

Vietnam Communiqué

Dec 3-Dec 9

America kills 194 in I Corps**America Div**

Soldiers of the America Division killed 194 enemy during a week of heavy fighting.

On Dec. 6 America forces and supporting tactical airstrikes accounted for 43 enemy killed in widely scattered actions in the southern portion of the I Corps Tactical Zone.

Brave and Bold soldiers of the 198th Light Infantry Brigade and supporting airstrikes reportedly killed 23 enemy in scattered contacts in the Tien Phuoc-Chu Lai area.

Infantrymen from the 196th killed eight Viet Cong in contacts in the Tam Ky-Hoi An area.

America Division units accounted for 12 VC and six NVA soldiers killed in scattered actions on Dec. 3.

196th Light Infantry Brigade soldiers, working throughout the Hoi An-Tam Ky area reported 24 enemy killed in scattered actions throughout the day.

Infantrymen from the 11th Light Infantry Brigade killed 12 enemy as they operated in Quang Ngai Province. Four of the VC were killed five miles north of Duc Pho by helicopter crews of the 174th Assault Helicopter Co.

9th Inf Div

Elements of the 9th Infantry Division killed 146 in a week of heavy contact with the enemy.

On Dec. 3 Old Reliable soldiers of the 9th Division, supporting gunship crews and tactical airstrikes accounted for 24 enemy killed in scattered actions.

Thirteen enemy were killed by a

hunter-killer team from the 3rd Squadron, 17th Cavalry during scattered action in support of division infantrymen nine miles northwest of Tan An.

Old Reliable soldiers and supporting gunship crews reported killing 39 Viet Cong in scattered actions in the Mekong Delta on Dec. 6.

Riflemen from the 3rd Brigade and chopper gunners from the 3rd Squadron, 17th Cavalry reported killing 14 enemy in actions centered eight miles northwest of Tan An.

1st Avn Bde

Gunners from the 1st Aviation Brigade killed 119 enemy in support of Free World Forces and ARVN units this past week.

On Dec. 3 gunship crews from the 164th Combat Aviation Group reported killing 31 enemy in scattered contacts in the Mekong Delta.

Crews from Troop A, 7th Squadron, 1st Air Cavalry flew several missions in an area centered 25 miles southwest of Can Tho during the day. Gunners reported seven VC killed.

Elsewhere, Cobra crews from the 307th Combat Aviation Battalion's 235th Armored Helicopter Co. flew several missions along the southernmost coast of South Vietnam, reportedly killing one Viet Cong.

Crews from the 307th Combat Aviation Battalion's 235th Aerial Weapons Co. reported killing 21 enemy in scattered actions on Dec. 4 in Chuong Tien Province.

Gunships crews from the 164th Combat Aviation Group reported killing 33 enemy in scattered actions in the Mekong Delta the same day.

Thirteen enemy were killed by a

1st Cav Div

1st Cavalry Division soldiers reportedly killed 96 of the enemy in scattered action during the week.

Action increased in the 1st Cavalry Division's area of operations on Dec. 4 as they reported killing 45 enemy soldiers.

Two companies of the 2nd Battalion (Airmobile), 8th Cavalry engaged the enemy and killed 18 of them in night action 12 miles southeast of Katum. During a sweep of the area at first light, 19 additional bodies were found, bringing the total killed to 37.

On Dec. 9 1st Cavalry Division soldiers killed 46 NVA troops.

An element of the 5th Battalion, 7th Cavalry observed five NVA soldiers moving along a trail four miles west of An Loc. The soldiers pursued the five, and as they closed the distance, took them under fire. The fire was immediately returned by more enemy soldiers concealed in the thick underbrush. In the ensuing battle, which lasted more than three hours, 25 enemy were killed.

An element of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment then joined the battalion in a sweep of the area which revealed five more enemy dead in a bunker.

1st Inf Div

Infantrymen of the 1st Infantry Division killed 38 enemy soldiers during the week.

