

DANGER *forward*

Winter 1970

The Magazine Of The Big Red One, Vietnam

In Retrospect

This has been a highly successful year in Vietnam for the Big Red One. Together with our Vietnam allies we have made great progress in a united effort to defeat the Communist aggressors in our portion of the III Corps Tactical Zone.

You have driven the enemy from the Iron Triangle and denied him use of traditional routes of infiltration such as the Saigon and Song Be Corridors. You have Rome Plowed his base camps in the Catcher's Mitt. You have denied him free reign in the Michelin plantation and captured his hidden weapons and food supplies.

While crushing these forces, you have built miles of new roadways, crisscrossing areas once belonging to the enemy. Today, for example, Route 13 is a busy highway, whisking traffic to and from the populated areas of the south. Within the memory of many Big Red One soldiers, travel north of Di An was limited to armed convoys.

During the next year, we will continue our unified effort to drive the enemy out of III Corps by pushing north, making it even more difficult for the Communists to continue fighting. As time passes we will pacify and secure more and more of this area so the Vietnamese will be able to return to a happy, safe and productive way of life.

During the next year, we can rely on these achievements to give us continued strength and moral courage. I am proud of the soldiers of the Big Red One and the job you have done. I am confident that during the months to come you will continue to work diligently toward our goal of a lasting peace for the people of Vietnam.

A E Milloy



MG A. E. MILLOY

Commanding General
1st Infantry Division

DANGER *forward*

Volume three, Number four—Winter 1970

The Magazine Of The Big Red One, Vietnam

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The special effects picture on page 17 was taken by SSG L. E. Perkins of the 1st Infantry Division Information Office. The picture was shot with a Leica M-2 on Ektachrome X film at 125 sec., F 11. The color slide was exposed to a safe light reflected off a darkroom wall for 11 seconds and then processed in E-4 color kit chemicals.

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Bob Hope

Hope In Lai Khe

ILT Mark F. Clark

Bob Hope and his 1969 Christmas troupe premiered in Vietnam before some 15,000 cheering soldiers at 1st Infantry Division Headquarters in Lai Khe.

The two-hour show opened Hope's sixth consecutive holiday tour in Vietnam and marked his 27th year of entertaining American servicemen.

Accompanying the veteran comedian were astronaut Neil Armstrong, actress-singer Connie Stevens, dancer Suzanne Charney, "Laugh-In's" Teresa Graves, the Goldiggers, Eva Rueber-Staier (Miss World of 1969),

Les Brown and his Band of Renown, and the Peiro Brothers, a comic juggling team. There were 83 on the trip, including performers and the production crew.

The star—"Mr. Entertainment"—was introduced by Major General A. E. Milloy, commanding general of the Big Red One.

"Bob Hope is an old friend of the Big Red One," General Milloy said. "He has entertained the Division in Sicily (during World War II) and over here a couple of years ago."

With that, Hope came out swinging a golf club and sporting an oversize, patch-covered fatigue jacket with sleeves that extended beyond his hands.



Neil Armstrong



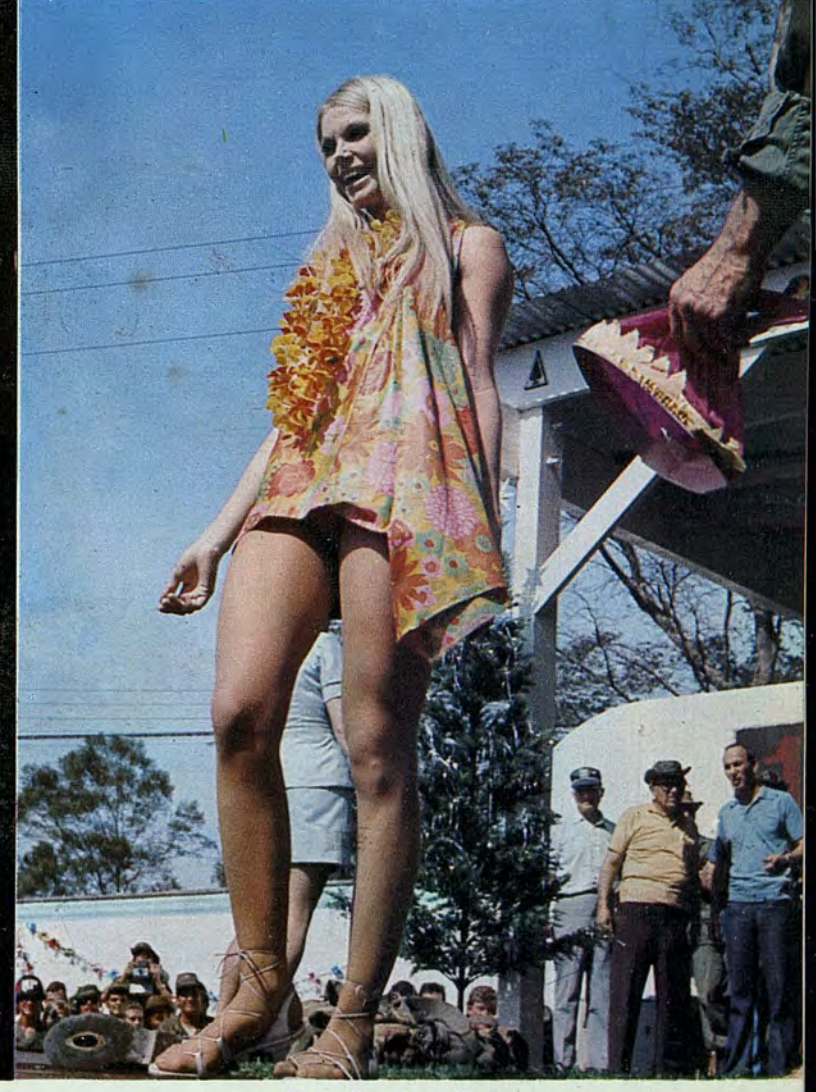
Suzanne Charney



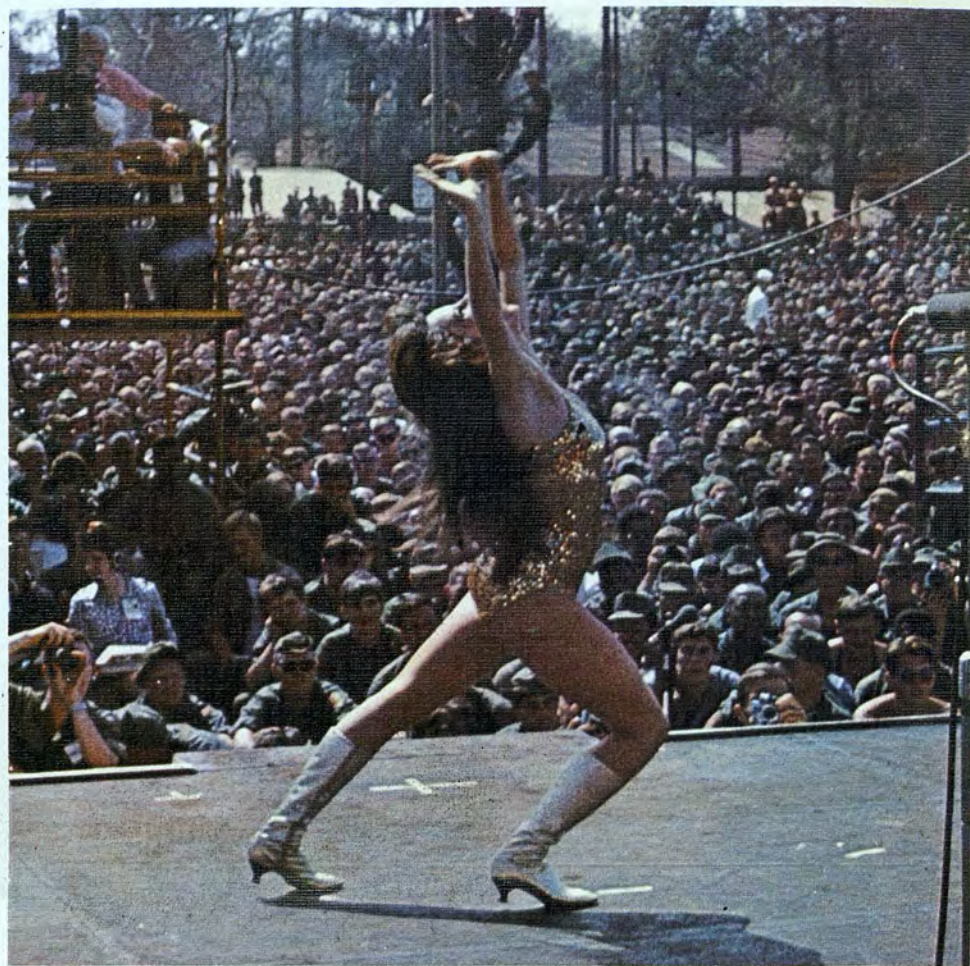
Teresa Graves



Connie Stevens



Eva Rueber-Staier



He had come prepared with gags about Lai Khe and the Big Red One: "I know why they call it Lai Khe," he said, pronouncing it "Lai Kee" instead of "Lai Kay." "I just stepped off the plane and me no likee."

And the name "Big Red One" is appropriate, he said, because "that's what my backside looked like when the mosquitoes got through with it."

Some of his jokes were unexpectedly appropos—even for Hope, whose writers always seem to be up to the minute.

Runway Too Short

"Lai Khe is my favorite and fastest stop—the runway is three feet shorter than the plane," he said.

That may well have been what it felt like when Hope's plane, just starting to land, was waved off the landing strip because two cobra gunships had to scramble in support of a ground contact with the enemy.

"We have a very mixed audience today at Lai Khe," he quipped at another point. "We're so close to the fighting we had to give the Viet Cong half the tickets."

Again he wasn't far from the truth. At six p.m. the night before the show, a patrol from November Platoon, Alpha Company, 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry had found eight enemy soldiers emplacing three rockets for Lai Khe. Two of the enemy were killed and one was detained in the contact four miles north of the base camp.

Honored Guests

During General Milloy's introduction of the show, he paid tribute to the five soldiers in the contact. Calling them "our honored guests," he said, "it may well be that the show goes on today through their courtesy."

Hope's banter with Miss World put the lovely 20-year-old Austrian in the position of "straight lady."

Bob: "As Miss World you have a mission don't you?"

Eva: "My job is to promote international good will and understanding."

"How are you going to do that?"

"Through love."

"You've sold me. Where does a civilian re-up?"

Naturally, the Army was the butt of many of the gags. In a skit about the military, "Lieutenant" Connie Stevens asks "Private" Bob Hope, "What were you in civilian life?" And he replies, "Happy!"

