



LIGHT CASCADES through the partially covered entrance to a tunnel complex as a soldier from the 1st Infantry Division peers into the opening. The infantryman's unit, the 1st Bn., 28th Inf., uncovered dozens of bunkers and tunnels near Lai Khe in the "Rocket Belt."

Lieutenant rescues soldier trapped 40 feet underground

TAY NINH—You always wonder how you will react in a tight combat situation—particularly as an infantry lieutenant, newly-arrived in country. Lt. Joe L. Young found out in only five days.

Young was with Co. A, 2nd Bn., 8th Cav., 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), for on-the-job training as a platoon leader before being permanently assigned to another company. He was moving with the 3rd Platoon, about two miles south of FB Ike when the unexpected happened.

"We were pulling out of our night defensive position, crossing a clearing in the bamboo, 'leapfrogging' through the 1st Platoon to take point," Young began, "when our point man fell into a 40-foot dry well."

"The top of the well was covered with dead fall and leaves. There was no way you could see it. All we could see was the steel pot on his head."

"The commanding officer, Capt. George R. Swearingen tried to get down there twice on a

rope, but the lack of air and the gasses down there about knocked him out and we had to pull him up," he added.

"Young asked me to let him try," Swearingen related. "Young went down with a rope tied to him and a gas mask, but he threw the mask away about 10 feet down. He couldn't breathe and we had to pull him up. In the meantime, we had called for a Medevac."

The Medevac hovered over the well and lowered its jungle penetrator down the hole with Young clinging to the cable.

"I made it about 20 feet and had to come up for air," Young said. "The third time I made it down all the way but the air was really thin."

"The only thing I had with me was a rawhide strap from the scout dog handler. I got it around the trooper's leg and waist but couldn't hook it on the winch, so I wrapped my hand around it, hooked myself to the man and they pulled us out."

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Continuing Vietnamization

ARVN's adopt Cav tactics

PHUOC VINH—Airmobility was just a vague concept to a battalion of men from the 2nd ARVN Airborne Brigade when they were airlifted to an isolated clearing 22 miles northeast of Tay Ninh.

Within 48 hours they had established a fire base and moved against the enemy with the same ground tactics and air support used by every line company in the 1st Cavalry Division (airmobile).

"This is completely new to us," said Maj. Dudley McIver, senior advisor to the 3rd ARVN Airborne Bn.

"Previously we had to move in a mass. When you don't have much artillery and air support you need large numbers of troops for firepower."

"Of course you lose the element of surprise."

The paratroopers now have that support. An ARVN 105mm battery at the battalion's fire base, 1st Cav. helicopter gunships and 1st Cav. artillery at nearby fire bases are committed to the battalion's ground activity.

After taking 82mm mortar fire the first night at FB Jackie, four line companies moved out at dawn in the four cardinal directions to seek out the enemy.

Headquarters company cleared fields of fire, completed stringing the concertina wire built bunkers and in other ways secured the base.

1st Cav. Hueys and Chinooks brought in food, water and building supplies. The division's 8th Engrs. arrived the first day with bulldozers and other heavy equipment.

"We're here to build the TOC, the aid station and the berm," said Pfc. George Coles, one of the 50 combat engineers at the fire base.

"After that it's their baby. We're showing them how to set up the wire and clear the area, but they're doing most of the work. The next time they'll be on their own."

At times the new fire base looked like an outdoor classroom. Infantry, artillery, logistics, communication and engineer officers from the Cav.'s 1st Bde. met their ARVN counterparts in informal discussions throughout the first day.

Beyond the perimeter ARVN A-6 Skyraider planes began bombing an enemy bunker complex a mile away. Artillery from the fire base opened up as an ARVN unit radioed for support. 1st Cav. gunships from Tay Ninh went on station.

Vietnamization of the war, at least in this part of the 1st Cav.'s area of operation, was proceeding smoothly.

Choppers foot-fed

DAK PEK—Eighteen men from three units claim they hold the title for using the most people to refuel a Cobra.

All 18 are members of the 361st Avn. Co. and the 57th Helicopter Co., both under the 1st Aviation Brigade. Along with a few bystanders from the 5th Special Forces Group, all ascended a 500-gallon fuel bladder. They jumped up and down in a wine-stomping manner in order to refuel four Cobras after the fuel pump in the camp broke down.

It took a few hours to refuel the four gunships by this unique method, compared to the usual few minutes of refueling time.

One member of the pumping team said that the Department of the Army has denied applications of a change of MOS for these men from aviators to wine-stompers explaining that more OJT time was needed.

THE SETTING SUN frames a silhouette of a 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) soldier as he slowly winds his way along a bunker to his guard post at LZ Sally. The soldier, carrying the 90mm recoilless rifle, is from the 1st Bn., 501st Inf., 2nd Bde.

