

Awards and decorations

Pilot cited twice for valor

BAN ME THUOT — A young warrant officer who took the lead in two daring air operations within 72 hours was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and the Distinguished Flying Cross.

In addition, 22-year-old WO Gilbert N. Terry of the 155th Assault Helicopter Co., 10th Combat Aviation Bn., earned a Purple Heart.

The action came last August during the struggle to save the city of Duc Lap. Terry was wounded in the first mission which began in the early morning hours of Aug. 23, 1968. He had volunteered to replace a weary commander who had been flying all the previous night.

As Terry's aircraft neared the besieged city, the lead ship developed transmitter trouble; so he assumed the task of coordinating control with the forward air controller and ground troops.

He began his gun runs, penetrating the entrenched enemy, his own craft attracting enemy fire in return.

"On the second pass," Terry recalled, "I observed heavy fire originating from some buildings in a small village near the woodland. I requested and received permission to engage these targets."

Three rockets found their mark, but the run cost the officer's ship more damage. The engine's oil pressure gauge dropped.

"The ship was in extremely bad shape and the rotor continued to bleed off," Terry said. "I flared and tried for a tail first impact to cushion the rather fast sink rate we were experiencing."

After the chopper came to a

halt, the officer managed to crawl out of the tangle and free the pilot. Together, they carried the crew chief, wounded in the leg, to the MACV compound, under a barrage of automatic weapons fire and mortars.

When they reached the post, they learned of a serious shortage of ammunition.

"There was a large supply of mini-gun ammo still on the aircraft," Terry said, "so I elected to go out with two people from the compound to recover it."

The enemy fire had not ebbed, nor had the impacting mortars, but he went anyway. Moments later, he returned with the badly-needed resupply.

His sense of duty had blurred all thoughts of personal safety. Upon his return, he realized that a bullet had found its mark. Though in pain, he spurned medical attention until he saw that his crew chief had been treated.

For this action, he was presented the Distinguished Service Cross and the Purple Heart by Gen. Creighton Abrams, MACV commander.

Less than three days later, he was to play the starring role in another thriller.

The place and setting had not changed, but in this scene, Terry was the pilot.

Despite thick enemy fire, he repeatedly hit his targets until his ammunition was spent.

Through a blanket of fire, he flew his ship to a downed chopper whose pilot had been seriously wounded. He landed, picked up the man, and lifted off — all the while under hail of bullets.

The exposure to enemy fire had to have its effect sooner or later, and shortly, the aircraft's commander was suddenly wounded.

Terry quickly grabbed the controls and recovered the ship. Taking complete command, he skillfully flew the damaged aircraft away from further danger.

Enroute to the airfield, he contacted the medics on the ground and arranged for ambulances to get his wounded passengers when he touched down.

In another recent ceremony, Maj. Gen. Robert R. Willeams, commander of the 1st Aviation Brigade, awarded Terry the Distinguished Flying Cross for his actions during the second engagement.



RECEIVING a Distinguished Service Cross from Gen.

1st Avn Photo