"Welcome Bing"

But Hope took his share of the ribbing too. One giant sign held up by some troops in a prominent spot



in the audience read "Welcome Bing Crosby." And Neil Armstrong kidded the comedian about his reliance on reading his lines from "idiot cards."

Armstrong injected a moment of seriousness into the show shortly after Hope introduced him:

"For those of you that are here every day of the year to find a just and lasting peace on earth," he said, "I'd just like to say it's a pleasure for me to represent all the folks back home in saying thank you for what you're doing."

In a short second appearance before the show ended, General Milloy presented Hope with a memento of the Big Red One, but not before he was chided for coming on stage too early. Hope first acted surprised

to see the general standing beside him, but then he allowed, "this is your ranch and you can come out here any time."

Hope's Memento

The memento was a chrome-plated, Vietnamese-made machete which General Milloy said was used to cut trails through the jungle.

But Hope would have none of that.

"You must have stolen this from a delicatessen in Saigon or a rabbi or something," he ad-libbed.

Turning serious, Hope said the memento, one more to add to the many Big Red One souvenirs he has, would occupy a prominent spot in his trophy room.

The crowd that watched the show had been gathering for choice seats



since seven p.m. the night before.

By midnight there were 17 men from I Company, 75th Rangers; the 1st Battalion (Mechanized), 16th Infantry; and the Air Force "side-winder" contingent in Lai Khe.

15,000 Fans

By the time the show started, there were an estimated 12,000 seated and 3,000 standing. Besides the 1st Division soldiers, the audience included a thousand 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) troopers and support soldiers and airmen from various units in the Big Red One area of operation and the Saigon area.

One 1st Division group that hadn't expected to be there got to see the show thanks to a girl scout troop in California. The troop, which had "adopted" Mike Platoon of Delta Company, 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry, wrote a letter to Hope, asking him to say hello to them in Vietnam. All 20 in the platoon were there.

There wasn't much doubt about audience reaction to the starlet-studded show.

"Hope's jokes were very appropriate and all," said Big Red One soldier, Specialist 4 Ronald Sans of Wayne, N.J. "But the girls were the best part."





Hope and Armstrong were escorted from the Lai Khe airstrip by General A. E. Milloy





he fights to live

SP5 Stuart M. Richel

The man is a youngster, a teenager, but a seasoned veteran. He is a man. To believe otherwise is folly; but to gape at such truism is to be astounded by the obvious.

Where there is work to be done, no one is more capable. If the chore be mundane, he will do it, though perhaps without blinding speed. Where the task is of importance, no one will delay him. That danger crosses the path before him is of no consequence. Some of his kind have gone beyond hell, and can look back with disdain. Others are prepared for the challenge. Their heritage, their training, their pride in country—all these dictate that the man respond with courage and dignity. The incident will pass and simply become a memory.

Let his manliness not belie his gentle nature. His conscience mourns the creation of death, and the labors and tactics which bring about such lifelessness. Though oncoming hordes will not incapacitate him, his heart will cry out at the sight of a child in distress.

His body is covered, not with modern fashion, but with the rags and grime of war. He looks to his sleeve or a towel around his neck to remove the stain, not fortunate enough to have greater convenience at hand.

The clouds around him are hardly silver-lined. They are laden with rain. They are simply makers of mud. Their only redeeming value is as a buffer, stopping the sun from bearing down mercilessly.

As if to tease, the sun will replace the unbearable rain, move on to produce equally unbearable heat, and dry the feet sore and rotted. The man takes it, doing what he must, doing whatever he can against the elements.

He warms his food, if at all, with the heat from stick-like explosives, rather than a gas range. His food is usually tolerable, but becomes quite tiresome after nine or ten months of similarity. Fruit cocktail and pound cake are delicacies, much the same as snails or caviar to the Beautiful People. The fruit and cake are to be sought with diligence, and protected with all but life itself.

Don't speak of loneliness to him. He knows it too well.

Don't preach about losses, and the meaning of death. He has a history which enables him to count higher than you. And no one has undergone more of the experiences which make a guy cherish life and what it has to offer. He has lived and fought with great friends, some of whom will return home. But he notes the irony: that those who live, live only to return to riots, bloodshed, despair—or perhaps hope.

Don't speak to him of race. The blood his brothers shed was real, and not strangely, was as red as his. When it got down to survival and life was on the line,



colors blended. After all, color won't stop a well aimed round.

Speak to him of nice things. Scream about living and life itself. Whisper about people, love and softness.

He is a human being. And, as such, wants to leave "grunt" and "leg" behind him, in the dim past, where such history belongs. His personal victory is simply in terms of "DEROS"—leaving Vietnam. He has finished his one year tour, no more chalking off days on a calen-

dar. And now his future lies with his folks, his girl, his job—his world.

That world should thank him and let him go on his way. Give him the respect he merits, but—no parades or pedestals, please. Allow him to pick up the pieces and move on to a new and fruitful life.

As an infantryman, he has earned his keep, his place out of the sun. He deserves no less.

the soft sell



1LT Brent W. McWhorter

The helicopter went into an orbiting pattern making five trips around a huge imaginary circle. An important, but still potential Hoi Chanh was hidden in the thick jungle below. Riding in the helicopter was his wife and two Vietnamese national policemen. They peered anxiously at the wooded area below. Suddenly he broke from the treeline, running, waving a red flag.

The helicopter slipped in for a quick landing and another successful Hoi Chanh mission had been completed.

Earlier that day the Vietnamese wife had walked 12 kilometers to Tri Tam District Police Station to tell officials that her husband, a finance minister for the local communist infrastructure, wanted to rally.

She said that he feared being shot by the guerrillas if he were to leave his hiding place. Consequently, the 1st Division provided a helicopter as his personal taxi to freedom.

The rallier and his wife later told Big Red One interrogators that they had heard many recorded messages



from U.S. helicopters and that they believed them. U.S. and ARVN units in the Big Red One's area of operation (AO) receive ralliers every day who say they have heard the 1st Division's broadcasts and that they were convinced by the recordings that rallying would end their hungry, miserable way of life.

Nighttime PSYOPS

Getting the proper message to potential ralliers is the responsibility of the Division G-5 psychological operations/civil affairs office. They have used virtually every approach possible in their efforts to induce Communists to rally to the government side. Such a program, however, is limited only by the imagination and enthusiasm of the planning staff. Recently the psychological operations (PSYOPS) section developed a new approach—night flights—that have proven exceptionally successful.

The officer engineering the night program throughout the AO is Captain Lee Robinson, Fort Pierce, Fla., who oversees the night missions from the G-5 office in Lai Khe.

The night flights were inaugurated for three basic reasons: to harass the enemy by keeping him awake and compelling him to think about the messages; to hit the enemy soldier who sleeps during the day and moves at night; and to take advantage of excellent broadcasting conditions which exist at night.

"At night, the broadcasts from our choppers have been reported by Hoi Chanh to be much clearer and carry a longer distance," Captain Robinson explained recently. "So we think the nighttime PSYOPS will continue to play an important role in our program."

Theme Important

The G-5 staff found a solution to the problem of transmitting the messages to enemy troops early in the

program.

"We use a 'slick' with a thousand-watt sound system on it," said Captain Robinson. "Our missions are basically three hours in length and are flown between midnight and six in the morning."

The choice of themes to be broadcast to the enemy is important—not every theme will suit each specific enemy unit. The PSYOPS section has discovered consistently effective subjects that will lower almost any hard-core Communist's morale.

"One of the best themes we've found is the 'family appeal broadcast,'" he revealed. "This is basically a nostalgic theme that will make our audience think of home and the family they may have left behind. We also use a harassment theme which is called the 'Wandering Soul.'"

"This is a recording of eerie sounds intended to represent the souls of enemy dead who have not found peace. The enemy is supposedly very superstitious about being buried in an unmarked grave, with his soul not able to rest with his body because he was not buried properly.

"Superstition goes a long way—it's conscious but also subconscious. The enemy realizes these sounds are coming from a tape recorder on a chopper, but that still doesn't help to suppress the fear they evidently have of their souls someday wailing and moaning."

Glowing Account

While the night flights are new, they are not the only changes and improvements being made in the Big Red One Chieu Hoi program. The G-5 staff has recently been supplying enemy troops with white surrender flags with detailed rally instructions printed on them. These are disseminated by ground patrols and ambush parties at likely avenues of enemy movement.

More recently, the same white flags have been soaked in nuoc mam, a fish sauce that is a staple in the Vietnamese diet, to take advantage of the enemy's resupply difficulties and the resulting hunger problems.

The success of any new program can be measured in results, and thus far the statistics give a glowing account of the nighttime PSYOPS program.

Captain Robinson related that, "in August, 52 percent of our ralliers for that month said they had heard our broadcasts and read our leaflets. In September, we reached 60 percent and in October it climbed to 91 percent, so I would say that there is a steady increase in our ability to effectively reach our targets."

Friendly Persuasion

Part of the credit for the increased percentages must go to the unique Early Word system now employed by the 1st Division's PSYOPS helicopters. The system involves speeding a helicopter equipped with a radio—loudspeaker system to any location where an enemy has rallied to the Government's side. If the Hoi Chanh can point out the general vicinity where he believes VC or NVA comrades might be located, he is given a PRC-25 radio and asked to talk to his former buddies.

His ground transmission is picked up by a receiver in the helicopter overhead and broadcast to enemy troops in the area. Communist troops must be surprised when they hear the voice of a Hoi Chanh, who only an hour or so earlier had been on their side, urging them to rally to the Allies!

With the enemy having to contend with Early Word, the Wandering Soul, and surrender flags reminding him of the food he cannot get, it is not difficult to see why more and more Communists are deciding they would rather switch than fight.

ARPs In Action

SP4 Peter Mutmanský

A piercing wail, a moment's reprieve, then a mad scramble for equipment and the waiting choppers—the 1st Infantry Division's saber has been unsheathed.

Conterguerrilla warfare combines the finesse of a Chess tactician, the swift, clean probes of a fencer—thrust, parry, exploit—and the follow up blow of a steel studded mace.

In Vietnam, the function of the thin, flexible blade is carried out by the Cavalry whose three armored and one air troops primarily perform reconnaissance missions for each division.

If the comparison of the saber to the 1st Division's organic Cavalry unit, the 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry, can be pursued further, the twin-sided, fine honed point of the slender instrument can be likened to the Aero Rifle Platoon (ARP's) of Delta Troop stationed at Phu Loi Base Camp.

