

Sentinel to a City

cmac



Soldiers of the Capital Military Assistance Command can pride themselves on accomplishing one of the most important missions of the United States Army in the Republic of Vietnam.

Individually and collectively the enthusiasm and professionalism of the men of CMAC have been instrumental in assisting the Capital Military District in the successful protection of Saigon from Communist oppression.

The vital key to our success has been your selfless and untiring effort in establishing a peerless rapport with the valiant soldiers of the Capital Military District.

Your accomplishment of the mission is one keystone to the ever-increasing successes of the Republic of Vietnam in its self-determination of freedom and democracy.

Each of you is truly a "Top Man for the Top Job."

Walter B. Richardson

WALTER B. RICHARDSON
Major General, USA
Commanding General

In the fight to preserve peace and freedom, the Capital Military Assistance Command has made great contributions by its presence in the capital of the Republic of Vietnam fighting along side the Vietnamese in destroying the NVA as well as frustrating their attempts on Saigon.

You have closely cooperated with the Army of the Republic of Vietnam soldiers in all operational activities, and endured hardships at all hours to protect the capital of the Republic of Vietnam.

From destroy operations to pacification and civic action, your enthusiastic performance and bravery have demonstrated that you are excellent soldiers of a vanguard army of the Free World.

The exemplary ARVN and US cooperation is a firm foundation to withstand Communist aggression. I strongly believe that through an unanimous combination of efforts, the eventual victory will be on our side.

I expect that our cooperation will be closer in the future and will soon accomplish the ultimate goal that has long been anticipated by the Vietnamese people.

Nguyen-Van-Minh

NGUYEN-VAN-MINH
Lieutenant General
Commanding General
Capital Military District



Tet 1968 will long be remembered as a turning point in the Vietnam war. In late January of that year nine battalions plus elements of a regiment of Viet Cong and North Vietnamese regulars made an all out effort to capture Saigon, the capital city of the Republic of Vietnam. Never before had the enemy risked so much. Had the enemy succeeded in capturing Saigon, the Allied effort would have been dealt a severe setback.

The fighting during Tet was perhaps the most vicious and bloody ever seen in this already war-torn nation. From Hue in the north to Saigon in the south the Communists struck. Civilians were not spared, and on those living in the outskirts of Saigon fell the full fury of the enemy.

As the offensive progressed, it eventually became apparent that the enemy had failed in its attempt to destroy Saigon. The quick reactions and sound military tactics employed by the Allied forces beat back the repeated attacks, but at the cost of many lives and a multitude of homeless and destitute people.

To help against a recurrence of Tet 1968, the Capital Military Assistance Command was organized.



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countering the enemy's offensive initially, key representatives of Headquarters, II Field Force, Vietnam, commanded by the late Major General Keith L. Ware, were deployed to the city on February 2, 1968. For the next 15 days "Hurricane Forward" controlled designated elements of U.S. forces within the Saigon-Gia Dinh area and coordinated their efforts with the Republic of Vietnam Forces in the successful defense of the capital.

In May of 1968, the Communists again attempted to infiltrate the city; once more, "Hurricane Forward" moved to Saigon to successfully neutralize the enemy threat.

Hurricane Forward was then redesignated "Task Force Hay" and expanded to include more operations and intelligence personnel, plus a G-1 and small Headquarters Commandant section. Commanded by Major General John H. Hay, former Commanding General of the 1st Infantry Division, U.S. forces played a significant role in inflicting severe punishment on die-hard enemy units. In fact, the enemy retreated as far north as War Zone "C" to escape the pursuing Allied forces.

Task Force Hay returned to the Capital Military District later in May in response to intelligence reports of an impending attack. Due to Allied precautions, however, the attack failed to materialize.

In view of the continued threats of attack it became apparent that there existed a need for a centralized and permanent tactical command solely responsible for the protection of Saigon. This headquarters was to be co-located with the Vietnamese Headquarters for the Capital Military District (CMD) at Camp Le Van Duyet, Saigon. On June 27, 1968, U.S. Army Vietnam published General Orders establishing Headquarters, Capital Military Assistance Command (Provisional) under the command of Major General Hay, with an effective date of June 4, 1968.

Thus the Capital Military Assistance Command (CMAC) was born, and with it the enormous task of organizing a division-size tactical headquarters to carry out the mission of protecting Saigon.

Those first days were hectic. The massive problems of logistics and personnel seemed insurmountable.

The challenge was willingly accepted however, and the command shortly began to take shape. Units from all over Vietnam sent troops to fill the ranks of CMAC. Supplies began arriving. Often, personnel and equipment had to be relocated at a moment's notice—in many instances from one hallway to another. Offices were temporary, but with the ability to perform on a fully operational schedule. The tactical mission of CMAC had top priority, and everybody from general to private worked to accomplish the job.

