demolition range and destroys it by detonating it with explosives.

When an EOD detachment receives its daily calls, it weighs the importance of each, and teams are dispatched according to the suspected gravity of the incident. "There's no hesitating when a serious call comes in," said Sergeant Lord. "The men are usually waiting anxiously in the orderly room, all of them wanting to take it."

Maintaining radio contact with the detachment, the EOD team heads out to the location of the incident. In most cases, the EOD vehicle sports no flashy markings or wailing siren—nothing to telegraph its identity to Charlie. Now on the scene, the team members work very closely, each sensitive to the other's feelings and opinions. Nearly always the two men will agree on the procedures to be taken to render ordnance safe. On the rare occasions when the men disagree, the senior man's strategy will prevail—and he'll be the one to chance disarming the ordnance.

The blast from exploding ordnance brightens the sky near Camp Enari in Pleiku. The 85th EOD Detachment regularly detonates unserviceable ordnance at their demolition range.

Photos by SP4 James Cavanaugh

EOD teams work from the premise that "nothing is a dud." Their usual procedure, when dealing with familiar ordnance, is to place an explosive charge on or near it and blow the ordnance in place. If an incident involves a mine or other explosive situated on a road or in a building—areas which would be damaged by a blast in place—the EOD team will first defuse it, then move it to a place where it can be detonated without causing destruction.

At times, the EOD team will come upon a type of ordnance which is either unfamiliar or particularly suspicious—Charlie will sometimes rig additional hidden charges on common ordnance. In this case, the EOD men will move and jar the explosive remotely by means of a grappling hook before attempting to defuse or detonate it. Whenever possible, the teams will detonate all explosives in place. But if they discover a new type of enemy ordnance, they are seriously obligated to disarm it and carry it back for intelligence purposes. Here is where they must call upon their knowledge of EOD —and at times put their lives on the line.

But the situations in which real proximate danger is involved are rare. The men know their job thoroughly, and more often than not their biggest challenge consists of answering the many routine calls coming to the detachment. Like most EOD detachments in Vietnam, the 25th EOD Detachment at Camp Radcliff in An Khe has all the work it can handle. Supporting five infantry brigades and responsible for both Binh Dinh and Phu Yen provinces, the detachment averages nearly 350 incidents a month. Hardly a day goes by that the detachment is not fishing out a mine or two from QL 19, the highway that snakes through the An Khe and Mengyang passes—both favorite VC ambush sites. In addition, the detachment maintains a two-man, on-site team at LZ English, headquarters of the 173d Airborne Brigade.

But though often overburdened and understaffed, the EOD detachments in Vietnam enjoy a close relationship which makes their work easier. Though the Army's EOD detachments bear the brunt of the work, they can and do call for help at times from the detachments of other branches. U.S. Air Force EOD teams normally are responsible for air installations; the Navy's teams for rivers and canals; and the Marines' for supporting their own combat operations.

Whenever any U.S. EOD detachment discovers a new enemy weapon or piece of ordnance, it gives all the details concerning it to all other detachments. The new ordnance will also be thoroughly studied and evaluated by the Combined Materials Exploitation Command.

Such cooperation is vitally necessary in Vietnam, where EOD detachments have found an unending array of new and predominantly homemade explosive devices. It is common knowledge that the VC are particularly skilled in using any scrap of metal or piece of ordnance that Allied Forces leave behind. Recently the 25th headed to the boonies to detonate a 500-lb U.S. bomb that had not exploded—Charlie had already marked the huge bomb into sections for cutting. That one bomb would have supplied him with enough explosives for dozens of booby traps.

"The VC's makeshift booby traps and grenades have a considerably higher dud rate than conventional ordnance," said Sergeant Lord. "But occasionally, mostly in cities, you'll find more sophisticated devices such as chemical delay pencils with their sulphuric acid and firing pin mechanisms. Their ordinary devices—which they manufacture in nearby underground factories—function on the basic pressure, release, or pull principles."

In different parts of Vietnam, various EOD problems will be more prevalent. In the highlands, the detachments must dispose of an uncommon number of mines, especially the homemade "basket mines," consisting of powder, fuse, and a crude sand bag and bamboo covering. The enemy normally places this mine in culverts four to five inches off the road surface. It can demolish a five-ton truck. In the Delta or in dense jungle areas, EOD teams must render safe a great many U.S. bombs which skip across rice paddies or thick jungle foliage without detonating.

The type of ordnance or booby trap Charlie uses depends on the materials available, the terrain in

An EOD man's extensive training minimizes the risks of working with dangerous explosives. SSG Lemuel Mabry, of the 25th EOD Detachment, places explosives on a pile of unserviceable ordnance. Later he attached the fusing device and detonated the ordnance.

his area, and the skills of the sappers who work with the explosives. But all over Vietnam, allied units should rightfully fear the power of enemy rockets, nearly all of which are manufactured by Russia or Communist-bloc countries. The devastating 122mm rocket, for example, is considered by many EOD men as the most accurate and dependable weapon of its kind in the world. "We've only heard of six or eight known 122mm duds in the entire Vietnam War," said Captain William Eskew, CO of the 25th EOD Detachment.

