



THE AIR CAVALRY DIVISION

APRIL 1968

The FIRST TEAM . . . In Action



2nd Bn, 20th Aerial Rocket Artillery engages target



UH-1D "HUEY" brings 1st Cav Skytroopers on combat assault



CH-47 "Chinook" airlifts 105 mm assault howitzer



CH-54 "Flying Crane" moves 155 mm howitzer during Operation Pershing



CH-47A "Go-Go" ship, heavily armed Chinook, awaits mission



Armored Personnel Carrier (APC) of 1st Bn, 50th Mech tests flame thrower.

The Air

CAVALRY

DIVISION



VOLUME 1 APRIL 1968

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COMMANDING GENERAL'S INTRODUCTION

It is with pride that I write these words commemorating the first issue of the "THE AIR CAVALRY DIVISION".

The articles and pictures you see on the following pages tell the story that you helped write—the story of the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) in action for the past year.

Portrayed against the backdrop of sandy beaches, steaming jungles, and swollen streams, and accentuated with gun fire, the sagas of Phu My, the Crescent, Bong Son Plains, An Lao, Duc Pho, Son Re, Dak To, Que Son, Phan Thiet, and Tuy Hoa, portray you, for whom this magazine was originated, at your best.

As should be expected, since 21 January 1968 the FIRST TEAM has been blazing a new trail, conducting full-scale operations in the northern I Corps Tactical Zone in the Jeb Stuart area of operations, from Hue to Quang Tri City.

The challenges will no doubt be many and the way often frustrating, but you and your predecessors have set a pattern under similar conditions. The outcome will be no different.

For many, this is the last issue you will receive here. I hope you will treasure it as you reflect on your service as a Skytrooper.

For others, it will be but the first of four. "THE AIR CAVALRY DIVISION" will be published quarterly and each issue will depict another chapter in the epic of THE FIRST TEAM.

I join you in looking forward to them.



JOHN J. TOLSON
MAJOR GENERAL, USA
COMMANDING

1ST CAVALRY DIVISION (AIRMObILE)

MG John J. Tolson, Commanding General; BG Richard Irby, Assistant Division Commander; BG Oscar E. Davis, Assistant Division Commander; Major William Witters, Chief of Information and History

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OPERATION

The 1st Cav in BINH DINH PROVINCE Feb. 1966 to Feb. 1967

PERSHING

On February 12, 1967, the 1st Air Cavalry Division launched Operation Pershing in Binh Dinh Province. The fourth combat operation conducted by the "FIRST TEAM" in the Battle for Binh Dinh, Pershing encompassed the Bong Son Plains, the fertile Crescent area, the Phu My Valley, and the An Lao Valley.

The rice rich areas of Pershing had long been communist controlled, power having passed directly from the Viet Minh to the Viet Cong. As Operation Pershing drew to a close in January 1968, power had been wrested from the Viet Cong infrastructure and the enemy had been severely battered.

The first division-sized operation conducted by the Cav, Pershing pitted the Army's unique airmobile division against the 3rd North Vietnamese Army Division, a very unequal match which cost the communists over 6,000 killed

during the year long operation. During previous operations in the Bong Son and Crescent area, the quick reacting Cav had engaged battalion size elements of the 3rd NVA DIV on eight different occasions between September and December 1966. For much of the year, only two brigades were in the AO, as the Cav's ability to react quickly assisted beleaguered allies at Kontum, Que Son, Dak To and Duc Pho.

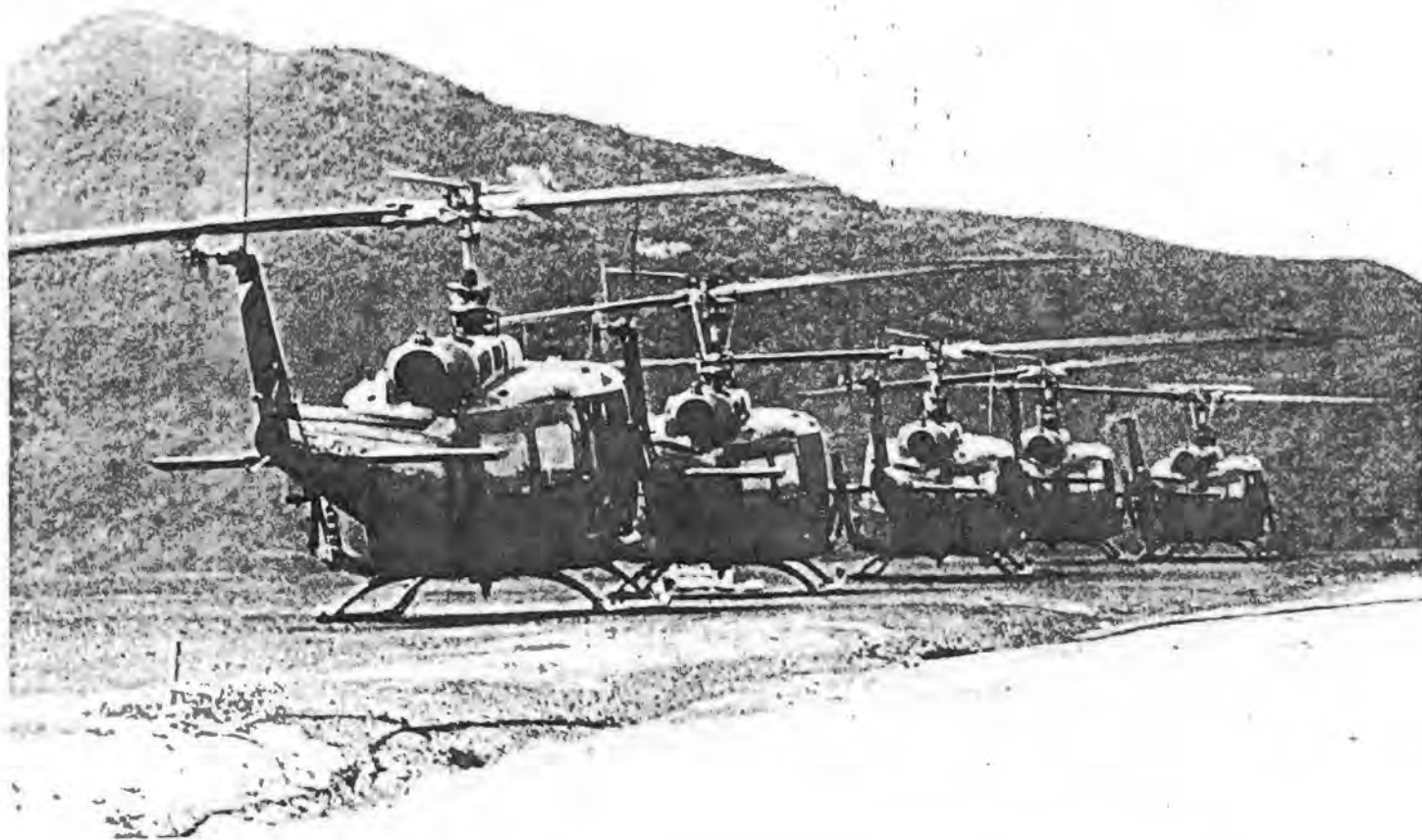
Suffering from the earlier defeats, the enemy refused to actively engage the Skytroopers, but was hounded relentlessly as the Cav dogged his foot steps. Only once during Pershing would the enemy stand and fight, at Tam Quan in December, and then he would lose 650 men from the 22nd NVA Regiment.

