

Nixon awards MOH to soldiers for Tet heroism

WASHINGTON—President Nixon has presented the Medal of Honor to two soldiers who saved several lives during the time of the enemy's Tet Offensive in 1968.

Before a large audience on the White House lawn, the President awarded the nation's highest medal for valor to Spec. 4 Thomas J. Kinsman and CWO Frederick E. Ferguson.

Kinsman received the award for his actions on Feb. 6, 1968, when his unit, Co. B, 3rd Bn., 60th Inf., 9th Infantry Division, was on a reconnaissance-in-force mission near Vinh Long.

His company was moving up a narrow canal in armored troop carriers when a well-entrenched Viet Cong force hit them with rockets, automatic weapons and small arms fire. They immediately breached and assaulted the enemy bunker complex, but the undergrowth was thick and Kinsman along with eight other men were cut off.

As they moved through the heavy enemy fire to link up again with their unit, a hidden enemy soldier threw a grenade into their midst. Kinsman yelled a warning to the others, then fell on the grenade and blocked the explosion with his body.

Miraculously, he survived the explosion, though with severe head and chest wounds. His action saved the seven men near him from certain death or injury.

Ferguson, the first Army aviator to receive the Medal of Hon-

or, was flying a resupply helicopter with Co. C, 227th Aviation Bn., 1st Cavalry Division at Hue on Jan. 31, 1968, when he heard an emergency call from wounded passengers and crew of a downed helicopter.

The downed chopper was under heavy attack in the enemy controlled section of the city, and all aircraft were being warned to stay out of the area because of anti-aircraft fire. Ferguson ignored the warning and flew just above the Perfume River at top speed toward the chopper's location.

He landed his helicopter in a blinding dust cloud under heavy mortar and small arms fire and waited for the wounded to be loaded while mortar fragments severely damaged his ship. Then he flew his crippled craft back through heavy fire to safely unload the wounded, saving five lives.



Spec. 4 Thomas J. Kinsman



CWO Frederick E. Ferguson



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Marijuana found

82nd Abn sweeps Red base

TRANG BANG — Soldiers of the 3rd Bde., 82nd Airborne Division swept through an enemy position five miles northeast of here, killing 20 VC with the help

of artillery and airstrikes. The infantrymen found a large supply of rice and a quantity of marijuana at the site.

Co. D, 1st Bn., 508th Inf. had moved out of Fire Support Base Patton and set up a night ambush position with Co. C.

The next morning the companies separated. Some 2,500 yards from the fire base, Co. D halted before a woodland to observe some VC bunkers. 1st Lt. Robert L. McPherson moved his platoon into the woodland and searched several bunkers and tunnels, finding them used recently. Looking up, squad leader Sgt. Harlan Smith noticed movement further back into the trees and requested that an artillery observer come forward to adjust fire on the bunkers and movement.

At this time a helicopter attempted to land near Co. D with supplies and replacements when the ground troops came under mortar and small arms fire. The helicopter was waved off and the artillery was called in.

Sgt. Tom Johannemon still was bringing his squad forward to make contact when a mortar round landed 10 feet from him, flipping him over backwards. Miraculously he escaped injury.

Smith had his squad fire on the enemy. "We received fire from the roof of a fortification; so we suppressed it and started to walk M79 rounds back onto the enemy mortar tubes. This we did and the enemy mortar crews ceased firing, broke, and ran."

Air strikes and artillery rained down on the enemy while the 3rd Platoon, led by 1st Lt. Rodney L. Gears, moved up to contact and killed several VC with M60 and M79 fire.

Then the company set up a night ambush position and radioed in its 20 VC body count. The next morning, Co. D swept the previous day's battle area and found booby traps, punji pits, 3,200 lbs of rice and a quantity of marijuana. The marijuana was burned on the spot. The rice had been disguised behind a false wall in a hench.

25th Inf ambushes chop up VC patrols

DAU TIENG—From a nearby rubber plantation to the Roi Loi Woods, Co. C, 1st Bn., 27th Inf. is teaching Charlie a lesson in his own forte—the art of ambush.

During a recent five-day period, the infantrymen successfully sprang six ambushes, killing 11 enemy soldiers and capturing nine AK47 rifles. In sweeps near the ambush sites, they also uncovered two munitions caches.

