

**Donated by 1SG (Ret) Joey "Brasso" Welsh
San Antonio, Texas**

**4th Platoon, Co E (LRP) 20th Infantry (ABN)
The TYPHOON was our main headquarters newspaper, this
article was written almost a year after we were formed,
during that time, no one knew we existed!**

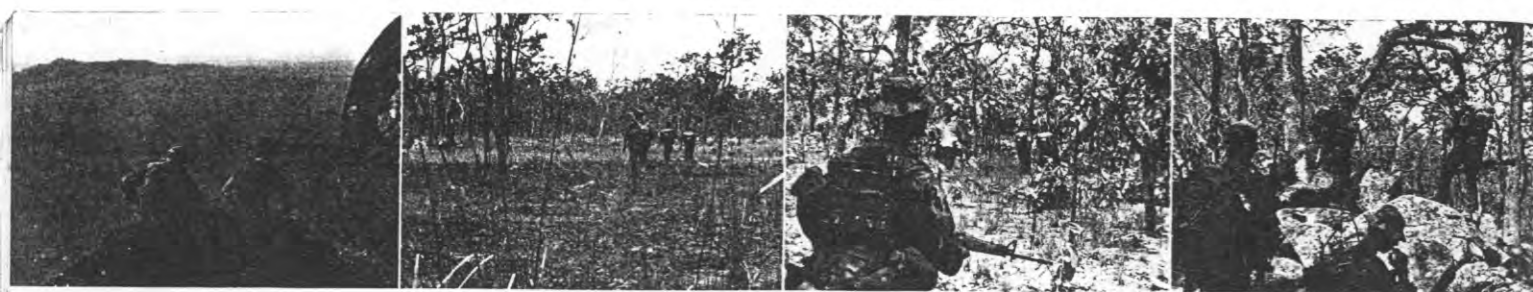


THE

JULY 1968

TYPHOON





Company E (LRP), 20th Infantry, Airborne

In Search of the Enemy

Story and photos by SP5 A.P. HONEGGER

The hill is of stone. Rising black and empty on the western end of the valley, it marks the fore-runner of the jagged mountains that form the Annamese Cordillera, running north to south over Indochina.

Slowly, almost reluctantly, men clad in black and green tiger suits reach the hilltop. Without a word or sign they fan out, taking up their respective defensive positions. Two of them settle against a protruding black rock. One tests the radio set while another opens a map on his knees. The man with the map takes out a pair of field glasses, focuses and begins a slow, methodical survey from the foot of the hill to a vast expanse of open clearing to the right of a spur.

The coastline is visible on the horizon—the South China Sea, a dark blue in the setting sun. The first lights appear in the villages. It is past seven in the evening. The day had been hot and languid, laden with an acrid smell of dust and dank emanations of the sun-scorched trees. Some Vietnamese call this part of Binh Thuan Province the desert of Vietnam for only a small portion of the valley is arable land.

Reduced to a mere shadow by the setting sun, the man with the field glasses studies the eastern

portion of the valley, swinging from north to south along a tree line that forms a grim reminder of a once luxuriant vegetation. There was no sign of life all around. The men gradually vanish in the tenebrous tentacles of the night. Yet they know the enemy is there. The day before another team had been extracted under enemy fire from that very same clearing. As he had done in the past, the enemy would be moving during the early hours of dusk and part of the night.

The man with the glasses holds a long time on the open clearing quadrangled by a tree line on all four sides. A likely place for the Viet Cong to assemble. But tonight it seemed empty too. The array of trails was next—those long, narrow paths, like a criss-cross of scars, which allow the enemy to move without map and compass.

Suddenly, the field glasses stop, swing back—here it is, a tiny dot of light moving along a trail. Another one on the left, slowly oscillates towards the same general direction. Seems like some rallying point.

Without undue haste or motion, the radio operator contacts the Tactical Operation Center (TOC) several miles to the southeast. The man with the glasses, the team

leader, plots the enemy's position on the map and sends his report in faint but distinctly audible words. Back at the TOC, the radio transmission has been entered verbatim in a log, and coordinates of the enemy location and direction of movement are marked on the map that covers an entire wall.

It had been a long and tedious march to the hilltop. The dried out leaves and twigs on the ground had considerably slowed the ascension and the big, black rocks had not made movement easier.

Early that day, a slick-troop carrying helicopter—flanked by two gunships had infiltrated the men into their area of operations.

The senior scout or point man went first. Ten to 20 meters behind, the assistant team leader, and in five to 15-meter intervals, the team leader, radio-telephone operator (RTO) and scout followed.

The march to the foot of the hill had been smooth and easy. But the climb had taken its toll in muscle and water. The water especially posed a major problem. It would have to be dropped from the air...

These men, Staff Sergeant James W. Nobles, Orange, Tex., the team leader; Sergeant Robert J. Shaffer, Sharpsville, Pa., the assistant team leader; Specialist 4 Richard Spears,



Ottawa, Canada, senior scout; Specialist 4 Ronald E. Renau, Charleston, S.C., RTO; and Specialist 4 James E. Perry Jr. of Dover, Del., a scout, are members of Long Range Patrol (LRP) Team 45, 4th Platoon, Company E (LRP), 20th Infantry, Airborne.

Based at Pleiku's Camp Enari, Company E (LRP), 20th Infantry, Airborne, is assigned to I Field Force Vietnam and attached to B Company, 5th Special Forces Group, Airborne, to conduct reconnaissance operations within II Corps Tactical Zone.