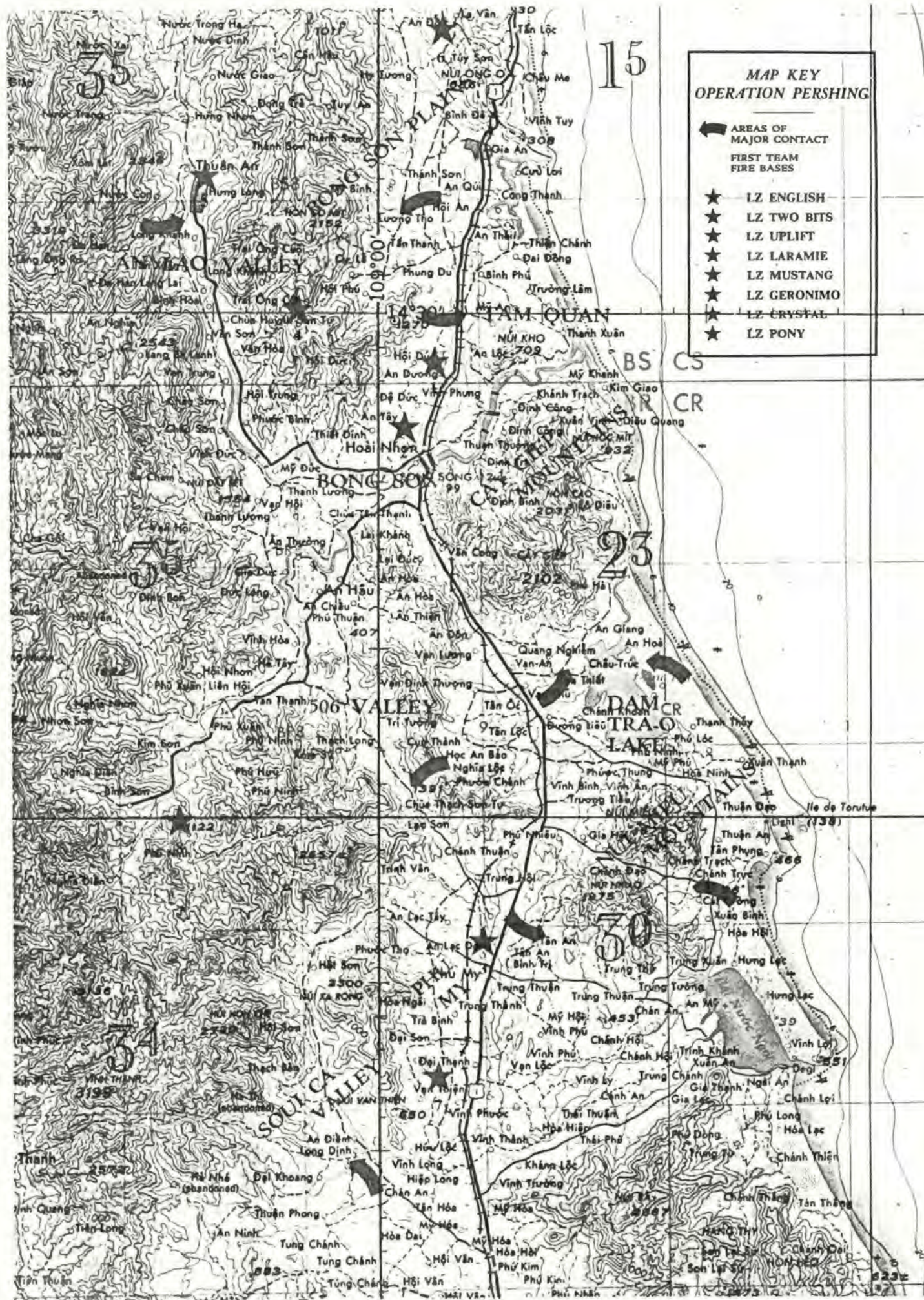
Operation Pershing was largely unglamorous, as the Cav began the monotonous task of cordon and search

operations that would break the VC political stanglehold in the villages. Skytroopers surrounding a village, the National Police Field Force would sweep through and search the area for VC. The Cav troops would capture or shoot anyone trying to escape. The process of physically rooting out the VC infrastructure had begun, and over 2,400 prisoners were taken during the year.

While the day to day footwork of the infantry lacked glamor, the spectacular flying of the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry and the Brigade's scout helicopters made up for the drudgery the infantry must endure. As the 3rd NVA rice gathering elements attempted to steal the crops, reconnaissance helicopters would engage the enemy and the pattern of aerial death was established. After being spotted, the enemy

ALL IN A ROW, Huey's from 227th Assault Helicopter Battalion prepare to drop troopers from 5th Bn, 7th Cav on landing zone.







