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Week-long battle at Hiep Duc

435 NVA die near village

QUE SON VALLEY — Combat between Americal Division soldiers and enemy forces from the 2nd NVA Division tapered off almost as quickly as it had begun. The initial flare-up of fighting left 435 NVA soldiers dead at the end of the battle, which centered around the newly resettled village of Hiep Duc, 35 miles northwest of Chu Lai.

Forces committed in the week-long conflict were divided into two battalion-sized task forces to overcome enemy resistance at two points in the valley. One force, under the control of the 4th Bn., 31st Inf., fought the enemy near a hill two miles north of Hiep Duc. The other element was controlled by the

3rd Bn., 21st Inf., which operated four miles south of LZ Center, east of Hiep Duc.

The first outbreak occurred when a company surprised an estimated NVA battalion. Supported by gunships, air strikes and artillery, Co. B. of the 4th Bn. linked up with Co. C of the same battalion late in the evening. Bodies found on the next day confirmed that the combination of infantry and supporting elements had killed 91 NVA soldiers.

During the next three days, fighting was heavy at the base of mountains that form this valley and the boundary between Quang Tin and Quang Nam provinces.

For several nights, the enemy made probing attacks and mortared the companies' night defensive positions. Enemy mortar fire was also directed against LZ West. In each case, US countermortar radar enabled supporting artillery to strike back quickly at the enemy's firing points.

US air power, artillery and infantrymen forced the NVA to withdraw from the fight. Soon the soldiers were able to provide security for combat engineers who began demolition work on the abandoned positions. The task force had killed 212 NVA regulars in eight days of almost continuous combat.

For the forces operating south of LZ Center, the action began when a company contacted another estimated NVA battalion. Late in the afternoon, a company from the 2nd Bn. of the 1st Inf. was combat-assaulted into the area to develop the contact. As enemy resistance increased, two companies of the 3rd Bn., 21st Inf., also joined the fray.

As US ground forces met continued resistance in the area, the 3rd Bn., 5th ARVN Division came into the area to open another front in the attacks on the enemy positions.



A **BILGE FULL OF BOMBS** was the prize captured during a combined reconnaissance sweep by Popular Force troops and the reconnaissance platoon of the 2nd Bn., 27th Inf., 25th Infantry Division 12 miles southwest of Cu Chi. Part of a VC weapons cache was found in two sampans floating by a river bank.

'Nui' battle resumes

TAY NINH—Heavy fighting erupted again around Nui Ba Den as 25th Infantry Division soldiers killed 49 NVA regulars.

At mid-morning a combined US-ARVN strike force composed of soldiers from Co. A, 4th Bn., 23rd Inf. and the ARVN 7th Abn. Bn., fought what they estimated to be a reinforced platoon of NVA regulars at the southern base of the "Black Virgin" mountain, five miles north of here near Phu Khuong.

US point elements were the first to locate the NVA unit in banana groves which dot the flanks of the twin-peaked mountain and alerted the main body of the allied force.

Armored cavalry assault vehicles churned over the banana stalks and assaulted the enemy's positions with .50 caliber and M60 machinegun fire.

The NVA soldiers in the groves temporarily slowed the advance of the combined strike force with heavy small arms and mortar fire.

A 23rd Arty. Group self-propelled 8-inch howitzer moved up and took a position south of the mountain to help the embattled infantrymen.

The big gun blasted into the base of Nui Ba Den while Cobra gunships poured rocket and minigun fire on to the enemy's positions.

Moving in behind the armored vehicles, US and ARVN infantrymen routed the remainder of the battered NVA platoon, finding the bodies of 49 enemy killed in the five-hour battle.



SIGHTING IN ON TARGET a door gunner with the 1st Cavalry Division trains his M60 machine gun on a suspected NVA bunker while other choppers prepare to

land troops at a "hot" LZ. Heavy fire from the air is the key to successful insertion of soldiers when the enemy is near the drop

Soldiers complete fund drive to assist victims of hurricane

CAMP EAGLE — Living up to their motto, "The Task is Ours," men of the 324th Engr. Bn., 101st Airborne Division, have donated

more than \$1,200 to aid the victims of Hurricane Camille.

