

Vietnam communique

October 20-26

Fierce fighting closes VC depot

A pair of gunships from the 116th Assault Helicopter Co., 269th Combat Avn. Bn., 12th Avn. Group, 1st Aviation Brigade, were reconning the area just north of the Ho Bo Woods Oct. 24 when they spotted movement in a crater, nine miles northeast of Trang Bang.

Due to heavy vegetation, visibility was poor. However, they each fired several rockets and flew back over the area to discover they had destroyed an enemy bunker and killed three enemy soldiers.

Troop-carrying 116th helicopters then inserted Co. A, 2nd Bn., 12th Inf., 25th Infantry Division, troops to sweep the contact zone. The infantrymen encountered a large scale enemy force and called for artillery and air support. Men of Co. B were brought in.

A platoon of Sheridan Assault Vehicles and armored personnel carriers of the 3rd Squadron, 4th Armored Cav., were called in and swept into what was later determined to be a supply-and-assembly depot for a VC regiment (made up 80 to 90 per cent NVA regulars).

After five hours of fighting, 47 Communist soldiers were killed and the remaining enemy force retreated.

4th Inf Div

Soldiers of Co. B, 2nd Bn., 8th Inf., 4th Infantry Division, mounted on armored personnel carriers, skirmished with an undetermined number of NVA regulars in the hills 19 miles northwest of Pleiku City Oct. 21, killing 24.

Elsewhere in the 4th Division's area, an 8th Transportation Bn. convoy moving through the Mang Yang Pass, 24 miles east of Pleiku, was ambushed with RPG and small arms fire from an estimated enemy platoon.

Drivers sped through the pass as Cos. A and B, 1st Bn., 69th Armor, dropped back to engage the NVA soldiers with .50-caliber and main gun fire from their M48 medium tanks. Gunships supported the tanks and 10 NVA soldiers were killed in

On Oct. 26, 16 Communist soldiers were killed in a two-hour battle three miles northeast of An Khe by the men of the 1st Bn., 69th Armor's scout platoon with the aid of gunships of the 238th Avn. Co. and artillery of Btry. A, 2nd Bn., 17th Arty.

The Communists were maneuvering into a position near a strong point along Highway 19 in an attempt to ambush a 1st Logistical Command convoy when they were spotted.

Sweeping the battle zone, the tankers found four AK47 rifles, a RPG launcher and three signal flares in and around two four-foot deep reinforced bunkers, two fighting positions and an observation post.

1st Cav Div

On Oct. 20, ground troops of Co. A, 5th Bn., 7th Cav., 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), supported by artillery and Air Force jets clashed with an undetermined number of NVA soldiers in the thick jungles eight miles northeast of Song Be, killing 14 enemy soldiers.

The same day a gunship from A Troop, 1st Squadron, 9th Cav., in three afternoon actions killed 11 NVA soldiers hiding in scrub trees nine miles northwest of Nui Ba Den.

Elsewhere, a large munitions cache was uprooted by elements of Co. A, 1st Bn., 5th Cav., in a bunker complex believed to be an enemy district headquarters eight miles southwest of Loc Ninh.

Men of A Troop, 1st Squadron, 9th Air Cav., discovered and destroyed a suspected enemy staging area 22 miles northwest of Tay Ninh City Oct. 23.

In the largest action of the day, helicopter gunships from B Troop engaged a NVA force in a running air-to-ground battle 20 miles north of Quan Loi killing 16 enemy soldiers in numerous clashes.

Elsewhere, an aero-rifle platoon of C Troop clashed with an enemy force in the jungles 17 miles northeast of Song Be, killing eight enemy soldiers.

On Oct. 26, men of Co. A, 1st Bn., 12th Cav., repulsed a platoon-sized probe of their positions 12 miles north of Tay Ninh

City, killing 11 enemy soldiers in two separate contacts.

Two days earlier, a gunship crew from B Troop, 1st Squadron, 9th Air Cav., killed three NVA soldiers moving through the jungles 20 miles north of Quan Loi.

Earlier in the week, a hunter-killer team from A Troop, 1st Squadron, 9th Air Cav., killed eight NVA troops in four separate actions 12 miles northwest of Tay Ninh City.