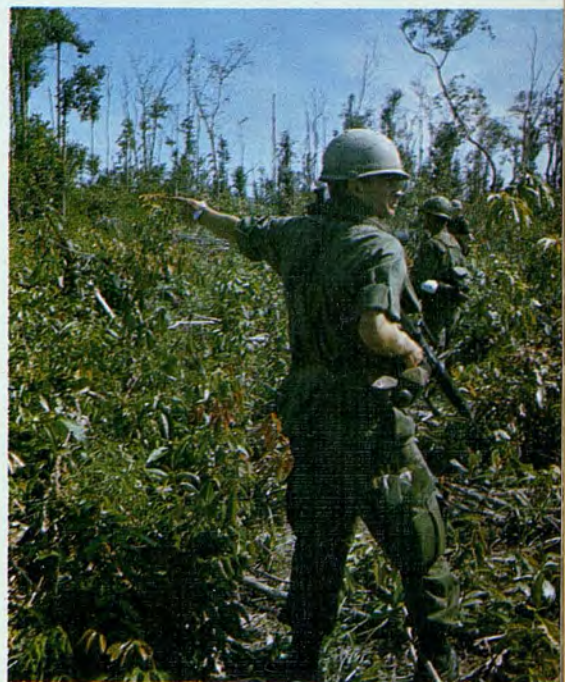
Major Charles L. Moore, commanding officer of Delta Troop, pointed out the strike versatility of his ARP's.

"Our job is to find contact for the Division. In this level of the war—that exemplified by hit and run tactics—if we don't lock onto Charlie whenever we find him, he'll quickly disappear.

Ready To Scramble

"Our Aero Rifle Platoon is always on alert," said Major Moore, "ready to scramble. If one of our hunter-killer teams finds a target, we insert the ARP's to make contact, to exploit the situation, to get

The ARPs are well known for their hit and run tactics, moving to a contact site quickly and with a minimum of outside coordination. One of their responsibilities is to find contact for the Division, pinpointing enemy locations, and air assaulting to develop the situation. Platoon leader 1LT Stuart J. Harrell says his men move well because they are always fresh and have a lot of confidence in themselves and in their back-up force. A ready reaction force, the ARPs work out of Phu Loi base camp and with their own helicopter support can be airlifted in just minutes to any hot spot in the Division area of operation.



a feel for what's there.

"The beauty of our flexibility is that, within Delta Troop, we have the means to exploit, to develop a situation, without a lot of outside coordination. The ARPs are an elite type, always prepared to be immersed into any type of situation with no elaborate planning. Every time we spot a target, we pounce on it with everything we have at our disposal: gunships, artillery, and finally the ARP's. That platoon sees more action day to day than any other unit in the Division."

Seen through the wide-angle lens of a mobile television camera, the reviewed footage of a typical ARP's mission might be described in this manner:

After the platoon scrambled aboard the five lift helicopters, the lead chopper ascended and seemingly drew the others in succession, like the lead capsule of a caterpillar ride at an amusement park. Within minutes the five choppers nestled down in a field adjoining Fire Support Base Normandy III while the artillery sections pounded the probable landing zone with high explosive rounds.

Enemy Spotted

The open mikes of the choppers' radio system clued the ARP's as to the nature of their mission.

"Forty-three, 43" squelched one station. "Approximately fifteen in

the wooded area beyond the deserted paddies. Over."

"Roger, Darkhorse. Call in air strikes and more arty, then insert the ARP's. Don't lose contact. This could be our biggest action of the week."

Fifteen minutes later the lift choppers swung out from Normandy III and nosed toward a section of the Catcher's Mitt, the large, circular basin of thick-veined jungle growth interspersed with irregular splotches of brown meadow in the Second Brigade area of operations.

As the string of choppers neared the target area, First Lieutenant Stuart J. Harrell, platoon commander from Redlands, Calif., leaned forward from his perch in the lead wagon to survey the terrain and watch two Cobra gunships unleash their arsenal into a section of the woodline.

Mini-gun Fire

The initial back-roar, the swish, and resonant impact of the rocket rounds added the aura of a piped-in background to a strip show—tracer elements from mini-gun spurts bumped and ground along the jungle runway as they tossed off their copper and steel jackets.

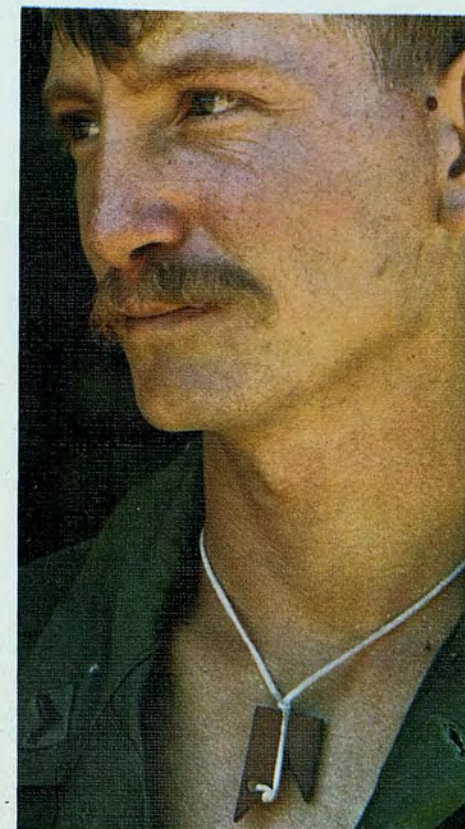
"Head for that clearing to the west of the target area," murmured Lieutenant Harrell in his phoneset.

The lead chopper banked left, half slid for a moment, then slipped



The Big Red One's Aero Rifle Platoon is always on alert, prepared for combat assaults at any location in the Division AO, in any kind of terrain and with a minimum of prior planning. A part of Delta Troop, 1st Squadron 4th Cavalry, the ARPs are commanded by Major Charles L. Moore.

"The beauty of our flexibility is that within Delta Troop we have the means to exploit, to develop a situation without a lot of outside coordination. The ARPs are an elite type always prepared to be immersed into any type of situation with no elaborate planning," Major Moore said.



into a long incline toward the touchdown point.

As the helicopters reared back to slow their forward momentum, the door gunners opened up with deafening bursts of their M-60 machineguns while the ARP's utilized the seats and doors of the choppers as starting blocks for their disembarking sprint.

Even before the choppers settled down, all the fully-equipped soldiers leaped into a two foot deep brackish water—broken here and there by sparse stubbles of rice stalks; then slithered through the mire to take up defensive positions while the helicopters hiked their tails and scooted. At this point a pan shot from one of the ascending choppers would show what appeared to be two schools of turtles with camouflaged shells lazing atop an inky pond.

Buoyed up by the murky soup, the ARP's propelled themselves out of the open area like frogs, then formed three columns to traverse the nearby woods.

Follow The Leader

For three hours, the platoon followed the lead of Major Moore, who hovered over the area in a Light Observation Helicopter and marked objectives in the enemy base camp with red smoke grenades. Two Cobras pranced like show stallions across the ultramarine sky, breaking form occasionally to kick up their

heels and rake the acreage in front of the proceeding ARP's. The whine of diving Phantom jets, mixed with the distant rumbling of bursting bombs and the roar of after burners, added to the cacophony of battle.

The troops filed through the thick underbrush, picking their way carefully along the rims of thirty-foot-wide bomb craters, slipping through dense stands of bamboo, kneeling at intervals during pauses in the search to peer through the lateral curtains of undergrowth to ascertain possible hostile movement, edging slowly into the purplish shadows draped unceremoniously from lower branches, flitting from one shadow-screen to another.

They destroyed bunkers and booby traps which they encountered and engaged enemy soldiers when found.

After crisscrossing the entire limits of the camp, the ARP's filed back to their pick-up zone to await their choppers.

Just a few moments out from Phu Loi, each chopper trailed red smoke. The saber hit home that day.

High Moral

Lieutenant Harrell evaluated both

his role as platoon commander and the high moral of the men.

"My men move well," he said. "They have a high moral factor because they know they'll come back that night. They're always fresh. But the biggest boost to their spirit is the firepower at our disposal, the security arrangement. We have gunships flanking us at all times."

The spirit of the ARP's is no fleeting, ghost-like phenomenon. It is visibly discernible and pervades the barracks life as well as the fighting life of the platoon. Though the esprit can, in fact, be seen in the friendship of the troops, it is also tangibly symbolized in the good luck charm worn by each ARP. Materially, the fierboard punch included in the old C-4 kits is worthless, but when dangled from a string that circles an ARP's neck, the one and one-half by one-half inch totem bespeaks the pride of a close-knit group.

Esprit de Corps

Major Moore attributes this closeness to the communication, the coordination between the support sections of his troop.

The ARP's themselves look at it

this way.

Specialist 5 Robert A. Hawkins, a medic from La Grange, Illinois, mused for a moment, then commented: "There is something exciting about being with the ARP's, an added element you don't find in other units. You're always on scramble, you don't know where you're going to go, and you don't know what you'll get into. In my opinion, they're a real elite fighting force."

James A. Jordan from Attica, Indiana, a Staff Sergeant recently graduated from NCO Academy, added his observations.

"I think what keeps us working so well is the fact that we all know we're not just taking a walk in the woods. We're put into a contact area and we know someone is out there. Everyone knows everyone else," he said. "When we make contact, we come back and talk about it, what we did right, and how we can remedy what we did wrong."

There is an art to being an ARP.

Like in the sport of fencing, the ARP must be agile of mind and body. He thrusts, parries, and exploits. But in his hand is no blunted foil; he carries the saber of the Big Red One.



On landing at Phu Loi, the ARPs trail red smoke as a sign of a successful contact.



Vietnam Battles

Phu Hoa Dong

Closing The Saigon

Dogface Ambush

Trapezoid IV

PHU HOA DONG

The cordon and seal of Phu Hoa Village has been described as "the largest such operation conducted in the history of pacification by the 1st Infantry Division." Engineered by the Big Red One's 2nd Brigade, the seal operation involved the 5th ARVN Division and Government of Vietnam forces from Phu Hoa District and Binh Duong Province, as well as numerous U.S. troops.

On the night of 15 September, ten U.S. and ARVN companies converged rapidly on the village moving to the area by boats, air, trucks and on foot. The seal was maintained for 11 days while the village was thoroughly searched by five Regional Forces companies, national policemen, an Armed Propaganda Team and U.S. troops. First Lieutenant William E. Giest from the Division Information Office was on the scene and following is his report of the activities that took place there.

The Phu Hoa Dong seal was no ordinary cordon and search operation. There are many of those staged in Vietnam each week. In fact, there had been many staged in this village. This was the fourth in the past fifteen months. The baffling variety of troops and the novel techniques used caused this one to be conspicuous. That it was highly successful made it distinctive: a victory, if not a major triumph of coordination and innovation.

With the advent of "Vietnamization," coordination has taken its place among leeches, heat cramps and the after effects of malaria pills as a formidable problem in ground operations. A company-sized operation is likely to consist of two platoons of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN), and two platoons of U.S. soldiers. Platoons themselves are integrated.