"I was really surprised and pleased at the enthusiasm the men showed toward this fund drive," said Chaplain (Capt.) Donald J. Robinson.

Chaplain Robinson said he developed the idea for the fund drive, which he called "Operation We Care Too," after hearing about a similar program sponsored by Bob Hope.

"I figured if the people back home could do it, we could too," he explained.

The chaplain began his campaign by passing out leaflets explaining the needs of the people in storm-battered Mississippi.

"We explained that men in Vietnam often get gifts, packages and letters showing that people back home support them," Chaplain Robinson said.

"We suggested that this could be a chance for the men to show that they support the people at home too."

"The men really got behind the idea," Chaplain Robinson noted. "They put up collection boxes in their clubs and even helped collect from men out at fire bases. They were great!"

The chaplain said that more than 60 per cent of the men in

the battalion contributed.

"Many men were in the field and we were unable to collect from them," he said, "but of the men who were able to give, the average contribution was a considerable amount."

Chaplain Robinson said that contributors represented 46 of the 50 states.

The money collected during the drive will be personally delivered to Mississippi Governor John Bell Williams by a member of the 324th Engineers who is rotating home.

Logistic and Engineer Equipment Officer Capt. Byron Woodsley will present the governor with a check for \$1,200 and a letter signed by the unit's commanding officer.

Woodsley will also carry a letter signed by many of the contributors.

The chaplain now admits that he was skeptical about his own idea at first.

"I knew it sometimes seems to the men that the chaplains are always collecting for one thing or another," he said. "I wasn't sure they would go for the program, but they really responded to the idea that some of their fellow Americans were in need."

Cavalry foils second lke attack

The 1st Cavalry Division's Landing Zone lke was the object of an enemy ground attack for the second time in two successive weeks, but again NVA forces were unable to break through the Skytrooper's perimeter defenses.

The first attack occurred September 5. That battle lasted more than two hours and cost the NVA 37 dead.

Early Sept. 14 a company of NVA soldiers tried it again, this time firing between 75 and 100 mortar and rocket rounds into the landing zone, which serves as the headquarters of the 2nd Bn., 8th Cav.

Cobra gunships from the 227th Combat Avn. Bn. responded by taking to the air to strike at the enemy's mortar positions northwest of the base, while other Skytrooper gunships supported 2nd Bn., 8th Cav., forces manning the LZ's bunker line.

Following the 25-minute mixed rocket and mortar barrage, a company of 1st NVA Division soldiers charged LZ lke, beginning a series of ground probes which lasted about three hours.

Each attack was beaten back by the 1st Cavalry defenders, who killed 33 NVA regulars before the balance of the force retreated. A first-light sweep outside lke's wire revealed 172 Chicom grenades, five 107mm rocket rounds and six AK47 rifles left behind by the withdrawing enemy.

25th Inf Div

Helicopter gunships of the 269th Combat Avn. Bn., and the 25th Infantry Division's 3rd Squadron, 4th Armored Cav., trapped two platoons of NVA regulars in a crescent-shaped area northeast of Trang Bang, killing 31 Communist soldiers.

Twenty-four additional NVA soldiers were killed elsewhere in the division area.

A 3rd Squadron light observation helicopter (LOH) found the two NVA units as it patrolled Highway QL No. 1 eight miles northwest of Cu Chi early Sept. 12. Two suspicious-looking men were spotted riding an ox cart outside a small village and three gunships of the 69th Bn.'s 116th Assault Helicopter Co., called to investigate, downed the pair as they dashed for cover.

The three gunships and the LOH began aerial reconnaissance of the area around the small village prior to an air-assault by soldiers of the 2nd Bn., 12th Inf. The four choppers were soon joined by hunter-killer Cobra LOH teams from the 3rd Bn., 4th Armored Cav., to fight what later turned out to be two blue-uniformed NVA platoons.