1st Avn Bde

On Oct. 23, gunships of the 22nd Combat Avn. Bn., 12th Avn. Group, and a gunship from the 240th Assault Helicopter Co., flying in support of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam infantrymen, killed eight VC and detained another.

Americal Div

Soldiers of H Troop, 17th Cav., Americal Division, killed seven NVA soldiers in the grasslands 15 miles northwest of Quang Ngai City and captured seven RPG rounds, one RPG launcher and four AK47 rifles Oct. 26.

On Oct. 22, gunships of F Troop, 8th Air Cav., operating six miles northwest of Tam Ky killed four enemy soldiers.

Two days earlier, four enemy soldiers were killed in a brief fire fight four miles southwest of Duc Pho by men of Co. C, 4th Bn., 21st Inf.

Later in the week, a reconnaissance element of the 1st Bn., 52nd Inf., killed four enemy soldiers and captured an SKS rifle, an AK47 rifle, a pistol and a carbine five miles north of Quang Ngai City.

25th Inf Div

On Oct. 23, soldiers of Co. C, 2nd Bn., 14th Inf., 25th Infantry Division, killed 15 and detained one NVA soldier hiding in a complex of old bunkers and tunnels 10 miles northwest of Cu Chi. Gunships from

the 116th Assault Helicopter Co., artillery and air strikes were called in to augment American fire power.

Seventeen NVA soldiers were killed the same day by men of the 2nd Bn., 27th Inf., 22 miles west of Cu Chi in day-long isolated small skirmishes.

Two days earlier, 12 NVA soldiers were killed by infantrymen of Co. B, 4th Bn., 9th Inf., eight miles northeast of Go Dan Ha.

Elsewhere, 15 NVA were killed seven miles northeast of Tay Ninh by tankers of Co. A, 2nd Bn., 34th Armor with the aid of cannoners of the 7th Bn., 11th Field Arty. and gunships from the 187th Assault Helicopter Co.

On Oct. 22, infantrymen of Co. D, 3rd Bn., 22nd Inf., killed five NVA regulars emerging from a cave on the southeastern slopes of the Black Virgin Mountain.

Later in the day, seven enemy soldiers were killed when soldiers from the same company, patrolling less than one-half mile from Patrol Base Rock Crusher, spotted 10 to 15 enemy soldiers moving toward the southern base of the Black Virgin.

Twenty-three members of an estimated NVA platoon were killed Oct. 26 in a day-long series of small skirmishes in the hedgerows and underbrush six miles southwest of Ben Cat.

3rd Bde, 9th Inf

A patrol from Co. B, 2nd Bn., 47th Inf., supported by artillery and gunships killed 10 VC Oct. 23 in a 20-minute battle one mile south of their Long An Province base camp.

Three days later, men of the 5th Bn., 60th Inf., killed five VC and supporting elements killed another three during an ambush three miles south of Rach Kien.

On Oct. 25, three VC soldiers were killed aboard a sampan on a tributary of the Vam Co Dong River three miles south of Ben Luc by infantrymen of the 5th Bn., 60th Inf.

1st Inf Div

A platoon of infantrymen of Co. B, 2nd Bn., 12th Inf., 1st Infantry Division, patrolling the Saigon River nine miles southeast of Dau Tieng aboard "Ski Boats" (outboard motor-powered launchers) killed nine VC Oct. 20. The enemy soldiers were trying to swim across the river.

On Oct. 23, seven enemy soldiers attempting to swim across the Saigon River five miles west of Ben Cat were killed by the 1st Infantry Division's, 1st Bde, operating in U.S. Navy patrol boats.

A day later, Big Red One soldiers found five small enemy caches containing a total of 21 82mm mortar rounds, 200 Chicom grenades, eight cases of Chicom high explosives, 35 RPG rounds, four SKS rifles, three CKC rifles, a French-made 7.7mm bolt-action rifle, a 9mm pistol and two other individual weapons.

On Oct. 26, the commander of Co. C, 1st Bn., 16th Inf., spotted a beer-can-sized hole along a wooded trail while on a mission to survey a destroyed six-bunkered complex six miles northwest of Ben Cat.

The small opening led into a concrete storage bin containing 97 SKS rifles, two light Soviet-made machine guns, seven Thompson submachine guns, 25 K44 carbines, five grease guns, six CKC bolt-action sniper rifles with five highpowered telescopic sights, 114 RPG rounds, 1,955 .51-caliber rounds, 174 57mm recoilless rifle rounds and two mortar sighting devices.

