

Vietnam Communique

Dec 16-Dec. 22

Americal pounds enemy in I Corps

Americal Div

Soldiers of the Americal Division saw the heaviest action of the week, reportedly killing 309 enemy.

Americal forces killed 88 enemy soldiers on Dec. 18 in their heaviest action. Three companies of the 2nd Bn., 1st Inf., 196th Light Infantry Brigade teamed up with support fire to kill 53 of the enemy in an ambush southwest of An Hoa. Other Americal soldiers killed six NVA and 29 Viet Cong in scattered action throughout the southern portion of the I Corps Tactical Zone. Eight more enemy bodies were found in shallow graves west of Tam Ky.

In all, the 196th Light Infantry Brigade killed 59 NVA soldiers and 14 Viet Cong.

The three companies of the 2nd Bn., 1st Inf. killed 53 NVA soldiers in an encounter with an estimated 100 NVA soldiers six miles southeast of An Hoa as the infantrymen were moving out of night defensive position.

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With approximately 30 NVA soldiers killed, the enemy broke and ran north where they were blocked by Co. A. The enemy then moved southwest and almost two miles from the original point of contact, they encountered Company D. Air strikes hampered the chances for an escape to the west. Artillery and gunship crews were called in to blast the enemy.

9th Inf Div

Soldiers from the 9th Infantry Division reported killing 154 enemy in a week of heavy fighting.

Old Reliable soldiers from the 9th Division saw contact heaviest on Dec. 21 as they killed 47 in scattered contacts in the division's delta area of operations. Gunship crews of the 214th Combat Aviation Battalion's 191st Assault Helicopter Company reported killing 18 Viet Cong in scattered encounters supporting 1st Brigade elements. After being air-inserted, infantrymen from the 2nd Bn., 39th Inf. killed two VC near Sa Dec.

Supporting the 3rd Brigade, gunship crews of D Troop, 3rd Squadron, 5th Armored Cavalry reported killing 14 VC after a Navy patrol boat received about 500 rounds of small arms fire 17 miles east of Tan An.

On Dec. 18 9th Division soldiers along with supporting helicopter gunships, killed 38 enemy.

Gunships supporting the 2nd Brigade's Mobile Riverine Force reported killing nine VC in scattered contacts as they operated throughout the Kien Hoa Province, while brigade ground troops reported killing six more.

1st Inf Div

Elements of the 1st Infantry Division reported killing 20 enemy soldiers in a week of light contact.

Big Red One Infantrymen of the 1st Bn., 28th Inf. operating near Di An one Dec. 18 encountered an estimated Viet Cong platoon and killed three of the

enemy. Soldiers of the 1st Bn., 18th Inf. killed two Viet Cong in action seven miles east of Lai Khe.

Elsewhere, one enemy was killed by elements of the 1st Bn., 26th Inf.

On Dec. 20 elements of the 1st Division killed five enemy during a day of scattered contacts.

An ambush patrol from the 2nd Bn., 16th Inf. engaged an estimated four enemy moving down a small dirt patch near Di An. The enemy returned fire and in the brief firefight, three of the enemy were killed.

1st Cav Div

Action was scattered during the week for soldiers of the 1st Cavalry Division as they reported killing 80 of the enemy.

Heaviest contact came on Dec. 18 as 1st Cav soldiers and supporting elements killed 42 Viet Cong. The bodies of 17 others were also found.

Shortly after noon that day, elements of the 1st Squadron, 9th Air Cavalry observed numerous enemy troops along a road 12 miles northeast of Phuoc Binh.

Following airstrikes 41 enemy were counted dead in the area. Another element of the 1st Squadron, 9th Air Cavalry reported discovering the bodies of 17 NVA soldiers killed in an area of previous contact by supporting fire.

In other action, one enemy was killed six miles west of Quan Loi. On Dec. 20 soldiers of the 1st Cav Division reported killing 23 enemy and finding the bodies of three others.

Elements of the 2nd Bn. (Airmobile), 12th Cavalry encountered several enemy soldiers 12 miles north of Quan Loi. In the ensuing firefight two NVA soldiers were killed.

