

Vietnam communique.

May 5-11

Enemy renews widespread shellings

The full enemy offensive action ended abruptly late in the week as scores of allied military installations were hit by Communist mortar and rocket fire. An NVA battalion unsuccessfully attacked a brigade headquarters in the Highlands.

In heavy ground contact earlier in the week, 25th Infantry Division soldiers smashed an enemy force of an estimated 200 men three miles southeast of Dau Tieng. In sweeps of the battle area the following morning, the infantrymen discovered the bodies of 102 North Vietnamese Army soldiers.

Screaming Eagles of the 101st Airborne Division ended their 69-day plunge into the A Shau Valley, Operation Massachusetts Striker, and accounted for 176 enemy killed and tons of Communist supplies and munitions.

25th Inf Div

A savage battle May 10 in which 25th Infantry Division soldiers defeated an estimated 200-man hostile force turned out to be an even bigger rout than first thought. In sweeps of the battle area three miles southeast of Dau Tieng the mechanized and leg troops discovered 66 more bodies bringing the total to 102 North Vietnamese Army soldiers killed.

On one sweep operation a company of infantrymen fought the NVA in a bunker near the site of the battle. All eight were killed. The Tropic Lightning troops confiscated more than 24 tons of rice from various locations throughout the area of contact, and also uncovered eight AK47 rifles.

May 10th's confrontation included a winning combination of ground troops, artillery, and air strikes, stripping away the opponent's hiding places in the thickly wooded area and allowing the allies to destroy the enemy force.

"There were so many bunkers we just didn't have time to blow them all," said Lt. Richard Nash, a platoon leader with the 2nd Bn., 22nd Inf. "Some were so tough we had to use three and four blocks of C4 plastic explosive."

1st Cav Div

Beads of sweat streamed down the foreheads of the squad of infantrymen as they sat beneath the mid-day sun, well-hidden on the side of a trail 25 miles west of Phuoc Vinh May 8.

After some time had passed, they heard movement on the small path and saw five North Vietnamese Army soldiers approaching them. With weapons cocked and ready, the Skytroopers waited until the NVA soldiers were directly within their sights. Suddenly, the NVA were hit with what must have seemed like a lead wall.

"We killed the first three right away, however, the others scurried into the brush. As they ran we wounded one and detained him. The other got away," said Spec. 4 Adam Moore, a rifleman with the ambush element of the 1st Cav's 1st Bn., 5th Cav.

An element of the 2nd Bn., 12th Cav, operating about 12 miles northeast of Tay Ninh engaged an NVA platoon in bunkers. The NVA employed small arms, automatic weapons and B-40 rocket grenade fire.

The friendly unit attacked with organic fire and called for artillery and Aerial Rocket Artillery. After about two and one-half hours of battle, airstrikes were called in on the bunkers. Eight NVA died in the battle.

In other action, 25 more NVA were killed by the Skytroopers. Eight of the 25 were killed in actions 21 miles northeast of Tay Ninh with six reported killed by gunship crews of the 1st Squadron, 9th Air Cav.

4th Inf Div

Troop D, the air cavalry unit of the 1st Squadron, 10th Armored Cav, was credited

with killing 57 NVA soldiers May 11 as they flew reconnaissance missions to locate the remnants of the NVA battalion that attacked LZ Oasis, 15 miles southwest of Pleiku.

At approximately 1:30 p.m., D Troop's commanding officer, Maj. William C. Schweitzer, was notified that one of his door gunners had spotted 40 NVA crouched in bunkers about 17 miles southwest of Pleiku City. Schweitzer ordered helicopter gun runs on the bunkers and by 2:15 p.m., 37 NVA dead had been confirmed.

Continuing the reconnaissance flights, the same unit saw 30 to 50 NVA moving through the open one-half mile south of the previous contact. Gunships and artillery ripped the area and 20 NVA kills were confirmed.

During both actions Air Force Forward Air Controller pilots were on station to direct airstrikes on any NVA escape routes.

The 57 kills by D Troop brought the 4th Division's total for the day to 118.

9th Inf Div

The Mekong Delta echoed the sounds of battle May 4 and 5 as the Old Reliables of the 9th Infantry Division killed 100 Viet Cong in clashes throughout Dinh Tuong, Kien Hoa and Long An Provinces.

