

Cav slays 269 NVA in day's battle

PHUOC VINH — Communist forces shattered a 10-week lull with vicious mortar and sapper attacks against three 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) fire bases.

The enemy was mauled in each attack, losing 146 men during the night's fighting. Helicopter gunships relentlessly pursued the retreating forces in the hours after dawn to boost the total enemy dead to 269 for the 24-hour period.

The early morning attacks were tipped off by a 1st Cav. raider team that spotted 45 NVA soldiers with AK47s and carrying 107mm rockets near (FB) Buttons.

Without revealing their position the team called in artillery and helicopter gunship support from B Troop, 1st Squadron, 9th Cav., to kill 41 as night set in.

The 2nd Bde. Scouts also made contact near FB Buttons earlier in the day, killing 21 NVA regulars with support from B Troop.

The enemy struck first at FB Ike, 12 miles north of Tay Ninh, with sappers breaching the wire during a mortar barrage.

Nearly simultaneous attacks were initiated against FB Ellen, six miles west of Song Be and near FB Buttons.

At FB Ike, 12 sappers quickly overran one bunker but got no further, thanks to an alert mess sergeant who downed one sapper as he ran through the nearby kitchen, then emptied 200 rounds from his M16 into the enemy-held bunker during a pitched battle at a range of 10 yards.

Helicopter gunships—an Air Force spooky plane and artillery from several nearby fire bases blasted the perimeter throughout the night. At dawn, 48 enemy bodies were found in the area and five suspects were detained.

"I've got to give the ARVN at FB Vicki credit," said Lt. Col. Stephen Woods Jr., commander of the 2nd Bn., 5th Cav., manning FB Ike.

"They were giving us plenty of artillery support while taking incoming at the same time."

Sappers also breached the wire at FB Buttons, 70 miles to the northeast, but were quickly driven back. Artillerymen and clerks from the 5th Bn., 7th Cav.,

found themselves fighting from the berm.

"Probably 90 per cent of my men had never been in a real firefight," said Lt. Col. William Harrison, commander of the 1st Bn., 77th Arty.

"Their response was outstanding."

The enemy lost 63 men in the attack.

"We were watching the light show at Buttons and wondering when we were going to get hit," said Capt. Rocco Alexander, commander of Co. E, 1st Bn., 8th Cav., at FB Ellen.

"Two minutes later we got our answer."

The sapper attack at Ellen was stopped short of the third strand of wire as helicopter gunships, direct fire artillery and Air Force jets strafed the perimeter.

"The fire was so heavy," said Staff Sgt. Casey Connally, "that we had to fire our mortars while lying on the ground."

1st Cavalrymen killed 35 enemy in the battle, beating back the ground attack in the first hour. Sporadic small arms fire was received until dawn.

At first light hunter-killer helicopter

teams from A Troop, 1st Squadron, 9th Cav., spotted .51-caliber machine guns and several individuals two miles from FB Ike.

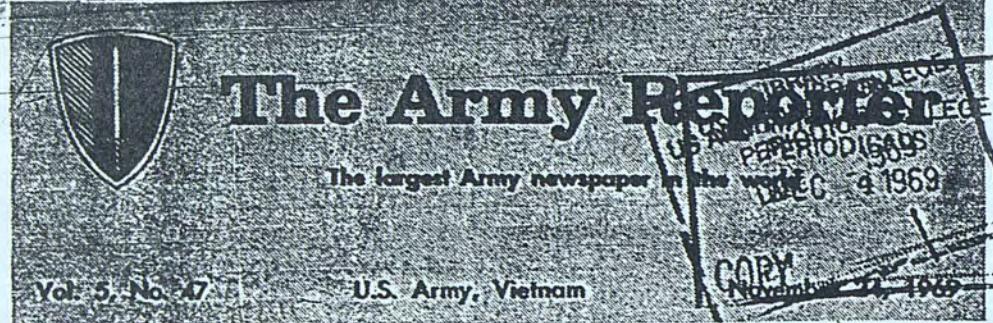
They engaged the enemy with Aerial Rocket Artillery and called in artillery and a jet air strike to kill 16 enemy.

Helicopters from B Troop, 1st Squadron, 9th Cav., killed five NVA regulars near Bu Dop. Then a LOH took .51-caliber fire. Engaging the area with ARA and machine gun fire, the birds killed five more and destroyed the weapons.

The division counteroffensive on enemy withdrawal routes netted 40 more NVA soldiers the following day.

In the heaviest action 24 enemy were killed 10 miles south of Song Be during a fierce air-to-ground duel with C Troop, 1st Squadron, 9th Cav. After a LOH drew small arms fire the hunter-killer team engaged the enemy with rockets and miniguns, then called in artillery and Air Force jets.

Action tapered off during the rest of the week but the total enemy killed (474) was the highest since August 12.



Split-second rescue

Pilot extracts downed crew

CAMP RADCLIFF — CWO William Roach was not alone in his helicopter gunship as he completed a dramatic rescue of two downed helicopter crewmen 10 miles south of An Khe. The 119th Assault Helicopter Co. pilot was riding with indispensable companions named courage, coordination and luck.

These three characteristics followed Roach as he responded to a "mayday" distress call after setting down at nearby LZ Patricia. He monitored the call, noted the crew's reported location, and immediately lifted off toward the downed crewmen.

"I got a perfect fix on their location as they were going down," recalled Roach. "I quickly unloaded my supplies at the LZ and within minutes, I was hovering over their position."

The distress signal was also monitored by three other gun-

ships. CWO Hugh Gologoly, led the gunships into the area from 1st Bde. headquarters here.

"I'm going after them," radioed Roach, as he spotted the approaching helicopters. "Their chopper is in good shape, and I can see two men."

"Roger that," returned Gologoly. "We'll give you all the fire support you need."

Roach then settled his gunship down near the two crewmen and they quickly scrambled aboard the helicopter.

"Their blades were still rotating, so they weren't down more than a minute," said Roach. "Likewise I lifted off within 30 seconds after setting down."

As the pilot completed the extraction, heavy barrages of support firepower were expended by the support helicopters. Gologoly, Lt. David Gibson, and CWO Gerald Clark blasted the

surrounding areas with rockets and minigun fire during repeated gun runs.

"The fact that the crew maintained a certain calmness aided in the recovery," he said.

According to Maj. Isiac F. Bonifay Jr., advisor to the 14th Arty, "that is just what has been done." The equipment is in fine shape, he said. "The battery has done a good job of reconditioning and maintenance."

With this equipment the ARVN 14th Arty. Bn., under the command of Maj. Duong Binh Tuan, will have its second firing and training battery.

In the past, the battalion had to train at FB Anzio, near Phu Bai.



GUIDING IN A support helicopter in the camp. The men, from the 1st Bn., 52nd

VC cache raided

CAMP RADCLIFF—As members of the 4th Infantry Division's Co. B, 1st Bn., 22nd Inf., searched for a night location, they discovered three enemy tunnels containing newspaper and propaganda campaign equipment.

Sgt. Richard Pate led his men through a creek in search of a satisfactory position to set up their night location.

"Moving cautiously, we observed a hootch at the base of a mound," said Pate. "Maneuvering around we swept the area finding three large enemy tunnels."

Pate and Pfc. James Hamm inspected the caves, discovering 15 sleeping positions along with photography and printing equipment. Captured were six cameras, one 200mm telephoto lens, film, 24 reels of recording tape, photo print paper, clothes, documents and