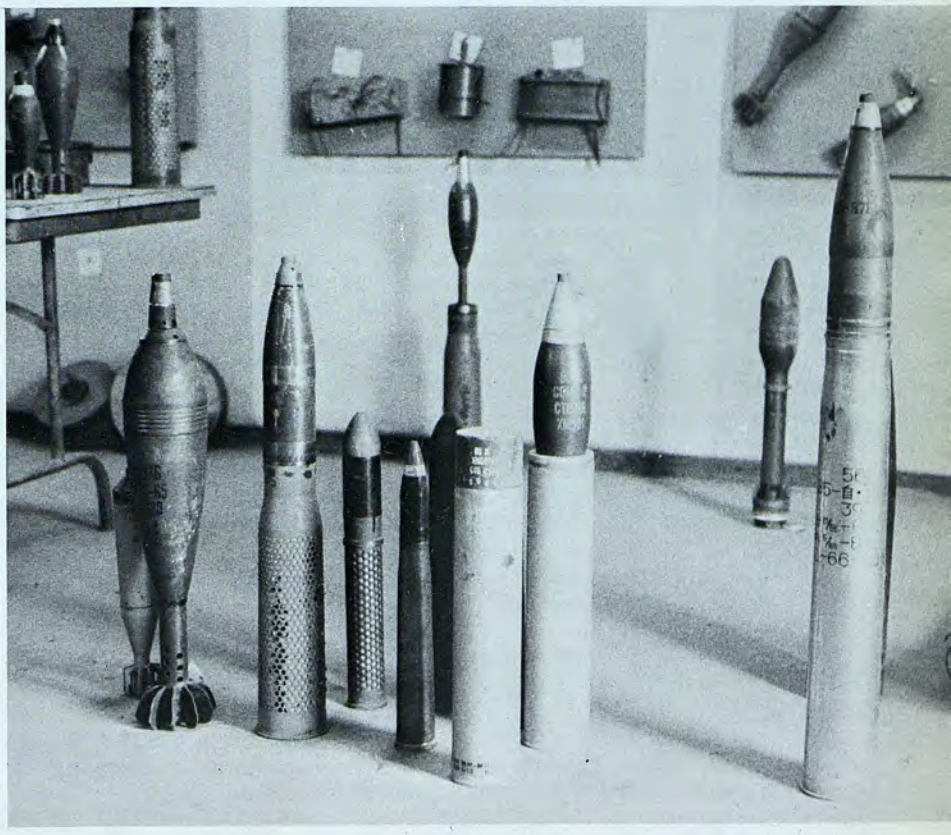
EOD teams are well prepared to deal with any piece of ordnance, familiar or not, which they may encounter in Vietnam. To become EOD qualified, a man must undergo nearly six months of intense training at one of the Army's most difficult schools. The training begins with a two-week chemical course at Fort McClellan, Ala., then on to the Naval Ordnance Station at Indian Head, Maryland for 21 more weeks of training. There, officers and enlisted men from all service branches study friendly and foreign munitions, explosive composition, fusing, and render safe procedures. Upon completion of this course, many go on to further training in nuclear weapons.

"There's no doubt that EOD training is tough," said Sergeant Lord, a former instructor at Indian Head. "The school has a 36 percent failure rate—which is good. It's better to eliminate an incompetent person early rather than risk having him be responsible for someone's life later on."

Though EOD work involves studying and instantly identifying a number of weapons and pieces of ordnance, this skill is almost secondary to a complete and confident knowledge of the basic principles upon which most explosive devices are based. And whether in the States or in Vietnam, EOD detachments hold regular training and discussion classes to keep abreast with any new developments. In addition, every EOD man returns to Indian Head every three or four years for a six-week refresher course in his field.

Because of his recognized background and qualifications, the EOD man in Vietnam has become an instant trouble-shooter for any ordnance problems on or near his installation. EOD detachments usually awake in the morning to find at least a few rounds of unserviceable ammo on their doorsteps. The men of the 85th refer to this familiar

Above: MSG Wayne Lord, first sergeant of the 85th, holds a disarmed VC basket mine. The homemade mine is often found in the Pleiku-An Khe area. Below: The 25th EOD Detachment's museum testifies to the wide assortment of dangerous ordnance present in Vietnam. The detachment uses the museum for its classes on safety around ordnance.



Most EOD work in Vietnam involves the back-breaking task of retrieving unused or abandoned ordnance. MSG Daniel Lewis, first sergeant of the 25th, searches the waters of a shallow stream near Camp Radcliff for 90mm canister rounds.

phenomenon as the "phantom." And like the "shoe box scare," EOD teams also rush daily to false alarms. "We dig out more tail fins of detonated rockets that are described to us on the phone as potentially dangerous duds," said Captain Eskew.

But though they chuckle about these false alarms, EOD detachments urge all units to call them rather than handle suspicious ordnance. "It's not their responsibility to identify and dispose of ordnance," said Captain Eskew. "Sure, the false alarms are often unnerving and troublesome, but this is part of our job."

EOD teams are vastly more disturbed with those units which do encounter dangerous situations, yet fail to call EOD. Most infantry and engineer units have a demolition man who will detonate simple booby traps and grenades which might block their path. But in more serious incidents or when a weapons cache is discovered, an EOD team should be immediately called. As a result of these demands, EOD detachments in active combat areas will spend at least 30 percent of their time going to incidents in the boonies.

But too often infantrymen will chance blowing enemy explosives themselves. "It's the old story of getting too familiar with firearms and explosives," said Staff Sergeant Edward Komac, Schenectady, N.Y., an EOD NCO with the 85th. "I've heard of cases where infantrymen threw grenades at mines and even large bombs to detonate them. How do they ever expect to get down in time?"

To spread the word about safety around ordnance, all EOD detachments give classes to any unit that desires them. At LZ English, the 25th's instruction periods to men of the 173d Airborne have greatly reduced casualties from booby traps which plague the brigade's AO.

"Everyone in Vietnam has to be constantly wary of the threat of dangerous ordnance," said Sergeant Lord. "Little kids will play with sacks of dud 40mm rounds. Soon a GI will come along and want to take a look in the bag. The next minute, they're all dead. There's enough ordnance lying around this country to keep ten EOD teams busy for ten years."

Few people in Vietnam will ever come in contact with deadly ordnance as often as the EOD man. Because of this, he has been described in print as a "super-human hero" or at the other extreme as a "masochist with a death wish." The men who work in EOD will laugh at such descriptions and dismiss them as so much nonsense. They are painfully modest and frankly embarrassed when praised for their courage or heroism. They would rather be known as hard workers who merely do their job.

But whether they want to admit it or not, a very real danger exists for them. In February, the Army's EOD detachments in Vietnam suffered one killed and five injured, admittedly unusually high losses. Most EOD casualties, however, result from enemy fire rather than through EOD work itself. "We'll go out to the bush on what we consider a routine job," said Captain Eskew, "but because of Charlie's presence, the job all of a sudden isn't so routine anymore."