Terrorize Villagers

The village of Phu Hoa Dong consists of four hamlets, has a population of over 9,000 people, and straddles the junction of two communist infiltration routes from Cambodia to Saigon, just 15 miles away. The Viet Cong had threatened and in some cases assassinated Government of Vietnam (GVN) sympathizers in recent weeks. The villagers feared for their lives and the lives of their children.

An "ordinary" cordon and search operation simply wouldn't be sufficient for Phu Hoa Dong. Lieutenant Colonel David Martin, the operation's task force commander, knew it. Colonel Chong, the 7th ARVN Regiment commander knew it. It was agreed that a simplistic approach would be inadequate for several reasons. The most important consideration to those who plotted, planned, and organized was a lasting solution to the problem. The Communists must be driven out and not allowed to return.

Variety Act

Ed Sullivan himself has not had such a variety of troopers as took part in this seal operation. At 11:30 p.m. on September 15, five U.S. 1st Infantry Division companies (from two separate battalions), two companies of the U.S. 82d Airborne Division, four companies (one was a reconnaissance company) of the ARVN 7th Regiment, 5th Division; South Vietnamese Provincial Reconnaissance units, South Vietnamese Regional Forces, South Vietnamese Popular Forces, South Vietnamese National Police, local police, tracker dog units, scout dog units, and elements of the California State Highway Patrol, moved out to seal off the village. In a little more than an hour, the seal was complete, airtight.

"We had no idea you were coming; we always know," said a disillusioned VC company commander who was captured that first night.

The Decoy Village

Thousands of leaflets urging VC to turn themselves in, were dropped on Tan Thanh Dong. Observation planes, already on missions in the area, were instructed to make passes over the decoy village. U.S. and ARVN reconnaissance platoons plodded through the town on the afternoon of the 15th. Companies of the 1st Infantry Division were conspicuously placed a few thousand meters away. We were being un-

avoidably obvious. The word was out—the VC were moving quickly to safer confines such as Phu Hoa Dong.

Moving Out

Dusk, September 15: An estimated 50 VC regulars were through for the day and taking it easy in Phu Hoa Dong, while the allied force prepared to move out under the cover of darkness. That afternoon, elements of the 2nd Battalion, 18th Infantry and elements of the 7th Regiment, 5th ARVN Division were airlifted to an area northeast of Phu Hoa Dong. They were now moving steadily toward the village. The units of the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry, who had been busy beating pots and pans together, popping yellow and green and other pretty smoke grenades, and doing whatever else was necessary to let the residents of Tan Thanh Dong know that they were there, packed up quietly and closed on Phu Hoa Dong.

On The Saigon

The 82nd Airborne troops were moving down the Saigon River from the Iron Triangle on River Patrol Boats (PBR's) toward the village. The noose was tightened until the allies stood "shoulder to shoulder" along the five mile perimeter.

Flushing The VC

Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 18th Infantry then boarded trucks and roared into the village. No more stealth, no more deception, at least for the moment. They were to be a catalyst. They were to drive the Viet Cong from the core of the village to the surface, and at the surface they would be wiped away. To a certain extent, this is what happened. As the troops jumped from the trucks, they were fired upon. They engaged the enemy, who broke and fled to the northern edge of town where they incurred heavy casualties from ARVN forces, holding the seal. They were trapped and fought ferociously in an attempt to escape.

They let fly with eighty B-40 rockets in that battle the first night. Eighty of those precious rockets which had been toted perhaps 900 miles by land, by oxcart, by bicycle, by sampan. Nine hundred grueling miles, through floods, through jungle, through mountains, through B-52 attacks; along now dangerous trails, plagued with artillery fire and the claymore mines of allied amush units.

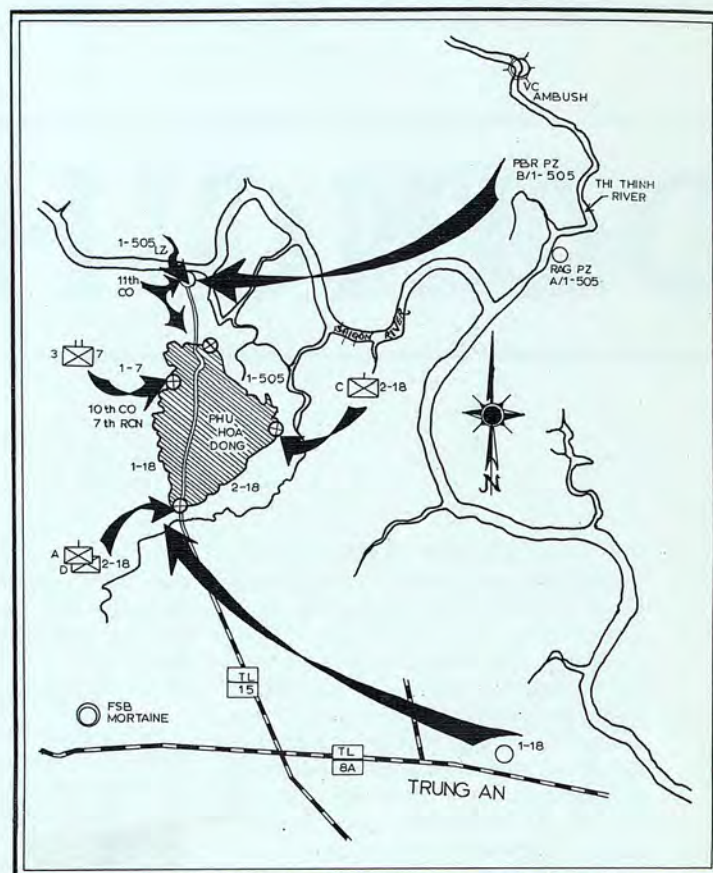
At daybreak, the show began—as it was to begin each morning for the next ten days. I can see why some thought of it as a carnival. There was a lot going on, a lot to take in. At first glance, it was rather confounding. As American Forces held the seal, all of those ARVN troops and Regional Forces and Popular Forces and National Police and Provincial Reconnaissance Units (there didn't turn out to be any California Patrolmen after all) were rounding up the villagers and sending them to the schoolyard for screening. At the same time, they were conducting painstaking searches of the houses—all of the houses—for arms, unauthorized tunnels, and the enemy.

Unauthorized Tunnels

Unauthorized tunnels? Each household is allowed one small tunnel for self-protection. A system which insured an intensive and thorough search was devised. The village was divided into five sections. The sundry Vietnamese units involved were likewise divided into five search units. Each unit combed its designated area for several hours, then rotated to another. This went on throughout the 10-day operation. The results indicate that this systematic search, designed to get several perspectives of the same area, was effective. Innumerable unauthorized tunnels were found containing weapons, ammunition, rice...and enemy soldiers. The tunnels were destroyed. It was a long and tedious job. After eight days of searching, tunnels and bunkers were still being uncovered. Private First Class James Levi explained, "this village is riddled with tunnel complexes and bunkers. The tunnels are expertly dug. We found one with three false walls."

Meanwhile, thousands of villagers were being screened in the school yard. Grouped by age and sex, an attempt was made to screen one thousand per day. Two ARVN soldiers, Do Thanh Loc and Lam Huu Duc, questioned the villagers, and explained the procedures. I.D. cards were checked. Government of Vietnam cards, student cards, military deferment and discharge cards. Ten basic questions were asked of each villager: Do you know any VC? Have you had any contact with threats from the VC?, etc. If any questions were answered affirmatively, or it was felt that the person being questioned was holding back, further interrogation was prescribed.

For perhaps the first time in the Vietnam war polygraphs were brought to the field. The lie detectors certainly substantiated the claim by Colonel Martin that he would try anything to make this seal a success.



Bizarrré? Yes. Effective? Well, no. Lieutenant Colonel Patillo was candid and concise in explaining their effectiveness, "They didn't work." It seemed the villagers were so frightened that they proved ineffective. I felt that the prospect of being subject to this highly sophisticated product of American technology might encourage some of the suspects to talk.

In this way, I felt it might have been valuable. I asked Gerald Walters, a U.S. military intelligence specialist who was in charge of interrogations if perhaps it might have been somewhat effective purely as a scare factor. "They didn't work," he replied. Walters felt that the screening and interrogations were going extremely well, however. "Of course," he admitted, "they're not telling all they know. That is to be expected."

Checking The Answers

He felt that this was caused, not by the people being sympathetic to the VC, but rather by a good deal of misgiving as to what would happen to them and their families if they did cooperate. This is an enormous problem and one of great consequence—the ubiquitous fly in the ointment, if you will. The Viet Cong were once the glorified champions of the people. White hats and what have you. The Good Guys. They led a revolution against the absentee landlords of the Saigon government who taxed heavily and gave nothing in return. Apparently things have changed. The VC are becoming more desperate, more ruthless and less welcome in an increasing large number of villages. The government in Saigon is becoming more responsive to the peoples, needs. Land reform and education programs are two profound examples.

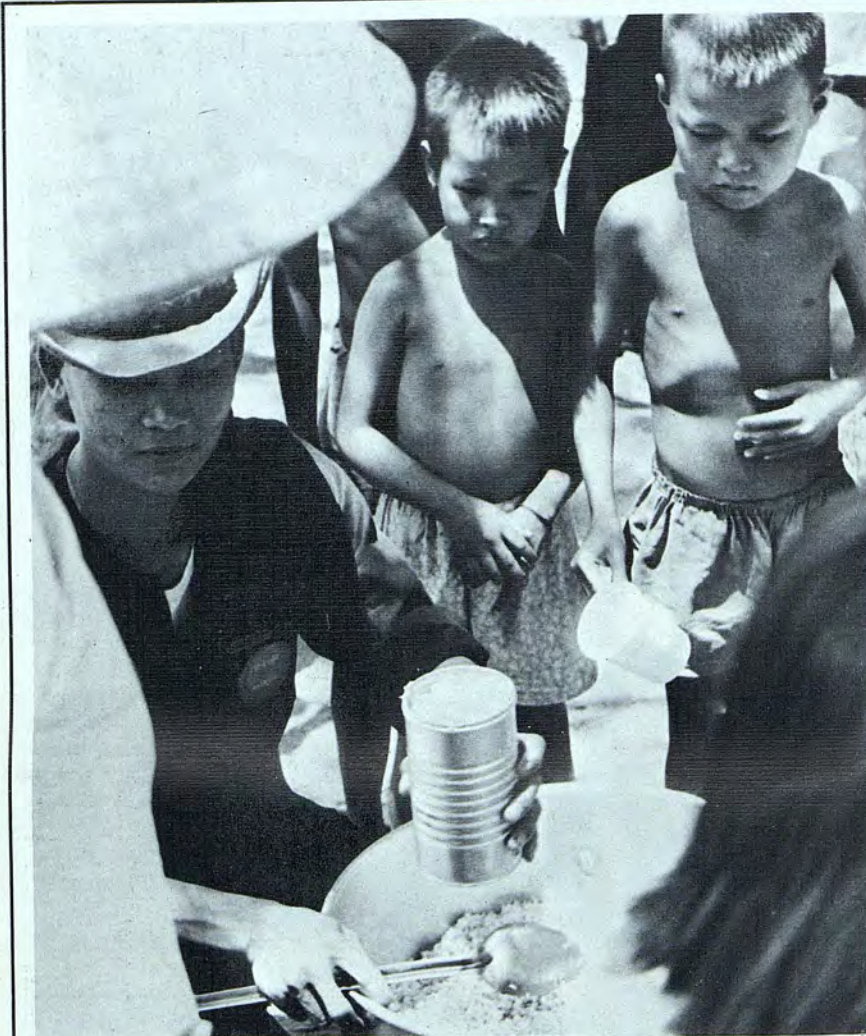
The cause for the revolution has dwindled, not to mention the revolutionary forces themselves. Today, in many villages, the VC is imposing his will on the people



Each villager had a numbered slip for the big raffle.