Elements of the 2nd Bn. (Airmobile), 7th Cavalry received small fire from several enemy seven miles northeast of Quan Loi. The infantrymen returned fire, killing four.

25th Inf Div

25th Infantry Division soldiers reported very heavy contact with the enemy during the week, killing 252.

Tropic Lightning soldiers of the 25th Division and supporting elements killed 92 of the enemy on Dec. 22. The heaviest action took place when 81 NVA regulars tried to overrun a patrol base.

The base, located nine and one half miles south of Tay Ninh City and manned by men from the 4th Bn., 9th Inf., came under attack a few minutes after midnight. An observer spotted an estimated 40 enemy moving to the west of his position. Mortar fire was directed on the enemy position. At about the same time, the base was hit on all sides by an estimated two enemy battalions employing small arms and automatic weapons fire. The fight raged heavily for two and one half hours, then slackened off and continued sporadically until 7:00 a.m.

Elsewhere, 11 more enemy were killed in scattered contacts, six of whom were credited to an Air Force air strike seven miles north-northeast of Dau Tieng.

In a seven and one half hour battle near Cu Chi on Dec. 20, a reported 54 enemy were killed by 25th Infantry Division elements.

Fighting began three miles northwest of Cu Chi when elements of the 1st Bn. (Mechanized), 5th Inf. established contact with an unknown number of Viet Cong. As the battle continued, the infantrymen were reinforced by elements of the 2nd Bn., 12th Inf. and 3rd Squadron, 4th Armored Cavalry. Supported by gunships, artillery and tactical air strikes, the 2nd Brigade soldiers fought for seven and one half hours when the enemy withdrew finally.

4th Inf Div

In very light contact soldiers of the 4th Infantry Division reported killing seven enemy during the week.

Light action was reported on Dec. 16 as a division reconnaissance patrol engaged an NVA force in a brief firefight approximately 20 miles southwest of

Kontum City killing two NVA soldiers.

The following day Iyemen reported killing two more enemy as a reconnaissance patrol killed one enemy eight miles southwest of Dak To while an airstrike accounted for another enemy elsewhere.

The next day two NVA soldiers were killed in an ambush five miles southwest of Ben Het while other Iyemen reported finding small amounts of miscellaneous enemy supplies elsewhere.

3rd Bde, 82nd Abn Div

Action was light for the 3rd Brigade, 82nd Airborne during the week as they reported killing one Viet Cong.

On Dec. 17 infantrymen from the 82nd Division's 2nd Bn., 505th Airborne Inf. sank one sampan and killed one Viet Cong in action nine miles south of Saigon.

Two days later, infantrymen from the 2nd Bn., 505th Inf. uncovered an enemy weapons cache 11 miles north-northwest of Saigon.

101st Abn Div

101st Airborne Division soldiers and supporting elements killed 39 of the enemy during the past week.

On Dec. 21 Screaming Eagles of the 101st Div (Airmobile) reported killing 16 enemy in several encounters as Operation Nevada Eagle continued.

Gunship crews of the 2nd Squadron, 17th Armored Cavalry reported killing five Viet Cong near Phu Loc after ground troops of the 2nd Battalion (Airmobile), 327th Infantry marked the area with smoke grenades.

Elements of the 1st Bn. (Airmobile), 502nd Infantry killed one Viet Cong six miles northeast of Hue, while four enemy bodies were found by soldiers of the same battalion in the same area.

Southeast of Camp Eagle, elements of the 2nd Bn. (Airmobile), 502nd Inf. engaged 15 enemy. The encounter resulted in two enemy dead and two individual weapons captured.

Six other enemy were killed in scattered actions elsewhere.

1st Avn Bde

Gunners from the 1st Aviation Brigade killed 18 enemy in support of Free World Forces and ARVN units this past week.

While flying in support of the 21st Infantry Division (ARVN) 26 miles southeast of Soc Trang, gunship crews from the 13th Combat Aviation Battalion's 121st Assault Helicopter Company encountered a large fleet of enemy sampans. The chopper gunners moved in and in a series of strikes reported sinking 63 sampans and killing 16 Viet Cong.

