

RANGER TEAM 41
JUNE 27 & 28, 1969
From Craig Leerberg

Our mission was to monitor sampans in the Song Dong Nai River and surrounding trails.

On day 3 we had no evidence of trail usage and spotted a sampan going down river so I convinced Guy **McConnell**, my TL, to let me engage it. Result - 2 bodies and an empty sampan floating down river. Since we had compromised our location, Mac called for an extraction.

Capt. **Paccerelli** came on and said, "Too late, move away from the river and move upstream and continue to monitor trails and river."

We did and just before dark we ran into a large bunker complex - maybe 15-20 with 36" overhead cover.

After moving away for a short time, Mac and I began going into a few of the bunkers, guarded by our team. The bunkers contained food, ammo, Viet Cong flags, and clothing, which meant it was being used.

We contacted HQ and Capt. **Paccerelli** ordered us to move away and monitor 'til daylight. At which time we could call in Redleg (artillery) and destroy it.

Since the best way to monitor this size of a complex was to set up close to one of the furthest bunkers from the river. Mac and I were behind the bunker facing it, while we all set up Claymores to cover all sides. Having secured our position, we waited quietly .

At 3:05 a.m. June 28th - I remember it well, at least 15-25 flashlites entered the complex. I don't know how many of the enemy did not have flashlites because it was pitch dark under triple canopy cover. Suddenly one of them hollers and every flashlite turned off!!!

Since we were obviously outnumbered we knew we were in BIG TROUBLE. They must have spotted our boot prints. All we could hear were people moving around, obviously looking for us. This was the first time I was really scared!!

I figured whoever fired first was probably going to be the winner.

With my feet against the bunker, a Gook stepped up on it and I was sure he could hear my heart pounding and could smell us. Then he took a step down on our side of the bunker and I gave him 18 rounds full auto. Trust me, you are never too old to wet your pants!

As we all opened up 360 degrees, Mac told me to hit my 2 daisy chained claymores in front of the bunker, but I was shaking so bad I couldn't flip the clacker - too much incoming fire and Chicom frags - but finally I blew the claymores and we could hear was screaming and hollering, but some of the incoming fire ceased - a good thing.

Mac told me to keep throw frags to make them think there were more of us. When I threw one of my last ones, it hit something and bounced back between Mac and me. I yelled "Frag in" and the rest of the team bailed out while Mac and I tried to find the cooking frag. The longest three seconds of my life!!

Mac yelled "Found it" and tossed it and it exploded while airborne. That was what ruining a nite was like. All of us, except Pineapple (Ramon **Taijeron**), were hit with shrapnel.

After that we had Cobras on line who ordered trip flares and asked for our position from the flares, and asked for our position from the flares as they began making their runs.

Captain **Paccerelli** evidently ordered a first of the ninth "Blue Team" to help get us out and monitor the dead. They inspected the "hopefully empty" bunkers.

We moved out to try to get a count of bodies and lots of "drag marks toward the river". We tried our best to give HQ a fairly accurate number.

I don't want to monitor bunker complexes EVER AGAIN and I believe I told **Paccerelli** that at our debriefing.

Craig Leerberg
Team 41