As the days progressed, the missions assigned to CMAC grew in number, size and complexity. Foremost in importance was the coordination of the operations of all Free World Forces in the Saigon area, and to prevent rocket and mortar attacks on the capital city. This involved two main areas of responsibility: control of U.S. operational units and advisors, and the offering of advisory assistance to the Vietnamese Armed Forces. In addition, the Commanding General of CMAC was given responsibility for the security of all U.S. activities in the Saigon-Gia Dinh Province area.

In order to execute this multi-faceted mission CMAC initiated many operational plans and contingencies. A number of programs designed to specifically anticipate and thwart enemy activity in Saigon and surrounding districts were put into effect.

Throughout the latter half of 1968 CMAC constantly strove to perfect the accomplishment of its missions and institute necessary new programs. The command of CMAC passed smoothly into the hands of Major General Fillmore K. Mearns, former Commanding General of the 25th Infantry Division.

CMAC's first big challenge came in February of 1969 during the post-Tet offensive. The enemy once again tried to wage full-scale terrorist attacks against the cities of the Republic of Vietnam. Saigon was a prime target. But the enemy failed.

In fact, he failed to launch even the bare minimum of an attack on Saigon. The only damage was done by scattered 122mm rockets launched into the city.

He failed because CMAC had utilized ambushes, a rocket and mortar detection system, water-denial, bridge security, and a host of other programs to keep the enemy under surveillance and restrict his movement. Thus far, the Communists have been unable to effectively penetrate Saigon since the Tet offensive of 1968.

In April 1969 Major General Walter B. Richardson, formerly the Deputy Commanding General of the II Field Force, became CMAC's third Commanding General.

Under his leadership CMAC has maintained its perfect record in the protection of the city. Part of that success comes from the fact that CMAC works closely with some of the RVNAF's best fighting units. The people of the Republic of Vietnam take considerable pride in their capital, so consequently they have vested its protection to some of its best trained troops. The 3rd, 5th and 6th Ranger Groups, plus two brigades of the ARVN Airborne Division are actively engaged in the city's defense and have more than matched CMAC's success.

In addition, the efforts of the National Police, the Vietnamese Navy and other para-military forces have been a significant contribution.

These RVN armed forces are under the control of the Commanding General of the Capital Military District (CMD), Lieutenant General Nguyen Van Minh. Under his leadership, CMD forces, more than anything else, have been responsible for keeping Saigon out of enemy control. The fine rapport established between CMD and CMAC is based on a mutual respect of the other's proven ability. Today, the forces of CMD are assuming even greater responsibilities. As recently as June 1969, the 199th Light Infantry Brigade was replaced by a Brigade of the ARVN Airborne Division which aggressively entered its area of operation and achieved immediate results.

The replacement of the 199th left the 3rd Brigade, 82d Airborne Division as the only U.S. unit involved in the protection of Saigon under the operational control of CMAC. Soon, the city's protection shall be a totally RVNAF responsibility, a job they have proven in battle that they are capable of performing.

CMAC was formed to fulfill a mission. That this mission was, and continues to be successfully accomplished, is a great credit to all the men of CMAC. But the job goes on, and the vigilance cannot be relaxed.



The infantryman has been called the ultimate weapon, and in Vietnam this has been proven true many times. His job is to engage and destroy the enemy, and deny him his military and political objectives. Despite computerized logistics, air support, tracking dogs, and exotic electronic black-box weaponry, the man with a rifle has yet to be surpassed or replaced on the field of battle.