Elsewhere other chopper gunners from the 164th Combat Aviation Group reported killing two Viet Cong, sinking five sampans and destroying three structures in widely scattered incidents as they operated throughout the Mekong Delta.

199th Inf Bde

Redcatchers of the 199th Light Infantry Brigade experienced light action during the week as they killed four enemy soldiers.

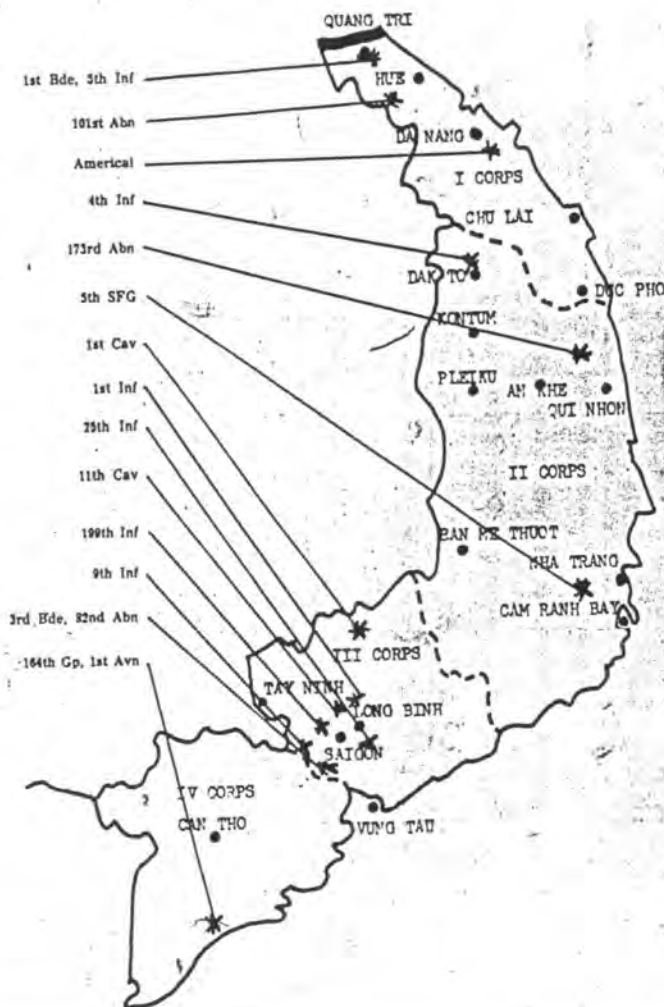
On Dec. 20 199th soldiers killed three enemy and destroyed numerous bunkers as they operated south and southwest of Saigon.

A company from the 2nd Bn., 3rd Inf. killed three Viet Cong during a brief firefight five miles southwest of Saigon, near the village of My Yen.

The following day elements of the 2nd Bn., 3rd Inf. in action nine miles west of Saigon found a cache with numerous mortar rounds and AK47 rifles.

11th Cav Regt

Blackhorse troopers of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment reported killing six enemy soldiers in scattered fighting near Tan Uyen on Dec. 18. The regiment also reported discovering a complex of tunnels and bunkers believed to have been used as a hospital. The cavalrymen found bowls of warm rice inside the tunnels.



Sweepers dust road for mines

CHU LAI — Under cover of darkness, two Viet Cong move silently from the rice paddies to Highway 1 a few miles north of Duc Pho. Hurriedly, for there is danger of discovery by South Vietnamese Popular Forces, they dig a hole in the road.

Into the hole the VC place a 105mm artillery round. Attached to it is a homemade bamboo pressure firing device. Throwing dirt over their work, the VC take time only to obliterate traces of their digging, then quickly vanish again into the fields.

The 105mm round has become a field expedient land mine. The weight of a passing vehicle will cause two metal leads in the bamboo firing device to make contact, blowing the mine. This mine will not accomplish its mission, destruction of US personnel and equipment. Its failure, however, will not be the fault of the Viet Cong who planted it. An 11th Brigade mine sweep team will discover and demolish it.