1st Bde, 5th Inf

Five NVA regulars were killed by soldiers of the 1st Brigade, 5th Infantry Division (Mechanized), Oct. 24 as they attempted to infiltrate their night position six miles northeast of the Rock Pile.

101st Abn Div

Men of Co. C, 2nd Bn., 502nd Inf., 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile), killed five VC soldiers Oct. 21 as they walked down a trail and into their night defensive positions in the foot hills 19 miles southeast of Hue.

Two days later, Screaming Eagles of Co. B, 2nd Bn., 502nd Inf., skirmished briefly with five Communist soldiers who walked into their night positions 25 miles southeast of Hue, killing two enemy soldiers.

173rd Abn Bde

Elements of Co. N, 75th Inf., 173rd Airborne Brigade, discovered a two-ton cache in northeast Binh Dinh Province Oct. 26, containing 12 cases of MAS36 ammunition, 12 cases of AK47 rifle rounds, six cases of machine gun rounds, 106 .57mm and .75mm recoilless rifle rounds and 30 B40 rockets.

199th Inf Bde

On Oct. 20, an observation helicopter of the 3rd Squadron, 17th Air Cav., 199th Light Infantry Brigade, spotted a 50-bunker complex hidden from the air by double canopy jungle five miles northeast of Xuan Loc.

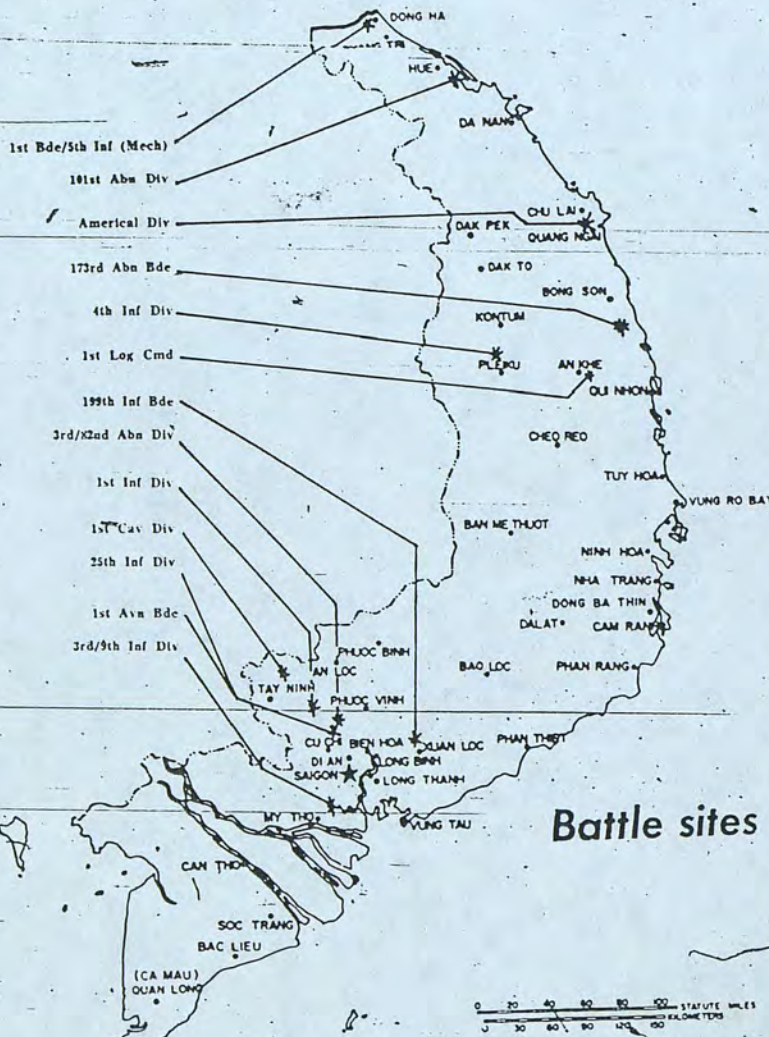
Air strikes were called in and four enemy soldiers were killed in the bombardment.