An air-to-ground fusillade continued until 1:45 in the afternoon with the gunships taking turns over the area and then shutting back to Cu Chi for more ammunition.

A subsequent sweep of the area by the 2nd Bn., 12th Inf. soldiers revealed the bodies of 31 enemy killed in the fighting.

1st Cav Div

In the largest contact by an Army unit Sept. 10, 1st Cavalry Division soldiers engaged NVA regulars in air-to-ground fighting spread over several hours.

A 1st Squadron, 9th Air Cav. patrol eight miles southeast of Phuoc Binh received small-arms fire and sighted an NVA force moving across an open field. The patrol's Cobra gunship unleashed rocket and minigun fire, killing 12.

About three hours later, a troop carrying fluey of the squadron was flying over an area three miles northwest of Katum when it received several small-arms rounds. The chopper called for artillery and gunships, which killed 10 of the enemy gunners.

The same day a squadron light observation helicopter flying 34 miles northwest of Tay Ninh City received ground fire from several NVA soldiers in a small bunker. The LOH responded with minigun fire, killing four.

Ground troops of the 1st Cavalry Division killed three NVA soldiers and one VC in individual contacts, upping the Skytrooper's total to 30 for the day.

Americal Div

In the largest Americal Division action of the week, infantrymen reported killing 31 Communists early Sept. 11 during a three-hour attack by an NVA sapper battalion on a division fire base in the lilep Valley.

(See related story page 1)

In other action, Americal soldiers killed 47 enemy in scattered contacts throughout the division's area of operation.

On Sept. 10, Co. C, 1st Bn., 46th Inf. was attacked at an observation post 10 miles southwest of Tam Ky by an undetermined number of NVA regulars. The company beat back the attack, killing three.

Four additional enemy were killed in another significant action when infantrymen of Co. C, 2nd Bn., 1st Inf. clashed with an estimated 10 VC seven miles west of Tam Ky. Four enemy were killed.

In another kind of action, Americal soldiers, with the help of a Psyops team and a farmer, robbed Charlie's "Rocket" Pocket" five miles southwest of Chu Lai. The farmer, complying with a Psyops leaflet urging villagers to relinquish information regarding enemy weapons caches, told Popular Force soldiers of the location of an enemy rocket. The PFs in turn notified Americal troops.

The farmer then led the soldiers to a 122mm rocket still in good condition and complete with warhead.

1st Inf Div

Big Red One pilots recorded all 12 enemy kills through the 1st Infantry Division area of operation Sept. 11 when they gunned down a VC force in the vicinity of a downed light observation helicopter (LOH).

The LOH had been shot down six miles southeast of Dau Tieng. An aerorifle platoon was soon landed to aid with the extraction of the crippled copter while gunships from Trp. D, 1st Squadron, 4th Armored Cav., circled overhead providing cover.

Several of the Cobra pilots saw about 15 VC soldiers hiding in a woodline nearby and dove in for the kill. The Cobras' miniguns and rockets claimed 11 of the enemy and a 1st Division forward air controller later got one more.

The same day enemy gunners downed another LOH eight miles north of Dau Tieng, but two 1st Division pilots followed the chopper down in a shower of enemy small-arms fire, pulled the wounded pilot free of the wreckage and flew away unscathed in their cobra.

3rd Bde, 9th Inf Div

Go Devils of the 3rd Bde., 9th Infantry Division killed 10 VC soldiers in two Mekong Delta clashes Sept. 13 and found the bodies of 22 others killed in recent fighting in Long An Province.

At 10 p.m. rangers from Co. E, 75th Inf., teamed with Navy helicopter gunship and patrol boat crews to kill eight VC soldiers four miles southwest of Tan An.

Just after Ranger Team 17 had jumped off Navy craft onto the banks of a canal, the boat crewmen saw four VC soldiers swimming across and killed them before they reached the other side. When the patrol boats opened fire, the rangers spotted two more VC troops and gunned them down.