Elements of the 26th Engineer Bn. and the 39th Engineer Bn. are jointly responsible for clearing Highway 1 of mines from LZ Bronco to LZ Snoopy, one of the most frequently mined areas. In order to insure maximum safety from land mines and obtain the greatest usage of Highway 1, every possible effort is made to have the road cleared by 10 AM

daily. Company "C", 26th Engineers, clears the access road from LZ Bronco and the portion of Highway 1 within Duc Pho, while the 39th Engineers sweep from LZ Snoopy south.

The Viet Cong use two main types of firing devices, both homemade from bamboo. One is designed for horizontal emplacement, covering a 14 inch wide section of the road. A curved strip of thin bamboo with a lead wire is attached to a flat strip by rubber bands. Pressure on the dirt above the device will cause the curved strip to break free of the rubber bands, allowing the wire leads to make contact.

The second main firing device employed by Charlie is of the horizontal plunger variety. A bamboo rod 30 inches in length, carrying a wire lead, is inserted part way into a tube holding a contact wire at the bottom. Wedges placed between the plunger and the tube impede the plunger's movement so that pressure must be applied repeatedly to it to drive it to the bottom, making contact with the base wire. The final pressure required to set off the device depends upon the remaining distance between the two wires.

The end result of a vehicle passing over these firing devices is the same in either case: a sudden, devastating explosion, capable of sending a 2½ ton truck 120 feet through the air, if the charge is strong enough. (American)

Ambushes rout noisy enemy force

LAI KHE — An American unit's well-planned series of night ambushes near the Cambodian border recently forced an enemy unit with poor noise discipline to disobey orders.

Intelligence reports indicated that the NVA company was under orders not to make contact enroute to Saigon. However, elements of the 1st Infantry's 2nd Bn., 2nd Inf. (Mechanized) were alerted by voices and radios in the distance.

Co. C and the Reconnaissance Platoon of Headquarters Co. had just moved into position forming three squad and two platoon-sized ambushes near the village of Ap Kalali when, forty yards down the road marched a company of NVA.

"We saw each other at the same time," commented Lt. Thomas Pugh. "When they opened up with small arms and rockets, we countered with claymore mines and .50 caliber machinegun fire. At first they tried to flank us to the north and east, but our 50's were taking their toll and the enemy chose to break contact."

One of the "Recon" elements resumed contact when it was called to reinforce Co. C. Several fleeing NVA were sighted, but the fighting lasted only momentarily, as the enemy wanted no part of the Big Red One troops.

"The enemy probed all night trying to recover lost supplies and weapons they had dropped," added Lt. George Costango. (1st Inf.)



1st Cav Photo

SPEC. 4 JAMES ROSE assigned to the American's 1st Bn., 1st Cav, cautiously searches a hootch during a recent action north of Quang Ngai City.

Cavalry to the rescue

NVA outgunned by rocketeers

QUAN LOI — Diving from the sky with rockets striking and mini-guns blazing, the aerial rocket artillery ships of the 1st Air Cav. Division are a welcome sight to the rifleman.

Whether "prepping" assault areas, searching for enemy rocket sites, or supporting infantry units in contact, the "Blue Max" pilots are constantly called on to deliver. Sometimes they must place fire as close as 20 meters from friendly positions.

"It's a thrilling experience piloting one of these birds," said WO Stephen J. Shaw, an aircraft commander with Battery C, 2nd Bn. 20th Artillery. "When I have a mission I feel excitement and anticipation about what I am to face, and whether our fire will be on target."

"Usually, two ships go together on a mission," he continued. "With one maneuvering to hit the target, while the other covers for him. We have had as many as eight ships on a mission, though."

With a team of two ships always on two-minute alert, fire support is only minutes away from any location in the division's operations area. Loaded with 76 rockets and 4,000 rounds for its mini-guns, the Huey Cobra can make instant believers of any who dare to challenge its authority.

"Once we receive information on an enemy force, we try to

formulate a picture of where our forces and enemy troops are located," explained Shaw. "Then we launch our attack from such a direction that long or short rockets will not be a hazard to our own men."

"The most interesting mission is to fire for the Long Range Patrols," said Capt. Franklin T. Thornhill, a platoon leader with Battery C. "They can't give away their position and they have to signal us by mirror. After that we have to keep them in sight so we don't lose them. We all have to put a little more for this type of mission."