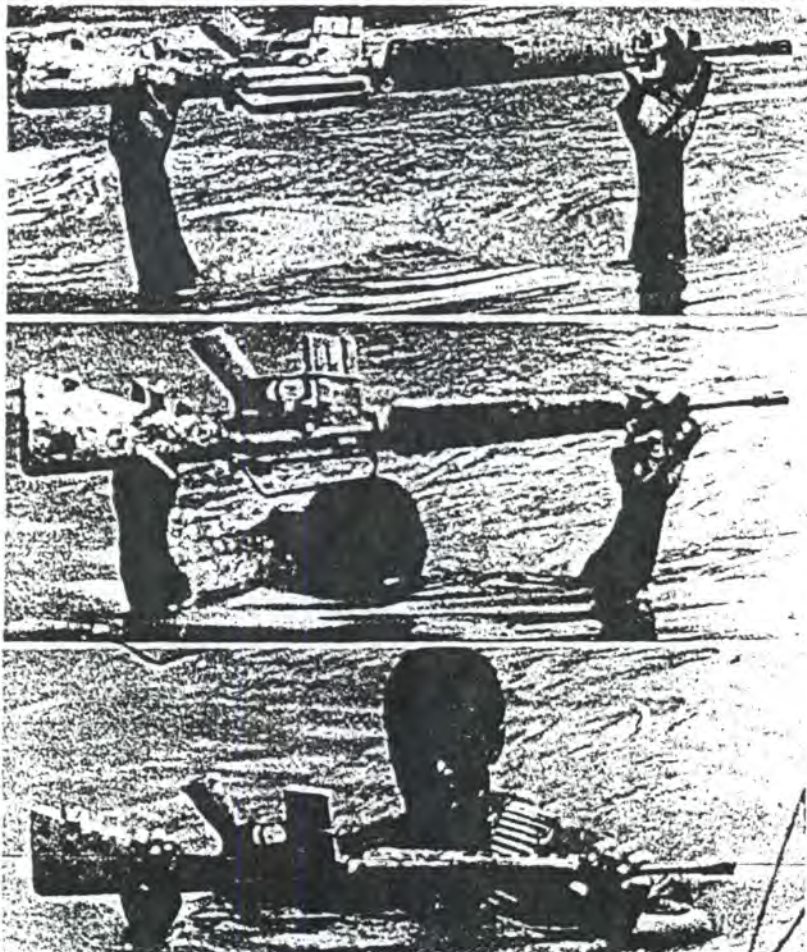
Capt. Lloyd Yoshina, the company commander, credits his unit's successes to "stay behind" daylight and nighttime ambushes using platoonsize or smaller units.

"We move into an area in force and drop off behind bushes along strategic routes," Yoshina said. "The rest of the unit moves away and sets up other ambushes."

In many cases, munitions and foodstuffs are uncovered near ambush sites. Unsuspecting enemy soldiers returning to their caches lead the Americans to hideouts. Conversely, ambushes are always set up when a cache site is uncovered.

Two such caches were uncovered within 150 meters of three successful ambushes that resulted in six enemy soldiers killed and five weapons captured.

The first cache, found in the bottom of a dry well, contained 113 RPG rounds and 2,500 rounds of AK47 ammunition. The second was uncovered at a nearby docking site. A bunker was discovered, and the soldiers probed it with bayonets locating a false wall that concealed a tunnel.



THIS ONE-MAN SUBMARINE, otherwise known as Spec. 4 James Pearson of Co. D, 2nd Bn., 60th Inf., 9th Infantry Division, uses strong lungs and long arms

to cross a particularly deep waterway in the Mekong Delta with a perfectly dry weapon.

Vietnam communique

May 12-18

9th Inf rips Reds in Mekong

Action was hot and heavy during the past week as the enemy stepped up attacks in anticipation of Ho Chi Minh's 79th birthday. Old Reliabilities of the 9th Infantry Division killed more than 400 enemy soldiers in scattered actions.

In Operation 'Speedy Express' in the Mekong Delta and Long An Province, 9th Division infantrymen killed a total of 94 enemy soldiers in sporadic fighting during one day's action.

In a day-long battle up the face of Hill 937, an NVA mountaintop stronghold, Screaming Eagles of the 101st Airborne Division killed 125 NVA.

Other units experienced heavy action as the enemy death toll mounted to its highest point in a month.

9th Inf Div

Soldiers of the 9th Infantry Division saw heavy contact during the week as they killed 440 of the enemy in the Mekong Delta.

A total of 94 enemy soldiers were killed in scattered actions on May 15. In Long An Province soldiers of the 3rd Bde. used hand grenades and artillery fired at point blank range to dig out a reinforced North Vietnamese Army platoon two miles southeast of Ben Luc, with 13 enemy killed in the action.

The NVA were hiding in well-concealed bunkers just inside a thick nipa palm grove. They opened fire on Co. B, 2nd Bn., 60th Inf., shortly after the infantrymen had left their helicopters and started sweeping toward the woodland.

"They must have been a weapons platoon," said Lt. Henley Reed, the company commander, "because they were throwing 60mm mortars and machine gun fire at us."

Lt. Col. Frederick K. Mahaffey, the battalion commander, pulled Reed's company back while airstrikes, artillery and gunships pounded the area. Two more companies and a reconnaissance platoon were inserted by choppers to reinforce Co. B.