As the team continued along the Da Ly Canal bank, Navy helicopter crews overhead took fire from four VC soldiers. They responded with minigun fire killing two and bringing the total for the action to eight.

The same day Ranger Team 18 killed

two additional VC soldiers in a brief fire-fight 11 miles southeast of Tan An.

In other action during the week 3rd Bde. troops, supported by gunships of the 240th Assault Helicopter Co., killed six VC soldiers also in Long An Province.

11th ACR

Blackhorse troopers from the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, under the operational control of the 1st Cavalry Division, killed 31 NVA soldiers Sept. 11, with much of the action centering around Loc Ninh.

Tankers from D Troop and armored cavalry assault vehicle and Sheridan track drivers from B Troop, 1st Squadron, were operating in the jungle two miles northwest of Loc Ninh when an undetermined number of NVA regulars opened fire. The Blackhorse soldiers killed 17 of the enemy in an hour-long battle, backed by tube artillery from nearby Landing Zone Kelly.

Earlier in the day, D Troop soldiers killed five NVA troops two miles north of Loc Ninh and C Troop cavalrymen killed nine three miles west of the city.

4th Inf Div

Gunships from A Troop, 7th Squadron, 17th Air Cav., supporting the 4th Infantry Division, caught an NVA company still napping as they were just leaving their night encampment Sept. 11. A flight of Cobras dove in on the NVA force standing in a clearing beside their overgrown base camp 19 miles northwest of An Khe. Air Force pilots followed the Cobras in and the joint service strike claimed 25 enemy dead.

101st Abn Div

The team of Danny and Duke Sept. 13 led 101st Airborne Division troops to an NVA officer and a small enemy supply cache near Landing Zone Sally, 20 miles north of Hue.

Pvt. Daniel D. Harrelson, the human half of the team, and his canine companion Duke from the Screaming Eagles' Scout Dog Platoon were patrolling a dry creek bed two and a half miles northwest of the fire base with a platoon of infantrymen from Co. E, 1st Bn., 501st Abn. Inf., when Duke alerted his master to a number of spider holes.

A trail from the holes led directly to a cache which contained two NVA packs, 325 pounds of rice, medical supplies and two AK47 rifles.

Infantrymen moving further down the creek spotted five NVA regulars and opened fire, killing the NVA officer as the other four fled.

3rd Bde, 82nd Abn Div

Four VC soldiers stumbled to within 100 yards of a platoon of troopers from the 3rd Bde., 82nd Airborne Division, taking a late afternoon break 15 miles southwest of Saigon Sept. 8. The Co. D troopers from the 1st Bn., 508th Abn. Inf., wheeled around, killing two. The other two escaped into the bush.

Two days later 82nd Airborne troopers brought down one VC soldier in a hail of rocket grenade and small-arms fire in the Pineapple region west of Saigon.