Besides the hazards of working in enemy-infested areas, other critical EOD missions include clearing combat areas after major battles and policing ammunition dumps which have been blown either through accident or enemy action. The 25th recently cleared the remains of an ammo dump at LZ Tape in the An Lao Valley. Such clearing tasks always involve the risk of coming upon fused ammunition—besides gruelling physical labor.

Every EOD man faces these dangers in his own way. Most feel relaxed and confident because of their thorough training. "EOD is not so much a bravery business as it is a knowledge business," says Captain Eskew. "Your knowledge minimizes the danger." Other EOD men go along brashly ignoring the risks and say, "An accident could never happen to me," or "If it does blow, I'll never know about it."

When an EOD replacement arrives in Vietnam, he soon begins to develop this bold indifference to danger. Somewhat experienced already from his stateside duty which usually includes working with city bomb squads, the replacement first receives a three-day briefing at the ARVN EOD school and Museum in Saigon. Then off to his assigned detachment. Soon he will be answering the wide assortment of calls that can take him down the street or to the heart of the boonies. On such incidents, he will first listen carefully to the senior man. Later, with more experience, he will form his own ideas and methods—and become more confident.

In EOD duty, experience and knowledge help diminish the fears. The men who do the work play down the hazards. "Just don't call us heroes," they say. But whether they want to admit it or not, the danger remains. Simple, routine incidents through a twist of fate or Charlie's cunning can easily become tragedies.

True heroism in EOD does not spring from the performance of "superman" tasks, which are admittedly rare. But rather it comes from the simple, everyday willingness to face and defeat the unknown dangers whenever or wherever they arise. ■

Little brother—
You can't talk or play yet
And you're an awful lot of trouble,
But I like to make you happy
And think of when you'll be big and strong.

STUDENT SKY SOLDIERS

By SP4 Richard Soehngen

"Six minutes," yells the jumpmaster above the roar of the twin-engined C-123. The Air Force plane begins the final critical approach over the drop zone four miles south of the Vietnamese Special Forces Airborne School at Dong Ba Thien.

Your mind is hyperactive now, as it has ben most of the morning. In just six minutes you'll be making what could be that leap to eternity from an altitude of 1250 feet with nothing but a nylon parachute for support.

As the plane drones on, you begin to wonder for the umpteenth time why you volunteered to go airborne. Sure, it was a requirement for Special Forces, but there are other reasons too. You wanted to be a little more than an ordinary soldier. The silver jump wings they'll give you after your seventh jump will signify you're an airborne soldier.

As the adrenalin begins to course through your body, you remember that you are also trying this stunt for the excitement and confidence it will give you. The idea of parachuting to earth is wild. Only birds were meant to fly. Lacking the appendages to fly like a bird, you figure the two weeks of extensive training you've gotten at the airborne school should help you descend safely. Thoughts of the physical training at your home unit fill you with nostalgia and a sense of physical well-being.

Like a boxer in training for a big match, you worked out conscientiously for six weeks. The Senior Enlisted Airborne Advisor to the Vietnamese Airborne Training Center, Sergeant First Class Robert L. Donahue, Portland, Maine, pointed out to you that the stateside airborne schools devoted one full week primarily to PT. Here in Vietnam, you either showed up for ground training in shape, or you washed out.

Photos by SP5 Paul Langelier

The physical training was so rough that only those with the desire to go "airborne all the way" could make it. Every morning for six weeks you ran a mile and did countless push-ups, deep knee bends, and sit-ups.

Then came the qualifying PT test. A mile run in under 8½ minutes, 20 airborne pushups, 80 deep knee bends in two minutes, and six pull-ups qualified you for airborne training.

Of the five Americans to start the training with you, two washed out. Three to five percent of the Vietnamese soldiers who begin the three week Vietnamese Airborne Course would also "lose direction" and drop out, according to Captain Vinh, S-3 of the Vietnamese Airborne Training Center and a graduate of the

Opposite: Through the rigors of training to the final equipment check and point of no return at the door, the jumpmaster is always giving encouragement. But once a student jumps, he is on his own.

"The Sky, even more than the Sea, is unforgiving of even the slightest mistake."

Vietnamese National Military Academy.

On the first day of training, Captain Vinh had spoken frankly to you about the program's requirements: "Ten different PT tests will be given to you in order to qualify," he said. "These include all the tests given to the American students going through our school. In addition, we require a 30 foot rope climb with weapon and rucksack and four different tests involving running with rucksack and weapon. Of this class of 133 now undergoing training, we have already weeded out five because they weren't strong enough to make it."

Besides ethnic Vietnamese, Montagnards, Cambodians, Chams and Chinese also took this stiff training with you. The instruction would better qualify them for the Vietnamese Special Forces, the Mobile Strike Forces, Airborne and Ranger companies, and CIDG units.

Each of the nationalities has its own language and customs, and misunderstandings occur at times. But the common hardship and danger inherent in airborne training helped bring you together and foster friendship between the different factions.

The U.S. Special Forces advisory role at the training center enjoyed this same mutual exchange of ideas and goals. Lieutenant Colonel Charles Hoyt, commander of Special Forces Detachment B-51, had stressed that the USSF soldiers were at the training center only to monitor the training and advise whenever requested.

But as you sit chain-smoking cigarettes in the bleak cabin of the 123, you wonder whether or not you've forgotten something important in the 72-hour block of instruction the jumpmaster gave you.

Remembering that first block of instruction on nomenclature of the T-10 military parachute, you recall numerous possible chute failures and you begin to shudder. The instructor had nonchalantly gone over "cigarette rolls" with the reassuring good word that "it only happens once in 80,000 openings or so." What a helluva feeling it must be to look up expecting a full canopy only to find the risers tangled and fused together.

Then you remember he lessened the odds considerably when he mentioned the less dangerous, but more frequent "Mae West" malfunction. Here the risers tangle and separate the canopy into two sections, resembling a large pair of "falsies." A good body position when exiting the aircraft helps prevent this, but usually one man in a stick of 30 or so will take the faster descent on a Mae West opening.

It's up to you to decide whether to pull the reserve chute or not. The instructor left you with the catch phrase: "When in doubt, pull it out." Just pray that it doesn't tangle up with what support you have. If it does, just yell Airborne All The Way; promise to sing in the Sky Pilot Choir; and execute a good parachute landing fall (PLF)."

