

Vietnam communique

September 1-7

Calm broken by attacks on LZs

Shortly after the announcement of Ho Chi Minh's death Sept. 5, NVA soldiers broke three weeks of relative calm in the 1st Cavalry Division area of operation by rocketing three major Skytrooper base camps and trying to overrun a landing zone.

But one captured enemy soldier told allied forces that he was completely ignorant of the fact of Ho's passing.

The major thrust came in the predawn hours against LZ Ike, five miles north of Nui Ba Den. After dumping about 20 107mm rockets into the perimeter, a large but undetermined number of Communists charged the wire in a battle that lasted several hours. When the enemy fell back, they left 37 dead and 24 AK47 rifles.

The same day, 24 enemy ambushers were killed when they attacked a 1st Logistical Command convoy traveling from Lai Khe to Quan Loi along Highway 13.

The ambushers launched small arms, automatic weapons and mortar fire from both sides of the road. But escorting mechanized troops from Co. B, 2nd Bn., 24th Armor, under the operational control of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, retaliated from their armored personnel carriers and gun jeeps.

The convoy rolled on to its destination with one vehicle sustaining moderate damage.

25th Inf Div

NVA soldiers burrowed in one of the myriad caves on Nui Ba Den gathered Sept. 3 at the cavern's mouth to glean a few moments of early morning sunshine, but were greeted by a rain of 25th Infantry Division artillery.

At dawn when 18 enemy soldiers climbed to the mouth of the cavern, gunners from Hq., 1st Bn., 2nd Bn., 34th Armor, spotted the tunnel dwellers and immediately hurled eight 90mm shells into the mouth of the cave, killing all 18.

Armor men from Co. A, checking the results of the barrage, killed three more NVA regulars who were fleeing up the mountainside.

Six additional kills were credited to 34th Armor gunners during the day, bringing the death toll in the area to 27.

In action on Nui Ba Den Sept. 6, mechanized troops of the division's 4th Bn., 23rd Inf., killed another 27 enemy without sustaining a casualty.

In another day of significant contact, Tropic Lightning soldiers Sept. 7 crashed into the Ho Bo Woods 10 miles northwest of Cu Chi and when they came out an hour later 26 NVA regulars lay dead.

Troopers from the 2nd Bn., 22nd Inf., located an NVA platoon in the twisted woods about 9:30 a.m. and immediately attacked the well-entrenched enemy.

Artillery and air support helped to soften up the Communist defenses and within the hour ground forces were able to overrun the enemy bunkers.

1st Cav Div

Airpower gave the 1st Cavalry Division a heavily one-sided edge against NVA regulars Sept. 1 as the Skytroopers and supporting units reported killing 52 of the enemy without losing a man.

In the most significant action, a trio of 1st Bde. helicopters were dogging a heavily traveled jungle trail northeast of Nui Ba Den when they flew past more than 20 NVA resting along the path, their cargo of 107mm rockets propped up against trees beside them.

The contraband cargo proved to be the NVA soldiers' undoing. On the gunships' first pass, they hit the 107s, which exploded and killed at least four of the enemy.

After the initial strike, the choppers called for artillery support from Skytroopers at nearby LZ Jamie. Artillery rounds thundering throughout the area killed another 12 enemy soldiers who were hiding in the brush to avoid the gunships.

The following day a company of cavalrymen of the 2nd Bn., 8th Cav., took on an estimated NVA platoon in a bunkered base camp complex 18 miles northeast of Tay Ninh. Company C soldiers battled with the enemy for about 10 minutes while tube and aerial rocket artillery

hammered at their bunkered positions. Twelve NVA soldiers died in the action and the remainder of the platoon fled.

In the second attack on a 1st Cavalry landing zone during the week, 24 NVA regulars were killed when cavalrymen foiled their attempt to overrun LZ Jamie Sept. 6.

While the NVA forces worked their way up to the perimeter wire, a shower of more than 50 mortar rounds crashed into the landing zone. However, pilots in Cobra gunships directed rocket and minigun fire at the enemy troops advancing in the dark.

When 1st Cavalry fire power finally broke the attack, all 24 enemy dead were found stretched on or near the wire.

1st Inf Div

Troops from the 1st Infantry Division's 1st Bn., 16th Inf., under the operational control of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, Sept. 3 took on an NVA company spotted in the jungles one mile northwest of An Loc.

In the clash that followed, the infantrymen and artillery from nearby LZ Eagle 1 hammered the hapless enemy, killing 40.

The same day a heavily-armed NVA force stormed the wire of the division's FB Thunder-Three 14 miles south of An Loc, but gave up hope of overrunning the Big Red One position after 19 enemy were gunned down.

The ground attack was preceded by mortar fire into the perimeter. By the time soldiers of Co. A, 2nd Bn., 2nd Inf., had begun reconnaissance by fire, an undetermined number of the invaders were through the wire and had positioned themselves in a drainage ditch, where they escaped small arms and .50-caliber machinegun fire.

The defenders routed the NVA troops from the ditch by bouncing in hand grenades. At dawn the attackers withdrew.

