

Soldiers unearth 280 ton salt cache

LZ GATOR — Americal Division soldiers of the 5th Bn., 46th Inf. have cut deeply into VC salt supplies, capturing more than 280 tons of salt in what is believed to be one of the largest caches discovered in Vietnam.

The salt, a vital part of the enemy's diet, is used extensively as a preservative, and at times is used for bartering.

The stores were found in a series of caches on the Batangan Peninsula 10 miles east of Quang Ngai City.

"We're distributing the vital salt to refugees in our area through CAP teams (joint U.S. Marine-ARVN Combined Action Platoon) and district and province headquarters," said Capt. Anthony Phelps, civil affairs officer for the battalion.

The cache-finding Co. B was conducting normal search operations along the southern part of the peninsula looking for VC by day and answering sniper fire by night. On the third day, Lt. Gary Hyler, 1st platoon leader, reported that his early afternoon patrol had found a four-foot-high structure which, after careful examination, was discovered to contain a large quantity of salt.

"I thought this was just an isolated case of finding a salt cache," said Capt. Schopp. "but after running some more patrols in the area, we found so much salt that I moved the rest of the company into the area."

By the end of the day the men had filled 200 bags with 16,000 pounds of salt, which was flown by choppers to LZ Gator, base camp of the 198th Inf. Bde.'s,

5th Bn., 46th Inf.

When the size of the find became apparent, two companies were rotated into the area to help with the removal of the salt. At the same time, other large amounts were discovered hidden under haystacks within a mile of the original find.

It was soon discovered how such a large quantity of salt came to be on the peninsula — the VC had been processing it from the nearby South China Sea.

They terraced off the area, surrounded on three sides by salt flats, and let the high tide fill it with sea water which was then trapped by a hastily built dike. As the water evaporated under the hot tropical sun, salt residue remained to be raked together, scooped up and hidden by the VC for future use.

Meanwhile, the battalion continues to find and sack more salt by day, and patrol at night to fend off constantly harassing enemy snipers.

"Moving several tons of salt daily requires a lot of transportation. It became such a problem getting all that salt to LZ Gator every day that we decided to take it over to the beach and coordinate with the U.S. Navy to have it moved by ship to its various destinations," said Lt. Col. Julian Wagner, battalion commander.

Musing over the huge amount of salt his men had found, Wagner came up with a few interesting figures of his own. There is enough salt to make salt tablets in a quantity to furnish every American here with two tablets a day for an entire year. Laid end-to-end, the tablets would stretch 2,658 miles.



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Weapons cache found nearby

Underground hospital located

TAY NINH — Regional Force and 25th Infantry Division troops rolled unopposed into an abandoned regiment-sized enemy hospital complex and arms cache in a Rome-plowed area deep in the Boi Loi Woods.

Guided by a Kit Carson Scout, members of Co. C, 2nd Bn., 22nd Inf., and the 389th RF Co., conducted a reconnaissance of the heavily-wooded area 17 miles southeast of here.

"I saw a stick poking out of the ground and a hole next to it that looked like an air vent to a bunker," said Spec. 4 Jerry Huckner, the first man to sight evidence of the complex.

"Further investigation disclosed at least eight tunnel entrances leading in various directions," according to Huckner, the company's senior radio-telephone operator.

Staff Sgt. Booker Jefferson, a combat engineer with Co. A, 65th Eng. Bn., jumped into the tunnel entrance and moved to further investigate the operating room. Stacked two deep along one of the walls Jefferson found three-gallon cans containing

large quantities of penicillin tablets, bandages, syringes, assorted medical implements and a 55-gallon drum of ether.

The 25th Infantry Division and Regional Force soldiers moved into the tunnel and began passing the medical stores by hand to the surface and waiting ACAVs. Seven full personnel carrier loads totaling more than two tons of supplies were extracted in the next several hours.

"This is the first time I've ever seen a bunker with a curved ceiling. It looks like a Quonset hut inside," said Sgt. Robert Cleveland, working on the human supply chain.

The combined force continued to search near the site of the original tunnel opening and inside a closely six-by-eight foot enclosure found a weapons cache containing eight AK47 rifles, 13 CKS bolt-action and two semi-automatic weapons.

In other partially collapsed tunnels and bunkers in the area, the troopers found one RPG2 launcher, an RPG7 launcher, 20 rounds of 90mm recoilless rifle

ammunition, two rounds of 75mm recoilless rifle ammo, three 82mm and six 60mm mortar rounds. Numerous medical supplies were also found.