Yeah, and if I had wings I could fly too. Who is he kidding? But you redoubled your efforts in learning the five points of contact to a good PLF.

A good PLF—toes together, elbows locked to the front, and head in. Relax, don't brace yourself. Just roll with the punch. When you hit, you'll have a brief moment before your chute collapses. Pivot and let the side of your body from your toes all the way up to your shoulders absorb the fall.

When you graduated from PLF by exiting at four feet, you went on to the 34-foot tower and the swing landing trainer.

Jumping from the tower, you experienced a jolt roughly equivalent to a chute opening before swinging down on the cable. It was here that a few soldiers balked at the height, and were promptly eliminated. Under the simulated conditions of the tower and the constant practice, you learned how to achieve a good body position when exiting the aircraft and how to deploy the reserve chute in an emergency.

As another class of Vietnamese soldiers and jumpmasters shuffled smartly from the swing landing trainer to the tower, you got your turn at practicing PLFs from a height of twenty feet or so. Using a rope attached to a pulley system,

"When in doubt pull it out." During training students are well briefed in the various malfunctions possible. Despite a Mae West opening, this soldier manages to deploy his reserve chute in time.

the instructor let you swing off on a harness and gradually lowered you to a height of four feet. Depending on your directions, he named the PLF to be executed and then released the rope. With the sudden drop, you often landed in a bruised heap on the ground. At times you made scores of PLFs before the instructor was satisfied with your performance.

The suspended harness trainer was another exercise in discomfort. Here you practiced pulling risers to direct your descent and avoid such pitfalls as high wires, trees and water. This trainer suspends most of your weight on the lower regions of your body, making it painfully clear why it is often referred to as "suspended agony."

After the sweat and exertion suffered in the suspended harness, it was a welcome relief to practice releasing your chute with the wind machine. Here you got a chance to rest on your back before the large fans blossomed the chute and sent you downwind twenty feet or so. At that point you simply released the fasteners near your shoulders and you were free of the chute.

Before you begin to speculate on how you'll feel after the real thing, the command "Get Ready" snaps you back to reality and the job at hand.

"You afraid you're gonna crash and burn?" asks the student beside you. You realize you are shaking and perspiring, but you answer back bravely, "Yes, but if you can't pay the price, you shouldn't play the game." This false bravery has a calming effect, if only temporarily.

Your fellow Vietnamese soldiers are singing and bantering back and forth. You manage a weak smile to a Vietnamese Ranger. The common hardship and danger you're facing draws you together. You give him a "V" for victory sign with your fingers and he replies with thumbs up. He'll make it, and you tell yourself you will too.

"Stand up," yells the jumpmaster from one of the door exits. Now the countdown begins in earnest. You wobble to your feet. "Hook up." You attach the static line to the cable running along the fuselage. "Check static lines." Check.

"Check equipment." For the last time you check your equipment to see if everything is properly fastened. Your buddy gives you a few words of encouragement as you check each other out. "Sound off for equipment check." You yell, "Three zero check," but it doesn't sound like your own voice.

Airborne training tries to simulate actual jump conditions with such devices as the mock door, jump tower, and suspended harness. This student prepares to execute a PLF from a swing landing trainer.

"Stand in the door." The red light flicks to green as the plane begins to pass over the drop zone. "Go!" There is no getting out now—except through that door. The momentum generated by those behind you pushes you toward the door.

Four, five, six soldiers before you leap out, static lines trailing behind them. Your turn. You poise at the door. The moment of truth has arrived. The jumpmaster taps you on the rear and yells "Go!" And you do go, springing tightly into a good body position.

As you make the wild, tumultuous exit with your heart in your throat, you begin to count. One thousand, two thousand. The wind in your face feels exhilarating. Abruptly your chute opens and you look up to see a full canopy. Hey, how about that—it works.

You don't have time to marvel at the sight because in the next instant you're pulling on a riser and running off the chute of the man below you before your own collapses.

You get clear somehow and begin to enjoy the quiet and wonderful solitude of the descent to the ground.

You look around. Startled, you see a man fighting with his reserve, his descent hastened by a Mae West opening. "Open, damn it," you scream silently. It does, and you breath a sigh of relief.

A smoke pot on the drop zone indicates you're drifting to the right. About a hundred feet off the ground you pull your left risers to slow your descent. Eyes on the horizon, you let yourself relax. Steady now.

Like a leaf falling from a tree, you flutter a moment before the chute collapses. The reality of the ground is transmitted through the shock of the landing. Executing a good PLF, you stare for a moment at the chute above you before releasing the fasteners.

You've done it. You've gone airborne. Terra Firma feels good though.

As you begin to pack your chute you wonder about the next six jumps. Six more to go. Six more big ones. And as you walk off the field, you feel a tremendous sense of accomplishment that you are just a little above the ordinary soldier—you're airborne. ■

The "Pair O' Dice"

Flying Through History

Story and Photos by SP5 John B. Smith

It was a particularly cold day in September, 1919, and a small group of Air Force pilots had gathered behind a hangar for a little sport—shooting craps. Their luck had been running good for several weeks now, as every day they took the mechanics to a cleaning. Their luck was running so good that one of the pilots decided to paint a pair of dice on the nose of his plane—for luck on his missions. His idea caught on with the other pilots in the squadron, and soon they were all sporting the "pair o' dice" on their planes.

Today in Vietnam, the "Pair O' Dice" is still going strong. If you'll drop down to the 90th Tactical Fighter Squadron at Bien Hoa, you'll find the familiar symbol still on the nose of its planes. There, the squadron's sleek jets stand poised to aid infantry units at a moment's notice.

For the pilots of the 90th TFS a quiet evening of reading or recreation often ends in a combat mission. One evening recently, First Lieutenant Dee Friesen, Inman, Kan., and Major Robert Groszer, Olympia, Wash., were relaxing in the 90th's reading room, browsing through the latest copies of the *Air Force Times*. They had spent the day flying missions, and it was good to rest a while.