The same day, men of Co. A, 3rd Bn., 7th Inf., patrolling six miles southeast of Xuan Loc unearthed a munitions cache containing 10 SKS rifles, 12 assorted individual weapons, seven 60mm mortar rounds, two Chicom rifle grenades, a .30-caliber light machine gun and 15 rolls of wire.

3rd Bde, 82nd Abn Div

Three VC were killed and an AK47 rifle, an AK50 and a B40 rocket round were captured by the men of the 3rd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division, in the Iron Triangle 35 miles northwest of Saigon Oct. 21.

Elsewhere, 20 tunnels and three bunkers were destroyed by the men of the 3rd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division, and 16 individual weapons captured.



Nighthawk choppers prey on enemy



A gunship underlines the team's firepower

PHUOC VINH—A hail of bullets and rockets streaking down a beam of light are only part of the Nighthawk surprise waiting for Charlie operating during darkness in the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) area of operation.

The surprise is packaged in the form of a specially equipped Huey chopper teamed up with a deadly Cobra.

The firepower available to this team includes two 7.62mm miniguns, each capable of firing 4,000 rounds a minute; a 40mm grenade launcher, delivering 150 grenades in 30 seconds; and 76 2.75-inch rockets in a variety of weights, warheads and fuses.

The Nighthawks patrol the division's area each night with assistance from several target detection teams, ranging from the infantrymen to sophisticated ground and air radar. When the Nighthawk team is alerted to a possible enemy location, the crew is well equipped to find whatever is lurking in the shadows near friendly positions.

A powerful infrared light and scope turn night into day for the keen-eyed target detection crewman. Also at his disposal is a night observation device, which needs only starlight to operate effectively.

Besides these two modern electronic detection systems, the crew uses the "ultimate finder" — a 50,000-watt Xenon searchlight which not only serves as a locator but also as a marker of the enemy's position.

The Nighthawk's specialty is giving close support to the infantry unit in a night defensive or ambush position. The moment that an infantry squad spots movement around its position, word is flashed to the Nighthawk.

In a matter of seconds the unit briefs the pilots and marks the positions with a light that can only be seen from the sky. Quickly, the Nighthawk begins searching the area until target detector Spec. 4 Harold Boatz picks up movement on his scope.

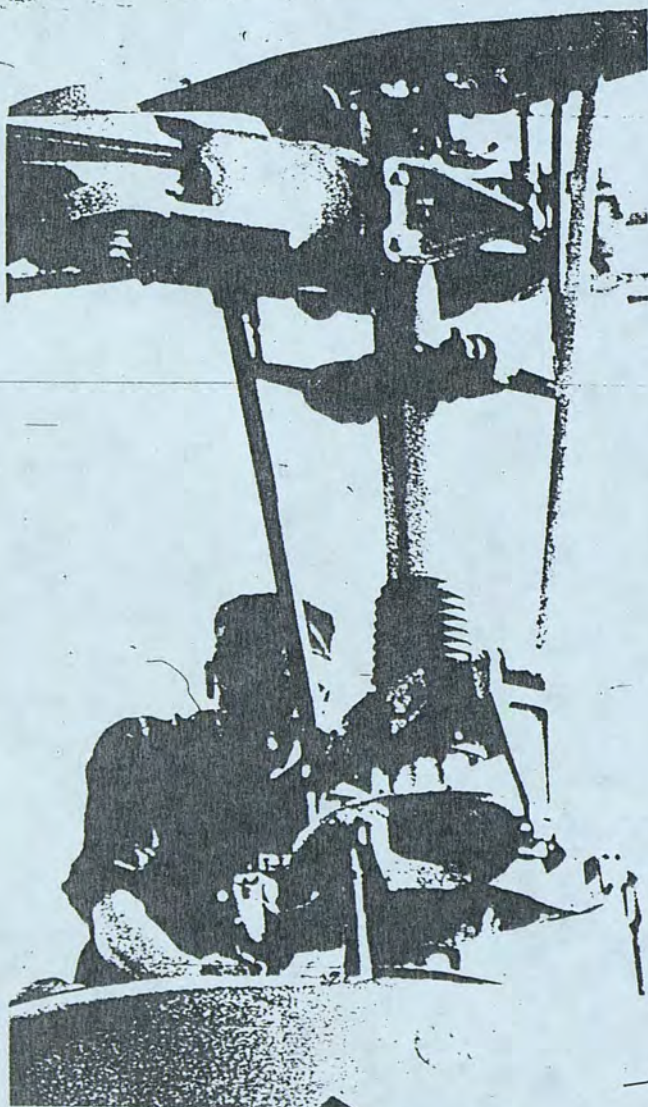
With a target in sight, WO John Snowgren, piloting the Huey, banks to the left while co-pilot WO Ronald Baker informs the Cobra pilot circling above the Huey of the sighting.