The company, headed by Major William O'Connor of Boston, Mass., was formed in Phan Rang in September of 1967 and has been operational since November when it moved to Camp Enari in the Central Highlands.

A member of Company E from its organization, Staff Sergeant Georges J. Barber of Thermopolis, Wyo.,

points out that, "The bulk of the company was originally formed of hand-picked volunteers from the 101st Airborne Division."

Company E is organized into four platoons of seven teams each, a headquarters section handling all the administrative and logistical work, and a communications platoon which is responsible for the vital radio contact with all the teams scattered throughout II CTZ.

First Lieutenant Jack Daniel of Russellville, Ky., 4th Platoon leader, remarks, "The mission of this LRP company is to find the enemy's main routes of supply, bivouac and troop concentration sites, to report their exact location and to leave the area undetected in order to continue the mission. Normally a mission lasts several days, but in case of heavy contact with an enemy force, the teams in the field can be extracted at any time."

In addition, the company has the capacity to operate as a platoon-size force and conduct regular recon-in-force missions. Several members are presently teaching the techniques of long range patrolling to selected volunteers from the Army of the Republic of Vietnam's 22d Division at Bong Son and the 23d Division at Ban Me Thuot.

To date, Company E (LRP), 20th Infantry, Airborne has supported U.S. units such as the 1st Air Cavalry Division, the 173rd Airborne Brigade (Sep), the 4th Infantry Division, the 101st Airborne Division and the 5th Special Forces Group, Airborne throughout the II Corps area.

Good intelligence is a most decisive factor in an armed conflict, and through its outstanding fighting record, Company E (LRP), 20th Infantry, Airborne, can be proud of its contribution in blunting the edge of Communist aggression.

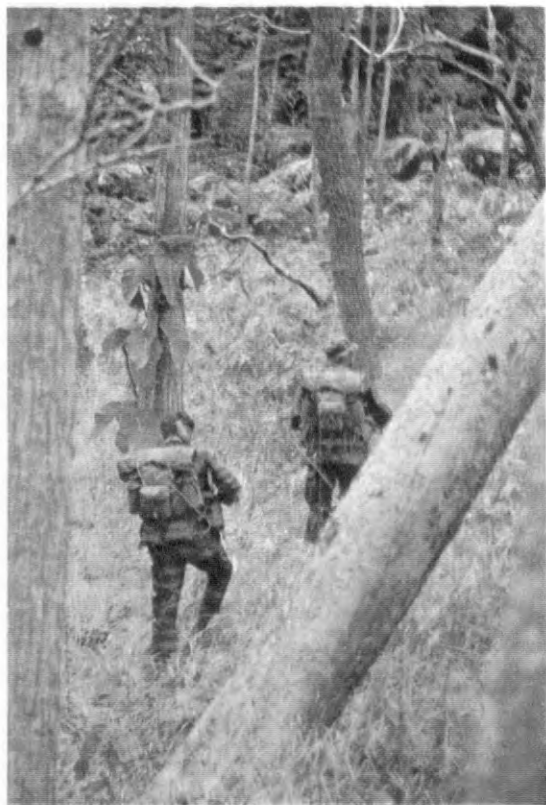
The team leader radioes a situation report (SITREP) to the battalion TOC. A SITREP is transmitted three times daily to indicate the team's position and latest observations.





LRP Teams Look

In II Corps



Ready for instant reaction, two LRP members cover each other.



Point man in front, Company E's T

Members of Team 45 move



Patrol member looks for "Charley" at sunset.



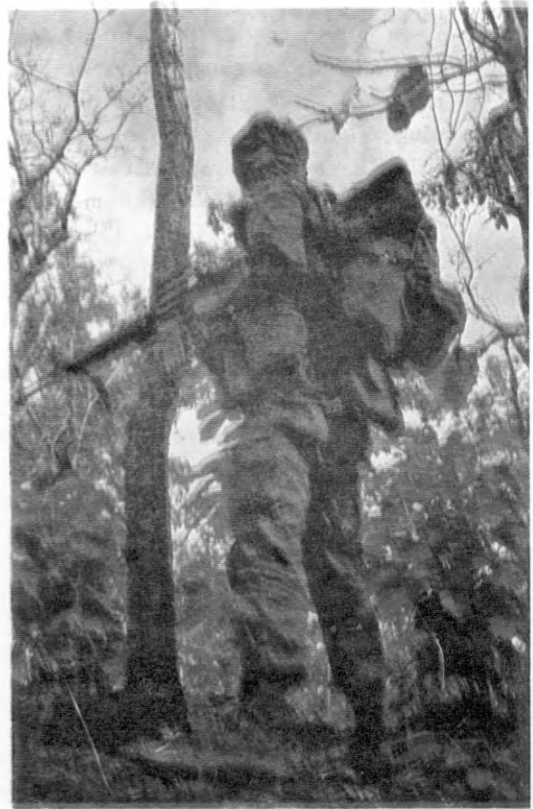
Look For "Charley"

Tactical Zone



Team 45 follows a suspected enemy trail.

Team 45 moves cautiously through open terrain.



Always on the alert, the point man looks out for any suspicious sound or movement.

Three members of Team 45 dash toward the waiting helicopter that will fly them back to the forward base camp.