They then moved into the nipa palm and blew up 45 bunkers, killing four enemy still hiding from airstrikes and destroying two AK-47 rifles and one machinegun.

The infantrymen again received fire and were again pulled back so the self-propelled artillery could lower its guns and fire directly against the enemy.

Contact was lost early in the evening. Nine more enemy bodies were found in the area.

25th Inf Div

A firefight May 14 six miles northwest of Tay Ninh resulted in 35 NVA soldiers killed under the combined fire power of artillery and infantrymen of the 1st Bde. of the 25th Infantry Division.

Later in the afternoon 2nd Bde. mechanized and infantrymen units encountered an unknown-size enemy force 10 miles west of Ben Cat. In the firefight that followed 34 NVA were killed, 13 AK-47 rifles and three rocket propelled grenade launchers were captured.

In other actions during the day, division elements killed 14 NVA six miles southwest of Cu Chi and found three bodies in a bunker complex just northwest of the firefight. An additional six Viet Cong were reported killed on a sampan on the Saigon River 10 miles northwest of Cu Chi by the crew of the command-and-control helicopter of a 2nd Bde. Infantry battalion. Nineteen more enemy soldiers died during light actions throughout the division's area of operations bringing the day's total to 101 enemy killed.

101st Abn Div

In a day-long battle up the face of Hill 937 May 18, two battalions of Screaming Eagles killed 125 NVA soldiers. This was the third day in seven of heavy contact on the NVA mountaintop stronghold.

The 3rd Bn., 187th Inf., accounted for 114 of the NVA casualties. The bodies lay in positions overrun by the battalion.

"We've got them now," said the battalion commander, Lt. Col. Weldon Honeycutt. "There are no two ways about it; we are going to drive them out." The battalion was assaulting up the hill denuded of its trees and bushes by the heavy bombardment from U.S. planes and artillery.

1st Cav Div

Nine of the 1st Cavalry Division's Landing Zone fire bases and the division base camp at Phuoc Vinh received indirect fire harassing attacks, some of which were followed by ground attacks or probes, in the early morning hours May 12.

A staunch defense of LZ Jamie, 21 miles northeast of Tay Ninh, by the 2nd Bn., 7th Cav., left 73 North Vietnamese Army soldiers dead.

At 2:30 a.m., approximately 200 mixed 60mm 82mm mortar rounds and 107mm rockets fired from all directions impacted into the LZ within 10 minutes. The barrage was followed by AK-47 and automatic weapons fire. The Skytroopers returned the fire with Claymore mines, grenades, small arms and direct fire from the 105mm howitzers of the 2nd Bn. 19th Arty.

At approximately 3:15 a.m. the NVA soldiers using Bangalore torpedoes penetrated the perimeter wire, followed by others. "The enemy occupied three bunkers," said Sfc. Durwood Potts. "Our men drew back when they saw they would be overrun. There were at least 12 NVA in each bunker."

1st Inf Div

More than 160 rounds of rocket and mortar fire impacted at Lai Khe and surrounding fire support bases as enemy forces attempted to assault several 1st Infantry Division emplacements May 12.

Alert and inspired Big Red One soldiers killed 47 VC and detained four Chieu Hoi's.

"Artillery and mortar batteries performed magnificently and enabled allied forces to retaliate against the hostile forces," stated tactical operations duty officer Capt. Enrique P. Rodriguez. After the first high explosive barrage hit Lai Khe at about midnight May 11, the VC initiated several other attacks.

Fire Support Base Gela reported killing 28 enemy and capturing assorted weapons.

In the dense and marshy area 10 miles west of Lai Khe, an element of the 2nd Bn., 28th Inf., engaged and killed seven VC.

In light action May 15, soldiers of the

1st Division accounted for 15 enemy deaths.

The heaviest action of the day was seen by elements of the 2nd Bn., 28th Inf. The infantrymen accounted for 11 VC in two separate ambushes in a heavily vegetated area 14 miles west of Lai Khe.

In the first ambush a VC element was moving east on a trail when the troopers blew Claymore mines at the enemy and engaged them with small arms and automatic weapons. Five VC died and three AK-47s were captured. In the second ambush six VC were killed and their bodies yielded five more AK-47s.

Americal Div

Across the open fields dotted with rice paddies rolled the armored carriers of H Troop, 3rd Platoon, 1st Squadron, 1st Armored Cav. The unit, working with an element of the Americal Division's 1st Bn., 52nd Inf., 198th Light Infantry Brigade was on a search and clear mission 10 miles northwest of Quang Nhai Mar 13.

The armored cavalry unit suddenly received heavy automatic weapons fire from a woodline. "We spotted 20-30 North Vietnamese Army troops trying to move up on the 1st Bn., 52nd Inf., so we came on line and assaulted the enemy in the woodline," said Lt. George E. Palmer, a track commander.