At the same time in southern II Corps, an infantry company was having a far less enjoyable evening. After a day-long search and clear operation in an area considered by intelligence sources to be heavily infested by the enemy, the company set up a night perimeter and posted guards. The battle weary men lay back to catch a few hours sleep before daybreak.

Minutes later noises near the night encampment alerted the perimeter guards. Before they could react, satchel charges exploded and automatic weapons fire ripped into the perimeter. Instantly, the company commander was on the radio requesting air support from the 90th.

The two pilots' evening of relaxation ended when the commander's radio message was relayed. They were alerted to go to the aid of the besieged company. Throwing down their papers and zipping up the fronts of their flight suits, they ran down the short hallway, pushed their way through the front door, and headed toward their A-37 jet fighters, already in the final stages of ground preparations.

In less than ten minutes, the two pilots, in their "tweetie bird" aircrafts, were on their way toward the action and a rendezvous with the Forward Air Controller (FAC) already in the area.

The FAC, in radio contact with the ground troops and jets, coordinates with both to insure the accurate and effective use of the aircrafts' ordnance.

Soon the "tweetie birds" were screaming over the enemy, spilling their munitions on him. The mission completed, a grateful infantry unit again radioed the FAC. . .

"Red Dog one, this is Packer five zero, contact broken, and I don't know who those jet pilots were, but thanks a hell of a lot."

Similar situations occur daily in the lives of fighter pilots of the 90th TFS as they fly air strikes in southern II Corps and III and IV Corps. But with all of their professionalism they credit their success to the FAC.

"The FAC is the key to a good airstrike," said Lieutenant Friesen. "At times they can make us look better than we really are. A good FAC means a good airstrike."

Professionalism has been the mark of the 90th since the squadron was formed in 1917, making it one of the oldest Air Force squadrons on active duty today. It has flown continuously since its organization at Kelly Field in San Antonio, Texas, and has distinguished itself in World Wars I and II, Korea, and now, with its new look, in Vietnam. Whether or not crap shooting or rolling dice at the bar for drinks has anything to do with their effectiveness is questionable, but the Pair O' Dice can still be found on the nose of every plane assigned to the 90th.

In October, 1969, they were ordered to cease operations with the F-100 jet and make a change to the A-37/B attack aircraft. Two months later, with new pilots and ground support personnel, the 90th was in the air with the small, twin-jet, ground attack fighter. The craft is especially well suited for the 90th's mission in Vietnam—close air support.

The A-37 is the descendant of the older T-37 trainer, but the similarity ends there. The A-37 has three times the thrust of the old "tweetie bird," and has about twice the weight. It sports a nose-mounted mini-gun, similar to that of a Cobra, that will fire over 3,000 rounds per minute. The plane's fuel tanks are lined with a "self-patching" foam. If the tanks are hit, the foam immediately seals the opening, preventing fuel leaks and possible explosions. With lower fuel tanks and armament only inches from the ground, the pilot must be extremely careful to land the craft straight.

But the main threat of the bird is its ability to deliver a variety of firepower with great accuracy in close support of ground troops in contact. Since the men of the 90th are on call 24 hours a day, their planes are always ready to go with a full ordnance payload.

Its small size, great maneuverability, and tremendous climb rate make it a difficult target for the enemy gunner. But, though extremely elusive, the A-37 can be hit.

Returning to Bien Hoa from a recent mission, one A-37 took a hit through the battery compartment to the left front of the cockpit that headed straight toward the pilot. But somewhere on its way the bullet ricocheted and lodged between the body and windshield. The pilots of the squadron still talk about that one.

Before switching to the A-37, the 90th flew a great variety of aircraft, from cloth covered, wire and wooden bi-planes to super sabre jets. It was while assigned to the 90th that Lieutenant James H. Doolittle established a new cross-country flying record in his DH-4B—2,163 miles in 21 hours, 20 minutes. Pilots of the 90th also flew night missions in Korea and introduced the "skip" method of bombing in World War II. This method entails flying almost level with the ocean and releasing the bombs so they skip across the water toward the target.

Pilots of today's 90th are still following in the footsteps of such pilots as Doolittle. Major Albert Motley, Roanoke, Va., on his second tour of duty as a pilot in Vietnam with some 4,400 hours of jet time to his credit, talked about the need for competitive spirit in a pilot. "Show me a fighter pilot who doesn't want to be the best gunner and bomber in his unit and I'll show you a man who isn't a good fighter pilot." Major Motley enjoys this continual challenge and competition. "You always have a good mission when a lot is happening," he said.

New men, flying new planes in a new war, and shooting craps behind a new hangar or at the bar, but the emblem—the "Pair O' Dice"—is the same as in World War I. Following 35 years of tradition and service, Major Motley and the men of the 90th have become attached to that emblem. Said the major, "It's like a good luck charm. I'll always wear the dice." ■

The Dice's pilots, constantly on alert, are always ready to fly. 1LT Dee Friesen checks out his instruments in preparation for a mission.

Much More Than Water

By SP4 Larry Maloney

The burden of civic action in II Corps is increasingly shifting to the Vietnamese.

The dry season in the Central Highlands can be very oppressive. It burns the land and bleaches out its beauty. Everywhere swirls of red dust blow about, getting into eyes and sticking to sweaty skin and hair. The dust and heat will also parch and choke the throat—at times to the point of gagging. And if there is to be any relief at all, water will bring it. But good, cold, pure water is hard to find.

Though tight in the grip off this dry season, the Montagnards of Plei Thung Heng village, just north of Pleiku, enjoy such water—maybe the best tasting water in Vietnam. A water trench system channels several springs that pour from both sides of a narrow ravine and gives the people abundant water for drinking, washing, and irrigating. The tiny, almost miraculous oasis brings relief to 2800 thirsty people. And things will get even better with the completion of a pipeline, water pump, and reservoir.

More significant than this water system itself are the men behind its construction. The civic action team of the 4th Infantry Division's 1st Battalion, 22d Infantry started the project, but ARVNs will finish it.

All over Pleiku Province and progressively over all of II Corps, dedicated and involved American CA teams are reluctantly abandoning their projects due to troop redeployments and the Vietnamization program. Like the water system, scores of worthwhile civic action projects initiated by Americans will be completed by ARVNs.