As the searchlight beam hits the ground, the infantrymen below relay their positions in reference to the light before the Huey's radio crackles with—"Nighthawk Two, this is Dodge Six, you are clear to engage."

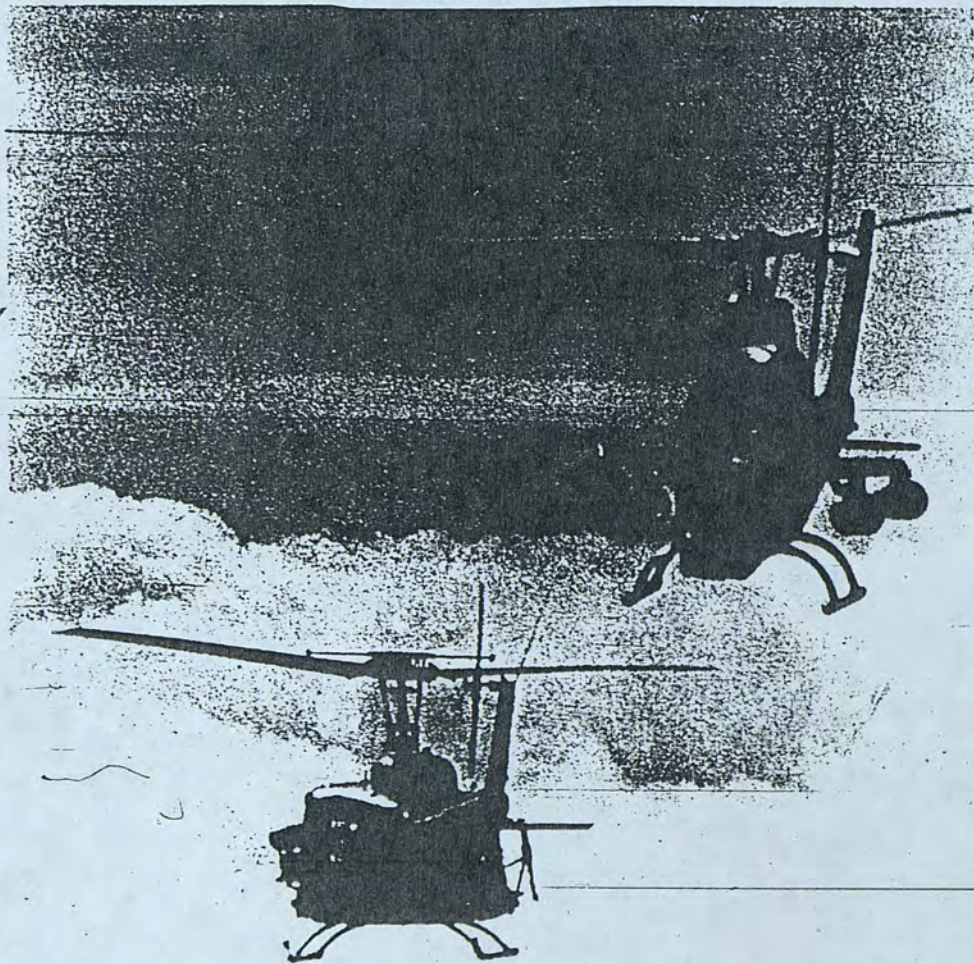
On the minigun, Spec. 4 Stanley Cook pours a constant stream of fire and lead down into the small beam of light. Moments later, the Cobra overhead rolls hot and releases a burst of minigun fire and a salvo of rockets from pods tucked under its sides.

The light goes dark, but infrared scopes continue to probe the target area for an assessment of damage.

Mission completed for Nighthawk means that the enemy has been caught and stopped in the darkness before he can strike at unit positions on the ground.



A pilot carefully checks his Huey



Huey and Cobra depart at sunset