Devastating fire rained in upon the enemy as the men of the troop accounted for nine NVA killed. "We began checking the area which was littered with weapons and dead NVA when we started receiving mortar fire, rocket propelled grenades and more automatic weapons fire," said Palmer. Leaving the area the unit moved to provide security for the 1st Bn., 52nd Inf., as fighting continued nearby. When the cavalry returned to the woodline, all the NVA bodies and weapons had been removed.

At Landing Zone Snoopy, six miles southeast of Quang Nhai City early May 12 embattled artillerymen protected their perimeter from a savage Viet Cong attack, killing 23 VC and detaining one in beating back a company-size sapper attack on their newly established LZ.

4th Inf Div

A fierce hour-long battle between C Troop of the 2nd Squadron, 1st Armored Cav., 4th Infantry Division and an estimated North Vietnamese Army company 1,200 yards east of the Ya Krong Bolah River resulted in 40 of the enemy killed late May 17.

The action started when Maj. Gordon B. Rogers, executive officer of the 2nd Squadron, 1st Armored Cav. was flying

over sloping terrain when he observed three to five NVA soldiers wearing green shirts and khaki shorts moving through open terrain.

He immediately radioed C Troop and they engaged the NVA with a withering volume of .50-caliber, 90mm and small arms fire.

At one point during the battle, a U.S. tank was hit by a B40 rocket round. Some NVA soldiers were killed as they mounted the disabled tank. Contact was lost after about 25 minutes when the remaining enemy withdrew.

In other actions, a 4th Infantry Division Armored Cavalry troop killed 14 NVA soldiers late May 17 during close-in fighting 11 miles southeast of Kontum City.

The 4th Infantry Division's base at Camp Enari received more than 15 rounds of 82mm mortar and 122mm rocket fire. They caused light casualties and no fatalities.

1st Avn Bde

Gunships of the 116th Assault Helicopter Co. working from one-half mile north to two miles northwest of Cu Chi May 15 killed two NVA and captured a third.

Two NVA walking up the center of a dry canal one-half mile north of Cu Chi were sighted by the gunships working in the area. Upon the approach of ships one of the two NVA took cover under bushes overhanging the canal while the other tried to outrun the choppers. The one running apparently realized his plight was hopeless and surrendered to the chopper crews. The other died by M60 machine gun fire in his hiding place.

Continuing on up the canal, the chopper crews spotted another NVA attempting to cross it. Spec. 4 Marshal M. Seay described it. "You wouldn't believe it! He was crossing the canal with a lot of bushes around him, with his head sticking up out of them looking straight at us." He was fired upon but a kill could not be confirmed.

Later in the day two miles northwest of Cu Chi four NVA were spotted by one of the gunships which marked the enemy position with smoke. While pulling out of their run Seay sighted "packs and web gear hidden in a hedgeclimb about 50 yards behind the enemy position. They (the packs) were under nipa palm trees like they (the NVA) were taking a break. I'd say there was a platoon size force nearby from the number of rucksacks."

The four NVA fled into a bunker and one of the gunships rolled in and fired two rockets. One rocket landed in the doorway of the bunker but no kills could be confirmed. One NVA was sighted crawling out of the wreckage of the bunker and was killed by machine gun fire from another gunship.

199th Inf Bde

A brief firefight May 18 led to the death of a Viet Cong and the discovery of a cache of rockets and mines by members of the 5th Bn., 12th Inf., 199th Light Infantry Brigade.

Seven 107mm rockets, eight anti-tank mines, four explosive charges, and 14 firing devices were recovered from a sampan. The sampan was discovered sunk in the Khai Canal 11 miles southwest of Saigon by a reconnaissance element of the 5th Bn.

The area the sampan was found in "appeared to be a pickup point for enemy material," commented battalion intelligence officer Capt. Bernard P. Thomas. The firefight occurred as a boat was en route to pick up an ambush patrol.

Two VC fired on the boat with small arms and the boat's occupants returned the fire. One of the VC dropped and fell into the water. The other, dragging the dead VC's body, disappeared into the nipa palm.

The boat then picked up the patrol and returned to the scene of the firefight. A search turned up a blood trail leading into the nipa palm, one AK47, and the cache in the sampan.



MOVING THROUGH high grass with his dog "Savage" is Spec. 4 Claude Warhurst, a dog handler with the 9th Infantry Division's 43rd Scout Dog Platoon. Warhurst was on a 9th Division operation in the Mekong Delta.



THE GREATEST ASSET a soldier can have when caught in a crossfire ambush is speed. While undergoing in-the-field training, members of USA HAC's reaction force encounter numerous obstacles set up by "enemy" determined to give them a good taste of what they can expect if called upon to stop an attack by the real enemy.