Presently ARVN teams conduct all the civic action work in Pleiku Province, the former AO of the 4th Division's CA efforts. The 47th ARVN Regiment, the 202d ARVN POLWAR Company, and the Pleiku Province teams consisting mainly of RF/PF personnel have now assumed responsibility for helping the Montagnards in the area. The official deadline for the final redeployment of the 4th's CA teams was April 15. For weeks before that date, the U.S. teams came to visit the villages from their base at Camp Enari. In the past, they had actually stayed and lived with the people. But in the last weeks of their work, these teams came only to advise the new ARVN teams and smooth over the transition.

The water point is easily the favorite spot at the Montagnard village of Plei Thung Heng. Thanks to the efforts of American and ARVN CA teams the villagers enjoy cool, clean water, even in the dry season.

Planning for the ARVN takeover first began in April 1969, when 4th Division representatives visited II Corps Headquarters in Pleiku. There they discussed the possibility of placing ARVN NCOs with the 4th's CA teams. "We realized then that the civic action program could help create a better relationship for the ARVNs with the people," recalled Lieutenant Colonel Earl M. Hennen, the II Corps G5 advisor. "The presence of ARVN CA workers would more effectively impress the image of the GVN on the people."

The first ARVNs to become involved in this new plan came from the ranks of ARVN interpreters assigned to the 4th Division. The initial CA class, a joint ARVN/4th Division effort, provided training in POLWAR, basic techniques of civic action, and U.S. weapons familiarization.

While this first class was in training, the ARVN POLWAR Staff and the G5 Advisory Staff expanded the program to include ARVN interpreters in other Free World Force units as well as ARVN main force unit NCOs. The new II Corps ARVN Civil Affairs School, now located at Camp Schmidt, was in full swing.

The present school, run by some 20 instructors of the ARVN 20th POLWAR Battalion, consists of three weeks of intensive training. Each class, numbering about 175 students, receives instruction in first aid, basic field engineering and sanitation, psychological warfare, agriculture and animal husbandry, intelligence, and Montagnard life and traditions. The school's program culminates in a three-day field exercise, in which the students form teams and do actual work in the surrounding villages.

Though the school is still in its early stages of development, it can already claim significant progress. In 1969, 310 CA cadre were trained, with 107 of these returning to their units to organize 107 new ARVN CA teams. In 1970, ARVN will organize an additional 29 civic teams.

The mushrooming, self-perpetuating concept of the new CA school is probably the most striking aspect of the ARVN takeover. Ideally, the ARVN or RF/PF soldier trained at the school will return to his unit and establish his own CA team. Acting as team leader, he organizes a team consisting of a trained medic, an engineer and construction NCO, an intelligence NCO, and two duty soldiers to assist the medic and engineer.

The ultimate goal of the program will be to have all CA teams indigenous to the area they serve. As ARVN main line units move increasingly from their pacification and civic action work to combat operations, RF/PFs will continue their work and eventually will bear almost full responsibility for civic action in II Corps. Consistent with this goal, the CA school is now enrolling more RF/PF students, many of whom are Montagnards.

These new CA cadre, many of them school-trained, will be trying to set up model villages, perhaps patterned after Plei Thung Heng, home of one of the finest water systems in the highlands. This Montagnard village, with its own dispensary and school, admittedly far surpasses the average village. But most of the villages in the 4th Division's

Photos by SP4 James Cavanaugh

former AO have achieved at least satisfactory progress in numerous projects, thanks to the hard work of the division's CA teams.

For months the Americans tended to the villagers' injuries and diseases—plague, dysentery, malaria. They built schools, stores, water points, sanitation systems; they stocked fish ponds and taught the people new methods of farming and animal husbandry. They lived and worked close to the Montagnard people, who grew to know and respect them. These improvements made the people proud of their villages and more determined than ever to resist the VC. The increasing ability of Montagnard RF/PF forces, often trained by CA cadres, testifies to this newfound pride.

But now the Americans are gone, and ARVNs must finish the work. The transition, of course, will entail some difficulties. "The Montagnards may feel a little strange at first, working with the ARVN CA teams," said Specialist Five Raul Torres, El Paso, a medic with the 2d Battalion, 8th Infantry's team, which formerly worked among the tribesmen. "The only Vietnamese many Montagnards know are the merchants, whom they naturally distrust."

The ARVNs are determined to avoid any misundersandings with the Montagnards and establish a lasting rapport with them. The first thing any CA team does in a Montagnard village is foster a close relationship with the tribe's elders and make plans with them for solving the village's problems. "We don't intend to change their customs or way of life," said Captain Pham Quoc Hung, Chief of the II Corps Political Indoctrination Section and also deeply involved in the ARVN civil affairs program. "We want to go along with the Montagnards in every possible way. Most of all, we just want to help them."

The changeover from Americans to ARVNs was not a sudden one. During the weeks before the official April changeover data, members of various 4th Division teams continued to visit the villages and worked alongside the ARVNs. Most of the Americans were pleased with what they saw, especially with the progress of ARVN medics, many of whom receive at least as much training as their U.S. counterparts.

Most interested of the Americans in the progress of the new ARVN civil affairs effort in the Pleiku area are the advisors for the II Corps G5 office. They now represent the only U.S. advisors directly concerned with civil affairs in the Pleiku vicinity. These advisors visit several village a day to observe the work of the ARVNs.

"Is the ARVN medic at work today?" the U.S. advisor will ask the ARVN team leader. A long line of waiting patients moving through the dispensary door answers his question. Then the advisor might talk with the team members, discuss their projects, and offer to supply help or materials if needed. But in most cases, the U.S. advisor in the Pleiku area does little now but travel about and offer a helping hand. The ARVNs are doing the work—together with the villagers.

"The ARVN civil affairs program here and in all of Vietnam must work for the Vietnamization program to be a success," said Lieutenant Bryan Harper, an advisor for the II Corps G5. "Some U.S. soldiers felt that the civic action effort would fall apart here once they left. Sure, U.S. CA teams could and did do a world of good in these villages where the people had next to nothing. But the projects are going to continue, and the ARVNs are going to make them work."