Operation

PERSHING



Moving through the jungle, you stay alert and keep quiet.



Skytroopers assault from Chinook.

Lift ships approach landing zone during combat assault on Bong Son Plains.





Cav Medics normally don't make house calls, but this one makes an exception during cordon and search operations near Bong Son.

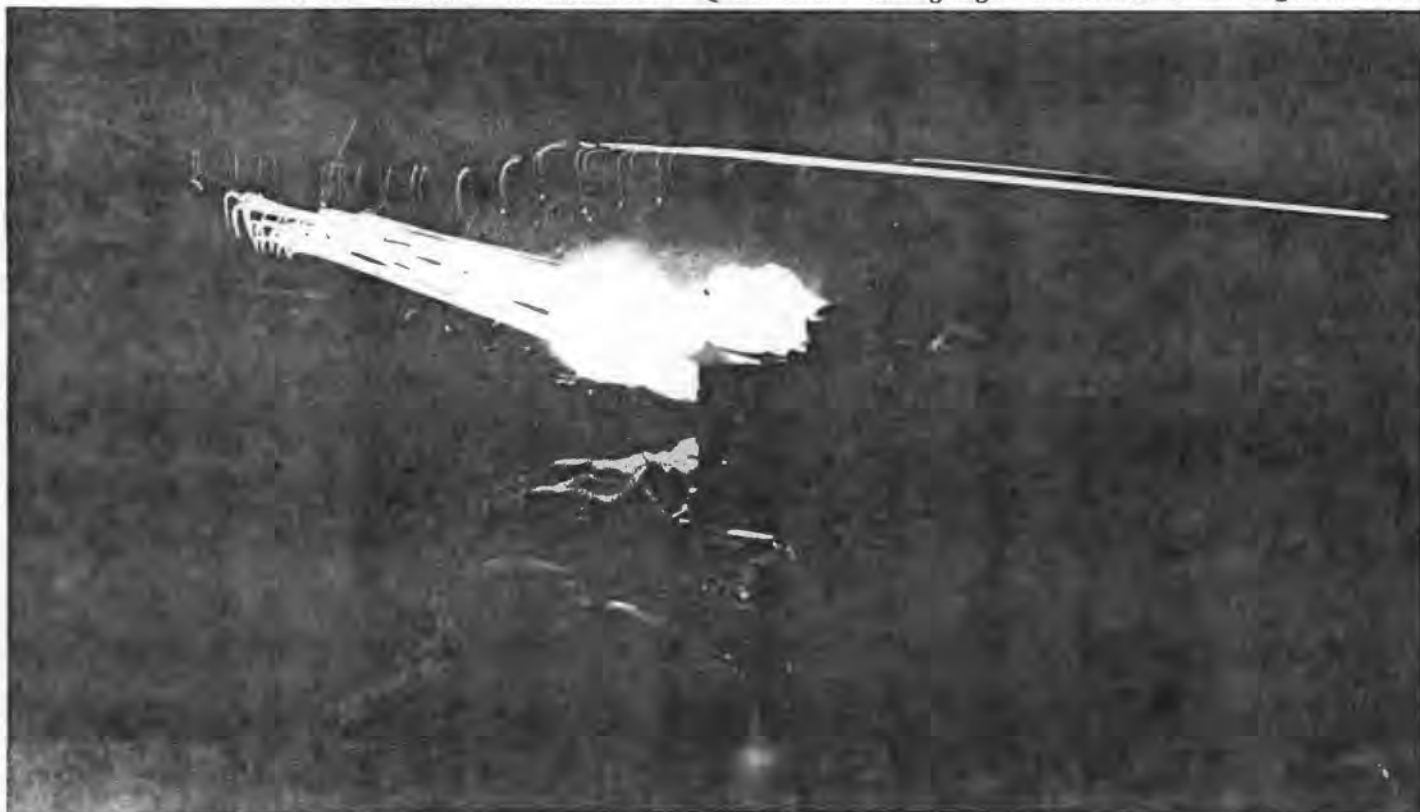
could expect aerial rocket artillery, tube artillery, infantry, and the slashing mini-guns of gunships to descend upon them. A frequent mistake of the NVA soldiers was shooting at a Cav helicopter, which guaranteed sudden death. The 1/9th alone accounted for over 1700 enemy dead.

Important rice producing areas were closed to the enemy. In the An Lao Valley, thousands of refugees were relocated from the valley, depriving the VC and NVA the crops that would have been raised in their former stronghold. The Kim Son and Suoi Ca were also made denial areas, forcing the VC to the plains in search for food. Artillery fires pounded the denial area at night, a hazard the NVA could not face.

Though only a dozen and a half major engagements were made during Pershing, the Cav took a heavy toll of the enemy as the gunships caught food producing units moving down from the mountains. As hunger gripped the NVA, entire companies and battalions attempted to leave their hiding places for the lowlands and were interdicted by swift movements of the Skytroopers.

As the pacification program pace increased, the Cav physically blocked VC attempts to re-gain influence in the villages. The Pershing area of operation extended over 1600 square miles, and the "FIRST TEAM's" ability to hold such a large area displayed the capabilities of a well deployed air mobile division. Artillery battered enemy positions and was a prime force in

M-42- "Dusters" fire over M-55 "Quad Fifties" during night interdiction at Landing Zone Willie



Operation PERSHING

denying the 3rd NVA elements movement and access to the fertile areas.

May 31st saw 100 enemy from the 9th Bn, 22nd Reg. killed as they came down from the mountains to the west of the Bong Son Plains. In June both the 2nd VC Reg. and 18th NVA Reg. took heavy losses at Dam Tra-O Lake and the Soui Ca.

By early summer the Cav faced a highly demoralized enemy. Chieu Hoi's and prisoners spoke of the terror that ARA and armed Helicopters created and of the rapid decay of morale among the VC and NVA. Throughout the summer, the sky rained death for the NVA as the 1/9th Cav made contact, and artillery and air assualting infantry would quickly inundate the fleeing enemy.