Dustoff chopper heaven-sent to waiting wounded troopers

LAI KHE — Like a large hummingbird fluttering down to nestle on a nearly overgrown path, the helicopter banks left sharply, swoops toward the clearing hacked from the dense jungle, then descends slowly toward the waiting wounded.

"Back up, back up," blurts the crew chief to the chopper commander as the rotor wash made several tree branches dance beneath the fuselage.

The pilot reins in on his controls, jockeys the swaying air-ambulance to a position free from entanglement, and finally nests down between two lines of armored personnel carriers.

"We ask the ground troops to secure as much acreage as possible and to direct us to the safest approach to the site. Also, on the initial call, we require their coordinates, the type of terrain and the number and kinds of injured so the chopper commander can brief his crew and medic," said Maj. Fred Balcher, commanding officer of the dustoff.

Twenty seconds after touchdown, the chopper rises to tree-top level, and skims along the forest ceiling like an elevated train. When the chopper withdraws from the immediate contact area, the pilot eases back on the control stick and noses the ship toward home base.

As the big bird whirls back, the 1st Medical Bn. is already informed of the conditions of the incoming patients.

When the whirlybird swings down to its berth, a six-man team rushes out to meet it. Four

grab the arms of the litter and carry it toward the aid station, while the remaining support the walking wounded.

Time from the initial call to aid station: twenty minutes.

Capt. Gary L. Lattimer, head of Delta Med, said, "If we get a man back here alive, he has an almost 100 per cent chance of living. We act as a clearing house for the wounded. We treat less serious wounds, and stabilize the more severe cases for evacuation to more specialized treatment centers."

In March, Delta Med received 580 dustoffs, 280 of which were soldiers injured as the result of hostile action. Lattimer further added that many of the dustoff missions bring in troops with virus ailments and similar ills, plus scores of civilians each week.

Once the patients have cleared through Delta Med the cases requiring surgery are immediately sent to the 2nd Surgical Hospital.

Upon admission to the emergency room, a general surgeon immediately separates the more seriously wounded from the less severely injured and begins emergency action.

From the emergency room the patient is rushed to the full-size X-ray facilities where pictures can be taken and read within minutes.

Next, the wounded man is taken to the pre-operating room where he is prepared for surgery; and finally, within minutes, he is on the operating table.

The 2nd Surgical Hospital is

Attend field training

Clerks, cooks guard capital

THU DUC — A specially trained platoon of clerks, cooks and mechanics is ready to change into a fully prepared fighting unit in support of Vietnamese Forces when danger threatens Saigon, thanks to a comprehensive course in tactical field training.

Led by Lt. James P. Mills, Headquarters Area Command's Quick Reaction Force (QRF) "Hotel" combines reconnaissance patrol and ranger training with lessons learned in Vietnam to prepare itself for its task. Three days of classes, monthly, culminating in a rugged jungle patrol exercise, teach new men the skills they need and provide a review for the old hands in the platoon.

"We attempt to teach each platoon member to react quickly to many varying combat situations. Only then could the platoon function efficiently as a quick reaction force," said Mills. "Courses in radio communications, weapons and battle drill with an emphasis on patrolling pretty well fill up the three days. The platoon employs M72 anti-tank LAW's, M14 and M16 rifles, M60 machine guns, .45 caliber pistols, submachine guns and M79 grenade launchers.

QRF "Hotel's" area of operation includes rough river banks as well as crowded streets and narrow, winding alleyways, calling for special combat skills. The terrain of the military academy here on the Bien Hoa Highway north of Saigon closely simulates the QRF's roughest

areas so training in patrolling is conducted there.

"Actually, the Thu Duc terrain is a little tougher than ours," continued Mills, "but the training is realistic." During the half-way patrol, the students are broken down into four-man teams. The trainees patrol through a plotted course where "aggressors" present them with a series of quick reaction tests including: a crossfire ambush, a weapons cache, an explosives finding exercise, a Chieu Hoi, snipers, weapons and documents

caches and several booby traps. Reactions to the problems are graded and the winning team is rewarded with a free steak dinner.

When the time comes to answer a call the QRF is ready. The platoon sergeant Staff Sgt. Larry Gillette and the three squad leaders check equipment daily. All vehicles and weapons are readied for action every night. Only a small number of the QRF's can be absent from the assembly area at one time.

Booby trap course reduces casualties

CAMP FRENZELL-JONES—The log bridge conceals a pressure-type mine.

A claymore mine covers the log bridge with one trip wire crossing the path and dike and another just under the water surface to catch a man attempting to disarm the mine.

The L-shaped trip wire is designated to explode a grenade in the center of a small patrol. The point man trips the wire and the grenade explodes 10 feet behind him.

The grenade, usually Chinese Communist-made, on a stick or in a can, is strung with trip wire to another stick—the most common type of booby trap found.

