

TROPIC LIGHTNING NEWS




Ready To Strike.... Anywhere, Anytime

Vol 4 No. 4

TROPIC LIGHTNING NEWS

January 27, 1969

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Warriors Uncover Huge Rice Cache, Clue Leads to VC Resupply Village

By Sp4 Charles Haughey

CU CHI - Tropic Lightning troops of the Fire Brigade's 2d Battalion, 12th Infantry, grabbed three huge caches of enemy food stores containing over 23 tons of new rice. Combat sweep operations along the south bank of the Saigon River, 12 miles north of Cu Chi, netted the huge finds.

Working jointly with Stinger gunships from the 116th Assault Helicopter Company, the Warrior's Alpha Company was first to turn up a substantial amount of the grain when they located a camouflaged stack of bagged rice amounting to nearly 10,000 pounds near the river's edge.

"It was obviously in transit," said Alpha Company Commander First Lieutenant Richard A. Wiggins of St. Petersburg, Fla., "Either freshly deposited along the shore for further transport by or cart or awaiting pickup by sampan."

Later that same day, B Company acting on reports from gunships, added 4,000 pounds of rice to the day's find. Working swiftly the Warriors piled the 100-pound bags in cargo slings which were speedily evacuated by Chinook helicopter to Cu Chi.

Eagle flights dropped the 2d Brigade soldiers in the area within the hour. The Delta Company troops salvaged as much of the precious food as possible and destroyed in place what could not be saved.

Four days of intensive search passed without results. Then the Fire Brigade soldiers of Bravo Company, commanded by Captain Allen R. Wissinger of San Diego, Calif., struck it big. Pushing through about 14 inches of earth, the probing infantrymen found a huge hollow spot.

Digging soon turned up rice. Over 3,600 pounds of the hard white grain was carefully extracted and airlifted to Cu Chi. An additional 4,000 pounds could not be saved and was destroyed.

"The rice was a clue to search the village," said Wissinger. "Working with ARVN interpreters, we discovered what appeared to be an enemy resupply point."

Search of the area found most of the hootches with at least one sewing machine, some as many as three. "These we believe were used to produce VC uniforms from some of the over 40 yards of material found hidden in one of the buildings," Wissinger commented.

The Warriors continued throughout the day finding evidence to support the resupply point theory: 300 pounds of sugar, two hidden 105mm dud rounds, several packages of Cambodian-made cigarettes, 15 Viet Cong type hammocks and small plastic bags of rice.



HARVEST TIME - While on patrol near Duc Hoa, Tropic Lightning soldiers of B Company, 2d Battalion, 14th Infantry, form a sharp contrast to a Vietnamese woman husking rice. (PHOTO BY SP4 E. R. JAMES)

NVA Look Like Beatle Fans'

By PFC Ralph S. Novak

TAY NINH -How does a charging wave of North Vietnamese look?

"Like a bunch of kids running to see the Beatles," said Sergeant Samuel A. Rodgers, Dallas, Tex., a radarman with the 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Manchu, who a day before had helped turn back a fierce midnight assault on their Mole City patrol base, 16 miles southeast of Tay Ninh.

Sergeant Shelton F. Barrs, John's Island, S.C., whose platoon bore the brunt of the NVA attack in which 106 enemy troops died, agreed with Rodgers.

"There wasn't any of this 'banzai' stuff or screaming and yelling," Barrs said. "They just came running in."

The estimated regimental attack on the Manchu's Bravo and Charlie companies' well-entrenched patrol base came hard on the wake of a rocket-mortar barrage, "and some of those NVA came right along with the rockets," Rodgers said.

The NVA forces broke through at one point to take two bunkers and 50 feet of trench line. But the two companies of 1st Brigade infantrymen, with support from mortars, artillery and aircraft, held fast.

Barrs said the NVA seemed over-confident. "They made two false assumptions," he contended. "First, they thought we'd fall back, and we didn't. Second, they weren't expecting us to be so well dug-in, and that set them back."