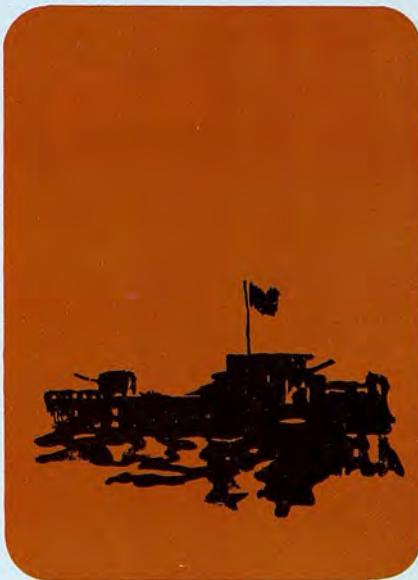
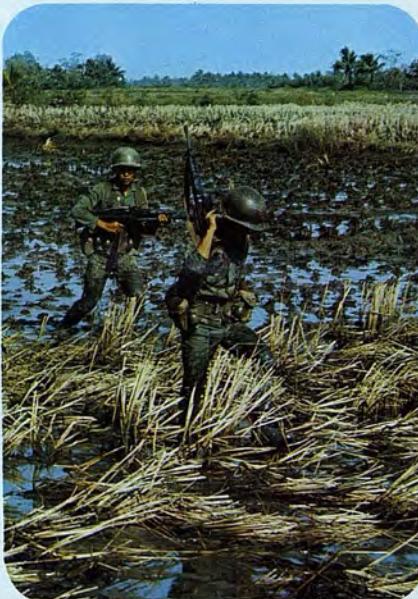
Upon him fall all the miseries of war: scorching heat, chilling rain; choking dust, clinging mud; leeches and mosquitoes. In Vietnam, he must additionally be clever enough to avoid the many boobytraps and filth-covered punji sticks which seem to be waiting for him no matter where he goes. The job of searching an area for enemy supplies, rockets, and other weapons included in a terrorist's arsenal requires a brave and loyal individual; a person able to survive by singular and common skill, and who can many times muster his courage for the frequent necessity of close combat.

In the protection of Saigon, much of



the operational plans involves the use of Republic of Vietnam infantry soldiers, and American fighting units under the operational control of CMAC. Included in the Capital Military District defense force are:

"The Palace Guard" composed of two brigades of the ARVN Airborne Division; the 3rd, 5th, and 6th Ranger Groups, as well as a variable number of Regional and Popular Force units of platoon, company, or battalion size who are strategically located and operating in and around the greater Saigon area. These units, plus the National Police, and US-RVN Navy units secure the approaches to Saigon, as well as police, and patrol the city proper.



The role of U.S. combat units in the defense of Saigon is rapidly diminishing as the RVNAF units assume the ever greater mission. At publication time only the 3d Brigade of the "All American" 82d Airborne Division remains under the operational control of CMAC, but they are only one of a proud roster of fine fighting units that have aided in the protection of Saigon.

These units are: the 199th Light Infantry Brigade; the 3rd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division; the 3rd Squadron, 17th Air Cavalry; and the 6th Battalion, 15th Artillery.

But, the men of the 3rd Brigade, 82d Airborne Division and the 199th Light Infantry Brigade formed the backbone of CMAC. Their assignment was not glamorous, and much of it was tedious. All was dangerous. Count-



WILSON

less sweeps were conducted, oftentimes through areas that were known to contain a high percentage of Viet Cong. The number of enemy killed was high, but often so were our own casualties. Still, the searches of suspected hamlets went on. The bridges were guarded, the roads and waterways patrolled endlessly.

But there was another, more subtle side to the securing of Saigon. Its fulfillment could never have been accomplished by a command order alone. It was done by many individual soldiers, on their own initiative, often without any conscious thought.

Brigadier General George W. Dickerson, Commanding General of the 3/82d Airborne Division told his men, "... We are operating in a densely populated area, in daily contact with the Vietnamese people. To the RVNAF soldier with whom you go on patrol, to the housewife in

the marketplace, to the child who pesters you for candy, you are America... America as judged in the eyes of the Vietnamese."

In the early days of CMAC, when the job was most difficult, and decidedly vital, the soldiers who came in contact with the local Vietnamese citizens remembered that they were Americans and being judged as such. There is no accurate way of knowing how many lives this self-awareness has saved. One or 1000. Either way it made

a difficult task a little easier because it showed the people of Saigon that CMAC committed itself wholeheartedly to their protection. And in a job involving the cooperation of so many diverse people, where a delicate balance is maintained between advising, leading, and doing, every little bit of understanding goes a long way.





Technical sophistication is an important part of today's Army, but for CMAC, the most effective means of protection remains that of having soldiers stand and observe. Human eyesight and the ability to react immediately to a sudden flash is the basis of one of CMAC's most successful protection systems; the counter-rocket/counter-mortar program.

The system used against enemy rockets and mortars is the CMAC flash towers, a section under the control of the Capital Target Acquisition Battery (CTAB). Before any effective artillery fire can be placed on an enemy, his position must first be accurately determined. This detection is the job of the men in the flash towers.

The CTAB towers are a combination of converted water towers and steel-framed structures, some approaching a height of 150 feet. The men of CTAB have the job of staying perched for 12 hours at a stretch on the towers to watch for flashes that would reveal the launching of an enemy rocket.

The flash towers are located in strategic positions in and around the city, and are manned by two and three man teams who keep the entire 360 degree skyline of Saigon under constant observation. Each tower overlaps a section of the skyline already under observation by an adjoining tower.

