



American Photo  
AN INFANTRYMAN from the American Division's 4th Bn., 21st Inf. takes part in a combat assault in 515 Valley 11 miles west of Duc Pho.

## Pilot spots VC, 35 enemy killed

CAI LAY — The discovery of one Viet Cong by a sharp-eyed pilot of the 1st Aviation Brigade's 191st Helicopter Co. resulted in 35 enemy killed three miles northeast of here.

"I spotted one individual with a weapon hiding in some tall grass," said WO Mike Holt, a gunship pilot. "I broke around to check him out, and he opened fire on us. We engaged the target and all of a sudden the place came alive with VC."

Before the afternoon was over the gunships had killed 30 VC and taken nine detainees. Troops of the 9th Infantry Division's 8th Bn., 31st Inf. had added five kills to the total.

"The gunships were working on intelligence targets," said Lt. Col. Ralph J. Peterson, commander of the infantry unit.

After the initial contact, Company B, 8th Bn., 31st Inf. was inserted to sweep the densely forested area, known as the "Pie Slice."

"The area was dry and hard," said Staff Sgt. Robert L. Townley, 3rd Platoon sergeant. "We crossed only three small streams before getting to the treeline near the enemy's location."

As the sweep started, the infantrymen received small arms fire. The troops retaliated, killing two VC. They began sweeping south and received more fire, but a gunship hovering nearby silenced the enemy with rocket and minigun fire.

Holt and his co-pilot WO Rob-

ert Sanfilippo, and one other gunship piloted by Lt. Mike Arutti, and WO Robert Grebe flew on station for two and a half hours straight blasting the enemy.

This battle came during two and a half weeks of heavy, although scattered, fighting by the 9th Infantry Division's 1st Recon Bde. in Dinh Tuong Province.

More than 700 enemy soldiers in the area have lost their lives to the Recondos and supporting cavalry, artillery and Air Force during this post-Tet period.

As in the previous three months, contacts with the enemy throughout the dry, winter Mekong Delta have been scattered, but the fighting was extremely intense.

### Your M16

## Keep it clean

The M16 is a good weapon. It hits hard, can turn out a lot of firepower in a few seconds. It's light and easy to handle. In other words, it is a very effective weapon for fighting in the jungles of Vietnam. It can take very good care of you.

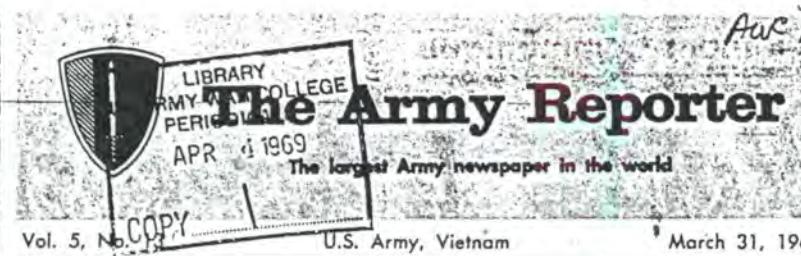
However, the M16 can't take care of you unless you take good care of it. There are a few tips to help you avoid trouble.

- Clean your ammunition and magazines daily. Rounds left too long unchecked in your magazines will gather dirt and rust. DON'T put oil on your ammo—oil just collects dirt and grit. Dirt and grime in the magazine can prevent the follower from working properly, meaning that the round cannot move forward into the chambering position.

- Never load your magazines with more than 18 rounds. Overloading puts too much tension on the follower. Carry an extra magazine if you need it.

- Tracer rounds look pretty and have a purpose. Too many, though, can cause problems.

- Dan'l Boone used "Kentucky Windage" to get his b'r. A good zero is a lot more certain. It takes only a few rounds and a couple of minutes.



## War flares anew in Delta, 9th Inf beats off assaults

DONG TAM — While contacts in the Fest of Vietnam tapered off, soldiers of the 9th Infantry Division continued to fight sharp, frequent battles with small enemy units scattered throughout the Mekong Delta.

Division troops trapped an estimated Viet Cong battalion near Cai Lay and frightened off a similar-sized enemy element near Cai Be, but most of the battles were with squad and platoon-sized elements.

The level of contact held steady throughout the week, with about 100 enemy soldiers killed each day and a reported total of 727 enemy dead by the end of the week.

Early in the week, elements of the 1st Bde., succeeded in locking an enemy force into an area seven miles northwest of Cai Lay.

As darkness fell, the Americans dug in and directed artillery barrages on the encircled Viet Cong.

The fighting began about noon when soldiers from the 2nd Bn., 39th Inf. established contact with the unknown-size enemy force. The battalion commander, Lt. Col. Robert Sullivan, immediately radioed 1st Bde. Commander Col. Ira A. Hunt that he had "an awful lot going on."

Hunt poured additional troops into the area and arranged for Air Force airstrikes.

The estimated VC battalion, entrenched in bunkers, were pounded by heavy airstrikes throughout the afternoon. Ground troops assaulted their positions and artillery fire raked the bunkers while gunship crews cut off avenues of retreat.