Elements of the 1st Bn., 2nd Inf., operating in the area of an earlier B-52 airstrike ten-miles east of Lai Khe, were moving through dense jungle Dec. 8 when they came upon a partly destroyed bunker complex. In the 23-bunker complex, the infantrymen found 800 pounds of rice, several small bunkers and the bodies of six Viet Cong. They then engaged a small VC force and, backed by helicopter gunships, fought for more than an hour, killing 16. The same day an element of the 2nd Bn., 28th Inf. killed one VC in an engagement eight miles west of Lai Khe.

23rd Arty Gp

Precision firing and close coordination with an aerial observer has resulted in at least 20 enemy killed by members of the 23rd Artillery Group in action during the past week.

In action Dec. 3 an aerial observer spotted a recoilless rifle position near a U.S. fire support base 20 miles north of Dau Tieng.

The observer called for 105mm howitzer fire from Battery A, 8th Bn., 15th Artillery, located at the fire support base.

Infantrymen from the 1st Cavalry Division swept the area after the firing had ceased and reported that the artillery fire had killed 10 NVA in the area, one of whom appeared to be an officer.

An aerial observer from the 23rd Artillery Group spotted four sampans containing 12 enemy on a river west of Tay Ninh. The observer flew clear of the area and waited for target clearance before returning.

As soon as he spotted them, they opened fire with automatic weapons, hitting his right wing. He then called in artillery fire from Battery B, 2nd Bn., 32nd Artillery at Tay Ninh.

5th SF Gp

Civilian Irregular Defense Group soldiers accompanied by advisors from the 5th Special Forces Group killed 100 enemy soldiers in contacts throughout the Republic of Vietnam during the week. The Vietnamese troops with their American advisors also detained 19 suspects and seized 50 weapons.

101st Abn Div

101st Airborne Division soldiers reportedly killed 21 enemy in a week of light action.

On Dec. 3 Screaming Eagles of the 101st Airborne killed ten enemy and found the bodies of four others in scattered actions in the Nevada Eagle area.

Elements from the 1st Battalion (Air-

mobile), 501st Infantry were led to an enemy bunker complex by a VC suspect. While searching the area, the soldiers engaged several enemy soldiers, killing six and capturing two individual weapons in sporadic contacts.

Troopers from the 1st Bn., 502nd Infantry were operating in the same area and found the body of one enemy apparently killed by artillery.

Early the same day, elements from the 1st Bn., 327th Infantry killed one enemy when they engaged an estimated enemy platoon. While searching the area, they also found the bodies of two enemy killed in a previous action.

11th Cav Regt

The aero-rifle platoon from the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment killed four enemy and detained three others during an early morning raid on an enemy base 10 miles north of Tan Uyen Dec. 4.

Action began when the soldiers entered the wooded area to evaluate an earlier airstrike by Air Force fighter bombers. The troopers found the enemy hiding in underground bunkers. A brief fire fight followed, resulting in four killed and three detained.

25th Inf Div

Soldiers of the 25th Inf Div killed 55 enemy during the week. Heaviest contact was made on Dec. 9 when infantrymen and supporting fighter pilots and gunship crews killed 26 enemy in scattered action.

In that day's largest conflict, 14 NVA soldiers were killed six miles southwest of Ben Cat. Soldiers from the 2nd Brigade's 1st Bn., 5th Inf. were conducting a combat sweep when they encountered an enemy force at 11:50 a.m. "After the initial contact, the U.S. troopers pulled back a sufficient distance and put in all the artillery and airstrikes available," said Maj. Joe Rigby, 2nd Brigade operations officer. Enemy fire ceased at 1 p.m. and the infantrymen swept through the area counting 14 enemy dead and capturing one crew-served and four individual weapons.

199th Inf Bde

Two Viet Cong were killed by 199th Light Infantry Brigade soldiers during an ambush the night of Dec. 9 two miles southwest of Duc Hoa. A company from the 2nd Bn., 3rd Inf. spotted four enemy in the "Pineapple Region" southwest of Duc Hoa while on a night ambush. The infantrymen engaged the four, killing two and capturing one AK-47 rifle.

Earlier in the week while operating in the same "pineapple region" on Dec. 4, soldiers from the 3rd Bn., 7th Inf. sank three sampans. While searching the area, they found a 34-bunker complex containing a small quantity of food and medical supplies. The bunkers were destroyed.