Problems do creep into the operations, however. Low hanging clouds, such as those that harassed the A Shau Valley operation, make maneuvering and locating enemy targets difficult. "Night missions are also hairy," reported Shaw. "Trying to spot from two thousand feet, a flashlight marking friendly positions, isn't easy."

"We were called once to provide night support for a friendly force that was pinned down by the North Vietnamese, less than one hundred meters away," continued Thornhill. Directed by the light of heat tablets, the pilots fired 470 rockets with such accuracy that the enemy force was sent staggering, and the Skytroopers escaped without a single casualty.

"We've never refused to take

a mission, nor have we ever pulled out when the going got rough," added Shaw. "When the rifleman are out of reach of artillery, we're all they have. We'll do anything to help them out."

"The most satisfying part of a mission to me," he continued, "is when you've gone in and hit the target, and the rifleman call up and say 'Roger, Blue Max, you've hit right where we wanted it!'" (1st Cav)

Patrol interrupts VC meet

ABOARD THE BENEWAH — A Viet Cong infrastructure meeting was rudely interrupted recently when Co. B 3d Bn. 60th Inf. on a combined reconnaissance Patrol paid a visit.

The result was 13 captured Viet Cong and two killed while trying to escape. No weapons were found at the site in Kien Hoa province.

Air mobility played a key role in the action after it was learned through intelligence reports that the meeting was to be held.

"We received some sniper fire going in," reported Capt. Lawrence R. Kincheloe, the 27-year old company commander. "As we closed the noose, the VC ran out of the two houses into the surrounding cane fields."

"These people were part of the VC infrastructure in the area," Kincheloe continued. "Today we got the recruiters and the tax collectors instead of the fighters."

Although one helicopter was forced down during the confrontation, there were no reported U.S. injuries. (9th Inf)

Blondie

by Chic Young





HUSTLING OVER a grassy bank, a rifleman from the Americal Division moves out in a operation north of Chu Lai. The soldiers of the 198th Infantry Brigade's Co. B, 1st Bn., 46th Inf. were crossing a stream during a sweep of rugged jungle terrain.

Waits, then forced to fire

Patrol meets 80 NVA

BONG SON — A night ambush for a 173rd Airborne Brigade patrol turned into a long night for the paratroopers who were forced to open fire against an unknown-sized force shortly after sighting over 80 NVA.

Earlier the same evening, paratroopers of Co. C, 1st Bn, 503d Inf., 173rd Airborne Brigade, had spotted fresh tracks on a well-used trail in the thick jungle of the Soui Ca Mountains along the north central coast of South Vietnam.

"The area had all of the characteristics of a real good ambush sight," recalled Lt. Kenneth P. Bergquist, who decided to drop off a small ambush while his platoon moved further down the trail to stop for the night.

"We chose a hill between two streams for the ambush

site," said Sgt. Robert G. Obidzinski. The lanky sergeant added, "We had good fields of fire and could watch both ends of the trail."

"As darkness fell we prepared ourselves for a long wait," remarked Pfc. Harry M. Sweatman, "but Charlie didn't make us wait very long."

The flank security spotted the first of the NVA as they came noisily down the wide trail, and radioed to Lt. Bergquist that there were 60 NVA on the trail. Almost immediately, 23 more moved into the open.

The paratroopers sat motionless, scarcely breathing as the large NVA force moved past them. As darkness shrouded the jungle, a lone NVA was spotted walking directly into the ambush.

"I thought he was going to step right on me," Cpl. Robert

Morrison said excitedly, "but before he could Sgt. Obidzinski let him have it and we blew our claymores and quickly relocated."

(173rd Abn.)



173rd Abn Photo

AFTER CHECKING his compass, Spec. 4 Robert L. Knicely looks up to survey his intended route. Knicely was on patrol with his unit, Co. C, 3rd Bn., 503rd Inf., 173rd Airborne Brigade.

1st Inf hits enemy camp

LAI KHE—A 1st Infantry Division battalion swept through an enemy basecamp recently during a seven-day reconnaissance in force (RIF) northwest of Lai Khe.