When a flash is sighted, the observer takes a reading on its direction with a BC scope, and radios the information to CMAC headquarters. Information from a second tower, which also sights the flash, is used to triangulate and plot the exact enemy gun position in much the same manner as the "Smokey the Bear" method used in U.S. state and federal parks to locate forest fires.

The entire plotting—from the moment the flash is sighted—can be done in only 18 seconds. Simple, and centuries old in its application. But it works.

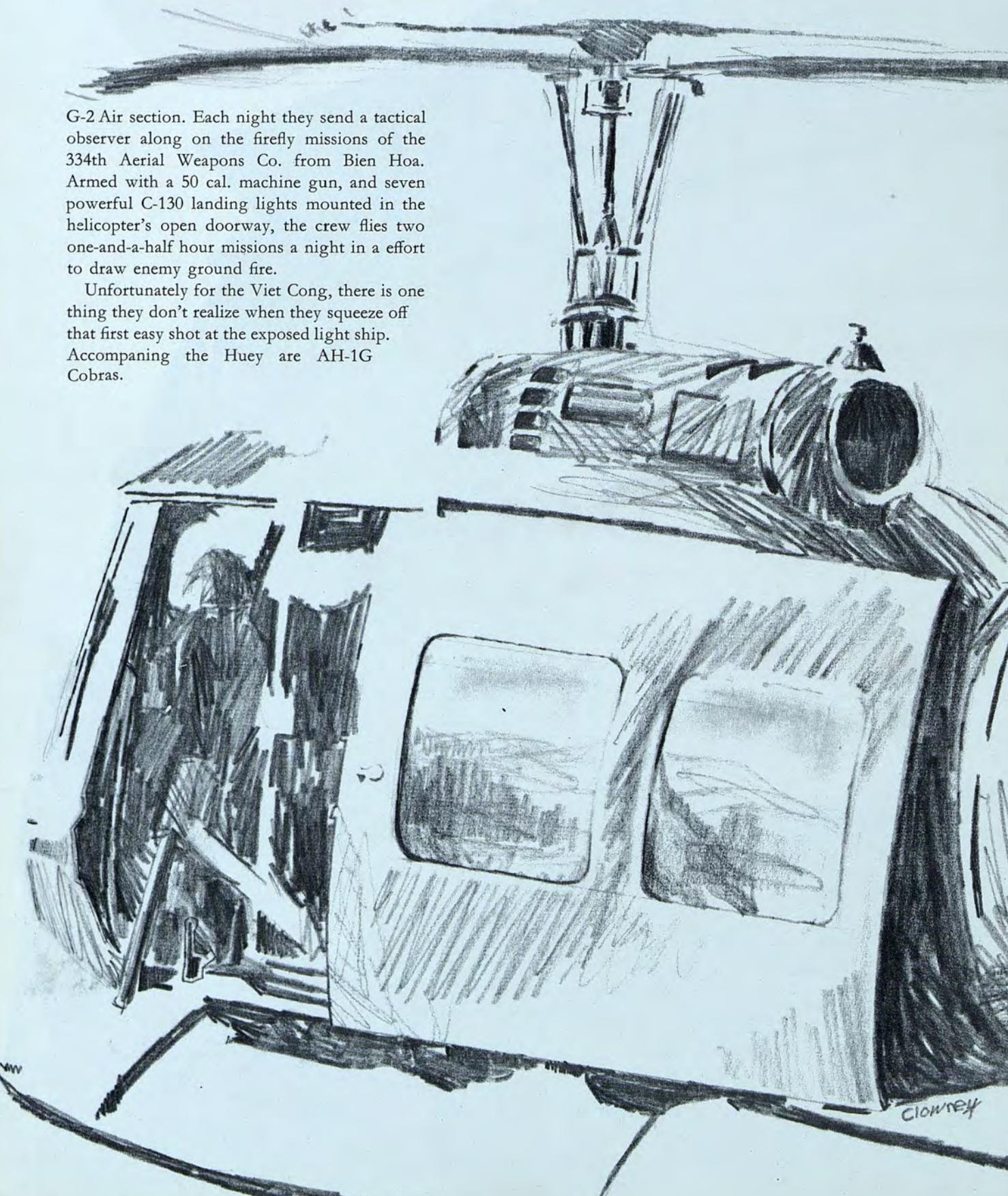
Another equally successful detection method, but considerably more complex than the watch towers, goes under the simple title of Operation Firefly.

It is night. You are flying in a Huey UH-1H helicopter over suspected enemy positions. The mission: find the Viet Cong. The method: shine a light in his face and dare him to shoot back.