The artillery round is buried in the dike with a pressure-type fuse just under the soil. The weight of a man's body is enough to detonate the trap. A piece of tin or wood may cover the round to keep the earth from washing away and exposing the trap.

The command-detonated Claymore mine can be fired from any distance. It is used mostly in hours of darkness against ambush patrols.

The helicopter trap consists of five grenades mounted on poles. The trigger mechanism is such that when one grenade explodes, the rest will detonate. The air blast from the rotor is enough to trigger the release mechanism.

Viet Cong booby traps and detonating techniques are often encountered by infantrymen of the 199th Light Infantry Brigade in their defense of the approaches to Saigon from the west and south.

With the help from brigade's mobile training team, a booby trap course simulating field conditions has been set up next to a brigade patrol base southwest of Saigon. The purpose behind the program, according to Capt. Stanley G. Flitcraft, is simply "to reduce casualties."

The day-long program consists of two hours of conference instruction and five hours of practical application followed by a critique. The classes cover booby trap employment, detection and destruction, as well as how to negotiate known or suspected booby trap areas.

"The course here has more meaning and impact than AIT on the subject in the States," said Pfc. Ton G. Deery. In Vietnam just over a month, he added, "You pay more attention because you know you're here face-to-face with booby traps."



USING THE JUNGLE to help him blend into his guard position, Pfc. Donald Taylor, remains alert for enemy movement outside

the perimeter. The Red Warrior of Co. B, 1st Bn., 12th Inf., 4th Infantry Division keeps his M79 poised for action.

Medevac crew defies danger

LONG BINH—It was late afternoon. Throughout the day crews from the 44th Medical Brigade's 45th Medical Air Ambulance Co. had been continually hopping from LZ to LZ, fire-fight to fire-fight, in a seemingly endless succession of medical evacuation (dustoffs).

Just as a quiet lull in the missions began, a "Mayday" call came screaming from the radio in dustoff operations. A 1st Cavalry Division light observation helicopter (LOH) on a reconnaissance mission had been shot down in the dense, VC traversed jungle about a mile and a half north of Bear Cat.

Racing to the area, CWO Merle Snyder and his crew spotted several Cobras and two LOHs orbiting the suspected location of the downed aircraft. Firing on the scores of enemy positions, the gunships were trying to divert the enemy from the downed, defenseless chopper. Circling the area several times in an attempt to find the disabled aircraft, the dustoff helicopter became the new target for Charlie's arcing spray of bullets.

A tiny clearing containing the immobile LOH was spotted by one of the observation helicopters. Immediately two Cobras made a pass over the area, unleashing a continual barrage of rockets. As the Cobras began their second pass, Snyder took the lead, skillfully guiding the approach from west to east. Just as the final clumps of trees surrounding the LZ were cleared, dustoff dropped from the formation into the clearing, fifty yards from the disabled LOH.

Enemy fire immediately began raining in on the stationary chopper. Looking to his right, Lt. Mark D. Gilson realized that the injured crew of the downed ship couldn't get to the dustoff unaided. "I looked to my right where the downed LOH was. The left seat was vacant — that crewman was pinned under the belly of the chopper," recalled the dustoff pilot after the mission. "The man in the right seat was sitting upright. I could see blood all over his face."

Once firmly on the ground where the dustoff was drawing enemy fire at a frantic pace,

aircraft commander Snyder glanced back at his crew, then yelled "go get 'em" over the intercom. The unarmed medic accompanied by the crew chief armed only with an M16, dashed through fifty yards of whizzing rounds, finally diving for cover beneath the LOH.

While Spec. 3 Gordon Gaskins ran around the ship to check the man still inside, crew chief Spec. 4 Raymond Deyo subjected himself to enemy fire, and returned it, in order to provide cover for his medic. The man in the ship was dead. Gaskins returned to the man under the ship. His thigh bone had been shattered by an AK47 round making him unable to move on his own.

As Snyder hovered over to within twenty feet of the LOH, Gaskins and Deyo dragged their patient toward the chopper. With no lull in the enemy fire, the two men were compelled to depend on their sharp reflexes and experienced judgment to get their patient and themselves safely aboard the flying ambulance.

Four rounds hit the chopper's tail boom. But it was too late. Snyder was already speeding to the waiting medical specialists at the brigade's 93rd Evacuation Hospital here.

Although the crew had flown on hundreds of missions, probably saving scores of lives, this mission was different. Gilson spoke for the crew when he said: "This was the first time I knew that if we hadn't gone in there, that man wouldn't have lived."



DANGER! BOOBY TRAP! A point man Division found this booby trap made from the 2nd Bn., 27th Inf., 25th Infantry a three-foot wire and a grenade.

Joking and levity end abruptly as time for mission arrives

LAI KHE — They sat around cracking jokes, putting thoughts of combat out of their minds. Then just as quickly as it started, the fun and joking stopped. A tough mission lay ahead of them.