From the condition of the bunker-tunnel complex and the supplies found, it was estimated that the hospital had been abandoned two to three months before. After extraction of the enemy supply and munitions caches, engineer troops destroyed the underground base camp area with explosive charges.



BRUSH LIKE THIS Capt. John Cole Jr., demonstrates to a young Montagnard child, Cole is a Medpac team leader with the 4th Infantry Division's 1st Squadron, 10th Cav. which visited the village of Kon Chara. He spent part of the day teaching the children proper dental care.

Russian bulldozer captured

A SHAU VALLEY — A Russian-built bulldozer has been uncovered in the A Shau Valley.

The enemy equipment was found recently by Lt. Col. Joseph L. Hadaway, commanding officer of the 3rd Squadron, 4th Cav., 9th Infantry Division while flying over the area in search of

Communist trails and bunker complexes.

The bulldozer was partially buried and hidden by brush on the valley floor. It is a model resembling the U.S. Army's D-6 dozer both in size and estimated capability.

Hadaway contacted the 59th

Engr. Co. (Land Clearing) to make the actual recovery of the vehicle.

The commander directed the engineer unit's bulldozers as they cut a road to the Russian-made equipment. After recovery, the dozer was taken to PB Henderson.

Lt. Col. Stuart Wood Jr., commander of the 27th Engr. Bn., remarked, "It's rather surprising to come upon a piece of enemy equipment which is more or less the counterpart to some of your own. Possibly, it was building a road just like ours — only from the opposite end."

"We've decided to make the machine operational, if possible," he added.

The task of putting the vehicle in operating condition again is under the direction of Lt. Robert A. Goodell, the battalion maintenance officer.

He commented that the dozer was in fairly good shape. "I think our main problem is going to be replacing unrepairable parts. I don't know if the Russian equipment uses metric threads," he said.

Red gunfire triggers deadly retaliation

CAMP RADCLIFF — An NVA soldier who couldn't resist shooting at a low flying light observation helicopter from A Troop, 7th Squadron, 17th Cav., triggered a chain of events leading to the death of 20 enemy.

The LOH, flying visual reconnaissance in support of 4th Infantry Division soldiers 30 miles southwest of An Khe, began receiving small arms fire from a previously unobserved hut complex as it flew 20 feet above the jungle floor.

The scout's accompanying gunships rolled in, working the area over with their rockets and miniguns, killing three NVA dressed in green fatigues and carrying SKS rifles.

Air Force jets finished bombing and strafing the area leaving four NVA regulars dead in the rubble.

The scout ships continued to recon the area and found several freshly used trails and another complex.

A Troop Aero Rifle Platoon was inserted to inspect the area more closely. The platoon leader, Capt. Howard Hodge said that, "After being inserted we moved about 300 feet to an enemy complex containing 16 large structures."

"There were numerous chickens and pigs in the area, indicating it had just been abandoned. We destroyed the complex and were extracted."

"During our time on the ground," he continued, "the scouts discovered another complex, so we were inserted in that area five minutes later."

"There we found a small recently abandoned complex with heavy underground

bunkers. We placed charges and blew the bunkers."

While this was going on, the ever-searching scouts found more structures and bunkers. In order to allow the gunships to remain on station, they called in Air Force jets which worked with devastating efficiency, killing eight more NVA soldiers.

After the airstrike, and while the platoon was being extracted for the second time, an observer aboard a scout ship flying down a high-speed trail leading from the area spotted and killed a lone NVA soldier attempting to flee.

Following the extraction, gunships opened up with rockets and miniguns on the trail where the lone enemy was found. After the smoke cleared, four more NVA regulars lay dead along the path.

Vietnam communique

September 15-21

Blitz by 25th Inf kills 38 NVA

Soldiers of the 25th Infantry Division battled a reinforced NVA company of more than 100 men on Sept. 15 in the "Citadel" region seven miles north of Cu Chi, killing 38 NVA regulars.

As troops of the 2nd Bn., 14th Inf. were reconning the area in the early afternoon, they started receiving sniper fire from the NVA forces.

While men from Co. B engaged the enemy, supporting gunships from the 116th Assault Helicopter Co., Air Force jets and Tropic Lightning artillery hit the enemy-held terrain.

1st Cav Div

1st Cavalry Division soldiers accounted for 25 NVA regulars slain when men from Co. D, 1st Bn., 12th Cav. battled the Communists 18 miles northeast of Tay Ninh, Sept. 19.

In other action the same day, six more Communists died when they tried to bag a 1st Squadron, 9th Air Cav. Cobra gunship 23 miles northeast of Tay Ninh.