Risky? Perhaps, but that is one job of CMAC's

G-2 Air section. Each night they send a tactical observer along on the firefly missions of the 334th Aerial Weapons Co. from Bien Hoa. Armed with a 50 cal. machine gun, and seven powerful C-130 landing lights mounted in the helicopter's open doorway, the crew flies two one-and-a-half hour missions a night in an effort to draw enemy ground fire.

Unfortunately for the Viet Cong, there is one thing they don't realize when they squeeze off that first easy shot at the exposed light ship. Accompanying the Huey are AH-1G Cobras.



The command ship is flying at a higher altitude; the others fly with all lights off below and behind the Huey. As soon as the light ship is fired upon, a Cobra dives in on the now-exposed enemy, peppering him with mini-gun fire, or jolting him with 40mm cannon rounds. The Huey now backs off and begins circling the target, all the while focusing its spotlight on the enemy. Usually, the ground fire is silenced in a matter of seconds, but if necessary, another Cobra can drop down from its perch high in the sky and unleash its arsenal on the enemy.

The firefly missions also have the responsibility of sinking any enemy rivercraft they spot. Upon sighting a boat, CMAC's tactical observer must first confirm if the craft is friendly or hostile. Only after clearance is received can the helicopters open fire. If they are fired upon, however, no clearance is needed.

Firefly missions are one way CMAC has to take the advantage of darkness away from the enemy, and make his job a little harder.



An artillery barrage is deceptive. What appears to be only brute strength is really a precision exercise in speed and accuracy. Most of the incredibly complex work that goes into destroying an enemy menace is done before the round is even loaded into the cannon.

The Fire Support Element (FSE) of CMAC's Artillery section has the mission of first pinpointing the enemy, and then destroying him. To accomplish this end, CMAC artillery relies on the knowledge and skill of a great many individuals working separately to produce a common result. A mistake by any one man can mean the failure of a fire mission, which in turn, can mean the inadequate protection of Saigon. It is no wonder then, that the word "mistake" is rarely heard in the CMAC artillery section.

As soon as enemy ground movement, or an enemy launch flash is spotted by either aerial, ground, or tower observers, the location of the enemy site is radioed to plotting central section. There, the site's grid coordinates and azimuth are plotted and the enemy position is pinpointed, often to within 20 meters.

In the 18 seconds it takes to get a suspected enemy location plotted, FSE is already informing the artillery batteries of a rocket alert, and processing the requests for high explosive clearance with the proper ARVN and U.S. military authorities. Plotting central then relays the rocket site or enemy location to the artillery unit's Fire Direction Center, which sets up a fire mission. Within minutes, an artillery barrage is blanketing the area from which the hostile rocket, mortar, or troop movement came from.

Efficiency and speed. These are the main components of CMAC's Fire Support Element, a combination which the enemy finds hard to beat.

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CLOWNEY



CLOWNEY

CMAC is more than men, equipment, administration, advising. True, these are the factors which comprise CMAC, the elements which protect the most publicized city of the decade. But what do we know about this city which is the very reason for CMAC's existence? For all the publicity, Saigon remains a mystery, a jigsaw puzzle of variety and foreign cultures.

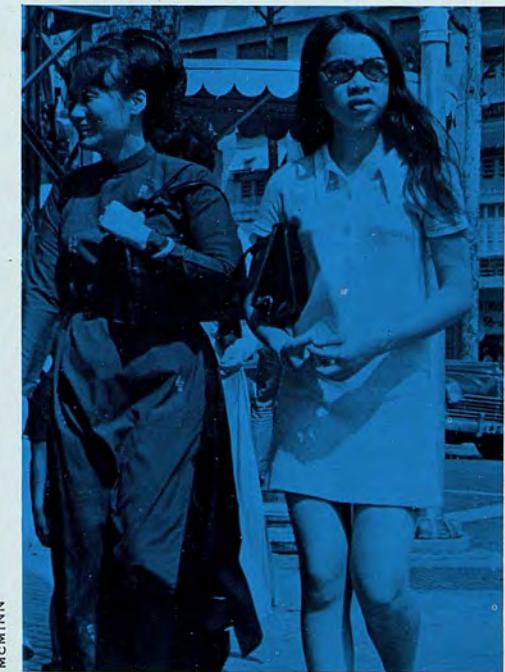
Saigon is built on opposites: a quiet tree-lined avenue, a narrow, dark alleyway: the very rich, and the squalid; the Presidential Palace, and cardboard huts on a sidewalk; French cuisine, and Nuoc Mam; the ao dai, and the mini-skirt.

