

4th Takes Hills In Dak To Actions

By PFC Andrew Pipon
DAK TO, (4th INF-10)—A unit of the 4th Infantry Division's 1st Brigade recently touched off some of the bitterest fighting seen in the Central Highlands. Companies A and B, 3rd Battalion, 12th Infantry had been moving up a steep hillside over-

looking the brigade base camp here and were within 300 yards of their objective when North Vietnamese Army (NVA) automatic weapons fire hit them. Co. B, the lead element, charged the enemy position before they could be planned for and overran the NVA force.

Co. A, which had been back as rear security, immediately linked up with Co. B and began digging in for the night.

As the two companies were setting up their night position, mortar rounds began screaming and overran the NVA force.

mer, 3rd Bn. commander, called for air support. After the jets had blasted the hill with high explosive ordnance, artillery began pounding the suspected area in an effort to quell the enemy mortar fire.

After an uneventful night, Capt. Robert Morton, Co. B commander, sent a small recon patrol up the pock-marked hill.

Nearing the top, the patrol met with heavy mortar and automatic weapons fire. The airstrikes and night long artillery fire had failed to dislodge an obviously well dug-in enemy force, now estimated to be battalion size.

After the patrol had withdrawn to the company perimeter, jet fighters and A-1E Sky-raidors were called in to bombard the hill again. With artil-

lery taking over while the aircraft departed to pick up more ordnance, the hill was saturated constantly for two hours.

After the devastating air and artillery support was lifted, Morton advanced his company up the hill again.

Moving towards the top in wedge formation, Co. B again came under intense mortar fire which was also hitting Co. A still dug in and providing protective fire.

Co. B battled their way up the hill and, 25 yards from the top, were forced to withdraw after encountering murderous small arms fire.

"They were just too well fortified," Morton said later. "We had to withdraw back to our night position. They were everywhere up there: in the trees, in tunnels and in bunkers."

While the two companies began digging even further into the hillside to escape the incoming mortars and rockets, more airstrikes were called in.

Stopped for the second day in their assault on the enemy-held ground, the two companies hugged the ground as artillery pounded the area and the airstrikes continued.

After night had blackened the hill, a C-47 Dragonship droned into the area, and with the guidance of the two companies on the ground, fired its fantastic miniguns.

After receiving sporadic mortar and small arms fire all night, Co. A sent up a recon patrol in the morning. They spotted a large group of North Vietnamese soldiers clad in tiger fatigues moving down the opposite side of the hill.

Artillery was called in on the fleeing NVA while the remainder of the two companies moved up the hill and secured the area that had been their objective for two days.

The top of the hill was a honeycomb of log bunkers and tunnels with deep trenches snaking throughout the area.

Among the mass of equipment found at the site were B-40 rocket rounds still in wooden packing crates, AK-47 rifles, ammunition, machineguns, mortar rounds, clothes, and enough rice and equipment to indicate the NVA were planning to stay for quite a while.

"We definitely took an area from the enemy that was a vital position for them to carry out further plans to try and invade the Dak To area," Vollmer said after the two-day siege.

"The force that controls these hills and ridges is definitely in the best strategic position to control the Dak To region."

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Ho Bo Woods Cleared

CU CHI, (25th INF-10) — The dense jungles of the Ho Bo Woods, 35 miles northwest of Saigon, no longer exist.

A 55-day combined land-clearing and search and destroy operation conducted by the 25th Division's 1st Brigade has leveled 90 percent of the 13,000-acre former Viet Cong sanctuary.

Specially equipped helicopters made daily flights over the woods spraying the secondary growth with defoliating chemicals.

The mission began September 17 as the monsoon season campaign portion of Operation Barkling Sands.

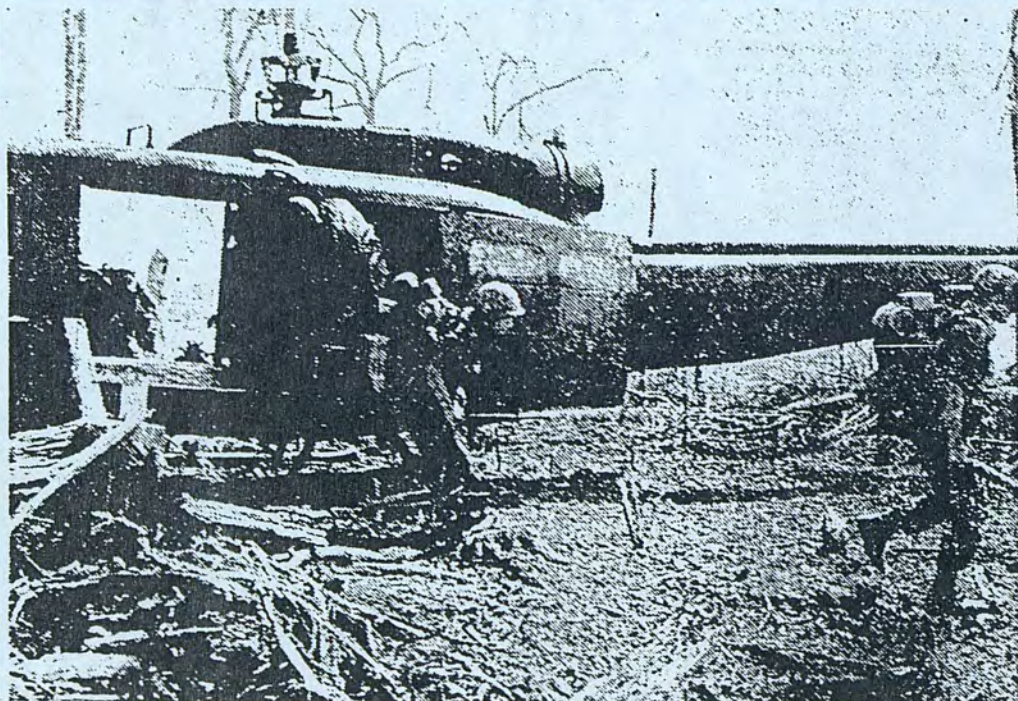
Rome plows from the 25th Land Clearing Team, escorted by armored personnel carriers from the 4th Battalion, 23rd Infantry and tanks from Company A, 2nd Battalion, 34th Armor, began uprooting trees and dense undergrowth in the northwestern sector of the woods.