1st Bde, 5th Inf Div

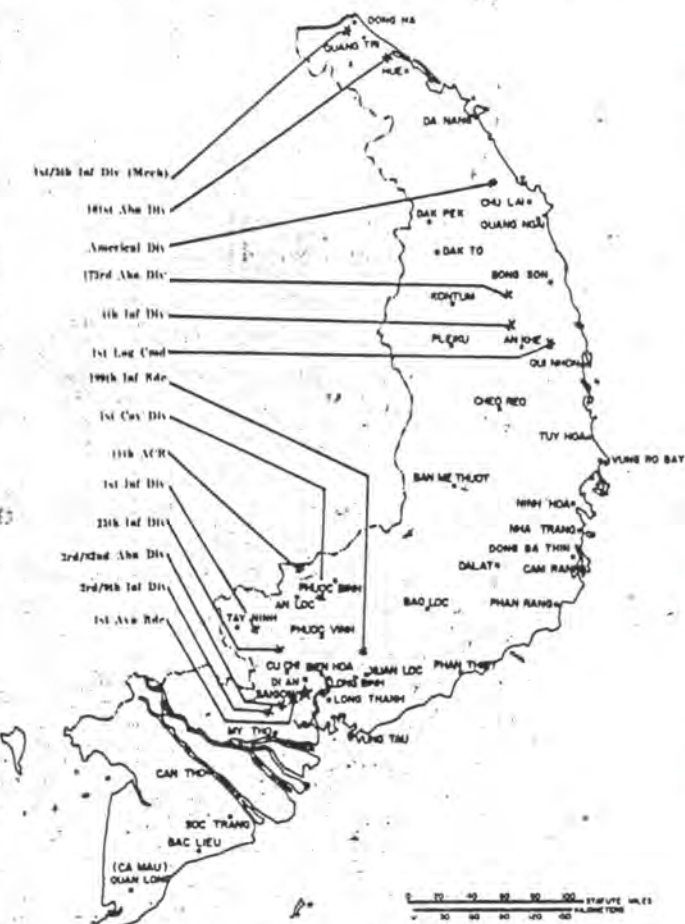
When Red Devils of the 1st Bde., 5th Mechanized Infantry Division, found three mortar tubes along a jungle path outside an 11th Inf. base camp near the DMZ, they made their discovery pay off. The infantrymen set up a trap along the trail and five NVA soldiers fatally fell into it late Sept. 10.

199th Inf Bde

Redcatchers of the 199th Light Infantry Brigade claimed three of the enemy deaths recorded by Army units in a day of light contact Sept. 9.

Redcatcher helicopters were flying low over a cluster of huts 13 miles northwest of Xuan Loc to check for enemy activity when two VC soldiers popped from one of the buildings and opened fire on the 3rd Squadron, 17th Air Cav. gunships with small arms. The gunships returned fire, killing both.

Another VC sniper was killed 13 miles west of Xuan Loc by Redcatchers of Co. A, 5th Bn., 12th Inf.



Ranger unit, aircraft kill 14 during blistering firefight

FB LIBBY — In a dramatic display of fire power, U.S. aircraft recently enabled a 75th Inf. Ranger unit of the 199th Light Infantry Brigade to escape without a scratch during a blistering three-hour battle in which 14 enemy were killed.

The combination Air Force-Army air strikes were credited with 10 kills. Team B of the rangers' Co. M, 7th Support Bn. had three kills during the clash with an estimated platoon of NVA soldiers about nine miles north of here along the Dong Nai

River.

Sgt. David Reeser and his long-range recon patrol had stopped for a rest during the second day of their mission when they discovered they were in an apparently unoccupied enemy base camp.

"We saw at least 12 bunkers all around us," Reeser said. "We didn't stick around."

After moving out about 300 yards, Reeser sent Spec. 4 Lou Garland up a tree to check for a marking rounds Garland didn't have much time to check.

"He jumped out of the tree and came running toward us," continued Reeser. "He had spotted about 20 NVA soldiers coming right at us."

Bravo team hastily emplaced a claymore and moved into cover. They had just crammed into a small, cubby-hole when the enemy appeared and detonated the Claymore.

"While I was calling in air support, Garland made a direct hit with his M79," Reeser recalled. "When another came out to retrieve the body, I got him. But they were still all around us."

F100 fighter jets and OV-10 Broncos carrying the forward air controllers arrived quickly and the jets began saturating the area with 500-pound bombs.

"The Broncos came in real low and the NVA troops started shooting at them with their AKs," Reeser added.

With his smoke grenades gone, Reeser signaled the Cobra gunships with an orange panel. After starting to rejoin his team, Spec. 4 J. R. Arell killed an NVA soldier running out of the brush toward him.

A light observation helicopter dropped a case of M16 ammo to fill the team's empty magazines. The gunships provided the rangers a full circle of fire.

Reeser estimated 10 aircraft participated in the life-saving mission.