The 1st Battalion (Mech), 50th Infantry joined the Cav in September, providing a heavy punch against heavily fortified enplacements as their APC's rumbled against the NVA in 506 Valley, Dam Tra-O Lake, Soui Ca, and Bong Son Plains in a quick introduction to combat for the fresh-from-the-states mechanized battalion.

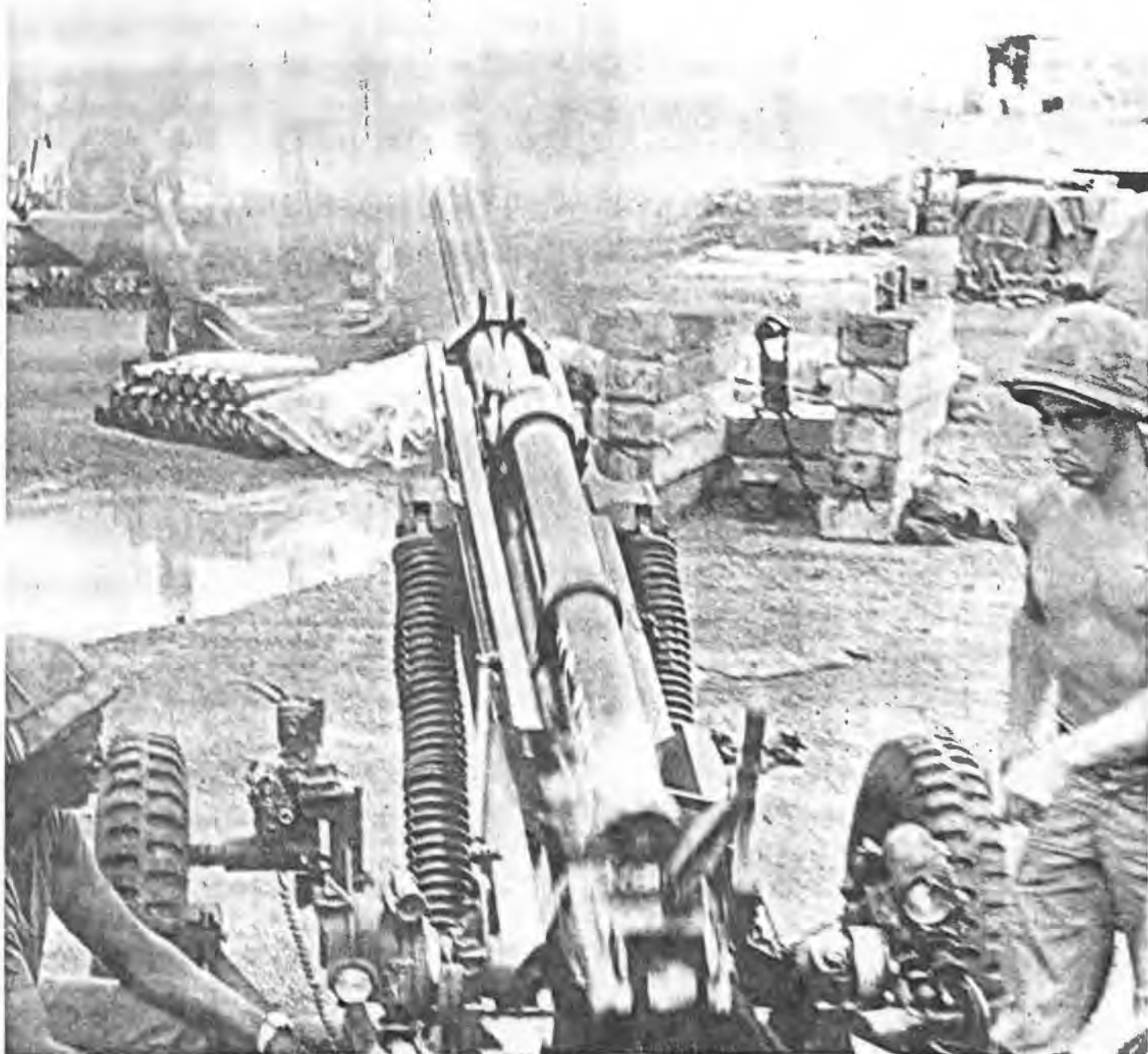
The 6th to the 20th of December saw the 1st Brigade return from **Operation MacArthur** at Dak To to engage the Headquarters, 7th and 8th battalions, and supporting companies of the 22nd Regiment in the much publicized battle near Tam Quan.



Door gunner keeps wary eye for Viet Cong.

In the An Lao Valley, Skytroopers from B Co, 5th Bn, 7th Cav direct artillery support.





B Battery, 2nd Bn, 19th Arty fires in support of battle at Tam Quan.

Two scout helicopters from 1/9th spotted a hut sporting an antenna, and when they wheeled to investigate were engaged by machine gun fire. Two infantry platoons from the squadron were inserted and quickly became heavily engaged.

The Cav's ready-reactionary force, B Company, 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry air assaulted into the area and were later joined by 1/50th APC's, which proved to be the equalizer for assaulting the bunkers and entrenchments of the NVA.

The 40th ARVN Regiment blocked to the north and south of the enemy headquarters at Dai Dong Village and elements of 1/8th Cav began assaulting

the fortifications in the village.

Returning from Dak To, 1st Bn, 12th Cav kept the pressure on the 22nd Regiment, and again the Skytroopers over ran the fleeing command post.

As the enemy slipped back to the Cay Giep Mountains, the 2/8th got a new fix on the NVA across the Bong Son River and quickly engaged the remnants of the 22nd Reg. headquarters. U.S. and ARVN forces had killed 661 enemy.

Army Chief of Staff, General Harold K. Johnson, visited the Tam Quan battle site and highly praised the 1st Brigade and the 40th ARVN regiment for their ability to take the battle to the enemy, disrupting the NVA's plans

for the TET offensive in the Bong Son Plains, and for the exceptional performance of the 1st TEAM in OPERATION PERSHING.