They killed seven Viet Cong and uncovered enemy weapons, munitions and food caches.

The operation began in the afternoon when the 1st Bn., 26th Inf's Alpha, Charlie and Delta Companies plus the battalion command group air-assaulted into a deserted rice paddy landing zone (LZ). Alpha company then headed southwest with Delta trailing, and Charlie moving northwest.

Co. A had moved approximately 300 yards off the LZ when it came into an active enemy basecamp. After a brief exchange of fire, the company moved into a clearing to allow an air strike to hit the basecamp. After the air strike they again entered the area of contact.

"We found numerous traces of the enemy as we moved through. The Viet Cong had moved further back and we engaged them again. This time we killed three before we withdrew for the night," commented Pfc. James H. Hudson.

The following day Co. C swept through the basecamp meeting no resistance and finding two additional enemy dead. They also uncovered 2½ tons of rice, 600 pounds of dried fish, six cases of dried milk, four live chickens, cooking utensils, construction equipment, 80 gallons of gasoline and 200 gallons of kerosene. A weapons cache was uncovered by probing in the bunkers and other suspected areas.

The weapons cache amounted to five machineguns plus 400 rounds of ammunition and four rifles. Also found in a bunker were five anti-tank mines.

Co. D starting on its own RIF that day, found another VC killed

by artillery fire from the previous day's action.

The following day Co. D, with the help of one of their Hoi Chanh scouts killed another of the enemy. The unit halted on the edge of a suspected basecamp and a cloverleaf was sent forward to check a trail. The scout halted the cloverleaf and told everyone to get down, and within a few minutes the enemy soldier walked into the waiting patrol.

Throughout the remainder of the operation, the battalion uncovered and destroyed 20 Chinese Communist grenades, one large claymore mine, a huge quantity of cooking utensils and clothing, 13 rolls of barbed wire, and 55 gallons of CS gas crystals.

(1st Inf)

Soldiers foil bike escape

TAY NINH — Five VC suspects tried to to rush past Comp. D of the 3rd Bn, 22nd Inf., and escape to Nui Ba Den Mountain but were literally run to earth by Lt. Dale Richey, and his Vietnamese Kit Carson Scout, Tom Nelson.

The 1st Brigade Tropic Lightening soldiers were on a reconnaissance-in-force mission two miles southeast of Nui Ba Den when they spotted five Vietnamese pedaling on bicycles. Richey and Nelson moved forward and called upon the suspects to halt, but finally had to run them down before they stopped.

A search of the detainees' belongings revealed 34,000 piasters. A sharp-eyed forward observer, Lt. Frank Catafamo found a shopping list containing a tabulation of types and quantities of medical supplies to be bought on the South Vietnamese economy.

Now Co. D had a real problem, what to do with the bicycles. "That's easy," said Richey. "We'll put them to good use." Delta's command group then proceeded to prepare the bikes for combat.

Radios were strapped to the luggage racks; and the commander, forward observer, medic and RTOs moved out with good point, flank and rear security, of course. (25th Inf)

American girl, 11, helps orphans here

QUI NHON—An 11-year-old girl has enlisted the support of her elementary school in a project to share Christmas joy with war ravaged Vietnamese children.

Patty Bayer, of Rolla, Mo., began her project when she read a letter to her sixth grade class at Benton Elementary School. It was written by her father, Lt. Col. William S. Bayer, commander to the 223rd Combat Support Aviation Bn, stationed here.

In the letter, Bayer explained that his aviation battalion had adopted as their civic action project a Save-the-Children-Fund convalescent center near it. The center cares for 55 children between one and 14 years old whose parents have been killed by VC terrorists or are unable to care for them. Many of the children themselves were wounded by the Viet Cong.

The colonel asked for help in a Christmas project, listing items that could be used for a Christmas party such as lights and decorations, building blocks, knitting needles, wool yarn, toy cars, picture books, crayons, soft toys, and wall pictures.

Seeing the enthusiastic reaction of her class, Bayer's daughter took the letter and pictures which came with it to all the other classrooms in the school. Excited by the chance to make other children happy and support their soldiers in Vietnam, the school children gathered gifts which are on their way to the children's center.

(1st Avn)