Saigon bears the scars of a long and violent war, a war that has taken a heavy toll on its leaders, and has scarred many of its naturally beautiful people. In January of 1968, the city was turned into a terrifying battlefield when the Viet Cong made a concerted effort to gain control of the city. CMAC was formed to protect Saigon from a repetition of those bloody events, and today life in Saigon is relatively safe.

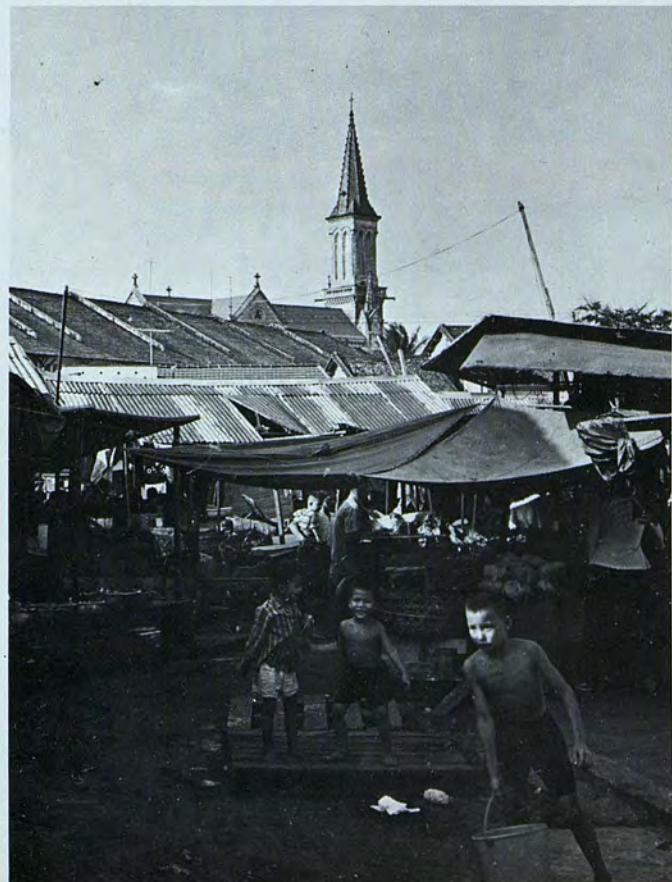
Saigon is Vietnamese, French, Chinese, and American, to name but a few. It has taken many cultures and compressed them into one electric experience. Tu Do is as cosmopolitan and variety-filled as any street in the world, with probably the highest concentration of motor scooters anywhere; yet only a few blocks away there exists a way of life totally unlike anything the average American has ever encountered. To the soldier, the throngs of people in the streets of Saigon seem beyond understanding; their language sounds baffling; their food... indigestible; their traffic jams... monumental. But consider a moment. Why should Saigon be replete with sights, sounds, and tastes common to American cities? Saigon is 7,000 miles and a whole culture from San Francisco. To appreciate Saigon you must approach it on Oriental terms and accept the many contradictions as an important part of the total experience.

Jets roaring off from Tan Son Nhut... A pedicab driver pedalling down Cong Ly... The serenity of the zoo... Cargo ships at the wharf... A cooling afternoon rain in the sunny streets. This is Saigon, and its people.

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MCMINN



MCMINN



The people of this country are part of a cruel paradox; originally known for their peaceful farm life, the delicacy of their art work, the fragile beauty of their women; today they are known as the victims of a 25-year reign of warfare.

Vietnamese citizens, now nearing middle-age, have never known the tranquility of their country at peace. CMAC realizes this, and perhaps its most complex mission now is the restoring of confidence to this war-weary people. Confidence must be restored and nurtured in the individual, in the community, and in the government, for without this sense of national and personal confidence there can be no security against internal or external threat.

It is the people of this nation who must ultimately combat the Communists by active participation in self-defense and development. Only by participation in the elections of village and hamlet governments, and in self-help projects can the people determine what is needed and provide whatever work is required for implementation. The CMD gives guidance and CMAC gives assistance, but the people must give themselves.

The support of the people can be gained only through confidence in the support and assistance they receive. The results are self-perpetuating. Providing effective service and assistance to help the people establish secure hamlet governments and, simultaneously, raise the standard of living has resulted in an increased sense of responsibility to self, community, and government.

The CMAC role in the pacification and development program is to help the people aid themselves. And to this end the command coordinates the diverse activities of tactical operations, civil affairs, psychological operations and civic action. Though the scope of assistance is varied, the objective is not. Every effort is directed toward helping the Vietnamese people build a democratic nation, rebuild their society and end the war.