The Vietnamese civilians, most of whom had been raised under the Viet Cong, witnessed a great transition as Operation Pershing crushed the VC. Under the direction of the Saigon Government, elections were held for the first time, and schools, hospitals, and refugee centers were constructed. Perhaps even more important, Highway One was opened for commerce through Binh Dinh for the first time in many years, and the civilians could travel to the major cultural centers.

Operation PERSHING

7th Bn, 13th Arty advanced party
hits LZ Cannister for artillery raid
west of the An Lao Valley.

Even the muddy An Lao Valley
water doesn't stop a quick battle-
field shower by men of B Co, 5th
Bn, 7th Cav.



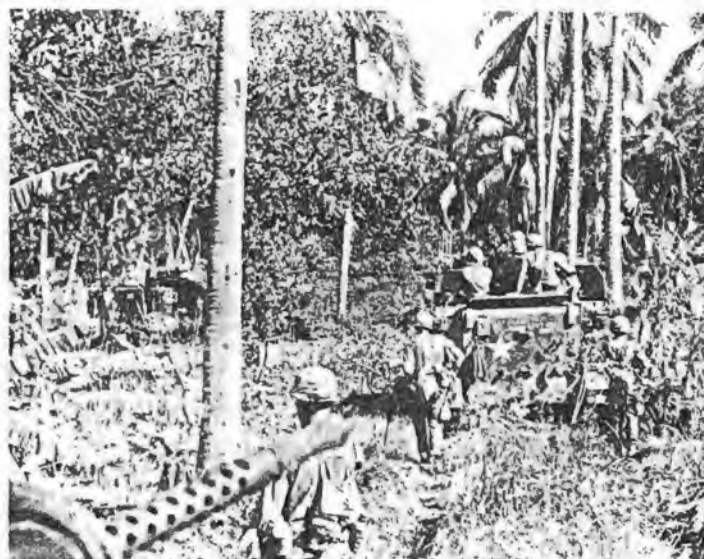
2nd Bn, 5th troopers scramble to helicopters prior to combat assault.





RECON BY FIRE as men of 2nd Bn, 8th Cav move across graves into sniper infested tree line during Operation Pershing.

The APC's of D Co, 1st Bn (Mech), 50th Inf move forward with 1st Bn, 12th Cav during battle of Tam Quan.



Mine sweeping by C Co, 8th Engineers is a ticklish job.

1st Bn, 5th Cav soldier blasts sniper in trees.



Loudspeaker accompanies 5th Bn, 7th Cav during sweep of An Lao Valley, Psy-Ops people talk NVA from caves.

Smoke surrounds artillerymen during artillery raid.



3rd Brigade . . .

OPERATION WALLOWA

In early October, 1967, a soldier from the 21st North Vietnamese Army (NVA) Regiment became a Chieu Hoi in Quang Tin Province, in the center of South Vietnam's I Corps Tactical Zone.

He was tired, he said, his morale was low, and his unit had insufficient medical supplies for its casualties. But the main reason he had become a Chieu Hoi was that he had heard that the 1st Air Cavalry Division was coming to Quang Tin. His leaders, he said, had told him the 1st Air Cavalry Division was the best unit in Vietnam, and he wanted to get out while the getting was good.

The soldier's intelligence network was good in all counts. The 1st Cav's 3rd Brigade had entered Vietnam's Quang Tin and Quang Nam Provinces

during the first week in October for a three and a half month stay that ultimately cost the 2nd North Vietnamese Army more than 2400 men killed. Three times during the brigade's operation, 20 or more members of the Viet Cong infrastructure would do decided damage to the VC structure by becoming Chieu Hois due to the relentless pressure brought by the Cavalry air and ground operations.

On October 2, the Cav's 3rd Bde began the 125 mile move north from its Binh Dinh Province headquarters. In the area 20 miles southwest of Da Nang, "Operation Wheeler/Wallowa" had begun.

During October, the NVA never knew what had hit them. Cavalry companies popped up all over the area of operations, dessimating the

North Vietnamese that tried to escape. The Cav helicopters and gun ships from 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry created havoc among the NVA.

"On my first day flying here," recalled Major Lewis B. Beasley, then B Troop's commander, "I saw a column of NVA walking in the open with weapons and packs. Right away, I knew that we were going to do some business in this area."

The NVA simply were not prepared for helicopter reconnaissance and gunship tactics, much less the spectacular habits of the 1st of the 9th. Flying at treetop level, B troop gunships and OH-13 scout helicopters dogged the NVA's footsteps. Soon the company size element was accounting for half the 3rd Brigades kills. When the operation was three months old, B

D Company, 2nd Bn, 12th Cav assaults into the Que Son Valley, 25 miles south of Da Nang.





The 1st Sergeant from C Co, 2nd Bn, 12th Cav keeps low as fire fight breaks out near LZ Leslie in Que Son Valley.

Scout helicopter from B Troop,
during Mini- Cav operation.



Trophies from a fire fight.



Troop had killed 834 NVA, roughly half a regiment, while losing three men.

The 3rd Bde's "regular" air mobile tactics brought similar results. Spotting a would-be ambush, 1st Bn, 7th Cav assaulted into the area instead of walking. The preparatory artillery barrage had sent the enemy fleeing and 1/7th killed 72 enemy without losing a man.

Throughout October, 5/7th Cav and 1/7th Cav took turns chasing an NVA regiment up the South China seacoast, twice killing more than 100 men in a single day.

The 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry was clearing the rugged Que Son area, where the coastal plains spill into a series of river valleys bordered by high hills. Using their massive artillery support to bludgeon snipers and NVA units, 2/12th Cav went out hunting for the enemy. C Battery, 2nd Battalion, 20th Aerial Rocket Artillery (ARA) flew extensively at night, blasting the

enemy as he moved.

On December 5, B Troop had its most significant day when a 17 enemy reconnaissance party was killed while performing surveillance on the battalion CP. The infantry landed, and collected 5 pounds of documents that identified among the dead the 2nd NVA Division political officer, division intelligence, operations, and rear services officers and 3rd NVA Regiment commander. In the documents they found an operations order for attacks on all 1st Cav bases beginning around Christmas.