The "River Rats" from 1st Engineer Bn., 1st Infantry Division were up early checking weapons and gear for the upcoming operation. The nine-man team led by Staff Sgt. James M. Hawkins gathered around him for the briefing.

"Our three patrol boats will start at Xom Dong Chay and move south toward Saigon, cut-

ting east along the Rach Chel River. We'll have Cobra gunship cover and meet up with the infantry units of Co. D, 2nd Bn., 18th Inf. two miles southeast of Xom Dong Chay. Our mission will be to transport the infantry to swamp and marshy areas inaccessible by air. We'll also provide suppressive fire if the need arises."

Hawkins looked at his reconnaissance report and continued, "Previous action two days ago indicates recent VC activity. If we hit any small arms or automatic weapons fire, we'll head for the river bank and take cover. Cobras will provide our fire if necessary. Scheduled time of departure is 1645 hours."

A reporter, asked Hawkins about his team, "I enjoy these river sweeps because this has been my life since I've been in the Army," he said. "I believe we're performing a definite service to the Vietnamese people. Ito fishes to earn an honest living. Our operations allow him to do this without harassment by the Viet Cong. We did the same thing in Korea and now the people have a stable and free electoral government. That's what we hope to accomplish here!"

Numerous Vietnamese fishing boats dotted the shoreline as the patrol boat caravan moved

from the safety of Thu Duc through the mucky swamps of South Vietnam. Each junk it passed waved the flag of the Republic of South Vietnam so that allied forces could identify the civilians in the area. A Cobra gunship hovered overhead, reconning the area.

Spec. 4 Gerry T. Furlong cut the engines as he maneuvered the craft around a destroyed Sampan. "This is the spot where we got ambushed February 12. Man, that was a bad scene."

"Just before that, 1st Engineers asked for a volunteer to drive the boats. I really love the sea and I'd rather do this kind of work than build bridges. I volunteered."

"The excitement and the feeling of taking the helm down the center of the river is a real thrill. A guy almost forgets he's at war... until he gets hit!"

It was a routine mission, and the "River Rats" cruised along the Saigon River at a speedy 16 knots. After transporting a company-sized force of infantrymen across the river and covering their insertion into an ambush site, the boats headed back to Thu Duc.

"We were coming in from our mission, three boats in line, and the VC opened up on us from the right," recalled operator Spec. 4 Larry Sather.

Will their luck hold?

QUAN LOI — Forty members of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment who captured an enemy training facility in the jungles near here thought they had learned their lessons well, but it turned out that their education had just begun.

The troopers, tired from three days of almost continuous contact with entrenched enemy forces, found the simple tin-roofed structure hidden in an enemy base camp. Among the propaganda banners cluttering the inside were the same learn-

ing aids found in military classrooms everywhere — blackboards, worn erasers and writing tablets.

Then a cavalryman noticed a peculiar sag in the worn floor. "Check it out," said the squad leader.

The rough boards came up easily, too easily, revealing how close the troopers came to meeting their maker. Wedged tightly beneath the floor was a booby trapped 500-pound bomb. What kept it from exploding no one knew.

Mother returns to housework

Sgt delivers baby at roadside

CAMP RED BALL—"East is East, West is West, and never the twain shall meet", said Rudyard Kipling. In Vietnam, the two often meet, but the situation of their meeting sometimes points up the differences of which Kipling spoke. Sgt. Joe Simone, a 3rd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division supply sergeant, can attest at least to the different reactions to one situation—the birth of a child.

Simone was driving from Cu Chi to Camp Copperhead when a Vietnamese woman ran in front of his vehicle, frantically waving her arms and shouting "G.I., G.I.!"

Stopping, Simone warily looked around, and saw another Vietnamese woman lying under a tree beside the road, obviously in advanced labor. Now it was Simone's turn to frantically look up and down the road for help. On what is normally one of the heavily-traveled roads in Vietnam, there was no one else in sight. Other than the moans of the woman, only the wind could be heard. Deciding that it was up to him to help, Simone went to the woman's side.

Following sign directions from the woman who had stopped him, Simone got some water from a

nearby well. When the baby appeared and was spanked, the woman pinched the umbilical cord in two with her fingers, and Simone supplied some black thread from his jeep, with which the remaining cord was tied shut. Simone then held the baby while the woman washed the child.

By this time the mother was climbing to her feet, insisting that she take the child and leave. The blood that rushed out at the mother's movement made Simone fearful, and he was just as insistent that the lady see a doctor first. Running to the road, Simone stopped a Vietnamese man in a car, placed the mother and infant in the back seat, and led his small convoy back to Cu Chi, to the 25th Infantry Division hospital there. The doctor confirmed the woman's belief that she was all right, but wanted her to stay overnight for observation. The woman explained through an interpreter that this was her sixth offspring and she had to return home to look after the other children, she felt fine, and, all in all, the situation was "No sweat."