Among the individual efforts that helped repel the attack, Barrs and Rodgers both particularly recalled the work of two men - Charlie Company Commander Captain Ramon T. Pulliam of Chattanooga, Tenn., and Specialist 4 Charles E. Cureton, Greenville, S.C., a 2d Platoon grenadier.

"The old man (Pulliam) just kept going from bunker to bunker, passing out ammunition," Barrs said. "He really kept us going."

And Rodgers remembered Cureton "popping away with his M-79, keeping the enemy who'd gotten into our bunkers from going any farther."



WHIRLWIND - An incoming helicopter creates a mass of flying rice straw around Tropic Lightning infantrymen from the 2d Battalion, 12th Infantry, during an airmobile operation near Trang Bang.
(PHOTO BY SP4 CHARLES HAUGHEY)

Decorated

BRONZE STAR FOR HEROISM

LTC Robert S. McGowan, HHT 3d Sqdn, 4th Cav
MAJ Leo Ringham, B Btry, 1st Bn, 8th Arty
CPT Harry N. Joyner, 2d Bn, 14th Inf
CPT Raymond C. Dawson, Jr., Co F, 50th Inf
1LT John R. Moore, A Trp, 3d Sqdn, 4th Cav
1LT Daniel S. Ford, Co D, 1st Bn, 27th Inf
1LT Allen M. Watterson, Co D, 2d Bn, 27th Inf
1LT David G. Blanchard, Co B, 4th Bn, 23d Inf
1LT James F. O'Donoghue, A Btry, 1st Bn, 8th Arty
1LT Dennis Rohler, A Btry, 1st Bn, 8th Arty
1LT James Traynom, C Btry, 1st Bn, 8th Arty
1LT John J. Farley III, B Btry, 1st Bn, 8th Arty
1SG Calvin Barney, A Trp, 3d Sqdn, 4th Cav
PSG Eli Musulin, HHC, 2d Bn, 12th Inf
PSG Richard C. Christy, A Trp, 3d Sqdn, 4th Cav
PSG William Meyers, Co C, 2d Bn, 27th Inf
PSG Wyndham D. Jones, Co C, 2d Bn, 22d Inf
SFC John C. Main, C Btry, 1st Bn, 8th Arty
SFC John M. Ellison, Co B, 3d Bn, 22d Inf
SFC John J. Taitano, Co A, 2d Bn, 27th Inf
SFC Fredrick Lockwood, B Btry, 1st Bn, 8th Arty
SFC Angel Bonilla-Bonilla, Co D, 1st Bn, 27th Inf
SSG James N. Brown, Co D, 1st Bn, 27th Inf
SSG James Guillory, B Btry, 1st Bn, 8th Arty
SSG Osgood Fountain, B Btry, 1st Bn, 8th Arty
SSG Michael M. Jenkins, A Btry, 1st Bn, 8th Arty
SSG Levern C. Brown, A Trp, 3d Sqdn, 4th Cav
SSG James F. Calvert, Co C, 2d Bn, 27th Inf
SSG Charles W. Pannell, Co B, 1st Bn, 5th Inf
SSG Gordon J. Benson, D Trp, 3d Sqdn, 4th Cav
SGT Richard Prater, B Btry, 1st Bn, 8th Arty
SGT Roger R. Powell, B Btry, 1st Bn, 8th Arty
SGT Waverly C. Lewis, Co B, 4th Bn, 23d Inf