The attacks indeed followed, but the Cav inflicted heavy casualties during the two weeks of preparation.

A single scout helicopter killed 51 (of 130 killed that day) enemy who were attempting to gather rice. Three days later, 5/7th Cav killed 73 more NVA and VC. The brigade lost only one man in these actions.

After careful preparation by digging-in and stocking supplies, the

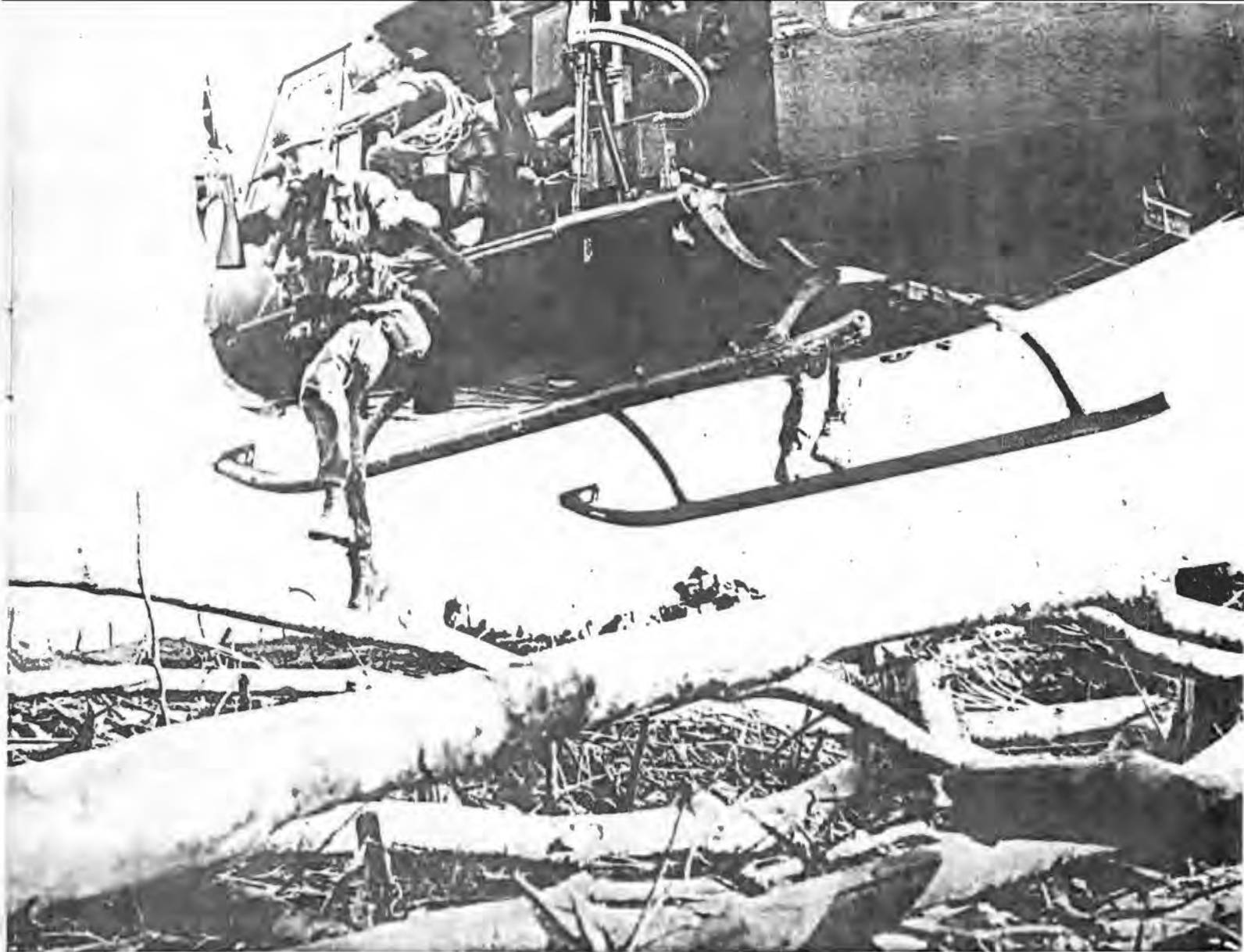
attack started on January 3, 1968 as rockets and mortar, coordinated with ground attacks, struck LZ Ross and LZ Leslie. After repelling the enemy, the 3rd Bde settled down for two weeks of harassment. In the Que Son Valley, vicious anti-aircraft fire restrained the freewheeling helicopters.

The brigade responded to the enemy pressure with almost incredible courage. Individual heroism saved the day on numerous occasions.

At the end of the Que Son operation, nearly every infantryman in the brigade had been in heavy fighting, and every helicopter had been shot at, shot up, or shot down. In 100 days, the 1st Cav's 3rd Brigade could say they had engaged and battered a division in some of the heaviest fighting the brigade had seen, then taken the enemy's worst counterattacks and stopped them.

A SEA of cannisters from the extensive artillery fires by 1st Bn, 21st Arty during Operation Wallowa.





1st Brigade at

DAK TO

In 1967, for the third time in as many years, large North Vietnamese Army Forces infiltrated across the Cambodian and Laotian borders during the month of November to threaten U.S. outposts in the highland jungles of Pleiku and Kontum Provinces. On each occasion the 1st Air Cavalry Division's 1st Brigade was called upon to respond to the threat.

The enemy target for 1967 was the large U.S. base camp at Dak To. An enemy force estimated to be four well-equipped regiments had maneuvered into positions around the camp and were being engaged by elements of the 4th Infantry Division and 173rd Airborne Brigade, when the first

Skytroopers arrived. The 1st Brigade's 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry was called for rapid deployment to Dak To.

Within 24 hours the battalion had responded and was relieving beleaguered 4th Division units on hill 724 west of the Dak To camp. Together with a platoon from Company A, 8th Engineer Battalion, the men of D, 1/12th worked throughout their first day and night to improve the hills hastily constructed defences in preparation for further communist attacks which soon materialized.