Earlier in the week, soldiers of Troop D, 1st Squadron, 9th Air Cav. and Co. B, 5th Bn., 7th Cav. with the support of 27th Aviation Bn. gunships surprised two NVA companies in a bunker complex five miles southeast of Song Be, killing 13.

On Sept. 16, troops manning the perimeter of LZ Ike detected movement outside the wire and called in an artillery mission in addition to organic weapons. A sweep of the area at first sight revealed 10 NVA soldiers killed while nine others killed in a skirmish 26 miles east of Quan Loi.

The next day, a 1st Cavalry Division helicopter team clashed with seven NVA soldiers, nine miles northeast of Nu Ba Den, killing all seven and destroying their vehicle, a two-ton truck.

Later in the week, an NVA gunner position 15 miles northeast of Nui Ba Den was silenced by the 1st Squadron, 9th Air Cav. and four NVA regulars were killed.

Elsewhere, six miles south of Song Be, troops of the 1st Squadron, 9th Air Cav. unearthed 1,360 Chicoms grenades in 34 factory-sealed crates.

3rd Bde 9th Inf

On Sept. 15, soldiers of the 3rd Bde., 9th Infantry Division killed 21 enemy in delta, including 16 caught in a pair of early evening ambushes six miles west of Rach Kien.

Nine miles away on the banks of the Bobo Canal, 9th Division Rangers of Co. E, 75th Inf. killed six VC soldiers silently slipping down the well-known Communist infiltration route by sampan.

Later in the week, 3rd Bde. troops killed six VC, including four in a pair of ambushes near Tan An while two ambushes by the 5th Bn., 60th Infantrymen of the 9th Infantry Division's 3rd Bde. accounted for 13 VC soldiers killed in the delta.

In a day-long running battle, Sept. 17, troops from 9th Infantry Division's 3rd Bde., 5th Bn. along with gunships from the 3rd Squadron, 17th Air Cav., killed 24 VC nine miles northeast of Tan An.

Moving along the heavy nipa palm lines along the banks of the Rach Chanh River, ground forces ran into a heavy volume of enemy fire.

The gunships and ground forces killed 17 VC throughout the day and added six more when a VC squad tried to sneak up on the infantrymen's night defensive position.

A day earlier, 3rd Bde. troops of the 9th Infantry Division working in concert with artillery, gunships and ARVN soldiers killed 41 VC troops in clashes around Tan An.

Soldiers from the 2nd Bn., 60th Inf., combined with troops from the 50th ARVN Regiment to kill 14 enemy in a battle six miles southeast of Tan An.

Gunships of the 3rd Squadron, 17th Air Cav. killed three while choppers of the 190th Assault Helicopter Co. claimed another three.

Craft of the 240th Assault Helicopter Co. helped the 47th Infantry flush five VC from bunkers three miles east of Tan An and killed all five.

Seven VC soldiers died in bunkers five miles south of Tan An and other sporadic

delta contacts accounted for the other nine enemy dead.

101st Abn Div

A reconnaissance team from Co. C, 75th Inf. spotted an estimated NVA company on Sept. 15, preparing a night defensive position. A reaction force from Co. C, 3rd Bn., 506th Inf. was air assaulted into the area and 58 NVA soldiers were killed by the troopers and supporting fires.

Later in the week, 1st Bde. soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division killed four enemy near Camp Eagle.

On Sept. 18, a former NVA soldier led 101st Airborne Division troops to a weapons and munitions cache hidden deep in the jungles 15 miles northwest of Hue.

At the site, the soldiers discovered 10 AK47 rifles, 14 SKS rifles, three Chicoms light machineguns, five individual weapons, a 60mm mortar tube, three RPG launchers, 15 cases of AK47 ammunition and 15 B40 rockets.

25th Inf Div

25th Infantry Division soldiers battled a reinforced NVA company of more than 100 men seven miles north of Cu Chi on Sept. 15, killing 38 NVA regulars.

As troops of the 2nd Bn., 14th Inf. were reconning the area in the early afternoon, they started receiving sniper fire from the NVA forces.

Men from Co. B engaged the enemy and supporting gunships from the 116th Assault Helicopter Co., Air Force jets and 25th Arty. hit the enemy-held terrain.

An hour later when the fighting had ceased, 38 NVA soldiers were dead.

Elsewhere, troops of the 2nd Bn., 27th Inf. spotted an NVA work detail 8½ miles west of Trang Bang and called for air strikes which killed five NVA regulars.

