

Vietnam communique

May 19-25

Cong routed in sharp clashes

Communist gunners hit military and civilian targets near Saigon with a barrage of mortars and rockets throughout the week, in heavy ground action throughout Vietnam.

In one six-hour battle involving soldiers of the 9th Infantry Division 34 Viet Cong were killed as two enemy companies attempted an assault on an allied position.

In action throughout the 25th Infantry Division's areas of operation, many Viet Cong soldiers were killed as a result of sharp contacts.

Soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division captured a 3,000-foot-high North Vietnamese mountaintop fortress during the week, killing over 500 NVA soldiers in the action that lasted 10 days.

9th Inf Div

Two companies of the 9th Infantry Division's 2nd Bde, teamed up with gunships to kill 84 Viet Cong in a six-hour battle six miles northwest of Ben Tre on May 24.

One company from the 4th Bn., 47th Inf, was airlifted into the area early in the day. Light action was established immediately upon landing as gunships from D Troop, 3rd Squadron, 5th Armored Cav, killed four VC during the landing operations.

Heavy fighting began in mid-afternoon when the infantrymen found an estimated 100 VC hiding in hootches in thick nipa palm growth. The VC were well armed and fought back with heavy automatic weapons and Rocket Propelled Grenade fire.

Artillery and air units were called in to support the infantrymen while another company was being airlifted to reinforce them.

The battle lasted into the night with the Old Reliabilities killing 53 VC and the gunships adding 29 more.

Light actions in the 1st and 3rd Bde, areas of operation resulted in an additional 24 VC being killed.

In Operations Speedy Express and Toan Thang III, elements of the 9th Infantry Division killed 131 enemy soldiers and detained six suspects. Nine individual weapons were captured.

25th Inf Div

In actions throughout the 25th Infantry Division's area of operations on May 20, Tropic Lightning soldiers and attached elements killed 49 Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army soldiers during multiple contacts.

The most significant find of the day occurred when A Troop, 3rd Squadron, 4th Armored Cav, operating eight miles northwest of Cu Chi discovered a huge hospital complex in the country store area of the Bo Loi Woods.

The hospital complex covered a 200 by 200 yard area and consisted of 30 individual bunkers most of which were 12-foot-square with four feet of overhead cover.

During an operation in the Citadel region seven miles northwest of Cu Chi, soldiers from the 1st Bn., 508th Inf., 3rd Bde., 82nd Airborne Division unit under the operational control of the 25th Division attacked an unknown size enemy force well entrenched in bunkers.

Artillery was called in to support the infantrymen pressing the attack. At about dark, firing ceased and a sweep of the area uncovered 16 NVA soldiers, seven AK47's and two Rocket Propelled Grenade Launchers (RPGs).

In another action in the same area soldiers from the 2nd Bn., 14th Inf. discovered a 200-yard tunnel complex that was being used to store a munitions cache. The find consisted of 18 RPG rounds.

1st Inf Div

A major battle erupted from what began as a minor North Vietnamese Army probe of a Regional Forces outpost near the village of Minh Duc four miles southwest of the 1st Infantry Division's 1st Bri-

gade base camp at An Loc.

Shortly after 10:30 p.m. May 22, NVA soldiers began a series of probes against the outpost. For six hours sporadic bursts of small arms and automatic weapons fire tore into the Regional Forces position and the village.

By 3 p.m. the following day the area had been secured and the bodies of 53 NVA soldiers were found.

In other actions 10 NVA soldiers were killed by hunter-killer teams 10 miles northwest of Lai Khe and three more were killed five miles northeast of Quan Loi.

1st Cav Div

Recent attempts by North Vietnamese Army soldiers to overrun 1st Cavalry Division fire support bases continued May 23. Two fire support bases were hit in the early morning hours by indirect fire and a ground attack followed.

At 3:45 a.m. the first of 200 82mm mortar rounds hit Landing Zone Joe 17 miles southwest of An Loc. Following the barrage an estimated NVA company attacked.

With Aerial Rocket Artillery and an AC-47 Spooky gunship supporting them the Skytroopers drove the NVA back after less than an hour of fighting. Eight NVA soldiers died in the attack and four were detained.

At first light an element of the 5th Bn., 7th Cav, made a sweep of the area around LZ Joe and found 25 82mm mortar rounds, seven 107mm rockets, and eight AK47 rifles.

The other fire support base to be hit was Landing Zone St. Barbara 18 miles northeast of Tay Ninh. A barrage of about 40 82mm mortar rounds hit the LZ

causing light damage.

Multiple actions in the rest of the division's area of operations saw Skytroopers kill 18 NVA soldiers for a day's total of 26.

Americal Div

A reconnaissance patrol of Co. G, 75th Inf, spotted a well used trail eight miles south of Duc Pho on May 25.

"Shortly after spotting the trail, 15 North Vietnamese Army soldiers walked by," commented Spec. 4 George Siffon. "Then five minutes later five more NVA used the trail. We decided to set up an ambush but just about that time one of our men was spotted."