3rd Bde, 82nd Abn Div

Soldiers from the 3rd Brigade, 82nd Airborne experienced very light contact the past week as they killed seven enemy.

On Dec. 3 82nd Airborne Division soldiers killed one Viet Cong and destroyed a 100-bunker enemy complex.

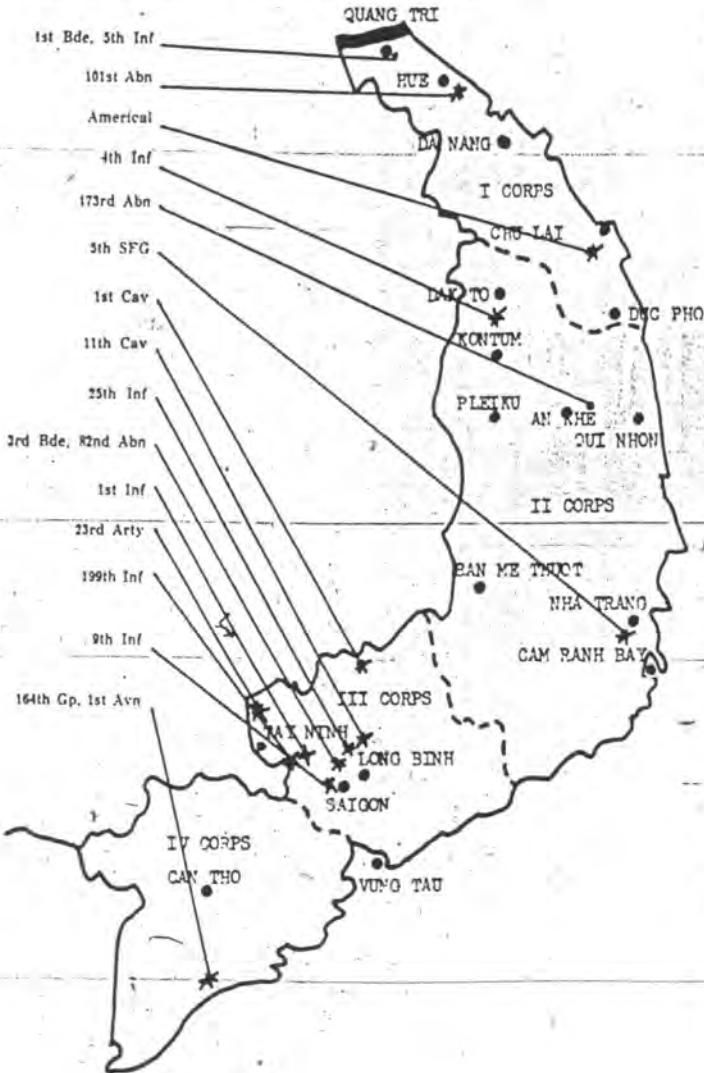
Soldiers from the 1st Bn., 508th Inf., killed the VC as he was moving down a trail nine miles south of Saigon.

The next day's action saw the 82nd Division soldiers kill two Viet Cong and destroy a 70-bunker enemy complex in light action.

A reconnaissance element from the brigade engaged an estimated five Viet Cong along a trail seven miles northwest of Saigon. During a brief exchange of fire, two Viet Cong were killed and two individual weapons were captured.

4th Inf Div

In light action Dec. 4, a reconnaissance element from the 2nd Bn., 35th Inf. found several abandoned enemy bunkers two miles southwest of the Duc Lap CIDG camp and the body of one NVA soldier. On Dec. 5 other division elements found and destroyed several bunkers and tunnel complexes 13 miles southeast of Kontum.



Awards and decorations

DSC awarded 11th Cav EM

SAIGON (11th CAV) — Pfc. Lester Kopsolias received the nation's second highest award, the Distinguished Service Cross, recently while serving with the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment's First Squadron.

Gen. Creighton W. Abrams, commander of U.S. forces in Vietnam pinned the decoration on Kopsolias at A Troop's command post at Tan Son Nhut air base.

The award stemmed from Kopsolias's actions on July 18, 1968 when A Troop of the First Squadron was conducting a reconnaissance-in-force operation near Loc Ninh.