SGT James B. Legner, Co B, 4th Bn, 23d Inf
SGT Jerome W. Smith, B Btry, 1st Bn, 8th Arty
SGT Ladislav Bucek, B Btry, 1st Bn, 8th Arty
SGT Daniel Gonzalez, Co A, 2d Bn, 14th Inf
SGT Joseph Antognini, Co C, 1st Bn, 27th Inf
SGT Phillip A. Sorrentino, Co D, 1st Bn, 27th Inf
SGT David P. Schultz, HHC, 2d Bn, 12th Inf
SGT Phillip G. Edwards, Co C, 2d Bn, 27th Inf
SGT Dwayne L. Meyette, Co D, 1st Bn, 27th Inf
SGT John W. Stump, Co F, 50th Inf
SGT John H. McEwen, HHC, 2d Bn, 12th Inf
SGT Larry Shelton, A Btry, 1st Bn, 8th Arty
SGT Donald C. Couch, C Btry, 1st Bn, 8th Arty
SGT Howard L. Rivers, Co B, 1st Bn, 27th Inf
SP5 Travis E. Toms, D Trp, 3d Sqdn, 4th Cav
SP5 Darrell G. Riggs, Co B, 1st Bn, 5th Inf
SP5 Ronald T. Golden, 257th FA Det, 25th Inf Div
CPL Benjamin Rosales, A Btry, 1st Bn, 8th Arty
CPL Thomas Hess, A Btry, 1st Bn, 8th Arty
CPL Anthony M. Logallo, C Btry, 1st Bn, 8th Arty
SP4 Jay S. Verran, HHC, 1st Bn, 27th Inf
SP4 Robert H. Jensen, Co B, 4th Bn, 9th Inf
SP4 Chris A. Smith, Co A, 2d Bn, 27th Inf
SP4 Clayton D. Shappee, Co C, 1st Bn, 27th Inf
SP4 Frank T. Kuloloin, Co A, 2d Bn, 14th Inf
SP4 Glenn Baughman, Co B, 4th Bn, 23d Inf
SP4 William Quoss, Co B, 4th Bn, 23d Inf
SP4 Garry W. Simpson, Co D, 1st Bn, 27th Inf
SP4 Roberto Lizarraga, Co B, 1st Bn, 5th Inf
PFC Joel B. Alfassa, Co B, 4th Bn, 23d Inf
PFC Charles C. Fleek, Co C, 1st Bn, 27th Inf
PFC Terry L. Collins, HHC, 3d Bde
PFC Robert J. Clark, HHC, 3d Bde

Courage? Foolish? You Decide

Courage is no stranger to Americans. Our pages of history reveal countless examples of men and women who have, through brave and resolute action, endured dangers, suffering and even death itself.

Simply defined, courage is "that quality of mind which enables us to encounter danger and difficulties with firmness." Yet courage is not a simple thing. It has many facets.

First, a man must understand the situation - the dangers involved. If he does not, he is ignorant, not courageous.

Second, there is the "will." After the mind comprehends, the will determines "I will do this or that." It sets the determined course of action.

Third, there is boldness of action; either great physical exertion, or quiet courage of one's convictions.

In the final analysis, whether a man can be called foolish or courageous depends on the moral worth of his goal.

Today the need for individual courage is just as great as it ever was. Whether civilian or soldier, we need to be courageous people. For courage begets courage, and a courageous people can deal with the problems that beset them.

Commander's Combat Notes - Help to Meet Our Objective

The following Commander's Combat Notes were taken from the daily commander and staff briefings. They reflect the views of the Commanding General and provide some general guidance as to his ideas of how we can better meet success.

1. Be concerned for people. Second only to the requirement to men is the value of the individual. He is a paramount consideration in all command decisions and analyses.
2. Commanders should develop an attitude of aggressive helpfulness to subordinate commanders.
3. Know your missions and insure that all your subordinates know their missions.
4. Foster and encourage the esprit of aggressiveness from the individual soldiers through each unit.
5. Maintenance is not solely a 'second team's' (XO, Maintenance Officer, etc.) job. It is a command responsibility and will be command emphasized.
6. Get commanders so mad and agitated at the enemy that they will insist on winning every engagement. When one of our positions is hit, return fire must be instantaneous and overwhelming. Contact must not be broken. We must move out and prevent an enemy escape once he has exposed himself.
7. Insure that return fire is effective for us, not the enemy. Don't set patterns of fire and don't divulge positions unless it is to our advantage. The enemy often encourages you to fire just to learn where you are. When you fire, give forth with enough volume to grind him under.
11. A matter of constant emphasis is the encouragement of personnel of all ranks to think of new ways to get the job done so that we can avoid falling into stereotyped patterns that facilitate the development of VC countermeasures.
12. Think mobility-flexibility-fire power. We fight with bombs and bullets, not men's bodies. We move men around only to find targets and to improve our fire power capabilities.