Throwing grenades and laying down a heavy volume of fire the rangers killed one NVA soldier before the firefight ended. The patrol called for gunships which skimmed the area but found no sign of the NVA and the unit was airlifted out.

4th Inf Div

Nine North Vietnamese Army soldiers were killed May 24 in action by 4th Division infantrymen 11 miles northwest of Pleiku.

The action started at 10 a.m. when the 3rd Platoon of Co. A, 10th Squadron, 10th Armored Cav, attacked an undetermined size enemy force. After receiving small arms and B-40 rocketfire, the unit was reinforced by the 3rd Platoon, Co. B, 3rd Bn., 12th Inf. Contact was lost at noon after a half-hour fight.

After an exchange of gunfire during the action, artillery was called in to support the infantrymen.

Air strikes, called in to support infantrymen already operating in the area, produced one secondary explosion.

A sweep of the area by infantrymen

uncovered nine NVA dead and several boxes of B-40 rocket grenades and recoilless rifle rounds.

A gunship from the 4th Avn. Bn. received fire from seven enemy soldiers on the ground 33 miles southwest of Pleiku while flying cover for an extraction chopper.

The gunship crew reported killing three of the hostiles while the remainder fled the area.

23rd Arty Gp

Cannoneers of the 23rd Artillery Group killed 29 Viet Cong during scattered fire missions over the week.

Four high explosive 105mm rounds on an H & I (harassment and interdiction) target five miles southeast of Tay Ninh reaped large rewards for Btry. A, 6th Bn., 15th Arty. early May 23. A sweep the following morning revealed 15 enemy bodies.

An aerial observer from the 1st Bde, 1st Cavalry Division called for fire on four Viet Cong trudging down a road eight miles northwest of Dau Tieng on the afternoon of May 24. Btry. B, 6th Bn., 15th Arty. responded from Landing Zone White scoring four kills. Btry. B killed an additional Viet Cong in an earlier mission near the same location.

11th ACR

North Vietnamese Army soldiers fired 10 60mm mortar rounds into the night defensive position of A Troop, 1st Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment six miles north of Xuan Loc during the early morning hours May 24. At dawn the cavalrymen began tracking them down.

"After we got hit, we got mad," said Maj. John Bahnsen, the 1st Squadron commander, "so at first light we searched the area until we spotted their trail. We went into the weeds after them."

Artillery and tactical airstrikes were employed. Fifteen NVA soldiers were killed in the firefight and their weapons and two .50 caliber heavy machineguns were captured.

199th Inf Bde

A total of 52 members of the Viet Cong Infrastructure (VCI) have been detained as of May 22 by the 199th Light Infantry Brigade in cordons near Ben Luc, 16 miles southwest of Saigon, over the past eight days.

The brigade is assisted in the operation by the 50th Regiment, 25th Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) Division. The brigade processed a total of 1,538 civilians through its Combined Holding and Interrogation Center (CHIC).

During the cordon approximately 1,000 civilians were fed and sheltered for a two-day period. They were entertained with movies and music by a cultural drama group from the Long An Province Psychological Operations Team.

Five VC were killed in action along the cordon's perimeter. Three of the VC were killed by Navy River Patrol Boats on the Vam Co Dong River.

Another two VC were killed by Co. A, 3rd Bn., 7th Inf. during a night ambush operation.

