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

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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 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 Force (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 infantryment could get there, the enemy had withdrawn, but the troops killed seven of them as they tried to get away."

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, 6th 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.

ert Sanfilippo, and one other gunship piloted by Lt. Mike Arruti, 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 Recon 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'a'r. A good zero is a lot more certain. It takes only a few rounds and a couple of minutes.

Tropic Lightning strikes back

Mass enemy attacks fizzle

CU CHI — Tropic Lightning soldiers of the 25th 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 RPG's 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 60mm mortar rounds, 76 B-40 rounds and seven launchers, 26 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

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Vietnam Communiqué

March 10 to March 16

Raids, traps costly to Reds

Despite continued enemy shelling, contact between Army units and Communist troops generally dropped in the third week of the enemy Post-Tet Offensive.

In the one area of heavy action, the Mekong Delta, 9th Infantry Division soldiers encountered a large number of small enemy units and killed a reported total of 777 during the week. In the division's largest action, 57 members of an estimated Viet Cong battalion died when they were trapped near Cai Lay.

Contacts continued to flare up in the enemy infiltration corridors west and north of Saigon. Early in the week troops of the 25th Infantry Division broke up an NVA convoy ambush and killed 78 enemy; a few days later, 21 NVA died in an unsuccessful attack on a division fire support base near Dau Tieng. Soldiers at a fire support base near Phu Khuong also repelled a heavy enemy attack early in the week.

9th Inf Div

Elements of the 1st Bde., 9th Infantry Division succeeded in locking an enemy force into an area seven miles northwest of Cai Lay March 11. When the fighting was over the next day, 57 Viet Cong had been killed.

The fighting began when soldiers of the 2nd Bn., 39th Inf. took on an estimated VC battalion. Some eight hours later, the soldiers had surrounded the enemy position and artillery was pounding the inside of the circle. Airstrikes were added and the fighting ended early March 12.

Infantrymen of the 3rd Bn., 60th Inf. and supporting gunship crews killed 24 Viet Cong March 14 when Americans raided three suspected enemy locations within three miles of Ben Tre.

March 13 saw soldiers of the 4th Bn., 39th Inf. and supporting gunship crews and artillerymen repel an enemy attack on a position 12 miles west-northwest of Cai Be.

The enemy force lost 13 of their men in the initial assault, while gunship crews of the 7th Squadron, 1st Air Cav. flushed out and killed four more Viet Cong shortly after the abortive assault. A chase ended the next day with 17 more enemy killed.

In two actions March 16, elements of the 4th Bn., 39th Inf. and gunship crews from the 191st Assault Helicopter Co., along with artillery, killed 37 enemy near Cai Be.

The same day, two 2nd Bde. Mobile Riverine Force ambush patrols from the 3rd Bn., 60th Inf. killed 29 VC seven miles northwest of Ben Tre.

Infantrymen of the 4th Bn., 47th Inf. were joined by gunships and Air Force jets March 15 three miles northeast of Ben Tre when the soldiers began receiving machine gun and rocket-propelled grenade fire from a nearby treeline. The fight left 24 enemy soldiers dead.

25th Inf Div

An NVA ambush of a supply column east-southeast of Tay Ninh City March 11 turned into a complete disaster for the enemy as 25th Infantry Division forces moved in to kill 76 enemy soldiers.

Infantrymen of the 2nd Bn., 12nd Inf., along with artillery and gunships, lit into the ambushers. "The artillery was precise, the infantrymen tenacious and those trucks who kept moving while enemy RPG and small arms fire raked their column were magnificent," said Command Sgt. Maj. Randal Johnston after the battle.

The same day, an estimated NVA company tried a ground attack on a 3rd Squadron, 4th Armored Cav. night defensive position—two miles northwest of Truong Mit. As the sun rose, the cavalrymen counted the bodies of 38 enemy and collected a variety of weapons.

