

Air Strikes Beat a USO Show

Mortars, B52s Enliven Bunker Life

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FIRE BASE FACE, Vietnam — A U.S. soldier peeked up from the floor of a bunker after two Communist mortar rounds had exploded outside, spraying the area with shrapnel.

To the American soldiers at this fire base 500 yards from the Cambodian border in northern Tay Ninh Province, the blasts offered some escape from the boredom of day-to-day life here.

Communist gunners have fired about 200 mortar and rocket rounds at the base since Sept. 29 with most of the incoming rounds directed at the Chinook helicopters as they approach the compound to drop supplies to the men of the 2nd Bn., 32nd Arty, and 1st Air Cav. Div.

"You get up in the morning and spend the day filling sandbags to reinforce the bunkers and replace the bags destroyed

by mortar attacks," Spec. 5 Richard Budzinsky, one of the medics with the 1st Air Cav. Div., said.

"You also run for a bunker when the Chinooks come in to drop supplies because the choppers are bound to draw incoming," he added.

One of the hazardous jobs at the fire base is bringing in the supplies which the helicopters drop outside the compound onto an exposed area of Highway 22 leading from Vietnam into Cambodia.

As several men run onto the road and begin loading the supplies onto a truck, the perimeter guards sit behind 82mm and .50-caliber machine guns and listen for the pop of mortar rounds leaving the tube.

As the guard yells "incoming," men working on the road dive under the truck which is their only protection against shrapnel.

The men work 15 hours a day here under a sweltering sun.

It takes time to develop the ability to fall asleep under the roar of the big guns, so they catnap mostly, one infantryman said. "You adjust and soon you can fall asleep anywhere, anytime," he added.

Diversion from the boredom often means writing a letter home or playing cards. At this fire base, however, a B52 strike is more popular than a USO show.

"A B52 strike is definitely a morale booster," the mustachioed Budzinsky said.

"As a matter of fact, the guards go around waking everybody up so they can watch," said S.Sgt. Jimmie Silvey.

"Even if the B52 strikes wake you up, it's worth it," Budzinsky added.

Most of the Communist rounds dropped on the base so far have been

during the day. At night, the Americans fire back with eight-inch howitzers and 175mm guns.

American Cobra gunships and F4 Phantom fighter-bombers sweep in often to blast suspected Red positions with bombs and napalm.

"Charlie's got guts," an infantryman on perimeter guard said as a Phantom dropped low and drew the chatter of AK47 assault rifle fire from a wooded area.

Inside the fire direction center two soldiers spoke of going home and getting a hot meal. One picked thoughtfully at a guitar and the other cleaned plastic-covered charts with shaving cream.

"O rations," one man said and wrinkled his nose.

"I sure miss that running water, man," another soldier said with a sigh.



CHINOOK HELICOPTER DROPS SUPPLIES TO FIRE BASE FACE

B52s Bomb Border In Reply to Shelling

S&S Vietnam Bureau

SAIGON — While Communist gunners pelted allied positions, U.S. Air Force B52 bombers pounded NVA positions in the Cambodia-Vietnam border area, allied military spokesmen said Thursday.

The South Vietnamese command said North Vietnamese soldiers shelled ARVN positions nine times Wednesday with 91 rounds of rocket and mortar fire. Two of the indirect fire attacks caused light casualties.

American soldiers at Fire Base Face near the Cambodian border weathered two shelling attacks without taking a casualty Wednesday, U.S. command spokesmen said. NVA gunners fired one 82mm mortar round at the base during the afternoon and seven mortar rounds at night.

Allied forces retaliated with four B52 bombing missions in Northern Tay Ninh Province and 58 air strikes against Communist positions on both sides of the Cambodian border, spokesmen said.

One flight of the B52s struck suspected troop locations 27 miles northwest of Tay Ninh, and three formations of the Stratofortress bombers hit bunker complexes and storage sites in areas ranging from 21 to 23 miles northwest of Tay Ninh, the U.S. command said.