The troop was sweeping through a rubber plantation when an NVA company opened up on them with small arms, automatic weapons and antitank rockets.

Immediately the young Black-horse trooper directed his armored cavalry assault vehicle in a counter assault; taking the lead when the track in front of him was hit and totally disabled.

Then suddenly two enemy rockets hit his track, wounding the entire crew.

Kopsolias called for a medic and together they removed the seriously wounded crew — gave them first aid and carried them one hundred meters through the intense fire fight to an evacuation vehicle.

Disregarding his wounds, he

returned to his CAV and quickly mounted the .50 caliber machine gun. Slapping a fresh belt of ammo into the machine gun he started spraying the enemy positions with deadly fire.

Twenty-five enemy soldiers attempted an assault on his position.

The lone defender of the track, Kopsolias retaliated once

again with his deadly .50 caliber — killing several and scattering the rest.

He was wounded again, but completely ignored his wounds and took complete command when troopers were sent to aid him. He remained in charge until the battle ended and only then did he agree to have his wounds treated.



STANDING TALL is Pfc. Lester Kopsolias of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment as General Creighton W. Abrams, Commander of U.S. Forces in Vietnam, awards him the Distinguished Service Cross.

Rifleman earns award the hard way—fighting buffalo

CHU LAI, (Americo) — As if fighting the elusive enemy in Vietnam isn't rough enough, infantrymen may have to keep an eye out for VC-sympathizing water buffalo.

Pfc. Vance S. Davis was really buffaloed when it took him longer than usual to get a purple heart he had earned the hard way.

The fact was that nobody believed Davis from Americo Division's 196th Infantry Brigade. Following his name in the casualty report of 2nd Bn., 1st Inf., is the entry—"Cause: Charging hostile VC water buffalo."

Davis was a rifleman in the last platoon of a company that was conducting a sweep of the area near Que Son.

Along the side of the trail was a high hedgerow. As he turned a corner he was suddenly confronted with enemy sniper fire.

"Just then I saw this buffalo in a pen about ten feet away," said Davis. "I turned and when I looked again he wasn't there. That's when I knew he had busted out—guess the sniper fire had spooked him," he added.

Davis is still impressed by the animal. "He came out of that pen and did a right face on a dime. Any drill sergeant would have been proud," he commented.

As his buddies dived for cover, Davis leveled his M-16 and fired, hitting his target four or five times: "It didn't even faze him," Davis said. "I tried to dodge him, but he looked like a wall charging at me."

The buffalo hooked to one side, caught Davis in the small of the

back and flung him into the air.

Looking the part of a fallen matador, Davis was dusted off to DaNang and spent 55 days in the hospital with internal injuries. Some men in his company later found the wounded buffalo and issued a coup de grace.

Looking back on his narrow brush with the "enemy" Davis still has trouble making people believe his story isn't bull — just buffalo.

WO's deeds win DFC

PHUOC VINH (1st Cav) — WO Norman L. Helmke was recently awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his heroic actions as a helicopter pilot with the 1st Air Cavalry Division.

On Aug. 19, Helmke, then a member of Btry. E, 82nd Artillery, was flying over Landing Zone Caro, 10 miles southeast of Quang Tri City, when the base was hit by a barrage of NVA rockets.

Without hesitation, he set his ship down in the midst of the explosions to evacuate a battalion commander. Then he returned to pick up several artillery observers and flew them, despite continued heavy enemy fire, over the suspected launching sites. The observers called in fire on the NVA, forcing them to abandon their bombardment of the LZ.

from the desk of



Shortimer Sam

Q. Dear Sam, I will be extending the necessary number of days plus two for good measure in order to get the five month early out. Upon leaving Vietnam, I will have served 19 months and two days active duty, 13 and one half months in RVN. I would like to know what I have coming in the way of VA educational benefits? Spec. 4 J.D.L., 1st Cav.

A. According to a recent (Oct.) revision, you may receive one and one half months financial support towards your education for every month you have served in the Army, to include the time involved in your early drop. For you, this adds up to 36 months of VA support towards your education.