In war, infinite sacrifices are made, hardships endured, pain suffered, privations witnessed. These are the brutal realities of any war, and for the soldier they cannot be avoided. Neither can they ever be adequately compensated. The medal worn by a soldier is perhaps the most expensive item he will ever own. He alone knows its true cost in pain, in sweat, in blood. CMAC has awarded medals to Regional and Popular Force soldiers, as well as to American troops; for heroism and valor are not traits exclusive to one nation, and in war, sacrifice, hardship, and pain are shared by all.



Americans first arrived in Vietnam in the role of advisers. We counseled and trained the Vietnamese in order for them to withstand the aggression of a ruthless enemy. But this was not enough. More American troops were summoned, not to advise, but to fight. They have fought for many years, and at great cost. Now, American troops are leaving Vietnam, and more will leave in the future.

The Vietnamese soldier has learned and accomplished many things in a relatively short period of time. He has progressed from the pupil to the professional; from a watcher to a doer. Troops from the Republic of Vietnam have now replaced U.S. forces in key locations. They have shown that they can do the job. They now can protect their homeland.

This is the most important change in Vietnam, and no one—Vietnamese or American—can deny its value and ultimate effect.



Anywhere in the world,

a policeman's job is a difficult

one. The Saigon National Police, however, have the added problem of working in a city which for years has been torn by war. The white-shirted Canh Sat are a familiar and frequent sight in the Saigon streets.

Day and night they patrol the roads and man checkposts, stopping robbery suspects, looking for black market activity, and trying to stop terrorists before they strike. The Communists fear the Canh Sat. Long ago they learned that the National Police are constant in their vigilance, and strict in their enforcement of the laws.

They are also thorough. On many nights the Canh Sat have searched each and every room in a given city area, checking identification cards and confiscating black market contraband.

Soldiers and civilians a like in Saigon know that a National Policeman is not someone to be taken lightly, and their respect for these civilian guardians of Saigon is considerable.

Working with CMAC, the Vietnamese Canh Sat do more than their share to make Saigon a safe place to work and live.

cảnh sát



In a city the size of Saigon, it is imperative that vital transportation avenues remain operative at all times. Prior to CMAC's formation, the Viet Cong were able to disrupt important transportation links by destroying some of the 150 bridges which span the canals and rivers in the Saigon-Gia Dinh area. Today, terrorist activity of this type is almost non-existent, thanks to the vigilance and efforts of the CMAC Engineer section.



American and RVNAF troops, Regional and Popular Forces, and Saigon National Police guard the bridges 24 hours a day. Using bright lights, concertina wire and chain-link fences, the guards are constantly on the look-out for explosives, Viet Cong divers, and potential saboteurs. Careful scrutiny is given to traffic as it crosses a bridge span, and no vehicle is ever permitted to stop.

No major bridge within the CMAC area of operations has been destroyed since the command's origin, and with the heavy precautions continuing, it is unlikely that any bridge will fall to enemy terrorists.



As the months pass, events prove that the formation of CMAC was a wise undertaking. Saigon needed immediate and permanent protection. CMAC provided just that. What began as a dire need grew in a matter of weeks to an efficient and cohesive deterrent force, capable of safeguarding the capital of the Republic of Vietnam.

The threat which forced CMAC's conception and rapid maturity has now eased. CMAC's vigilance has not. But with the passing days, CMAC is able to devote more time and effort to what its name implies: Assistance.

The Republic of Vietnam has matured, and now can shoulder many of the burdens which were once borne mainly by the United States alone. Someday, CMAC will no longer exist, for the threat to Saigon will have vanished.

The waging of peace requires the services of deeply committed men. These men came forward in Vietnam, and they shall continue to appear wherever they are needed.