Continuing airstrikes, including more than 70 in one day, pounded an area 20 miles north of Cu Chi during the week, resulting in 190 enemy bunkers destroyed, along with 643 meters of trenches. More than 130 secondary ex-

plosions also resulted from the airstrikes.

On March 15, NVA regulars struck at a remote fire support base three miles southeast of Dau Tieng. Infantrymen of the 1st Bn., 27th Inf. and cannoners of the 2nd Bn., 27th Arty. fought side-by-side to repel the fierce onslaught and a dawn sweep revealed 21 enemy bodies.

Americal Div

Infantrymen of the Americal Division encountered generally light and scattered action during the week but still managed to kill a significant number of enemy soldiers.

A March 15 combat assault by 11th Light Inf. Bde. soldiers three miles north of Duc Pho concluded at dark with 33 NVA soldiers dead. The fighting had begun in the morning when elements of the 3rd Bn., 1st Inf. encountered a large, well-equipped enemy force entrenched in hedgerows and huts along Highway 1. The fighting became so intense that additional U.S. units were moved in to support and artillery fire pounded the positions throughout the day.

Infantrymen of the 3rd Bn., 21st Inf. on March 16 found the graves of 133 NVA soldiers in an area nine miles west of Tam Ky. All of the dead were killed in earlier actions by small arms, artillery and airstrikes.

Elements of the 1st Squadron, 1st Cav. encountered an unknown-size enemy force March 11, killing 14 VC a little more than 16 miles northwest of Tam Ky and later destroyed 43 bunkers a mile away.

1st Cav Div

An estimated NVA battalion hurled itself against a 1st Cavalry Division fire

support base three miles northeast of Phu Chuong March 11. Soldiers of the 2nd Bn., 12th Cav. repelled the attack, killing nearly 90 of the enemy.

The same men had defended their base against an attack on March 8, killing 154 of the enemy in that fight.

The March 11 attack began about 2 a.m. but were met with a hail of small arms fire, quickly followed up by 105mm and 155mm howitzers leveled by the cannoners at point-blank range and Huey Cobra gunships and an Air Force Spooky.

A sweep of the area immediately after revealed 62 enemy bodies. On March 13, 24 more enemy bodies were found in shallow graves three miles northeast of Phu Khuong, apparent casualties in the attack.

Elements of the 1st Bn., 8th Cav. uncovered a large enemy weapons cache 29 miles south of Tay Ninh City March 14. The cache contained 488 RPG rounds, 210 B-41 shells, 793 82mm mortar shells, 1,188 60mm mortar shells, 908 Chinese Communist grenades, 149 57mm recoilless rifle shells and 144 75mm recoilless rifle shells.

4th Inf Div

Soldiers of the 4th Infantry Division generally encountered light and scattered fighting during the week.

Two division aerial observers were flying near the Potei Kleng CIDG camp March 10 when they noticed the flash of rockets being fired at the camp. They warned the camp of the incoming and then called in artillery, gunships and airstrikes, which pounded the enemy firing position and set off one secondary explosion.

During a March 13 sweep of an area 30 miles southwest of Dak To, elements of the 3rd Bn., 12th Inf. uncovered an enemy weapons cache containing five B-40 shells, five 82mm mortar shells and some AK-47 ammunition.

The following day, elements of the 1st Squadron, 10th Cav. discovered four separate enemy caches 20 miles southwest of Pleiku. The haul totaled more than 10 tons of rice and 100 pounds of peas.

1st Inf Div

Big Red One soldiers of the 1st Infantry Division saw generally light and scattered action during the week while turning up several munitions caches around Lai Khe.

In a firefight March 14 northeast of Tan Uyen, infantrymen of the 2nd Bn., 28th Inf. killed 13 Viet Cong. "The jungle around us was very dense and it was difficult to see the enemy, but we heard movement and opened up. We received fire in return. After a while, the shooting stopped, Charlie was dead," said Capt. Wilson Russell, whose company was credited with the kills.