In Dinh Tuong Province elements of the 1st Bde. killed 51 VC in night and day operations. Teaming up with gunship crews of the 9th Aviation Bn. in a night operation 12 miles northwest of Cai Be, Reconno Infantrymen killed 21 VC and destroyed four sampans in seven separate fights. Infantrymen of the 4th Bn., 39th Inf., operating six miles west of Cai Be, located and killed 13 VC during separate firefights.

Other clashes throughout the 1st Bde. area of operations resulted in another 17 VC dead.

The 2nd Bde. Mobile Riverine Forces operating in Kien Hoa Province killed 31 VC May 4 and 5. Nine VC died under the mini-guns of D Troop, 3d Squadron, 5th Air Cav. gunship crews during the night search operations south of Mo Cay and southwest of Ben Tre. Twenty-two additional VC died in other clashes throughout the province.

1st Inf Div

Initial contact with Viet Cong forces was made May 6 when a reconnaissance platoon from the 2nd Bn. 18th Inf. received intense automatic weapons and RPG fire.

Light Fire Teams, tactical airstrikes and artillery saturated the area. The encounter left four VC killed by artillery and three by ground fire.

Other action from one-half to six miles east and one-half mile to the west involving units of the 2nd Bn., 18th Inf. resulted in another seven VC deaths and one suspect detained.

In the rice paddies, marsh land and thick jungle 12 miles west of Ben Cat, Co. B, 1st Bn., 26th Inf. destroyed 100 bunkers, captured 10 60mm mortar rounds and evacuated 50 pounds of rice.

Seven additional VC were killed and two suspects detained in other firefights throughout the division's area of operations.

Americal Div

"The company (a reconnaissance patrol of the 1st Bn. 20th Inf. 11th Light Inf.

Bde.) was getting ready to set up camp under a very large tree," said Capt. Joseph Clary, of the 11th Bde. Tactical Operations Center, concerning May 9th's operation.

"One of the men looked up and noticed someone looking back. He immediately fired and killed a Viet Cong. When the body didn't fall he went up to bring it down to be searched. While in the tree he looked down and noticed five VC hiding in a hole in the trunk of the tree. He killed the other five at that time."

The six dead VC, two wearing blue and brown clothing, three wearing black and one wearing green, were killed seven miles northeast of Duc Pho.

1st Avn Bde

In an action southwest of Phan Thiet, B Troop 7th Squadron, 17th Air Cav. of the 17th Combat Aviation Group killed six Viet Cong.

Light observation helicopters spotted some bunkers and trails; on one trail they saw a man and a woman in the traditional black pajamas of the VC.

Twenty-eight airmobile riflemen were landed and once on the ground spotted a man in uniform. The team was fired upon and killed one enemy while returning the fire. Cobra gunship crews which had been flying cover pounced on the area. When the smoke cleared, one VC was reported killed by the choppers and two by the riflemen.

Continuing their sweep through the area the team found four more enemy who had been killed by helicopter crews. Two suspects were detained when they were found hiding together in some bushes. One had a weapon and the other was nursing a shoulder wound from a grenade. They were disarmed and removed to the rear for medical treatment and interrogation.

B Troop's riflemen were removed from the area.

199th Inf Bde

Redcatchers of the 199th Light Infantry Brigade and Government of Vietnam forces ended a six-day cordon-and-search operation 13 to 15 miles southwest of Saigon May 5.

A total of 4,200 Vietnamese civilians were processed by the brigade which resulted in 25 Viet Cong infrastructure personnel, nine Hoi Chanhs and nine VC suspects detained.

"From all aspects, we effectively saturated the area, coming out with excellent results. We had good intelligence and a lot of information came from the Hoi Chanhs and the detainees. Quite successful," said Maj. Dennis F. Lightower.

101st Abn Div

Operation Massachusetts Striker, a 69-day-long push into the A Shau Valley ended May 8 after accounting for 176 enemy killed and an impressive amount of Communist supplies and munitions captured.

The operation began with an air assault by units of the 2nd Bde, and the two months of combat that followed were marked by the discovery of several important caches that the enemy abandoned as it retreated before the advancing Screaming Eagles.

One cache, believed to be one of the largest in I Corps this year, contained more than 100 tons of ordnance, signal equipment and medical supplies, including 632 SKS rifles.

The final tally for the operation showed 859 individual and 34 crew served weapons captured, two detainees, more than 136,000 rounds of small arms ammunition, more than 2,000 crew served weapons rounds captured, and the discovery of 13 vehicles, 11,000 pounds of grain, and hundreds of pounds of other supplies and equipment.