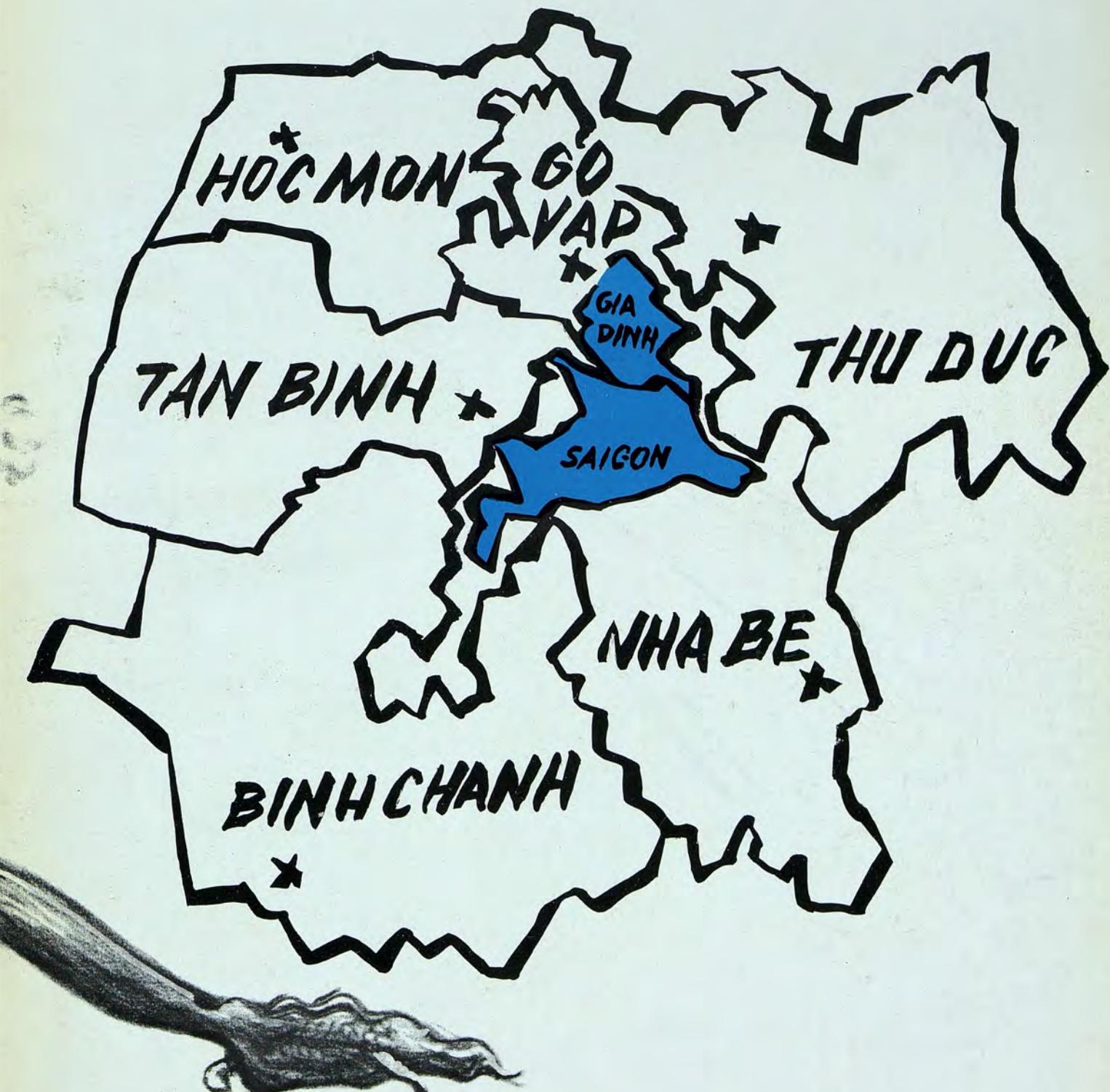
The Capital Military Assistance Command is proud to have included in its ranks so many of these dedicated Americans; Americans who converted their ideals into viable and appreciated deeds.





Major General Walter B. Richardson Commanding General
Lieutenant Colonel Paul A. Timm Information Officer
Editor: 1LT Anthony R. Wagner
Layout and Art Director: SP4 Paul W. Clowney
Text: SSG Paul M. Pennock
Editorial Research: CPT Ludwig T. Dulka
..... 1LT Anthony R. Wagner
..... SFC Harry E. Raymond
Staff: SFC William Jordan, SP5 Martin H. Wilson,
SP5 Richard Emerson, SP5 David Jones, SP5
Phillip Doyle, SP5 Logan McMinn, SP4 Ronald
Duran, SP4 John Rubincan.
ARVN Interpreter: SSC Pho Vi Nghia

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The Crusader's sword point up, with white blade and yellow hilt appears on both the shoulder sleeve insignia of the United States Army Vietnam (on an ultramarine blue base) and of the United States Military Assistance Command Vietnam (on a scarlet base). The sword, a symbol of strength and courage, refers in this instance to the Capital Military Assistance Command with the ultramarine blue and scarlet base providing the link with USARV and USMACV as the superior headquarters. The white five-pointed star is a United States symbol and is also similar to that of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam; the two stars placed on either side of the guard of the unsheathed sword refer to the constant and combined effort of the United States and the Army of the Republic of Vietnam in protecting Saigon, the capital of the Republic of Vietnam. The scarlet color also represents the Artillery which provides surveillance and counter measures against enemy rockets and mortar attacks, the blue color referring to the Infantry which continually patrols in and near Saigon to prevent enemy infiltration and ground attack.



CAPITAL MILITARY ASSISTANCE COMMAND