Among the prizes were sacks of flour, cans of cooking oil, and one Yorkshire pig. The lucky number was announced and the winner, an elderly woman, came forward bashfully, amidst cheers and applause. Captain James Baker presented it and told her not to eat it for dinner but to keep it for breeding.





The raffle was just a small part of the massive effort to passify the villagers. Vocal groups were performing, movies were being shown, dental teams were pulling teeth, prescriptions were being filled, kids were bused to the zoo and medical teams were circulating throughout the village.



and assassinating those who dare to disagree. Black hats, Bad guys. Lieutenant Colonel Martin believed "the vast majority of the villagers to be elated over our success in eliminating the VC."

Remember the confusing conglomeration of South Vietnamese forces? It wasn't madness after all. It's good practice for them first of all, but more importantly, these are the forces, who, unlike the Brand-X detergent, have real staying power. Elements of all those units will always be there to protect the villagers from VC reprisals. That was the reason for the array of troops and for the arduous coordination which was undertaken. Colonel Patillo remarked, "There has been complete cooperation from the outset. General Hieu the 5th ARVN Division Commander and I are very pleased."

As I mentioned, we are quickly becoming the Good Guys. I was relieved to discover that we weren't pulling fingernails or anything of the sort in those interrogation rooms. Again this was no ordinary seal operation. Massive efforts were made not to alienate the villagers. "We are attempting to make this as amendable as possible," said Major Thomas McInnes. Major McInnes was the, let us say, ringmaster, at the schoolyard. Vocal groups

were performing, movies were being shown, dental teams were pulling teeth (78 that day), prescriptions were being filled, helicopters equipped with sound equipment were flying overhead broadcasting some sort of messages, kids were boarding buses for the Saigon zoo, sheets of tin were being distributed to villagers whose homes had been damaged in the previous night's battle, medical teams were treating the sick (340 that day). Tomorrow, a Vietnamese drama team would perform, the day after, an Army band would play. (I was forever glancing upward, expecting the Goodyear blimp).

There weren't many brown-baggers in the crowd and by noon everyone was getting hungry. This day, over 1300 pounds of pre-cooked rice were brought in from Di An. C-rations had been distributed on the first day of the seal but were now in short supply. The day before, a Filipino had cooked the rice and it was not well received. In fact, it was downright "number ten." So, it was decided that a Vietnamese cook in the 1st Infantry Division base camp at Di An would prepare the rice. Rice is rice is rice is sometimes not rice.

A Raffle To Remember

Later that afternoon the raffle began. It had to be the highlight of the day. Each villager had a numbered

slip, with President Thieu's picture on the front. Captain James Baker took over giving away sacks of flour, cans of cooking oil, and one Yorkshire pig. A hush came over the crowd, the tension mounted, a child drew the number from a box labeled "A Gift From The People of The United States of America" (printed, regrettably, in English), and the pig ran under a truck. The lucky number was announced and the winner, an elderly lady, came forward bashfully amidst cheers and applause. Captain Baker retrieved the prize and presented it, admonishing her not to eat it for dinner, but rather to keep it and let it breed. No 5,000 mile warrantly, but the free services of the district veterinarian were promised.

On the third night, with the pressure becoming unbearable, the remainder of the VC regulars launched a savage attack, hoping to puncture the wall of soldiers on the perimeter. They hit with 53 rocket propelled grenades, satchel charges, and hand grenades. The attempt was stifled, the results of the battle were conclusive.

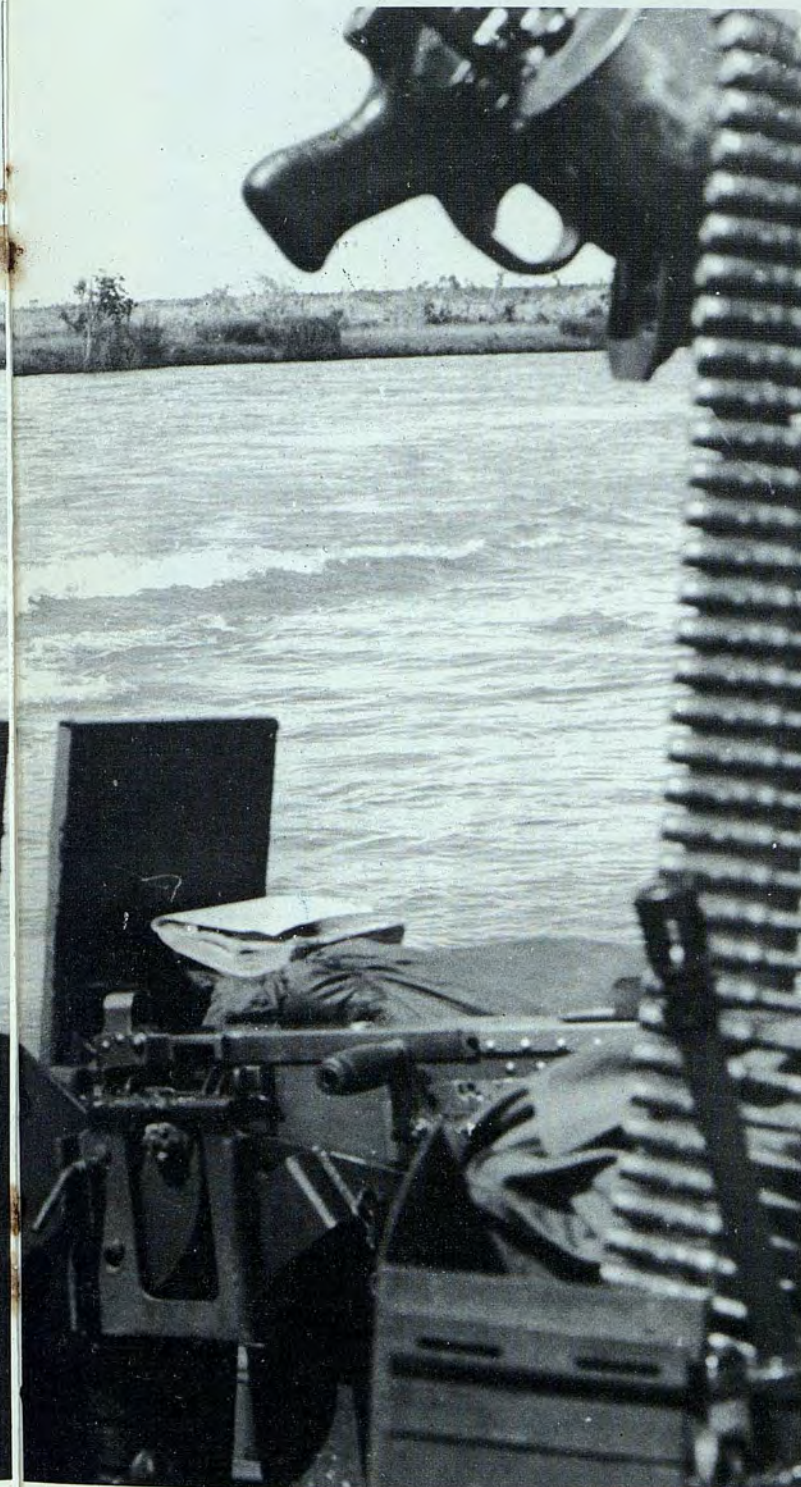
Four large, transportable watchtowers had been airlifted in by "Chinnook" helicopters. Equipped with radar, infra-red search lights, and .50 caliber machine guns, they proved to be quite formidable.

Convinced From The Start

The enthusiasm, the zeal, of these men was invincible. That a few ideas didn't work, couldn't concern them. From the start they were convinced that this would be a successful operation. Each man had put a considerable amount of time and effort into it and each was elated, gleeful at each cache found, each tunnel uncovered, each prisoner apprehended.

We stopped at District Headquarters. Tran Van Keo, the deputy district chief, was beaming. "Everything is going well. We have done great things here." Lieutenant Colonel Patillo, Lieutenant Colonel Ochis, and Major Dugan were discussing what had happened that day and what they hoped to accomplish the next. The chart was there: 23 enemy killed, 17 detainees, and 16 Hoi Chanh. At that very moment, a Hoi Chanh who had come unarmed to the district headquarters, of his own accord, was pinpointing VC locations for Gerald Walters. The operation had been a smashing success, an ideal prototype, deserving of the close scrutiny of all commanders in Vietnam.

Despite all this, Lieutenant Colonel Patillo had a look of discomfort. "Jim (Major Dugan), isn't there something more we could do? Something we haven't tried?"



CLOSING THE SAIGON

The 1st Infantry Division's Saigon River denial program has been perhaps one of its most successful operations during the past three months. Continued domination of the enemy's traditional and natural approach into the southern part of Vietnam has severely limited enemy movement in and out of the Division AO.

The river operations have prevented enemy forces from massing men, material and equipment of any significant size. The operations on the Saigon have also denied the enemy much needed food supplies, forcing him in some cases to literally eat off the land.

Guarding the waterway takes cooperation and coordination between the 1st Division's "Ski Boats," the PBR boats and ground forces operating out of fire support bases along the banks. One of the heaviest contacts during the past three months involved River Division 593. Following is a report on that action written by 1st Division Information Specialist Sergeant Fred Schuttenberg.

On June 14, 1969, in response to a shift in major activity from the coastal regions inland, Navy patrol boats moved into the Saigon and Thi Tinh Rivers north of Phu Cuong in the 1st Infantry Division's area of operations.

The primary mission of the patrol boats is to prevent the enemy from gathering sufficient troops and stockpiling enough equipment and supplies to launch a major offensive. In this it is vital for the Army and Navy to work together.