Joint force weeds lair nesters

TAY NINH — While conducting a dismounted sweep at the base of Nui Ba Den, a combined force from the 25th Infantry Division and the 547th Regional Force Co. of Tay Ninh Province, engaged an estimated company-sized NVA unit. Eleven enemy died and seven AK47 rifles were destroyed as a result of the contact.

As the combined allied force moved through the dense underbrush and banana groves at the base of the mountain, AK47 rifle fire cracked through the groves. Staff Sgt. Aseino Arismendez, section leader for the Tropic Lightning reconnaissance platoon, deployed his men and directed their fire on the enemy positions. A barrage of M16, M60 machine gun fire and M79 grenades answered the enemy.

As the unit returned the fire, Pfc. Norval A. Horton and Pfc. Samhy W. Nugent spotted 10 to 15 enemy running for one of the numerous caves at the base of the mountain.

A call for air support was made by Company Commander Capt. Thomas Boling, and he directed the men to pull back to allow the jets room to move in on the enemy positions.

Air Force jets first arrived, pounding the enemy position

OASIS — A platoon-sized patrol of mechanized infantrymen killed six NVA soldiers after surprising an estimated company-sized enemy element resting at their 50-bunker complex, approximately 14 miles northwest of Plei Me.

The 1st Platoon, Co. C, 2nd Bn., 8th Inf., 4th Infantry Division, came upon the enemy position while moving toward their night location. The soldiers were conducting a reconnaissance-in-force mission in the vicinity of Plei Me.

According to Staff Sgt. Samuel Ferguson, the platoon halted when they spotted two freshly dug bunkers.

"I moved ahead with our Kit Carson scout to check the area and we saw five NVA soldiers cooking a potful of food over a campfire."

The two men opened fire on the enemy and other enemy troops immediately returned fire with small arms and machine guns.

"We brought our own machine guns forward, formed a perimeter and tried to pin down the enemy," said Ferguson. A reaction force from the 2nd Platoon moved up on the enemy's flank to aid in the fight.

"I got a glimpse of the enemy troops every now and then, gathering their gear to move out," Ferguson noted.

Radio operator Pfc. Michael Cozzi recalled, "I called in artillery and then had a pair of guns working out on the enemy positions."

A sweep of the emplacement uncovered three rucksacks, four B40 rockets, 500 AK47 rounds, 52 Chicom grenades, as well as personal items, clothes, and documents.

Squad crashes dinner party

CAMP EVANS — "Guess who's coming to dinner," thought Sgt. Robert Taylor as he called in the first of the 105mm artillery rounds.

Taylor, a 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) reconnaissance squad leader from Co. A, 1st Bn., 506th Inf., was operating about 32 miles southwest of Plei Me. He had just given his five-man squad a short rest break when strange metallic noises clanged through the heavy jungle.

"When we checked it out we saw an NVA platoon cooking supper," recalled Taylor.

Taylor quickly moved back and pinpointed the

enemy's position. Then artillery strikes were called in, bringing the deafening sound of rounds as they smashed into the NVA camp site. When silence had returned, Taylor's squad moved out to search the area.

All that was found were a few pots and pans, remnants of a cooking fire, and, as if in reward for the team's efforts, a chocolate cake still intact.

"Isn't this great, Sarge?" asked one of the men as he helped himself to the dessert.

"Yeah, great," answered Taylor. "I wonder if they left any ice cream?"



TRUDGING ACROSS a deep stream, an infantryman leans forward to accept a helping hand while at the same time trying to

keep his weapon dry. The soldier, from the 2nd Bn., 8th Inf., 4th Infantry Division, was on a sweep of the Central Highlands.

Unit repels attack, outflanks ambush

LZ BRONCO — Americal Division soldiers, reacting with only 15 minutes notice, turned the tables on attacking NVA soldiers, killing 12 of the enemy.

Infantrymen of Co. D, 4th Bn., 21st Inf., 11th Inf. Bde., were combat assaulted into an area two miles south of Duc Pho when a convoy, traveling on Highway 1, was hit with RPG and automatic weapons fire.

Landing on a ridgeline overlooking the enemy positions, the division troopers, with help from gunships of the 174th Avn. Co., began laying down a heavy volume of fire on the Communists.

As darkness set in, the company quickly organized and began a flanking sweep towards the highway.

"We started popping hand flares as we reconed by fire down the hill," said 1st Sgt. James S. Berry. "Suddenly we spotted an NVA soldier crouching in the bushes about 10 feet away. He started to raise his weapon, so four of us opened up on him, killing him instantly."

When the sweep was concluded, five enemy soldiers lay dead and two AK47 rifles and six RPG rounds were captured.

Two enemy were killed early in the skirmish by a Light Observation Helicopter (LOH) flying visual reconnaissance for the convoy. The chopper, piloted by WO George Huggins, laid suppressive fire on both sides of the road until help arrived.

A sweep the next day by Co. C, 4th Bn., 21st Inf., turned up five more Communist bodies.