In the village of Plei Thung Heng, ARVN CA Team nine has now taken charge. Like everyone in the village, the team members flock daily to the water point. They drink the cool water, wash clothes, or just splash about underneath the many water trenches. And sometimes, the ARVNs, like the Montagnard villagers, just stare in wonder and amazement at the fast-flowing streams. Water, an abundance of water, in the height of the dry season.

But when Master Sergeant Luong Van Loc, the leader of team nine, goes to the water point, he is not content to stare happily. Trained at the new II Corps Civil Affairs School, he knows there is yet much work to be done. He does not like to see women and small children carrying the large water jugs from the water point up the steep hill to the village. He and his men will put into operation a water pump and pipeline that will channel the water to a reservoir in the village.

In many ways, the reservoir, now only a massive hole in the ground, is more beautiful and meaningful to Sergeant Loc than the water point itself, because ARVNs built it. The story of Plei Thung Heng's copious water very simply characterizes a growing trend for civic action in all of II Corps—started by Americans, completed and continued by ARVNs. ■

A Montagnard medic treats a villager at Plei Thung Heng's dispensary. Future civic action plans call for training team members indigenous to the areas they serve.

A Happy Invasion

By SP4 Thomas Baker

Vietnamese clad in black pajamas invaded the coastal city of Phan Rang in late February for a non-stop assault lasting five nights. Not until the sixth day did the assault cease. The invaders held the resident people in captive awe. For five days, innocent children harangued their parents to allow them to become part of the black-pajamaed hordes.

Happily, this horde did not consist of VC but boys and girls from hamlets in Ninh Thuan Province who gathered in Phan Rang for the first Rural Youth Jamboree. During the gathering, the children performed civic action cleanups of three VC-influenced villages and entertained enthusiastic crowds on the two nights of the Jamboree Talent Show competition. The Jamboree culminated with a tour of the Vietnamese Navy Training Center in Cam Ranh Bay.

Wearing black pajamas and bunking in pup tents, the 320 members of Rural Youth Clubs spent the week away from home with a minimum of adult supervision. The youngsters, aged nine to fourteen years, organized their clubs into committees to buy food, cook it, and keep their campsites clean. Young Rural Development cadre, assisted by high school age Boy and Girl Scouts, provided the only guidance.

The children began arriving in Phan Rang February 24. They pitched tents, selected committees, and made new friends. That first night was a very happy one, as the children gathered around a campfire to sing and clown about.

The next morning, they traveled to three villages for cleanup projects. The projects continued for most of the Jamboree period. After the

Cooks always bear the brunt of the troops' complaints, but no one grumbled about the way these young chefs prepared the Jamboree meals.

Photos by SFC W. Scherp

work day, the children performed dramatic skits and song and dance routines before a delighted audience of parents, province officials, and local residents. Despite the pressures and ravages of war, Vietnam had taken time to turn the spotlight on its children.

In 1968, the Government of Vietnam had the idea to somehow involve the rural youth with its communities. RD cadre soon formed voluntary, locally-controlled youth clubs for hamlets throughout the province.

Where the idea was accepted, the cadre initiated a 20-month training program to strengthen the organization and make it self-sufficient. Three such groups were set up in 1968. Now there are 50 on their own and 34 in formative stages, making the effort in Ninh Thuan Province unique in Vietnam for the success and intensity of the organization's development.

Participation in the youth program has begun to snowball because of the Jamboree. Children living around the Jamboree campsite who did not belong to a club were asking if they could form a group. The enthusiasm reached the parents too, many of them in the Jamboree crowd of more than three thousand.

The youth clubs are also having an impact on the VC. Several parents have said they've been told to get their kids out of the clubs. The parents refused because they considered the project of value, and their children wanted to stay. In fact, some villages under VC influence have formed their own youth clubs. This is especially ironic since these youngsters must pledge allegiance to the GVN before their clubs are recognized.

Well over half the rural population of Ninh Thuan Province are children, and most are under fourteen. Innocent victims, born and raised in a war zone, they are influenced by both sides in the war.

"For ten years, the Government of Vietnam could do little to help its children," said Mr. Girard LaBombard, province community development chief for Civil Operations and Rural Development Support (CORDS), the American organization concerned with pacification in Vietnam. "The program here in Ninh Thuan Province is one of a few recent efforts."

The youth clubs are efforts to change idle ragamuffins into busy youths. Darting about in tennis shoes, smiling, and singing, the Jamboree participants are evidence that it is not impossible to give the children something of value. Keeping the clubs under local control and membership voluntary assures the clubs of being unimposing and responsive to members' needs.

The youngsters learn agriculture by raising poultry and livestock.

The youth club members held foot races, a talent show, and prepared their own meals. Everyone left the Jamboree with a full stomach and a happy smile.

The children sell the marketable goods from the gardens but usually keep the poultry and pork for themselves and their families. An avenue is thus created for giving the children a basic understanding of those skills and introducing new ideas.

The clubs travel to neighboring hamlets to conduct the same type of civic action projects that they conduct in their own villages. The children perform simple public work such as janitorial projects and flower-planting. They can entertain, too, as the large crowds at the Jamboree testified by their applause. Their dramatic skits, singing, and dancing are rich in Vietnamese folk tradition, an important point for a country building national pride.

Industrialized societies have institutions for training children in social graces and standards of behavior. The Rural Youth Clubs do the same thing in Vietnam. Children elect their own leaders and decide on policies and procedures, independent of their parents. It is the objective of the 20-month training program conducted by the RD cadre to instruct the children in democratic methods. These methods not only provide for the smooth functioning of the clubs but also build a foundation for the youngsters' future participation in their nation's political affairs. Most important of all, the program belongs solely to the children—RD cadre caution parents to advise and suggest, but never to demand.

Since they have worked harder than anyone to organize the youth clubs, no group is happier over their success than the RD cadre. Major Tinh, the Ninh Thuan Province rural development chief, is particularly satisfied. The youth clubs represent a personal victory over the VC. Three times the enemy has tried to kill him since the program began three years ago. His home is now a pile of rubble. Major Tinh has not lost heart. "I am very happy," he said. "These children have proven that they can accomplish a great deal and take care of themselves at the same time."