The 1st Brigade Headquarters and the 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry soon joined the First of the Twelfth in support of Operation MacArthur and

together with its attached units assumed responsibility for its own area of operation.

The major action for brigade elements came in an area 9 kilometers east of the Dak To camp on a series of jungle-covered hills overlooking Highway 14, the camp's land supply route. Massive firepower from air strikes, tube artillery and armed helicopters made the difference as the Second of the Eighth methodically gained first one hill and then another from the NVA.

Veteran noncoms in the battalion said the fighting was reminiscent of the tactics they had used in Korea as the Cavalrymen advanced directly be-

Dak To...

hind their supporting fire to push the enemy from the strategic high ground. The men fought through some of the most rugged terrain in Vietnam, crawling through dense bamboo and underbrush to within ten meters of the enemy positions before they could bring effective fire on the communist soldiers concealed in camouflaged bunkers and lashed to the tall trees.

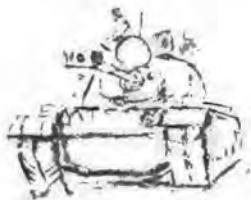
Nine enemy bodies were found on the ridgeline when the five days of fighting were over. Blood trails leading off into the jungle indicated the enemy had paid an even higher price for his brief stay on the hills. Two mortars, a rocket launcher and seven individual weapons were left behind the fleeing communists along with mortar, rocket and small arms ammunition, grenades, demolition supplies and other equipment.

The 1st Brigade's roll in Operation

MacArthur was concluded after only eleven days though the First of the Twelfth remained in the area under operational control of the 4th Division. During the eleven day period brigade elements were credited with 17 enemy killed by body count plus numerous weapons and supplies captured from the enemy. Brigade losses were five killed and 17 wounded. The massive attack planned by the communists against a major U.S. installation never materialized.

Crane of 478 Aviation Company moves 8th Engineer bulldozer for clearing operations.





PHU MY

The popular image of pacification in Vietnam has been fixed by the pose of a hardy GI bending to pop a vitamin or a spoon of cod liver oil in the mouth of an anonymous Vietnamese child.

The Cavalry's 2nd Infantry Brigade has handed out tons of vitamin pills, rivers of cod liver oil but its efforts in Phu My and Hoai An Districts have

relied heavily on extensive building and renewal projects, an effective working relationship with Vietnamese fighting forces and government officials in the area and a skillful deployment of brigade infantry units to provide a security screen against communist attack.

Today the area is widely recognized

as probably the most successful pacification program in Vietnam.

When the division first moved into the area in September of 1966, the Viet Cong and two full-strength North Vietnamese Army regiments had tight control over the area. Regimental headquarters for the enemy units

Skytroopers begin assault against NVA near Dam Tra-O Lake.



PHU MY....

Chinook drops howitzer to waiting gun crews.



Villager supplies refreshing shower to ammo-bearing Skytrooper.





Some times the infantryman only has his thoughts for company.

operated from the mountains nearby.

In **Operation Thayer** in the fall of 1966 the Cav succeeded in smashing the regimental command post and pushing remaining enemy elements to the beaches. In the sequel to Thayer, Operation Irving, the Cav pursued evading enemy forces as they fled to the coastal plains area.

And after the fighting the Cavalry stayed to assist in putting the pieces back together and to insure that pacification and renewal would be permanent.

The Viet Cong and North Vietnamese had left the area in a state of wreckage. In the drive to completely subvert the area and people to their control, the communists had systematically cut roads, burned schools and factories.

The recovery effort has been in the hands of the Government of Vietnam. The 22nd ARVN Division commander organized teams consisting of military and civilian personnel who get renewal projects started and then established an adequate system of local defense for

hamlets. By the end of 1967 programs were underway in 36 hamlets.

A market place closed for more than a decade is now the bustling center of local commerce in Phu My. The salt factories are again operating and a score of recently built schools are educating local children.

The Viet Cong and North Vietnamese have continually shown a penchant for symbolic victory.

Viet Cong and NVA units have repeatedly attempted to move back into the area and deal a leveling blow

PHU MY . . .

to the pacification programs. Not only have the communist soldiers been stopped in their effort to reach the renewed areas but the 2nd Brigade has made it increasingly difficult for them to operate at all.

Operating alongside the 2nd Brigade in the area are the 41st ARVN Regiment, the Vietnamese Marines, Civilian Irregular Defense Group and

local Popular Force and Regional Force units. Their total strength is roughly that of a division.

The 2nd Brigade has continually supported the Vietnamese forces with gunships and artillery support. It has, on occasion, lent them helicopters to make air assaults and when needed, put Cavalry troops on the ground to aid them during an operation.

National Police Field Force (NPFF) prepare to pull VC from spider hole.



1st Squadron,

9

9th Cavalry

1



THE BLUE PLATOON makes combat assault.

The 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry, the "FIRST TEAM's" recon unit, is considered by many as the Cav's Cav. This unique unit is truly "Airmobile" in its organic structure and has as a result, one of the fastest moving and quickest reaction abilities in the 1st Cav.

The Squadron is larger than a regular infantry battalion and yet

because of its breakdown has a very small infantry compliment.

The First platoon is known as the Headquarters platoon and is responsible for management and control of the other three platoons. The second platoon is the Weapons or "Red" platoon, consisting of 10 Armed Helicopters, both "Huey" gunships and the new AH-1G "Cobra" gunships.

The third platoon or "White" section is made up of 10 OH-13 "Bubble" helicopters and new "LOH" observation helicopters. The fourth section is the infantry or "Blue" platoon with its own organic lift helicopters of six "Huey" UH-1H's.

Starting with the scout ships or "White" birds, the recon squadron investigates areas of interest, whether



a suspected enemy troop location or a supply route. Covered by the "Red" gunships, the infantry platoon is inserted to search the area and if possible, make contact with the enemy. If a contact does result, the 1st of the 9th is backed up by a Quick Reaction Force (QRF), made up of regular 1st Cavalry infantry companies.