Tropic Lightning

Combat Honor Roll

Added to the Tropic Lightning Combat Honor Roll this week is Specialist Four Richard C. Holmes of



Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, (Mechanized), 5th Infantry.

He distinguished himself by heroic actions on November 29, 1968 while serving as a grenadier.

While on a road clearing operation, the scout platoon came under an intense attack from a well-entrenched communist force in a nearby village.

With complete disregard for his own safety, Specialist Holmes exposed himself to the devastating Viet Cong fire as he moved forward and placed effective M-79 fire on the insurgents' positions.

When an enemy mine inflicted numerous casualties among the command group, Holmes assumed command of his squad. He courageously moved through the bullet swept area as he led his men on an assault which successfully destroyed the hostile positions.

His valorous actions were responsible for the successful thwarting of the attack.

His personal bravery, aggressiveness, and devotion to duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, the 25th Infantry Division and the United States Army.

The TROPIC LIGHTNING NEWS is an authorized publication of the 25th Infantry Division. It is published weekly for all division units in the Republic of Vietnam by the Information Office, 25th Infantry Division, APO San Francisco 96225. Army News Features, Army Photo Features, Armed Forces Press Service and Armed Forces News Bureau material are used. Views and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Department of the Army. Printed in Tokyo, Japan, by Pacific Stars and Stripes.

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7-11 Artillery MEDCAP Team Concentrates On Small Villages

CU CHI - Two or three times each week, a small but proficient medical team from the 7th Battalion, 11th Artillery sets out by jeep on a MEDCAP (medical civic action program) mission.

The team consists of Captain John W. Gaebler, M.D., of Indianapolis, Specialist 4 Donald Johnson, the battalion S-5 from Sharon Hill, Pa., and an ARVN interpreter. Because of the small staff at the battalion aid station, Gaebler must handle all the medical work on MEDCAPs himself.

Working out of Tay Ninh base camp, the MEDCAP team travels to small hamlets and villages near Tay Ninh City.

On a normal day, Doc Gaebler treats about 50 patients but sometimes the figure will exceed 100. It is very rare that the people in these small hamlets can obtain medical attention from a civilian doctor, since the majority of the civilian doctors in Vietnam practice in the larger population centers. Therefore these MEDCAPs are vital to the Vietnamese villager.

While Gaebler was treating the patients, Comstock broadcasted Chieu Hoi messages along with Vietnamese music and health tips. These broadcasts inform any nearby VC of the opportunities awaiting them in the Chieu Hoi Program.



'SHARP,' says First Lieutenant Milton C. Jones of Chicago as the Tropic Lightning infantryman points out the deadly sharp points on punji sticks in a pit near Fire Support Base Reed. The pit was discovered by the 2d Brigade's 2d Battalion, 27th Infantry Wolfhounds. **(PHOTO BY PFC R. B. WILLIAMS)**

Cleans Out Retrograde Yard

By 1Lt. Mack D. Gooding

CU CHI - Over 4,500 tons of destroyed equipment has been removed from the huge retrograde yard at Tay Ninh West. The movement was accomplished in only five months.

The 548th Maintenance Company of the 277th Supply and Service Battalion worked steadily to load the retrograde onto trucks for the trip to Long Binh, where the salvageable will be shipped to Okinawa for repair and the non-repairable items will be scrapped.

Most of the retrograde is the result of the Battle of Tay Ninh City last August and September," said Lieutenant Morris C. Cannon of Bement, Ill., Commanding Officer of the 277th S&S Battalion. "Colonel Fair (1st Brigade Commanding Officer) asked us to move the retrograde to Long Binh as soon as possible so the Retrograde Yard could be converted into a baseball diamond for the troops," one of the many projected improvements to the Tay Ninh West Base Camp.

Brigadier General Arthur Hurow, commanding General of the U.S. Army Support Command, Saigon, was on hand to give the signal to hoist the last load of retrograde onto the flatbed on December 30, 1968. "I can think of no better way to start the New Year," commented General Hurow, "than by cleaning up last year's junk and preparing the ground for constructive use."