Platoon finds tons of rice in VC bin

LZ BALDY—Americal Division infantryman Spec. 4 Larry Small peeped through a hole in a storeroom wall and saw a pile of rice.

"I knew I had to break the door down to get in," Small said. He threw his shoulder into the wooden door and crashed into the room. More than two tons of grain were contained in the large bin—enough to feed a company-sized element for more than a month.

Small's unit Co. E's reconnaissance platoon of the 2nd Bn., 1st Inf., 196 Inf. Bde., was taking part in a cordon and search of a small village located 14 miles northwest of Tam Ky.

Approaching the village from the other end was a platoon from Co. B.

As they neared the hamlet, both platoons were met with small-arms fire. The Americans retaliated with a devastating barrage of automatic-weapons fire. Four VC were killed. The infantrymen then moved into the village.

The village itself was rich in artifacts symbolic of the era of French occupation. There were ornate wood carvings and cement courtyards—now shrouded in jungle growth. But not all of the art work dated from the French period.

Crude paintings on white-washed walls depicted American helicopters being shot down. Other drawings showed American tanks being attacked by ground forces armed with AK47 rifles.

"It was only a temporary cache," said Lt. Mike E. Holyrod, commander of the reconnaissance units. "The rice was surprisingly ill-concealed. They usually bury it in crocks. I think they put it there after harvest and planned to ship it out to their troops," he added.



WITH PROTECTION in mind, a 1st Infantry Division soldier keeps his LAW and M16 high and dry as he crosses a stream in late afternoon. His unit is on a reconnais-

sance-in-force mission near Lai Khe making an early evening sweep around their camp.



A HELPING HAND from this 9th Infantry Division soldier braces a woman against a departing helicopter's rotor blast. The soldier's 3d Bde. unit was on a mission 27 miles south of Saigon.

Sappers play at losing game

LZ GATOR — Four Communist sappers played a dangerous game of hide and seek with Americal Division infantrymen of Co. D, 5th Bn., 48th Inf.,

recently, and came out losers.

Shortly before midnight, bunker guard Spec. 4 Jason M. Woody Jr. spied a figure standing like a statue behind a rock about 35 feet from his bunker.

"It was incredible. Apparently he didn't realize I had spotted him. Although I was sitting on top of the bunker and looking in his direction, the sapper didn't make any move to duck down. I guess he figured the darkness would hide him," Woody said.

At the first sign of movement from Woody the sapper disappeared behind the rock.

After alerting others in the bunker, Woody spotted another three sappers and began to direct mortar and small-arms fire on their position.

For the next two hours shad-

ows continued to dart from rock to rock, drawing continued small-arms fire from the 198th Inf. Bde. soldiers.

At 3 a.m., an unexplained explosion occurred in a small gully on the hillside near the original bunker. "I called to two other guards to see if they had thrown any hand grenades in the area," Woody recalled. They had not.

The next morning a preliminary search of the area revealed the cause of the explosion.

One of the sappers, heavily laden with explosives, had been struck by a bullet fired by the base camp defenders, causing his deadly baggage to explode, killing the enemy soldier.

A more thorough search of the area revealed blood trails marking the exit route of the other members of the sapper team.

Enemy 'party line' leads to 'hot' line

TAY NINH—An NVA field phone discovered by troopers from the 1st Air Cavalry Division six miles northeast of Tay Ninh became an unwanted "party line" for an enemy force that soon found itself on the wrong end of a hot line.

Co. C, 2nd Bn., 8th Cav., followed a strand of enemy communications wire into thick bamboo to find two NVA soldiers setting up a field phone.

The two enemy were quickly overtaken by the lead element. The company's Kit Carson Scout then sat down to eavesdrop on the connected line. A set of coordinates were picked up from the enemy conversation and relayed by radio to the artillery control center at the 1st Cavalry's nearby FB Ike.

Moments later, a heavy barrage of artillery began slamming into the site revealed by the NVA caller. The Kit Carson Scout reported hearing excited jabbering on the other end of the line—and then abrupt silence.