Simone was able to take the woman as far as the western edge of Cu Chi, and watched the new mother, her one-hour-old infant in her arms, walking home to do her housework.

Three things fall from the sky

Sgt Scumbag makes first jump

TAY NINH — People say the only things that fall from the sky are airborne troopers and one other commodity. But recently pathfinders of the 11th Aviation Group, 1st Air Cavalry Division, added another item to the list.

"Sergeant Scumbag", the canine mascot of the pathfinder detachment, which prepares LZs, recently made his first jump along with the other Blackhats.

"I got the idea from reading a newspaper article about a tracker dog team jumping," said Lt. James Saine, the officer in

charge of the detachment. "After I read it, ideas started to go through my head and so I thought why not try it."

After the decision was made to let their mascot jump, the Skytroopers went to work to gather some materials with which to fashion a harness for the wiry haired terrier. To substitute for a regular-size parachute the men used a parachute from an artillery flare.

Finally the day of the big jump came. Saine and some of his men went down to Phuoc Vinh to make their monthly jump. "We usually try to jump

at least once a month so as to keep our proficiency up," said Saine.

To test out the parachute before putting it on the dog, the men first tried it out by attaching a sandbag, which weighed approximately as much as the dog. The only problem they encountered was that it drifted a little too far. But no sooner did the problem come up than they had it solved.

"We took the chopper up to 300 feet," said Sgt. Robert Strosser. "We had the pilot slow it down to about 25 knots and someone held the top of the chute while another Blackhat tossed out the 'Sergeant'."

The dog fell for about two seconds and then the chute gently opened and the dog started to float down to the ground.

"Before the dog hit, we had someone who had jumped earlier catch him," said Strosser. "He made it through the jump like a pro."



THERE'S ALWAYS ROOM for one more when it happens to be a mascot. The pup belongs to the 2nd Bn., 47th Inf., 9th Infantry Division.

Roller derby star now hoofs it for Americal

LZ BRONCO—Soldiers of the Americal Division come from various backgrounds and many had unusual professions in civilian life.

Pfc. Robert Dancell of the 11th Bde., 4th Bn., 3rd Inf. is one such soldier, having been a professional roller derby skater before he came into the Army.

Dancell considers roller derby to be, "a highly competitive body contact sport," and became interested in it through previous skating experience and televised roller derby matches. He attended a training center in 1963 and started skating professionally in 1965.

Under the contract with the Original Derby League Dancell played for the Honolulu Hawaiians, the San Francisco Bay Bombers, the Mid-West Pioneers and the New York Chiefs. While playing for the Mid-West Pioneers, he won a six-lap speed race.

A professional roller derby club is composed of a seven-man team and a seven-woman team. Separate competitions for each of the teams are held between opposing clubs. The five players who are actually in the rink at any one time are called a "fack" which consists of two "jammers", two "blockers" and a "pivot man" who can serve either as a "blocker" or a "jammer". Dancell, a wiry 5 feet, 8 inches, became a "jammer", possessing the qualities of speed and maneuverability which are needed to by-pass the opposing "blockers" and score points in the allotted time of 70 seconds.

Dancell attended City College in San Francisco for two years as a pre-medical student, and later as an accounting major before leaving school to travel with his team.

B-ball craze hits flight deck

ABOARD THE USS MERCER

— If you see a basketball floating down the river past Dong Tam, don't be surprised.

If you retrieve it, don't return it to one of the courts in Dong Tam, but to the USS Mercer.

The flight deck of the Mercer, which serves as the home of Headquarters Co., 3rd Bn., 60th Inf., serves a double purpose with a basketball standard at one end. The standard is anchored to an elevator used to transport equipment below, while two mattresses provide protection for overenthusiastic

players who slam into the wall and otherwise would have to utilize the elevator.

Some games are planned but most just happen. Many of the players are regulars and the court is especially crowded after duty hours from 4 to 7 p.m. No inter-service matches have been planned as yet but tension is building and soon a tournament may evolve featuring games between the 3rd Bn., the ship's crew and the crews from the gunboats of Rivron 15.

There is no danger of being blown away by a helicopter as there is a lapse of at least three

minutes between the sounding of "Flight Quarters" and the "Green Deck" for landing. All players must adjourn to the deck below until the deck is secured from "Flight Quarters."

"Your've got to watch for blisters," said Sgt. Glenn Davis. "With all that heat on the deck, you can get blisters as big as half dollars, I did."

Safety nets on the flight deck can be brought up to keep the ball from going over the side, but it doesn't always help.

"The ball has a nasty habit of bouncing over the side barriers," said Lt. Jim Finch.

FAN FARE

By Walt Ditzen