"Just as the Army denies the enemy use of the roads, we deny him access to the rivers," said Lieutenant Alan P. DeRoco, Seattle, Wash., of the 593 Riverine Division. "Natural waterways are the most convenient means of moving troops and equipment. When the Viet Cong can no longer use the rivers and streams,

a trip that formerly took thirty minutes may take two or three days by a circuitous, time-consuming route."

Joint Operations

Two types of boats operate on the Saigon and Thi Tinh Rivers north of Phu Cuong. The river patrol boats (PBRs), fast, light, heavily-armed craft operated by the Navy, are used for daylight reconnaissance missions and night ambushes. Ski Boats, operated by the 1st Engineer Battalion, 1st Infantry Division, are small, fiberglass skiffs propelled by outboard motors. They are used for troop transportation, and in joint operations with the Navy function as miniature PBRs.

PBR night ambushes, called "waterborne guardposts" by the Navy, are set up near fords or other areas of suspected enemy movement. The boats try to find a spot to tie up where tree limbs extend out over the water so they are not grounded by low tide. The sailors are often tipped off to enemy activity by land-based radar, and are supported by artillery and Night Hawk illumination and fire power.

The patrol boats have been very effective in curtailing Viet Cong activity along the rivers, killing over 210 enemy between September 1 and the middle of December. As a result, the enemy must compensate for the loss of movement along the waterways. Their response to the boats' presence typically follows a three-stage pattern.

Riverine Division 593

"The PBRs have a lot of action for a time, with a lot of kills," explained Captain Larry Hicks, of Salem, Ore. "Then there's a lull as the VC try to move up and down the river to avoid the boats. When that doesn't work, they try to ambush the boats."

One of the largest single actions involving the river patrol boats occurred in the early hours of September 22. Boats 756 and 842 of Riverine Division 593 were on waterborne guardpost on the Saigon River south of Ben Chua village.

At 15 minutes after midnight two men pulling guard on boat 842 observed what they thought were VC swimming downstream. They notified the boat commander, Engineman First Class Ronald W. Dering, of Coatesville, Pa. Dering saw the swimmers, too.

Enemy Trapped

"As soon as I saw them I called the other boat," Dering recalled. "Then we both broke out of ambush and went barrelling toward the swimmers. Seven-five-six got there first and ran right over four or five VC."

The boats had surprised a large force of enemy trying to cross the river at a shallow spot. It looked like a hundred of them in the dark, according to Chief Signalman Robert Monzingue, boat 756 commander. The two boats each covered a bank and, keeping the enemy trapped between them, sprayed the water with .50 caliber and M-60 machinegun fire.

The Viet Cong feebly attempted to return fire, but there were no American casualties. The firefight was over in a matter of minutes.

The PBRs requested illumination from 1st Infantry Division artillery, and under the eerie light of the flares searched the river. They found 25 enemy dead, 14 backpacks, and one AK-47.

At 9:10 that night at another ford two miles upriver the PBRs again surprised an enemy force, estimated at 20 VC, trying to get from the southern to the northern bank. The sailors cut loose with their machineguns at close range, killing 17 Viet Cong. Eleven backpacks and one AK-47 were also recovered.

Charlie Learning

The day's total for the PBRs was 42 kills, a crushing blow for the enemy.

"That September action taught Charlie a lesson," said Lieutenant DeRoco. "They've very seldom tried any large group crossing since then. Now they stick to small groups."

During the past several months the PBR branch has been increasingly Vietnamized. In early October 80 riverboats were turned over to the Vietnamese.

The ACTOV—accelerated turnover—program is designed to train Vietnamese sailors and provide them with equipment. Vietnamese graduates of basic seaman's school are placed on board American vessels for on the job training in boat handling, engineering, navigation, or boat tactics.

"The plan was for a Vietnamese to replace an American aboard the boat once he was trained," Lieutenant DeRoco said. "That way the replacement would be gradual. But the way it's worked out, we train the Vietnamese and then turn the boats over to them en masse, as the units become qualified."

The Vietnamese and American PBRs will be conducting combined operations on the Saigon River. As more and more Vietnamese are trained, they will take over boats from the Navy and will eventually be totally responsible for patrolling and providing security for the Saigon and Thi Tinh Rivers.





DOGFACE AMBUSH

One of the primary missions of the 2nd Brigade during the past three months has been pacification and security of the central and southern portions of the Division area of operation. Until their recent move north, the "Ready Now" Brigade has concentrated much of its effort on civic action, psychological operations and village pacification programs.

In carrying out this mission the Brigade has worked closely with elements of the 7th ARVN Regiment and the 3rd Brigade of the 82nd Airborne prior to their redeployment.

In addition to their strong pacification program, the Brigade has maintained Forward Attack Base Florida and Fire Support Base Normandy III to keep the enemy off balance. By operating out of these two locations, the 2nd Brigade has been successful at interdicting enemy infiltration from the north and the east.

Information Specialist Weldon D. Jolly has worked out of Normandy III during the past three months following the activities of the "Ready Now" units. Below is his account of one of the most significant con-

tacts made in the Catcher's Mitt during the second half of 1969.

A partial extraction of an element of the 1st Infantry Division's 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry seemed to be the key factor in the successful ambush on November 15th of at least 35 Communists 12 miles east of Lai Khe.

Twenty-one enemy soldiers were killed, while seven more were detained. One GI was injured in the contact.

"Dogface" Battalion's Alpha Company had been inserted into the flat, grassy area to set up ambushes. When nothing was found, choppers were sent in the following day to extract all but the 2nd (Mike) Platoon.

The platoon was repositioned in a heavily wooded area off one of two main roads near the Song Be River.

On the platoon's fourth day out, a party of four Communists entered the ambush site. They proceeded up the road until they spotted the tracks of the GI's waiting in ambush.



The enemy turned and ran back down the road as Mike Platoon blew their claymores. Three of the fleeing soldiers were killed and the other dashed to safety in the heavy brush. One American was injured in that contact.

Mike Platoon, having compromised their position, relocated on the second main road, south of the first ambush site.

Again the platoon was positioned off the road in three groups covering about 100 meters of the road.

Enemy Sighted

The following day, Mike platoon received word that they were to be air-lifted out of the area. The men had just begun to gather their equipment when they heard movement off the opposite side of the road.

A party of about 35 Communists came out onto the road from a concealed secondary road and sauntered up to the ambush site.

Second Lieutenant Michael Cook, platoon leader, from Rich Square, N.C., later related his being shaken by the sight of so many of the enemy on his first operation.

"I was in the middle bush," he began, "and I can remember counting at least 20 of them passing our posi-

tion. I just decided that we had better do something, so I had the men in my group blow their claymores."

Lieutenant Cook said that almost simultaneously the other two positions blew their ambushes, and "all hell broke loose." "They didn't return much fire because we didn't give them a chance to. We threw grenades at them and opened fire with small arms immediately after blowing the bush."

Counter Attack Fails

Specialist 4 Jose Angulo, of Azusa, Calif., was also in the middle position with Lieutenant Cook. According to Specialist Angulo, the enemy tried to counter-attack, but were unable to gain fire superiority.

"When we blew our claymores," he said, "they charged our position. We just kept shooting and fragging until they stopped advancing. One of them fell about three meters from our position."

After the first few minutes of the contact, Lieutenant Cook radioed for artillery and air support.

When gunships of Delta Troop, 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry arrived, they peppered the area, already pockmarked with B-52 craters.

Mike platoon received artillery support from Alpha Battery, 1st Battalion, 7th Artillery, located at Fire

Support Base Normandy III.

A tracker dog team from the 61st Infantry Tracker Dog Platoon, was also sent down to trail any Communists that might have escaped the coordinated ground, air and artillery fusillade.

Visitors Heap Praise

Brigadier General Herbert E. Wolff, Big Red One assistant division commander-maneuver, later visited the area along with Dogface Battalion's commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas R. Finley, of Bandana, Ky. Both officers heaped praise on Lieutenant Cook.

Colonel Finley regarded the young platoon leader as a football coach might his star quarterback.

"Lieutenant Cook and his 2nd Platoon of Alpha Company have proved the exceptional fighting qualities of an American soldier," he said.

"The techniques used in this ambush, and follow up assault fire," Colonel Finley continued, "were the finest I've seen in three conflicts. It's men like these that are winning, with the help of our ARVN counterparts, in the Republic of Vietnam."

In other actions within the 2nd Brigade area of operation that day, Big Red One troops killed seven more Communists soldiers, bringing the day's total to 28 enemy killed in action by the "Ready Now" Brigade.





The Trapezoid is a vast jungle area lying between the Michelin Plantation in the northern part of the 1st Infantry Division's area of operation and the once formidable Iron Triangle in the south. Covering over 100 square kilometers in area, the "Trap" is bordered on the west by the Saigon River and on the east by the Thi Tinh River.

Once a lively stronghold for numerous groups of Communist troops, the Trapezoid has been methodically Rome plowed and systematically searched by Big Red One units. During the past three months only one significant contact has been made in the Trapezoid. Following is an account of that battle written by the Big Red One's 3d Brigade Information Officer, Captain Kenneth L. Benton.

It started out as a simple ground reconnaissance mission by a single infantry platoon in the western part of the Trapezoid. It ended up in a day long battle that was to shake the western Trapezoid and be a classic example of armor against fortified positions.

The 3rd infantry platoon of Alpha Company, 2nd Battalion, 28th Infantry was conducting a ground reconnaissance of an area that had been hit by a B-52 strike the previous night. The platoon went into the area and received heavy fire from an enemy basecamp located in a heavily wooded area, 13 miles north west of Lai Khe. The platoon couldn't maneuver and had to set up for the night under a protecting blanket of artillery illumination.

The next morning the 2nd platoon of Alpha Com-



TRAPEZOID IV





pany air assaulted to the south of its sister platoon, thereby placing troops on two sides of the enemy position. But the enemy was seemingly unworried by the troop dispositions.

Pinned Down

"We were just walking up the B-52 strike area," related Private First Class Larry A. Cultum, Bremerton, Wash., the 2nd Platoon RTO, "when we came under fire from the right flank. It was a heavy, accurate fire and had us pinned down immediately."

The situation had grown serious, for the 3rd platoon had also been pinned down. Charlie Company of the 2nd Battalion, 28th Infantry was air assaulted in at 1330 hours to relieve the pressure on the two platoons of Alpha Company.

"We moved up into positions on the left of Alpha Company's 3rd Platoon," recalled Staff Sergeant Dennis L. Savery, Kansas City, Mo., platoon sergeant for the 3rd Platoon of Charlie Company. "We waited for air strikes, then we started to sweep forward on line. But fire from the bunkers pinned everyone down."

The two platoons of Alpha Company had also tried to move forward, but were again stopped cold. Metal

muscle was called for in the form of a reconnaissance section of the 2nd Battalion (Mechanized), 2nd Infantry, and a heavy section from Company B, 2nd Battalion, 34th Armor. The tanks were unable to make it to the scene of action due to mud. The tracks of the Iron Fist did arrive later in the afternoon.