Leading the plows were infantrymen from the 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry and 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry, who hacked their way through the jungle searching out Viet Cong.

Although fighting from a maze of tunnel and bunker complexes and never attacking in force, 39 of the enemy were slain.

Working with the infantry were elements of the 65th Engineer Battalion, who used explosives to destroy the trenches, bunkers, and tunnels that were uncovered. The engineers also upgraded the portion of the main supply route running near the area with tons of laterite and bridge spans.

The intensive search turned (Continued on Back Page)



MOVING OUT—Men of the 4th Infantry Division's 3rd Battalion, 12th Infantry move out from choppers on a mountain top southwest of Dak To. The soldiers made the initial contact with a multi-regiment North Vietnamese force which started the battle around Dak To. (Photo by PFC Andrew Pipon, 4th INF-10)

Three Nation Teamwork

Operation Forces Out Enemy

LONG THANH, (9th INF-10)

—Operation Santa Fe, a coordinated mission of American, Australian, and Vietnamese forces centered 35 miles east of here, accounted for 48 enemy killed in two weeks.

Units of the 9th Infantry Division's 1st Brigade, the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment (ACR), the 86th Engineer Battalion, the 1st Australian Task Force, and the 15th Division, Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) are participating in the tri-nation drive.

Santa Fe began with airborne assaults by the 9th Division's 4th Battalion, 39th Infantry into an area near the Long Khanh-Binh Tuy Province borders.

Helicopters from six aviation companies teamed up to shuttle the battalion during the initial assault.

As the 4th Bn. secured the landing zone, other Allied units, including units of the 5th Special Forces Group, moved overland into positions designed to trap the 5th Viet Cong Division in the dense jungle area near the South China Sea.

The 1st and 3rd Squadrons of the 11th Cav. maneuvered into blocking positions along Highway 1 to prevent Viet Cong units from slipping across the east-west route.

Tanks and armored personnel carriers of the 11th ACR also provided security for Rome Plow teams of Company A, 86th Engineers as they shaved vegetation from the sides of Highway 1 and cut paths 100-yards wide through the jungle.

Only light and scattered contact developed as the combined forces initiated search and destroy missions, combat and reconnaissance patrols, and extensive jungle clearing opera-

tions. During the early phases of Operation Santa Fe, numerous Viet Cong base and supply areas were uncovered. Ground commanders reported finding seven enemy bases during one five-day period.

The pattern of light and scattered contact continued to dominate the action during the (Continued on Back Page)

Is Nothing Safe?

Look Before You Sleep

TAM KY, (4th INF-10)—When an infantryman is tired he can sleep just about anywhere. For 1st Lt. Roger Ladd this included sleeping on a "bouncing betty" mine.

Ladd's platoon, the reconnaissance platoon, 1st Battalion, 35th Infantry had been operating as a blocking force. They chose a landing zone that they considered safe as a night position.

They used normal precautions in checking the area, then began to set up for the night. The lieutenant laid out his gear, inflated his air mattress and settled in on the mine. For some unknown reason it didn't detonate.

Nor did it detonate the next morning when the platoon moved out of the area. The mine went completely undiscovered until the platoon returned later that day.

Ladd went back to his sleeping area, not realizing how much his luck had already been pushed. But this time, as he laid down his rucksack, he noticed the mine's characteristic three prongs. The prongs had had some of their camouflage knocked away.

The mine was detonated in place and Ladd spent the night on that very spot because, as he put it, "It was the one spot around here I knew was safe."

Buffaloed Skytroopers Find What Sign Means

AN KHE, (1st CAV-10)—Skytroopers of the 1st Cavalry Division's 1st Brigade can be thankful they are not as heavy as water buffalo.

Company B, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry, while on a recent sweep with the 1st Cav. on the Bong Son plains, saw a sign, written in Vietnamese, on the side of the trail.

It was hidden behind some bushes so rather than remove the sign, Skytroopers, although unable to read it, copied down

the words and continued their mission.

Co. B followed the same trail for the remainder of the day until they reached their destination. After their defense had been set up and chow served, the company interpreter was asked what the sign said.

He glanced at the words, grinned, and translated the sign: Do not walk water buffalo along this trail—it is booby-trapped."