On Sept. 19, infantrymen of the 25th

Infantry Division had helicopter gunship crews of the 25th Combat Aviation Bn. trapped an estimated 120 platoons of VC soldiers in newly-built bunkers less than three miles from their base camp at Cu Chi.

In a four-hour battle which was triggered by 116th Assault Helicopter Co. gunship pilots, 20 enemy were killed.

Earlier in the week, cannoneers of the 2nd Bn., 77th Arty. killed seven enemy soldiers during a night fire mission northwest of Bao Tri and infantrymen killed 14 others in intermittent ground fighting.

At the same time, troops of the 2nd Bn., 12th Inf., operating seven miles northwest of Cu Chi discovered a 2,400 pound rice cache neatly stacked in 100-pound sacks in a hootch.

199th Inf Bde

Troopers of the 199th Light Infantry Brigade killed eight NVA and VC soldiers in five brief engagements Sept. 18. In three actions, 199th infantrymen found and engaged squad-sized enemy units which broke contact immediately rather than fight. Each contact netted one NVA soldier killed.

Elsewhere, infantrymen of Co. A, 5th Bn., 12th Inf., operating 13 miles northwest of Xuan Loc, surprised three NVA regulars carrying 400 pounds of opium and some clothing, killing all three of them.

Earlier in the week, infantrymen of the 199th killed seven NVA soldiers 17 miles east of Xuan Loc.

Americal Div

A pair of large clashes on Sept. 16 — one offensive and one defensive — accounted for 29 Americal Division enemy kills.

An unknown number of NVA soldiers probed a 3rd Bn., 21st Inf., night defensive position at LZ Center 18½ miles west of Tam Ky and met heavy defensive fire.

backed by artillery, gunships and air strikes. A total of 17 NVA soldiers carrying more than 150 hand grenades were killed.

In the other clash, choppers from the 71st Aviation Bn. spotted an estimated 20 VC in a rice paddy, 9½ miles northwest of Tam Ky and killed 12.

A day earlier, the mountainous terrain near LZ Siberia, 24 miles northwest of Tam Ky was the center of fighting for the Americal.

Two companies battled a pair of unknown sized NVA forces within a half mile of each other.

Soldiers of Co. C and Co. D, 4th Bn., 31st Inf. killed six Reds in battles that ended shortly after night fell.

Elsewhere, Americal soldiers killed 11 enemy including one NVA soldier who returned to pick up a sick buddy.

On Sept. 17, Americal artillery and Air Force jets hit an area 12 miles northwest of Quang Ngai City to account for 10 NVA deaths.

Troopers from Co. C, 4th Bn., 31st Inf. also found 17 Communist bodies hidden 24 miles west of Tam Ky.

Two days earlier, Americal Division soldiers of Co. B, 3rd Bn., 1st Inf. locked up with an NVA squad 15 miles west of Due Phu, killing four of the two in the largest action of the day in the division sector.

On the same day, men of Co. C, 4th Bn., 21st Inf. two miles south of the city, found the bodies of five NVA soldiers killed 48 hours earlier in an abortive ambush attempt on an 11th Bde. convoy.

Later in the week, troops from Co. C, 3rd Bn., 21st Inf., ambushed three VC soldiers along a heavily-traveled enemy jungle byway 12 miles northwest of Due Phu, killing all three.

On Sept. 17, gunships of the 121st Assault Helicopter Co., under the operational control of the Americal Division, fought an undetermined number of VC soldiers in a four-hour air-to-ground battle killing 28 enemy.

The next day, Americal Division infantrymen killed five VC soldiers in a day of sparse action and found the bodies of two NVA regulars killed by helicopter gunships in earlier fighting.

1st Inf Div

Gun jeeps with mounted machineguns claimed 10 VC kills on Sept. 17, as 1st Infantry Division patrols from Hq. Co., 1st Bn., 26th Inf. cruised along the rubber-line trails nine miles east of Lai Khe.

Earlier in the week, infantrymen of the 1st Infantry Division jumped a NVA company six miles west of Ben Cat, killing 15.

Infantrymen from Co. C, 1st Bn., 28th Inf. and the 392nd Regional Force Company were led to the enemy base camp by a Hoi Chanb.

Three Air Force light fire teams, five hunter-killer helicopter teams and Big Red One artillery were fired on the NVA soldiers, which the ground troops bypassed in order to reach the bunker complex.

The bunkers were exactly where the Hoi Chanb said they would be, manned by an NVA squad. Taking the highly-camouflaged complex almost completely by surprise, the combined U.S.-ARVN force killed 15 of its occupants.