Cavalry To The Rescue

"It was just like the cavalry coming to the rescue," exclaimed Private First Class Robert H. Berge, Joliet, N.Y., a rifleman with Alpha Company's 2nd Platoon. "It was the most beautiful sound in the world when I heard those tracks. And when that 106mm recoilless rifle they had mounted on one track went off, we were ecstatic."

"When the tracks came up, we moved out," added Sergeant Savery. "We took a lot more fire and pulled back and let the tracks go to work."

First Lieutenant Larry Jordan, Kansas City, Mo., leader of the tracks, moved his armored vehicles into the base camp area and they opened up with everything they had. "It was rough," said Jordan, "but somebody needed to do something, and we had all the muscle."



Firing Point Blank

"The tracks did an outstanding job of getting into the bunker area," recalled PFC Berge. "The first bunker they got to, a track climbed up on it and steered around until the bunker collapsed. The 106mm recoilless was firing point blank into the bunker ports and really doing a job."

"After the tracks started blowing hell out of the bunkers, we were able to move forward again," continued Sergeant Savery. "Fire was coming from three directions, but we got up with the tracks and were able to start fragging the bunkers."

Darkness came, and the few enemy left alive slipped out into the night. But they left behind 30 dead Communist comrades. Also left behind were a large number of enemy weapons, including mortars, machineguns, and RPG launchers.

"The next morning," said PFC Berge, "we had to start digging out the bunkers the tracks had crushed. The first one we dug out had five bodies in it, a mortar, two AK-47s, one RPG launcher and grenades. They were the best armed I had seen so far, but we did a job on them in the end."



Jungle Heavies

CPT Kenneth L. Benton

Of all the vehicles that have led the American soldier into combat, perhaps the strangest recently made its fighting debut with the 1st Infantry Division.

The vehicle is the ever faithful Rome Plow. A specially-built tractor, the plow is designed to cut down the jungle growth that covers many parts of the Vietnam countryside. Originally the plow was a tractor modified at a plant in Rome, Ga., where the special blade was added.

While not new to fighting men in Vietnam, the Rome Plow has taken on a new role: that of a fighting vehicle. For the first time in the Big Red One, Rome Plows were put to tactical field use.

New Concept

"They are the first weapons to meet the enemy," said Major James E. Harris, Operations Officer of the 1st Battalion (Mechanized), 16th Infantry, who initiated the tactical Rome Plow concept.

"This is the first time I've ever seen the Plows used this way," said



Specialist 5 Lawrence J. White, Palatka, Fla., This is my second tour as a plow operator and I say this is quite an improvement."

In the past, Rome Plows had been used only as a semi-tactical weapons to clear large areas of jungle, and to cut down the possible hiding places of communist forces, as well as to provide cleared areas along major communication routes.

But under the auspices of the 3rd Brigade and the 1st Engineer Battalion, the plows were put to a job that combined past performances with a new aggressive dimension.

Making Contact

"Under the new concept," explained Captain Stephen A. Olson, Clarksville, Tenn., a mechanized unit commander, "the plows lead the tracks into the jungle, cutting as they go. They are the first to make contact. When contact is made the armored vehicles following the plows open up, giving them support."

"It's one hell of a job," exclaimed

First Lieutenant Clark W. Fuller, Whitehall, Ohio, the Rome Plow platoon leader. "But these guys are proud to be Rome Plow operators."

"People always talk about the infantry saying 'Follow Me!' but in this case it's the Rome Plows that lead the way for the infantry."

Specialist 4 James C. Browning, another plow operator, agreed with Lieutenant Fuller. "We take a lot of stuff out here, but we're grunts. It sets us apart from the rest of the engineers."

Tough Assignment

Both the Rome Plows and operators are members of the 1st Engineer Battalion. "The men are strictly volunteers," said Lieutenant Fuller, "because it's really a job that deserves the term hazardous duty!"

"You don't know what hazardous is," added Specialist White, until some commie jumps out of a bunker in front of your blade and fires his RPG."

RPGs and mines are the biggest trouble for the plows, but the vehi-

cle can take a lot of abuse. One plow recently took a direct hit from an RPG round in its engine block. The driver took a slight scratch and the plow got a new engine, but both are still operating.

Not only does the enemy try to take his toll; so do long hours. A typical day's work starts out with an intelligence report on suspected enemy locations. At first light the plows start up and head for the area. When darkness comes, many hours later, the operation stops, and the maintenance begins. "We've been out cutting now for more than 45 days," said Specialist Browning. "The men can take it, but it's rough on the equipment."

Clearing The Path

During the last quarter of 1969 the plows spent more than 88 percent of their time on tactical cutting operations. Operations included tactical cuts in the Trapezoid, the Long Wind Secret Zone and the Upper Song Be Corridor. An extremely large number of bunker



complexes were discovered and destroyed by the Plows, while over 2,000 acres were cleared of jungle.

The Plows live up to the idea of being tactical weapons by taking part in a number of small, sharp contacts. On one such contact the Rome Plows led the way to the contact site, the mechanized troopers following in their path. The enemy had fled into a series of bunker complexes, but the area was surrounded. The Plows, under the watchful guns of tracks and engineer tanks, proceeded to crush the bunkers and tunnels one by one.

"It's an old story with us," added Sergeant Robert N. Parker, Collinsville, Ill. "They either give up or they pay the price."

Sergeant Parker, who commands an engineer tank, has been on many missions guarding the Rome Plows. His comment after taking part in the new Rome Plow concept was that "Tanks are good for jungle busting, but Rome Plows are better. Used in this way they flat do a job!"

Rome Plows have been used in Vietnam for several years but recently the 1st Division Engineers have been utilizing the heavy tractors in a different role. In the past they have used the Plows only as a semi-tactical weapon, clearing large areas of heavy jungle. Under the new concept, the Plows lead the tracked vehicles in tactical operations, cutting as they go. This means that they are the first to make contact and the ACAVs are in a supporting role.



Working Together For Peace



Since the end of July, 1969, the Dong Tien ("Progress Together") program has continued to expand in the 1st Infantry Division. The major goals have remained the same: to increase combined operations; to advance the Division's primary missions of pacification, improvement of Vietnamese military units, and intensification of small scale combat operations; and to make critical combat and combat support elements more efficient.

The overall purpose of Dong Tien is to further "Vietnamize" the war by improving the effectiveness of all South Vietnamese military forces. The Division's program must prepare Vietnamese units to assume, at some future date, the responsibilities currently held by the 1st Infantry Division. At the same time, intensive combined operations continue to reduce the number of enemy in the area of operations, making the task of changing territorial responsibilities easier.

The following two articles deal with aspects of the Dong Tien program on a personal level. The first, by Tech Sergeant Jerry Hirsch, U. S. Air Force, describes his reactions to a mechanized assault in which he participated while filming a combined U. S.-ARVN operation for television. The second, by a Vietnamese officer, Lieutenant Nguyen Tien Hanh, is his reflections upon Major Chau Minh Kien, an ARVN battalion commander who died in combat September 13th, 1969.

Planning for a combined operation takes a great deal of patience and coordination. Major Kien and Colonel Vy, the 8th Regiment Commander, discuss plans with Colonel Price and Colonel Haldane.

"I don't mind saying I was scared"

TSG Jerry Hirsch, USAF

I don't mind saying I was scared. Although I've spent a total of 16 months in Vietnam, as a writer and combat tape recorder for the Air Force, I was now going out on my first combat mission with the Army.

Armored personnel carriers of the reconnaissance platoon of the 2d Battalion, 28th Infantry, of the U.S. 1st Infantry Division were moving into dense jungle terrain, 33 miles northwest of Saigon and I was sitting on top of one of them.

Next to me, manning a 50-caliber machine-gun, was Sergeant John Clark, 21 from Dayton, Ohio. Up front, in the lead 'track', was Staff Sergeant Thomas De Miton, 35, from La Crescenta, Calif., the only other Air Force man on the mission.

He held a large movie camera, I carried a notebook and a pen. We were engaged in shooting a movie of Vietnamese-American operations at Fire Support Base Mahone (now Fire Support Base Kien), for network television news

shows back in the United States. Three other members of our Air Force movie team were at the 'helo' pad at Mahone, waiting to board any helicopters that might be used in the jungle mission.

Ready To Strike

Two miles southeast of Mahone, in the area toward which the 'tracks' were rumbling, elements of Alpha Company and Charlie Company were poised to hit enemy forces which had recently shot up a medical-evacuation helicopter which had gone in to pick up a fatally-wounded soldier.

I felt as helpless as a sitting duck, as our APC's plunged across a field and then crashed into jungle shrubbery and trees at least 15 feet tall.

I kept thinking that at any second the unseen enemy in that jungle would somehow shoot me off the APC, or blow it up with a mine. The entire scene was unreal. Everyone on the track was grim and tight-lipped.

Close Call

"Bunker, bunker!", yelled Sergeant Clark, pointing frantically in my direction. I looked down. A few inches from the track there was an opening in the ground. It looked like an animal shelter. I expected

enemy troops in the bunker to start firing.

Instead, a soldier jumped from the track and moved toward the hole. "Booby trap, booby trap!" yelled another man on the track, pointing to something above the bunker. I didn't see what it was. At any rate, our track finally plunged ahead, and personnel from Charlie Company, who were moving into the jungle behind the APC's were left to dispose of the bunker with explosives.

Now there were occasional shots, or explosions, and Sergeant Clark's head jerked sharply with each boom. He was as tense as a quivering wire. Someone offered me a cigarette, and a flak-jacket. I accepted both gratefully.

Troops on the ground and on the track were smoking a lot. It looked odd to me. Somehow the idea of smoking and fighting at the same time seemed strange.

Moving Forward

Behind us, Lieutenant Colonel Richard W. Hobbs, from Columbus, Ga., Commander of the 2nd Battalion at Mahone, had landed in a helicopter and was urging the tracks to move forward. "What's the problem?" he asked casually, telling the troops that the faster they got to

their destination, the sooner we'd all get back for supper.

I thought I saw some blades of grass moving directly in front of the track, but there was a slight breeze, so I didn't worry about it too much. But Sergeant Clark took his hands off his machinegun, and reached for his M-16 rifle.

Then everything happened all at once. The track stopped, Sergeant Clark rose from his seat, and he leaned forward, yelling, "Chieu Hoi, Chieu Hoi!"

NVA Shows Up

It seemed that everyone was taking up the cry. "Chieu Hoi," yelled the men on the track. I rose from my perch, and saw a bare-headed Vietnamese rising from the shrubbery. He had no weapon. The yelling seemed to clear the air. Everyone relaxed a little. Now the unseen enemy—who turned out to be an 18-year-old North Vietnamese soldier—had finally shown his face. I began breathing again.