11th ACR

Third Squadron elements from the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment in the An Loc area Sept. 7 spearheaded an armored punch into an NVA troop concentration three miles southwest of the city and killed 42 of the enemy.

Driving Sheridan tracks, Blackhorse troopers from Troop I, 3rd Squadron, locked up with an undetermined number of NVA soldiers in the triple-canopied jungle.

While gunships and artillery rained lead upon the Communists, tanks from Co. M, 3rd Squadron, rumbled up from a different side, blocking off one of the NVA escape routes.

Four hours later as the sun left the jungle-covered battle scene, so did the enemy, leaving behind 42 bodies and two .51-caliber machineguns.

The same day another NVA force six miles northeast of Loc Ninh tried to bag an 11th Cavalry helicopter in a crossfire of .51-caliber machineguns. The Blackhorse chopper and another gunship silenced both enemy machinegun positions, and crewmen reported killing 35 NVA soldiers.

Americal Div

Americal Division soldiers killed 22 NVA regulars in the most significant contact of a day of generally light action Sept. 2.

Mechanized infantrymen of Troop A, 1st Squadron, 1st Armored Cav., sighted a large number of enemy in the jungle five miles southwest of Duc Pho.

Supported by infantrymen of Co. C, 4th Bn., 3rd Inf., the soldiers fought a running battle that lasted until late eve-

ning. When the enemy withdrew they left behind the 22 dead, eight AK47 rifles, a Communist light machinegun, a .57mm recoilless rifle and a RPG launcher.

The next day, Americal soldiers found 17 additional NVA bodies in the area, raising the death toll of the battle to 39.

4th Inf Div

Gunships of the 4th Infantry Division teamed up with Air Force jets to kill 13 NVA regulars and destroy an NVA base camp in four separate actions Sept. 3.

In the largest air-to-ground battle of the day a light observation helicopter of the 1st Squadron, 10th Armored Cav., spied an estimated squad of NVA troops building a bunker complex 10 miles northwest of Pleiku City.

The enemy laborers dropped their shovels, shouldered automatic weapons and began to fire at the lightly armed chopper. Cobra gunships of the 10th Cav. were dispatched to the site and patted the area with rocket and minigun fire, while the observation chopper directed an Air Force jet strike.

Ground troops of the 1st Bn., 22nd Inf., air-assaulted into the battered complex following the twin aerial bombardments and found the bodies of six dead NVA soldiers.

3rd Bde, 9th Inf Div

Soldiers of the 5th Bn., 60th Inf., Sept. 3, killed five VC aboard a sampans floating down a stream off the Van Co Dong toward the battalion's night defensive position two miles southwest of Ruck Kien.

As the soldiers opened fire on the oncoming vessel, the five VC popped up and began hurling grenades. All were gunned down before they could do any damage.

Later in the week, Go Devils of the 3rd Bde., 9th Infantry Division, killed one NVA soldier and nine VC in four unconnected clashes in the Mekong Delta Sept. 7.

The largest action of the day occurred in late afternoon as infantrymen of the 2nd Bn., 60th Inf., moved into a VC bunker complex six miles southeast of Tan An.

While sweeping the complex, the infantrymen downed four VC troops making unsuccessful sniper attacks on the Americans.

101st Abn Div

Screaming Eagles sweeping through the A Shau Valley Sept. 1, killed 10 NVA soldiers in a series of fire fights. Infantrymen of the 1st Bn., 506th Abn. Inf., were credited with six of the kills in the southern end of the valley, while gunships from the 4th Bn., 77th Aerial Rocket Arty., claimed the other four in the northern section.

Two days later division soldiers on a night reconnaissance mission 17 miles southeast of Hue killed five NVA regulars in a battle with an unknown number of enemy. In a number of unrelated daylight skirmishes 101st troopers killed another seven enemy the same day.

On Sept. 5, a Ho Chi Minh, just hours after he had rallied to the Republic of Vietnam, led 101st soldiers to five of his ex-comrades who chose to fight rather than rally. Aero-rifle platoon members of the 2nd Squadron, 17th Cav., killed the five when they came out shooting in response to the Screaming Eagle bid for allegiance.

199th Inf Bde

Rangers of the 199th Light Infantry Brigade's Co. C, 7th Inf., Sept. 4, walked into a platoon-sized base camp 30 miles northeast of Xuan Loc and were greeted by heavy small arms fire coming from the triple-canopied jungle behind the camp.

The rangers dug in and killed three NVA soldiers with their return fire.

The next day an estimated NVA company jumped a company of Redcatchers in the heavy rubber forests 12 miles southwest of Xuan Loc and held contact for more than five hours before slipping off into the darkness.

The NVA force had set up snipers and claymore mines in the trees around the area but the infantrymen held their ground and turned an enemy drive to overpower one of the company's flanks.



A BITTER CLASH with Charlie is recorded in the eyes of Pfc. Leonard Freeman, a 1st Infantry Division point man, as he moves cautiously through marsh northwest of Saigon.