Elsewhere, a combined search by Co. A of the Big Red One's, 26th Inf. and a company of the 5th ARVN Infantry Division troops found a six-ton food and provisions cache from a tunnel six miles east of Lai Khe.

The tunnel which stretched more than 200 yards, contained 11,000 pounds of rice, 200 pounds of salt, 800 pounds of flour, 90 pounds of tea and 50 cans of mackerel.

12th Avn Gp

On Sept. 17, helicopter gunships of the 269th Combat Aviation Bn., 1st Aviation Brigade and 1st ARVN Regiment troops killed two NVA regulars, one the commander of a 60-man NVA force, 15 miles south of Cu Chi.

An ARVN soldier was captured and under interrogation told Vietnamese that the commander of his 60-man unit had been killed.



SLOWLY EDGING HIS WAY ALONG a fallen tree, a soldier enlists the aid of a comrade from the 25th Infantry Division as he performs a balancing act in traversing a small stream in an operation north of Cu Chi.

Maintenance keeps choppers available

CAMP ENARI — Soldiers from the 4th Infantry Division spend much of their time in choppers but what most of those soldiers haven't seen are the people who make it possible to keep the helicopters in the air — the maintenance men.

After every 25 hours in the air, each helicopter is brought in for a five hour intermediate inspection to check on the complex of components and parts which keep it flying.

Every 100 hours, the helicopters are brought in for a more extensive periodic inspection, which takes several days to perform. Every 300 hours, the engine is completely disassembled, checked and rebuilt.

Co. A, which has 26 UH-1 models, claims one of the highest availability rates of any helicopter company in Vietnam, according to Company Commander Maj. John Griffiths. For more than 17 weeks, 80 per cent of their aircraft have been ready for flight at any time.

The men responsible for that high availability rate are under the command of Capt. Robert Welter, unit maintenance officer.

"It's quite easy to schedule maintenance when you have 26 of the same type of aircraft," he explained. "We try to spread our maintenance evenly, so that we always have one ship from each of the three flight platoons in the shop each day."

Welter has four teams of five mechanics each for his ships. Three teams perform scheduled maintenance, while the fourth handles unscheduled problems.

Capt. Richard Wood, maintenance officer of Co. B, has slightly different problems. He has three different types of ships; Cobras, Huey gunships

and light observation helicopters. Each has many different parts, so scheduled maintenance presents a very different set of problems. In addition, the sophisticated weapons system on the gunships cause additional problems.

After mechanics have worked 12 to 16 hours a day for several days on an aircraft, the ship is taken up for an elaborate test flight by one of the maintenance officers.

"We check everything out," said Wood from the rear cockpit of the Cobra he was testing. "First we run a very thorough ground check on all the systems. Then we take it up and fly it around."

A low ceiling that day prevented another of the test pilot's favorite stunts — a simulated engine failure. Power is cut off and the ship is sent diving several thousand feet before pulling back up.

Weather permitting, the armament on the gunships is also test fired.



THESE CHILDREN WILL not forget, just like the elephant they made friends with, a trip to the Saigon Zoo. The youngsters, members of a Boy Scout troop from

Dau Tieng, were treated to a day of sight-seeing at the zoo by the 1st Bn., 27th Arty., 23rd Artillery Group.

Scouts use VC training against enemy

DI AN — Many American soldiers try to think like Viet Cong to predict enemy moves and locate their installations. Kit Carson Scouts have this advantage built in since they once were Viet Cong.

The 2nd Bde. of the 1st Infantry Division has an entire platoon of Kit Carson Scouts, possibly the only such platoon in the Republic of Vietnam.

They are mainly an intelligence platoon but have a great combat capability.

"They are absolutely fearless regarding combat," says Maj. Carl Reiber, brigade S-2. "They once engaged the lead element

of an entire NVA battalion and took them with such surprise and strength, that the enemy headed right back into the jungles minus some men and equipment."

The scouts are masters in the field. An innocent clump of bamboo that would be passed by most soldiers might reveal a well-hidden bunker to a scout's practiced eye.

Since they have been on both ends of VC boobytraps, they are able to locate and destroy them with a minimum of danger.

To become a Kit Carson Scout a person must have been a VC, or served with the

NVA and rallied to the government side. These raiders are recruited on an individual basis to serve as scouts.

The choice of becoming a scout is up to the individual; however there are always more applicants than positions.

The scouts are familiarized with American techniques and weapons in an eight-day course at the training command here.

Capt. Robert Higgins, training command S-3, said that approximately 60 scouts have been trained since the program began in February. Since then, the program has proved very successful.

FAN FARE



By Walt Ditzen