The long-haired NVA was questioned by Colonel Hobbs, a Vietnamese interpreter, and a Kit Carson Scout. Sergeant De Miton came over from his APC to catch the action with his movie camera.

It was getting dark. Up ahead, I

could see Cobra gunships lacing the ground with rockets. Flames spouted from the pods. An OV-10 'Bronco' dived to the attack. Nearby, an element of the Vietnamese battalion stationed at Mahone was in contact with the enemy. I heard the chatter of what I thought were machine-guns, but a soldier explained it was an enemy AK-47 automatic rifle.

Shows The Way

I walked behind some soldiers who were detailed to look for the AK-47 weapon which the prisoner had stashed before surrendering. The prisoner had agreed to lead us to it, and finally one of the soldiers pulled it out of some underbush.

As I saw the North Vietnamese soldier ahead of us, with the Kit Carson Scout and interpreter behind him, I had half-expected that he was leading us into a trap. I was happy that my fears had been unfounded.

Colonel Hobbs acted as calm and casual as if he were on a training exercise in the United States. When the weapon was found, he patted the scared NVA on the shoulder and said, "Good boy."

The prisoner claimed the weapon wasn't his. Next to it, in the brush, there were a pair of canvas bags,

containing a wallet, some letters, and some other things.

It was time to go home—to Mahone. I walked for a while, with some soldiers from Alpha Company, and then I climbed back into a track, with some help from two guys on it.

Every Day Happening

The trip back was uneventful. We were pelted by a driving rain-storm. I kept thinking—now I finally know what it means to lay your life on the line. Now I finally have an idea of what these ground-pounders go through every day. How can they gamble with death like this, day in and day out?

That night, we learned that ten North Vietnamese soldiers had been killed in the battle by the Vietnamese soldiers alongside us, and the air strikes.

Three nights later, Major Chau Minh Kien, the much-decorated commander of the Vietnamese battalion at Mahone, was killed in action, as he was leading a relief force against enemy forces who had pinned down some of his troops.

Gambling with death doesn't always have a happy ending.



LTC Chau Minh Kien

TO DIE BRAVELY

LT Nguyen-Tien-Hanh

From the 2nd of July until his death, Major Chau Minh Kien and his unit—the 1st Battalion of the 8th Regiment, 5th ARVN Division had won the following results: 205 enemy KIA and CIA, 106 weapons (including six crew-served) in the Dong Tien Campaign.

Major Kien died the night of September 13 when he went forward to reinforce one of his units at an outpost of Ben Chua hamlet, near his headquarters base two and half miles to the north. The next day the fire support base his battalion and an American one had shared was renamed for him.

At the time of his death, Major Kien was commanding the best ARVN Battalion in the III corps Tactical Zone. He was the ideal of what every U.S. advisor would like every Vietnamese officer to be. Before his death, he had received numerous Vietnamese awards for gallantry as well as the U.S. Silver Star and two awards of the Bronze Star. In recognition of his achievements, he was promoted posthumously to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

He is one of the youngest majors in ARVN. Graduated from the 19th promotion of the Da Lat Military Academy in 1964, he got promoted from second lieutenant to major in

only four years, thanks to his achievements on the battlefield.

The day before his death, I had been with him. We shared the hospitality of his bunker that night. We stayed up late: it seems that we cannot cut our talk until I oblige myself to be quiet as I thought he had to go for operations very early in the morning the following day.

He talked to me about his own life: born in a rich and famous family in Chau Doc Province, near the Cambodian border in the very south of Vietnam. He was educated in Primary School in his home town, then sent to Saigon to attend high school, then the Saigon University Science Faculty for two years.

In 1963, the situation in Vietnam is grievous due to the high level of aggressors from the communist North. Seeing that the youth of South Vietnam is generally weak and in disorder, he made up his mind to cut out his study and to register himself in the 19th Promotion of the Da Lat National Academy.

Indeed, Major Kien, drawn by his patriotic calling, had terminated his studies at the University of Saigon without his family's knowledge and informed them by letter after his enrollment at the Da Lat Academy of his newly chosen career. From then until the Sunday before his death, over six years, he did not see his parents. On that afternoon, a call from the 8th Regiment com-



Dai Uy and troops

mander, Colonel Le Nguyen Vy, was necessary to order him to return from the field headquarters at Ben Cat for a surprise reunion with his parents.

Graduated in November 1964 as a second lieutenant, he was assigned to be a company commander of the 8th Regiment, 5th Infantry Division. From then until now, with his achievements from battle to battle, he was promoted one grade each year.

His leadership and tactics were aggressive and he cared for his men and their families. More importantly, Major Kien had a burning feeling of patriotism and national pride in his homeland and a desire to rid it of the communist aggressors. He had pledged himself not to rest until this had come to pass.

I still remember his last words to me in that night of September 12: "I hate the depressed young people of nowadays, so I had to raise myself above all of them to follow the examples of our hero brothers and forefathers. Many times my family intended to ask for me a safe place in Saigon JGS, but I refused. I sacrificed all my life in the Army to fight directly the communists. My men and I promised to one another that we have to fight until we die, and we have to die bravely in the battlefield in front of the enemy. If need be, my sacrifice will restore peace to our lovely country."

It seems to me that his words are his will, his legacy, to me and to all of us—the Army Men.



Preparing together



One more award

October was the month of the big treasure hunt in the 1st Infantry Division's area of operation with numerous hidden enemy caches being uncovered, some with the help of Hoi Chanhs.

Leading the hunt was Alpha Company of the 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry (Mechanized), who were guided to six separate munitions caches by a 33 year-old Hoi Chanh, Van Thoi, who made headlines and plenty of money for his exploits.

Van Thoi received 521,000 piasters and was honored in a ceremony at An Loc for his contribution to the Allied cause.

The former VC was taken from his family some four years ago and held captive by the VC. He vowed all the while to repay his tormentors for the hardship they caused. Enlisting in the VC army to escape the drudgery of the labor camp in which he had been held, Van Thoi meticulously noted the positions of his unit's hidden supplies.

Rallies To ARVNs

His outfit, the infamous Dong Nai Regiment, had been operating in an area northeast of Lai Khe. Waiting for the proper moment, Van Thoi rallied to the side of the Government of the Republic of Vietnam.

What followed was one of the most productive cache hunts in the entire history of the Chieu Hoi program. During the period from September 29th through October 8th, the rallier led Iron Brigade elements of Alpha Company to no less than six significant caches of explosives, arms and munitions.

Included in the booty were over 20,000 rounds of 7.62 ammo, over 1200 pounds of TNT, 61 B40 rounds, seven B41 rounds, one 107mm rocket, 12 Chinese claymore mines, 148 75mm recoilless rifle rounds, seven 82mm mortar rounds, 17 60mm mortar rounds, two 82mm mortar tubes with baseplates and 24 Chinese Communist light machineguns.

Plans To Return

Nearing completion of a course for Hoi Chanhs, Van Thoi's mission of retribution is not yet complete. He anticipates becoming a Kit Carson Scout in the near future, returning to do even more damage to those who deprived him of his freedom and his family.

During that same month, Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 2nd Infantry added to the list of discoveries, a large bunker complex believed to be an NVA hospital found in the northeastern corner of the Michelin Plantation.

A thorough search of the area yielded 3,000 penicillin bottles, six large penicillin bottles, 40 bottles of glucose, four bottles of vitamin B, 30 bottles of sterile water, and 10 operating tables.

Found In Trapezoid

Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion, 28th Infantry also joined in by adding a cache they found in the Trapezoid containing 10 light machineguns, 300 hand grenades, one heavy machinegun with mount and an extra barrel, 22 SKS rifles, seven carbines, five AK-47s and 25 pounds of TNT.

One of the largest single caches found during the fall quarter was uncovered by Alpha Company of the Iron Rangers. While on a sweep operation in the Trapezoid, Alpha discovered the buried loot that included 97 SKS rifles, 25 Soviet carbines and five submachineguns. Also uncovered at that location were seven Thompson machineguns, one 7.62 heavy machinegun with three spare barrels, two Soviet light machineguns with three spare barrels, 114 RPG rounds, 174 57mm recoilless rifles rounds, 1,955 rounds of .51 cal. ammunition, nine 70mm CHICOM artillery rounds and two 75mm recoilless rifle rounds.

Taking Charlie's Supplies

SP5 Stuart M. Richel



VP Visits Kien

1LT Mark F. Clark

"I really don't have much to tell you except that the people back home are pretty darn proud of you and what you're doing over here," Vice-President Spiro T. Agnew told soldiers at Fire Support Base Kien during a surprise visit on New Years Day.

"What you may see and read in certain publications just doesn't reflect the feeling of the American people about the job that's being

done by American fighting men in Vietnam.

"I know that you want to go home as quickly as you can. We want to see that happen. But I also know that you don't want to simply take off and walk away from a situation, leaving your sons and grandsons to finish something you didn't have the courage to stick with."

Mr. Agnew was speaking to a

small gathering of soldiers at the combined firebase of the Big Red One's 2nd Battalion, 28th Infantry and the 4th ARVN Division's 3d Battalion, 8th Regiment.

US and ARVN officers briefed the Vice-President on recent combat activity and a rice denial program carried on by the two battalions. Lieutenant Colonel Richard W. Hobbs, commander of the 2nd Battalion, 28th Infantry, explained the idea of Dong Tien (Progress Together)—the program linking the Big Red One with ARVN troops on combined operations and at firebases such as Kien.

He also told Mr. Agnew of the combined program to deny the enemy food, especially rice, that he needs to survive and fight.

"As a result of this program's success," Colonel Hobbs said, "the VC are very hungry now and they are to the point of digging up roots for food."

The Vice-President later talked with some of the troops at Kien. "I had the pleasure of being in a division that worked with the 1st Infantry Division during World War II on two separate occasions, and I know the fierce pride and esprit de corps that 1st Infantry Division people have."

Before shaking hands with the troops, he gave them a final verbal pat on the back. "I hope that I can take back to President Nixon the feeling that I found in this particular group—that the spirit of American fighting men and their South Vietnamese counterparts is high, and high as it ever was, that the resolve is there and the determination, and that all they need from him is the continuation of good executive management to work this thing out so that we can get it over with."

At least one Big One soldier asked the Vice-President about reports concerning the possible redeployment of the 1st Division. The Vice-President answered the question by saying that he hoped that American troops could leave soon, but that would depend on the enemy situation during the months ahead.



Vice President Agnew was escorted around Fire Support Base Kien by Battalion Commander LTC Richard W. Hobbs and BG Herbert E. Wolff, assistant division commander-manuever. Mr. Agnew talks with members of Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion, 28th Infantry.