Q. Dear Sam, I spent one full tour here in Vietnam and came back in April of this year for a second time around. I want to extend for another six months but would like to get out of my present job (engineer) and do something else. I heard that the Army has escorts for deceased personnel and I would like to extend my tour for this. What USARV reg. covers this and how would I go about applying for this? Sgt. E.H., 173rd Engr. Co.

A. USARV Reg. 638-31 covers military escorts and states that remains shipped from RVN to CONUS, Hawaii, Alaska or possessions of the United States will not normally require an escort. Upon request of next of kin, however, a military escort will normally be provided from RVN if this command has declared his availability. To qualify as a military escort, you must have completed five-sixths of your normal tour of duty in RVN. Approval of military escorts not specifically requested by next of kin must be obtained directly from Chief, Support Services, Department of the Army.

Q. Dear Sam, I have a question to ask you concerning a song we heard on the radio the other day. It's called "Love, Sweet Love". I would like to know who sang it? Spec. 4 T.G., 4th Inf. Div.

A. My good friends down at AFVN tell me it's going to be hard to determine which artist sang the version of the song that you heard as they have recordings by Polly Bergen, Marilyn Maye, and the original artist, Jackie De Shannon, who, incidentally, also wrote the song. In addition to these female vocalists, they also have versions by Glenn Yarbrough and instrumentals by Wes Montgomery and Stan Getz.

Q. Dear Sam, are there any restrictions on taking home Vietnamese liquor? Spec. 4 A.F., 59th S.D.

A. There sure are. You may take one wine gallon of alcoholic beverages back to the United States. Of that gallon, three quarts must be distilled or otherwise manufactured and bottled in the United States, American Samoa, Virgin Islands, or Guam. That leaves you one quart of Vietnamese liquor. By the way, you also have to be 21 and the liquor must accompany you and not be shipped as hold baggage.

Q. Dear Sam, I read in the Army Times in September or October that EM who had served in Vietnam since September 1966 were going to be awarded the Expeditionary Medal. My personnel say that they know of it only being awarded to Korea. What is the correct answer? Staff Sgt. S.G., B.M.B., 124th TC.

A. I believe that you might have misinterpreted the article in the Army Times. I didn't notice it, but my sources in USARV awards Branch tell me that the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal was awarded to Vietnam veterans for the period of July 1, 1958 through July 3, 1965. As for other Armed Forces Expeditionary Medals, you can find them in AR 672-5-1. As for your reliable personnel, they don't appear to be too sharp on their information. But then that is what I am here for.

Q. Dear Sam, I would like to know who to talk to in order to get stationed in Bangkok as an R&R liaison NCO. I was supposed to DEROs on Oct. 25 of this year but extended for six months in order to get this position. I cannot locate the man at USARV who told me there was a possibility of getting this position. Can I get this job or am I stuck for the six months? Staff. Sgt. W.A.M., 173rd Spt. Bn.

A. I regret to inform you that USARV personnel are eligible for selection to the following liaison teams: Hawaii; Penang; Kuala Lumpur; Singapore; Tel Aviv; and Tokyo. USARV personnel are not eligible for any other R&R sites. If you desire the proper office for further information, write to USARV HQ's, ATTN: AVIAG-B, for you do have six other choices for liaison NCO.

Q. Dear Sam, when I arrived in country two months ago I was told that I was authorized so many R&R's, so many leaves, and so many in-country passes. Now I am in my unit and am told that I should consider myself lucky to receive one R&R which I will get, so I am told. Also, is it possible for a single man to get an R&R in Hawaii? Pfc. D.O., 198th Inf.

A. This sounds like the run of the mill info given to newly arrived men for duty in Vietnam. You can pick up almost any sort of information on any subject with no great degree of authenticity. As for R&R, you are authorized one R&R out of country and one in, the latter providing you are not short staffing your unit. You may take seven days leave out-country, and the passes are up to your unit commander. As for R&R in Hawaii for a single man, be my guest. There is no preference for married men for R&R in Hawaii. Don't give R&R serious thought right away, though as it is best to break up your tour by taking R&R around your sixth month in Vietnam or later.

Questions on any subject may be sent to Shortimer Sam, in care of The Army Reporter, HQ, USARV, APO 96375. All questions will be given prompt attention and deep thought. Unsigned or anonymous letters will not be answered.

Shortimer Sam