With its ability to react fast to any situation, the 1st of the 9th made important contributions to the "FIRST TEAM's" cause in Operation Pershing. This small but effective unit accounted for 38% of the division's kills during the operation and maintained a kill ratio of 38 to 1, one of the highest in Vietnam today.

During Operation Pershing, the Squadron killed 513 NVA, 1,214 Viet Cong, and captured 602 enemy soldiers. They captured 13 crew-served weapons, 190 individual weapons and 24,927 rounds of ammo.

One of the biggest months for the 1st of the 9th was the month of June, 1967. During this month, the "Eyes and Ears" of the Cav started five battalion sized battles, accounting for over 300 enemy dead during the month. But



WHITE PLATOON scout helicopter keeps wary eye for enemy.

perhaps the best month for the squadron came in October as two of the Air-Cav Troops working in Operation Pershing killed a total of 514 enemy. The third Troop working with the Americal Division just to the north of the Pershing area of Operation claimed a total of 350 enemy, bringing the total for the month of October to 864 enemy killed by the 1/9th.


During Operation Pershing, the 1st

of the 9th can point with pride to the fact that they started over 12 battalion sized battles at the same time keeping up the daily job of finding, fixing and destroying the enemy one at a time.

This fact of finding, fixing and destroying the enemy was one of the important reasons for the Battle of Tam Quan. Started by the 1st of the 9th, this important battle claimed over 600 enemy.


RED PLATOON gunship makes low level pass.





1st Cav Division

ARTILLERY



The professionalism displayed by 1st Cavalry Division Artillery units was described well by a young Skytrooper: "I sure am glad that the artillery is ours. Everytime you need additional fire power, it's right there."

The sense of urgency that keeps Cav artillery fires "right there" is no accident. Continuous practice and cross training make every Cav artilleryman a real professional. Not only are they accurate shooters, but the battery members have stamina, often pouring 3000 rounds on target in a single day, often shooting for days on end.

In addition to the tube artillery, the Cav's 2nd Battalion, 20th Aerial Rocket Artillery, provides direct fire support that the Skytroopers speak about with

awe. With the 105 mm howitzers of 2nd Bn, 19th Arty; 1st Bn, 21st Arty; 1st Bn, 77th Arty; ARA combined to bring aerial destruction to the Viet Cong at every turn. Their 2.75 inch rockets head a varied arsenal that has struck terror into the enemy.

The artillery raid, developed by the FIRST TEAM in 1966, was used over a dozen times during Operation Pershing, as 7 Bn, 13th Arty, the "almost Cav" artillery battalion, struck deep in enemy territory.

The fine support of 1st Bn, 30th Artillery's 155 mm howitzers provided additional fire power as two howitzers went with the 105s during a unique combined artillery raid.

Chinook drops 105 mm howitzer on LZ.

Gun crew runs to howitzer during arty raid.

First rounds on the way.





ARA and the CAV'S TUBE ARTILLERY

ARA engages target in Soui Ca Valley.

C Battery, 1st Bn, 21st Arty at LZ
Colt.

155s shoot landing zone prep.

Hook on arty raid.



BYRD



Rice paddies afford little cover from snipers, as men from 2nd Bn, 7th Cav move out.

The 1st Air Cavalry Division's 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry has ended **Operation Byrd**, the operation the battalion commander calls: "perhaps not just one of the success stories, but *the* success story of the war in Vietnam."

The Cavalrymen of 2/7th Cav have good reason to be proud. As they left Landing Zone Barlett near Phan Thiet

in Binh Thuan Province, the Vietnamese villagers acknowledged the airmobile battalion's accomplishments with: "Horse Soldiers, number one."

When 2/7th Cav arrived in Binh Thuan Province, the southern most province in South Vietnam's II Corp Tactical Zone, the entire area was in danger of falling into the hands of

two Viet Cong Battalions operating in the area. The government had receded to the immediate area of Phan Thiet, the provincial capital and center of profitable fishing and fish-sauce manufacturing industries.

After a Regional Force company was ambushed and virtually wiped out in broad daylight while escorting a

Operation BYRD

convoy, the Cavalrymen were committed to Operation Byrd. At that time the province chief was afraid to venture out of his capital.

16 months later, the 2nd of the 7th "Gary Owen" troopers had run up a body count of 924 enemy, while losing 39 of their own men.

More important, they had cleared the populous "triangle" area north and west of Phan Thiet for Government of Vietnam administrators to begin Revolutionary Development work. Exceptionally active, the Revolutionary Development teams went to work on a dozen "New Life" hamlets.

The roads around Phan Thiet opened gradually as the 2/7th operations fanned out from the capital, until travel to the district capitals was possible.

Perhaps the biggest success of Byrd's last two months was the reopening of Highway 1, which had been closed by the Viet Cong for years in parts of Binh Thuan Province.

LTC Joseph T. Griffin, who has commanded the 2nd of the 7th Cav Task Force since August, recalled the effect of the road's reopening: "The word spread like wildfire. Shops along the highway, which had been closed for years, suddenly came to life again, with goods sent up from Saigon." Lobster, fish, and fish-sauce, Phan Thiet's main industries, were on the way to Saigon by truck.

One highly significant military development was the progress made by two ARVN battalions which conducted

combined operations with the Cav task force.

In these operations which began a year ago, a company of U.S. forces and ARVN companies worked together on a given mission. A platoon of each company was assigned to the other company, so that ARVN's were under G.I.'s and G.I.'s under ARVN's.

The 2nd of the 7th men who worked with the ARVN's felt the Government forces had improved greatly, and praised the "Little People" highly for the abilities they displayed during the combined operations.

The fighting is far from over in Phan Thiet. As allied pressure has built and the resources of the VC became less, the enemy is resorting to terrorists activities. As the 2/7th Cav rejoins the main body of the 1st Cav, they leave in Binh Thuan Province a Government of Vietnam force that can cope with the enemy.

Vietnamese and Skytroopers combine to root out VC in bunker





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