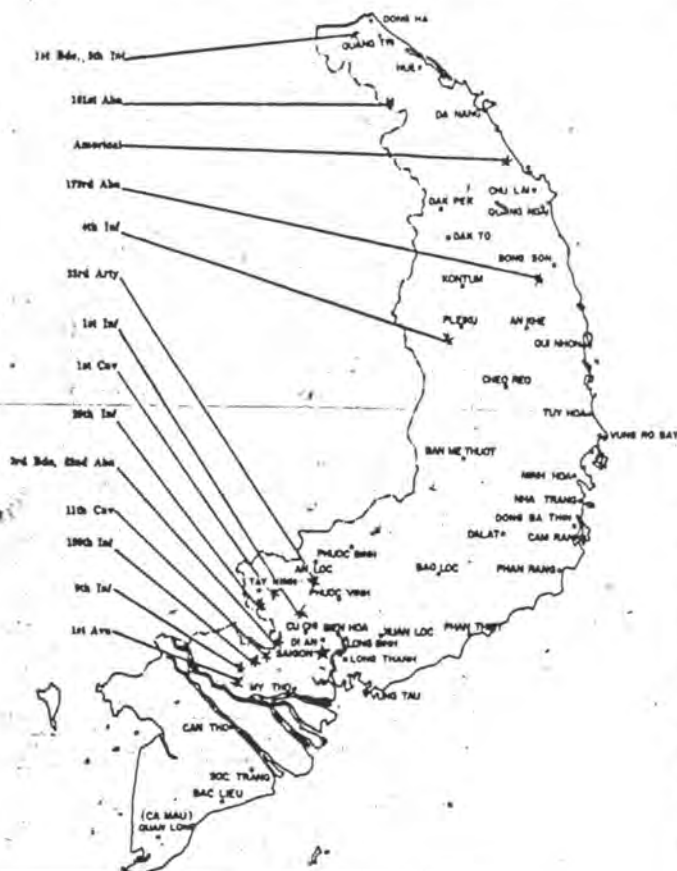
101st Abn Div

Soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division and South Vietnamese infantrymen captured and occupied a 3,000-foot-high North Vietnamese mountaintop fortress along the rugged Laotian frontier the past week in the tenth day of heavy fighting to take the position.

The allied force stormed the Dong Ap Bia mountain (Hamburger Hill) from four sides. The seizure of the mountaintop came after ten previous assaults failed to move the North Vietnamese, who fired rocket-propelled grenades and machineguns from bunkers built to withstand bomb and napalm strikes.

Over 500 NVA soldiers perished at the hands of the 101st and the ARVN soldiers.

The mountaintop overlooks the A Shau Valley, a major Communist supply depot and staging area for attacks in the northernmost I Corps Tactical Zone.





LAST PLANK IS LAID



PONTON FLIES INTO PLACE

Enemy blasts vital bridge, new one flies, floats in

LAI THIEU — Early in the morning, an explosion rocked the sleepy village of Lai Thieu. Within minutes bewildered villagers came running from their homes to the site of the explosion. Once there they rubbed their eyes in astonishment.

The 850-foot Phu Long Bridge which for so many years spanned the Saigon River was now crippled by VC sappers bent on closing the major lines of communication in Vietnam.

Before the morning sun had fully risen, engineers from the 100th Float Bridge Co., 150th Engineer Group, 20th Engineer Bde., under the direction of Lt. Richard Ramirez, were on the site reconnoitering the damage. They were accompanied by ARVN en-

gineers of the 301st Combat Engineer Bn., 30th ARVN Engineer Group.

Shortly the decision was reached to put in an M48 float bridge, thereby reopening the north Saigon by-pass, the route which the bridge services. The bridge company would provide the bridging and technical assistance and the ARVN engineers the muscle for the assembly stages.

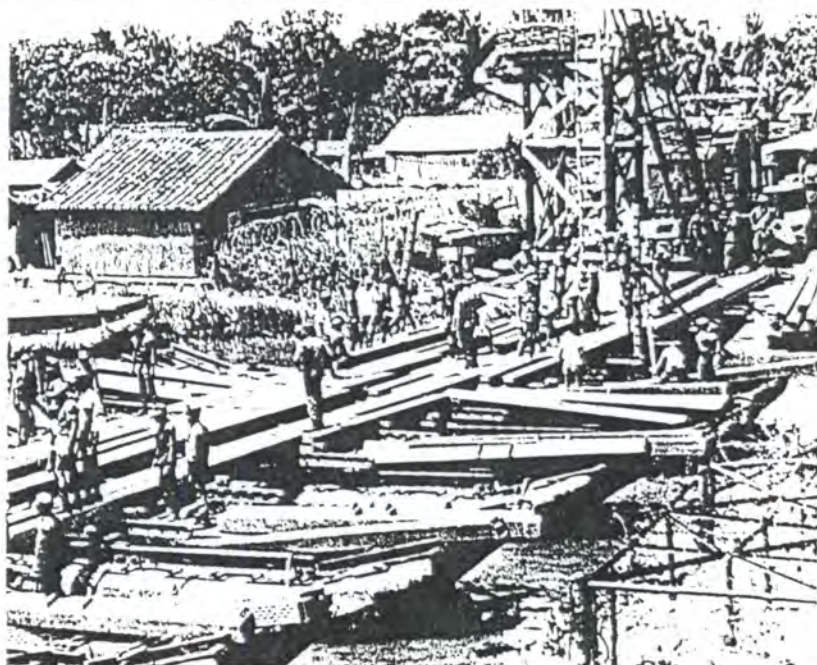
A major problem initially arose due to the peculiarity of the bridge's location. Dense vegetation covered the shores of the river, and it was virtually impossible to inflate and assemble the bridging at the site where the float bridge was to be emplaced. Consequently, the situ-

ation called for the pontoons to be inflated in an open area three-fourths of a mile inland and later transported to the bridge site.

The solution for transporting was close at hand, when a CH-54 Flying Crane was called in to skidlift each pontoon from the assembly area to the river. The pontoons were carried to the river upstream from the bridge site.

As this operation progressed, approaches to the float bridge from the main route to the river banks were being readied by bulldozers.

The last piece of balk was set into place by one ARVN and one American engineer. Within minutes the roadway was opened and traffic began to flow.



WORK CONTINUES ON FLOATING BRIDGE



KIDS CROSS NEW BRIDGE