1st Bde, 5th Inf

Operating in the area south of the Demilitarized Zone, cavalrymen of the 1st Bde., 5th Infantry Division experienced light and scattered contacts after having killed more than 110 enemy in one battle two weeks earlier.

In an action March 16, troopers of the 3rd Squadron, 5th Cav. clashed with an estimated NVA company five miles north of Cam Lo, killing eight of the enemy.

173rd Abn Bde

Paratroopers of the 173rd Airborne Brigade were air-assaulted into an area 18 miles south of Bong Son March 16 after receiving word of enemy activity. Troopers of the 2nd Bn., 503rd Infantry arrived to find the enemy fleeing. The chopper gunners opened up on the enemy, killing 14, while the paratroopers killed three more on the ground. In a subsequent chase, the chopper gunners killed two more enemy.

23rd Arty Gp

Cannoners of the 23rd Artillery Group's 1st Bn., 27th Arty. blasted an area four miles east of Dau Tieng March 10, killing nine VC.

On the same day, the big 175mm howitzers of the 2nd Bn., 32nd Arty. were firing from Fire Support Base St. Barbara and killed six VC 19 miles north of their position.

11th Cav Regt

More than 75 tanks and armored cavalry assault vehicles of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment conducted a massive sweep in the dense jungles 25 miles north of Bien Hoa March 16. Earlier, Troop D, 1st Squadron troopers had killed nine enemy when they attacked with hand and rocket propelled grenades.

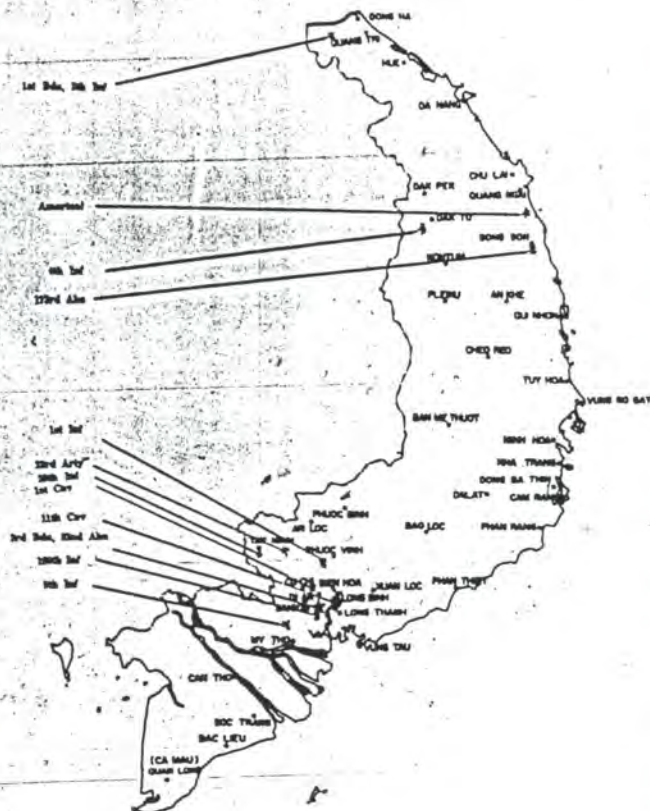
199th Inf Bde

Redcatchers of the 199th Light Infantry Brigade killed a VC officer and five other enemy near a village three miles southwest of Saigon during a search of the village March 10.

The next day, elements of the 4th Bn., 12th Inf. uncovered 133 82mm mortar rounds six miles southwest of Duc Hoa and destroyed 117 enemy bunkers.

3rd Bde, 82nd Abn Div

Elements of the 3rd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division's 1st Bn., 508th Inf. detained four VC in an action seven miles west of Saigon March 16, while capturing a quantity of munitions. The same day, soldiers of the 2nd Bn., 505th Inf. held 35 suspects for questioning five miles north of Saigon. The detainees were held because of improper identification.



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.

ANF Photos