In Saigon and throughout all regions and provinces of Vietnam, greater attention is being paid to the Ninh Thuan Province project. People are discovering that the clubs give Vietnamese children a group to identify with and a chance to assert themselves and develop new interests. "The project has brought national attention to the problems of Vietnamese youth," said First Lieutenant Jack Fulton, community development operations officer for CORDS. "Based on the example of Ninh Thuan, people are now striving for successful means to cope with such problems."

If the children of Vietnam have serious problems, none were apparent to those who witnessed the Jamboree. On the final day of the five-day event, the children enjoyed a bus tour of Cam Ranh Bay military installations. They proceeded to win the hearts of their hosts, the U.S. Air Force and Vietnamese Navy.

U.S. airmen expressed amazement over the conduct of their young guests. The Air Force had treated the children to lunch in their mess hall, and like their campsite, the children left the mess hall orderly and clean. "They weren't as messy as the same number of GIs, I'll tell you," said a surprised cook.

But the Rural Youth Jamboree, the culmination of three years of hard work, meant a great deal more than talent shows and parties. On the last day of the Jamboree, province chief Tran Van Tu impressed this fact on the children. "If older people did not have you, they wouldn't have to sacrifice to fight the enemy," he told them. "You are so young, but soon you will have to take care of them. A very hard role is waiting for you, and your education has not been very well developed. The RD cadre are trying to help you, and we hope you will become our best citizens."

Ninh Thuan's youth development will continue, thanks to the enthusiasm generated by the Jamboree. More children will be brought together for productive activity and for learning constructive skills. And like the happy parents at the Jamboree, perhaps more of Vietnam will organize youth clubs and reap the benefits and enjoyment of their children's achievements. ■

Just For Kicks

Larry pulled the clean white sheets up around his neck. The antiseptic smell of a modern Army hospital filled his nostrils. The sounds of the morning work had awakened him. It was the first restful night he had spent in several months, a pleasant relief from the past nights filled with worry and anxiety.

The last five months hadn't been too pleasant for Specialist Larry Hall, for during this time he had become addicted to barbiturates.

Larry's memory raced back to that time. Like so many others in Vietnam, he was really down. Those first two months in country only served to let him know that he wanted no part of this war. The time dragged on, he was lonely, and he couldn't understand why he had to be in Vietnam when so many of his friends didn't even have to come into the Army. The nights found him brooding, alone, thinking of home and wishing he could be there.

It was at this point that Larry met Sergeant Tom Blake. Sergeant Blake slept in the bunk next to Larry, and became the closest friend that he had. One night, while the two of them were alone listening to the radio, Larry revealed his feelings and depression. Sergeant Blake seemed to take a real interest in Larry's problems and told him to follow him.

The two soldiers went into a supply shack that Larry thought had been sealed off weeks ago. Inside, several other fellows were rapping and listening to a small tape recorder. After Sergeant Blake introduced Larry to his friends, he asked the young specialist if he'd like to join them. They were taking pills. This was the way they fought the boredom and loneliness of day to day life in Vietnam.

Larry had never used any form of drugs before, even though several of his friends back in the world frequently had asked him to try marijuana. He didn't need to then, but this was different. He was in Vietnam, his family would never know, and the guys had what looked like a foolproof system of getting the pills. Besides, he wouldn't be hurting anyone. That was the first of many nights that Larry spent in the supply shed with Sergeant Blake and his friends.

At first the pills helped out a great deal. Larry was able to forget about Vietnam and the loneliness that had filled his nights before. The thrill of using pills also excited him. It was the first time he had used drugs, and it made him feel he was putting something over on "Sam."

After a couple of months, however, things didn't seem so bright. Larry began to realize that the drugs were no longer merely a kick. He had become dependent on them. The afternoons were agonizing waiting periods before he could hit the supply shed and have a couple of pills. When the realization of this dependence finally hit Larry, he was gripped with fear. He never thought that his involvement with drugs would progress to this point.

One of the major problems that faced Larry was how to get enough money to support his habit. The money he had stashed away to buy a camera didn't last long, so he was forced to deal with illegal activities. He began selling MPC on the black market and buying PX items for a Vietnamese he had met.

Larry had never intended for all this to happen. He was merely caught up in an ever-increasing circle of illegal dealings and he couldn't see an end to them. He knew that his chances of being caught were very great, and increasing every day.

There was something that worried Larry even more than getting caught trading in the black market. He had never thought that he would become a drug addict. The thought of going home in this condition repulsed him. Larry knew he had to do something and he had to do it soon. He made up his mind he was going to get out of this rut.

Firm in his conviction, Larry began searching for some way to alleviate his condition. While reading through some of the material he had found on drugs, he discovered the amnesty program. The program was set up so that a member of the Army could turn himself in to a Provost Marshall, Chaplain, JAG officer or the Surgeon. If he admitted he had a drug problem and wanted to receive help, he would not be subject to any disciplinary measures. All the facilities of the Army would be used to help him with his difficulty. Absolutely no record would be kept of his visits, either in his 201 or medical file. Anyone could qualify, as long as they weren't already under investigation for drug abuse. There was also an amnesty box, where a person could deposit any drugs he had, again with no disciplinary action.

Larry saw this as a perfect solution to his problem. He went to the Chaplain's office and turned himself in. The Chaplain listened to Larry's problem, and referred him to the Surgeon. After talking to one of the doctors, it was decided that Larry would be admitted to the hospital.

In the hospital, several tests were made to find out the exact effect the pills had had on Larry and what treatment would be best for him. He also began speaking to the hospital psychiatrist, who tried to help Larry with the depression which had turned him to drugs.

Today is Larry's last day in the hospital. The doctors have told him there is no physical reason why he needs to take pills. The decision is up to him; if he wants to beat the habit, he can. There isn't much question in his mind now. He's off pills and has no intention of getting back on them. ■

All names and incidents in this story are fictitious.

From: _____

_____

_____

_____

TWO
AIR MAIL
STAMPS

To: _____

_____

_____

_____

Building a water point
Story on page 18