Seventh AF F4 phantoms and A37 Dragonflies flew 20 strikes in northern Tay Ninh Province while Vietnamese Air Force pilots flew 30 missions in support of ARVN units operating in the area, spokesmen said.

Communist pressure began fading in the Cambodia-Vietnam border area northwest of Saigon early this week, and spokesmen Thursday reported only one ground clash in the area.

In that skirmish, two companies of ARVN paratroopers killed three rebels Wednesday two and a half miles west of Hung Dao Base camp near the border, spokesmen said. There were no ARVN casualties.

Meanwhile, South Vietnamese rangers killed 14 Communists Wednesday six miles northwest of Kien An near the northern edge of the Delta's U Minh Forest, spokesmen said. Two Rangers were wounded.

South Vietnamese Rangers and Infantrymen killed 22 Reds Wednesday in Quang Ngai Province during fighting in three districts, spokesmen said. Four infantrymen and one ranger were wounded in the scattered clashes.

In a delayed report, the U.S. command said a U.S. Army OH6 Light Observation helicopter was shot down Tuesday 14 miles north of Kontum in the Central Highlands. There were no casualties.

Viets Attack U.S. Library

SAIGON (AP) — A band of 20 to 30 motorcycle-riding students staged an anti-American attack Thursday at the Abraham Lincoln Library in central Saigon, throwing rocks and hurling firebombs at American vehicles.

There were no injuries reported and the students fled before police arrived. The library run by the Joint United States Public Affairs Office for Vietnam. The students stormed past the gate as the guard tried to close it, knocking him out of the way.

They hurled rocks at a U.S. car, then firebombed it. The car was only slightly damaged. Another firebomb fell harmlessly inside the courtyard on the steps of the library.

Ancient Towns Found

MOSCOW (AP) — Soviet archaeologists are reported by the official news agency Tass to have unearthed the remains of two ancient towns in northwestern Russia. The towns are said to date back to about 10,000 years B.C.

Thais Move Against Southern Guerrillas

Combat Toll For Week: 21

S&S Vietnam Bureau

SAIGON — Twenty-one servicemen were killed in action during the week ended Oct. 2, down eight from the previous week, the U.S. command said Thursday.

Sixteen Americans lost their lives to other than hostile causes. This was a jump of 10 from the previous week.

U.S. wounded rose sharply to 117, up 70 from the previous week. Seventy-two of the wounded required hospital care.

Two U.S. servicemen were killed in air operations over Laos to bring to 97 the number of Americans lost to hostile fire over that country since March 19, 1970.

1,045 More Spaces Cut

SAIGON (S&S) — The 3rd Bn., 1st Inf. of the 23rd Inf. Div. (Americas) began stand down Thursday, the U.S. command said.

The 21st Aviation Co. (utility airplane) also began stand down with 125 space reductions, Army spokesmen said.

The 3rd Bn., 1st Inf., which arrived in Vietnam in December 1967, has 920 space reductions.

More Hue Massacre Victims Found

SAIGON (AP) — The government news agency said Thursday that 51 more bodies of victims of the Communist massacre at Hue during the Tet offensive in 1968 have been disinterred and reburied.

Vietnam Press said the bodies included those of two American

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servicemen, which were turned over to U.S. authorities, while the others were buried at a cemetery near Hue. The U.S. command said it had no information on the dead Americans.

More than 3,000 persons are believed to have been executed by the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong during the Hue attacks. More than 2,000 bodies

have been recovered from a dozen graves near the city.

Meanwhile, in Washington, U.S. State Department officials said Thursday it was not clear whether five graves discovered by Cambodian forces contained bodies of American newsmen.

Department spokesman Charles W. Bray said the U.S. Embassy in Phnom Penh has advised that Cambodian officials

are sending a team to inspect the graves, which were discovered on Route 30, south of Phnom Penh.

Bray said that it may be a matter of some days before I can speak to the point regarding identification."

Several American newsmen and television reporters have disappeared in that area.