By 8 p.m., 24 enemy had been killed and the position completely encircled. The artillery barrages continued. The action ended with a morning sweep of the enemy positions that revealed a total of 57 enemy killed in the battle.

Gunship crews supporting division ground troops in several night raids the same day, in western Dinh Tuong Province reported 29 Viet Cong killed in scattered contacts.

One of the gunship pilots, Lt. Robert Walker from the 9th Aviation Bn., said, "They just don't expect to be hit at such a late hour. It's unheard of for us to have a bunch of crazy GIs out killing VC at 4 a.m."

Riflemen from the division were searching in an area three miles northeast of Ben Tre one afternoon late in the week when they began receiving machine gun and rocket-propelled grenade fire from a nearby treeline.

Taking cover, the Americans laid down a heavy barrage of small arms and M-60 machine gun fire. They then called for artillery fire.

"We walked our artillery up and down the treeline," said Lt. John Tisser, a company commander with the 4th Bn., 47th Inf. "The VC were right where our concentrations were."

Besides artillery, the U.S. infantrymen called in helicopter gunships and airstrikes. In all, the U.S. forces killed 24 enemy.

In other division action early that day, a Regional Forces (RF) company was in night positions 10 miles west of Cai Be when a Viet Cong force attacked. The RFs immediately called for aid. The call was answered by soldiers from the 4th Bn., 39th Inf. who were in the area.

"We pretty well determined it was a VC battalion," said Maj. Lewis Higenbotham, the battalion's operations officer. "We gave them all the help we could, including artillery, gunships and an Air Force 'Spooky.' By the time our infantrymen could get there, the enemy had withdrawn, but the troops killed seven of them as they tried to get away."

### Tropic Lightning strikes back

## Mass enemy attacks fizzle

CU CHI — Tropic Lightning soldiers of the 23rd Infantry Division recorded a whopping 1,040 enemy killed and the discovery of a huge enemy cache containing more than 315 tons of rice during February.

Division troops also captured

306 enemy small arms and 148 crew-served weapons.

Intelligence reports indicated a planned attack by VC and NVA elements.

The Tropic Lightning was ready.

Finally, near the end of the month, the enemy came out of hiding and launched almost simultaneous attacks on the 25th Division base camps here and at Dau Tieng, as well as Fire Support Bases Diamond and Mahone II and other locations throughout the republic.

At Dau Tieng, infantrymen, cooks, clerks, and other support elements of the 3rd Bde. killed 73 of the enemy who had penetrated portions of the camp's perimeter. During the attack, hundreds of rounds of rockets, mortars, and RPGs struck the base camp.

With the coming of daylight, the 3rd Bde. soldiers had driven the enemy out of the camp, detaining 13 suspects.

Enemy munitions captured at Dau Tieng included 40 82mm mortar rounds, 78 B-40 rounds and seven launchers, 28 B-41 rounds and one launcher, 25 AK-47's, 205 satchel charges, 29 RPG boosters, five Bangalore torpedoes and three claymore mines.

Here, the enemy launched a three-pronged ground assault against division headquarters. Elements of an estimated NVA "sapper" battalion infiltrated the camp's perimeter, but due to quick work by helicopters, artillery, and spookies, they were repulsed. Thirty-one of the enemy were killed and eight more suspects were detained.

Sporadic mortars and rockets struck this installation, but the heavily-defended base camp sustained light damage. Division artillery fired approximately 1,300 rounds outside the perimeter in driving off the attack.

Confiscated during the fray Please see TROPIC, page 16

### Reporter

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Mar 31, 1969

# Dustoffs rush wounded from danger zone to emergency room

LONG BINH—DUSTOFF—a new word in the English language, but familiar to every soldier in Vietnam, means fast medical help.

In Vietnam, the fight for life from battlefield to hospital begins with a call over the dustoff radio network for an evacuation helicopter. The helicopter can get the man to a hospital in less than 35 minutes from anywhere in Vietnam. This quick medical evacuation from the battlefield, called medevac, is a key factor in the Army's successful medical program in Vietnam.

Every soldier knows that he has a better chance of survival than in any war in history. This is a major factor in the high morale of Army combat troops.

"Dustoff" was the radio call sign of the first air ambulance unit used in Vietnam in April, 1962. It has since been adopted by the entire air ambulance system in Vietnam, which now numbers 135 helicopters.

The call for medevac is made by the medical aidman at the site of the casualty and is received by the supporting air ambulance unit.

After the pickup is made, the patient is flown directly to the hospital best suited for the required care. Distance here is less important than time. The objective is to reduce as much time as possible between injury and appropriate treatment.

The UH-1D Huey is the preferred helicopter in all of the medevac and crash rescue units in Vietnam. This helicopter can carry six litter or nine ambulatory patients with a crew of four. About 15 per cent of air medevacs are flown at night. Poor weather is not a problem, because the helicopters can maneuver well in all weather.



Inflatable hospital contains operating room.



Advisors help wounded ARVN soldier.



Surgery begins less than an hour after injury.

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