WHERE DOES IT PLUG IN? - When the 7th Battalion, 11th Artillery, MEDCAP team broke for coffee, two young boys from Long Thoi hamlet in Tay Ninh Province tried their medical skills on each other. Said one of the boys, "I want to go to the university and be like Doctor John." He was referring to Captain John W. Gaebler, M.D. from Indianapolis, Ind., who conducts regular MEDCAPs in the hamlet. **(PHOTO BY SP4 PETE FREEMAN)**



Tropic Lightning Docs Give Hope To Young Heart Patient

By 1LT Joseph M. O'Brien II

DAU TIENG — Thanks to helping hands reaching halfway around the world, a Vietnamese youth faces the prospect of a longer, healthier and more productive life.

The youth, Nguyen Tan Hoang, 16, is crippled by a heart disorder which threatens to shorten his life. His father, a worker in the Michelin Rubber Factory at Dau Tieng, 45 miles northwest of Saigon, began seeking help for the youth last April.

The boy's plight came to the attention of medical personnel of the 3d Brigade which is headquartered at Dau Tieng, after Captain Bruce Greenfield of San Francisco examined the youth during a MEDCAP (Medical Civic Action Project). Greenfield is now assigned to Oakland Army Terminal, Calif.

When they heard of the teenager's condition, doctors and medics of Bravo Company, 25th Medical Battalion, resolved to seek open heart surgery for Hoang (pronounced Hwong).

Joint efforts by the medics and civic action personnel of the United States Air Force have sent Hoang some 9,000 miles to Houston, Tex., where he is undergoing tests by famed heart surgeon Dr. Michael De Bakey at Methodist Hospital.

According to Major Robert B. Perez of Niagara Falls, N.Y., commander of the medical company, preliminary reports from Houston indicate that the youth's condition was caused by a severe heart murmur which is the result of a damaged valve.

The Tropic Lightning medics have contributed more than \$700 toward the costs of Hoang's medical care. Men of the company also took the boy under their wing, teaching him English and dispelling his fears about making the lengthy trip to Texas.

Further contributions to the operation's costs have come from military personnel and civilians in the 25th Infantry Division, at Tan Son Nhut Air Force Base and in the United States.

While Broughton was lining up transportation, Captain Richard Brunswick of Philadelphia, then serving with Bravo Company, wrote to Dr. De Bakey describing the youth's condition. It was through Brunswick's efforts that the Houston heart surgeon decided to accept the boy's case.

"Dr. Brunswick was instrumental in laying the groundwork that will make Hoang's operation possible," said Perez. "He has spent months of effort on this boy's behalf."

Brunswick, who served a year as resident surgeon under De Bakey before entering the Army, has since been reassigned to Martin Army Hospital at Fort Benning, Ga.

Perez said that, based on preliminary reports, the youth's chances are good. No transplant operation is contemplated, he added.

Wolfhounds Find Cache

CU CHI - While on a sweep near Fire Support Base Reed II, 2nd Brigade soldiers from the 2d Battalion, 27th Infantry Wolfhounds discovered a large cache.

The first platoon, Delta Company troopers were sweeping near their night laager when they located an old VC bunker complex. "We realized that there might be a cache nearby," said Private First Class Revedy D. Black, Danbury, Conn. "So we spread out to search the area thoroughly."

The 2d Brigade soldiers conducted a careful search of the area, checking out spider holes and bunkers.

"I located a hole that had been stuffed full of brush," recalled Black. "I Pulled out the brush and spotted a Chicom 82mm mortar round."

The Tropic Lightning soldiers checked the hole and the surrounding area carefully and located more mortar rounds. Then they began the task of handing them out of the hole.

The find contained 88 82mm mortar rounds, 84 hand grenades made from beer or soda cans, one Chicom grenade, eight small and three large claymore-type mines, three anti-tank mines and one blasting cap.

The mortar rounds were evacuated to Duc Hoa and the rest of the cache was blown in place.



THIS CEMENT MIXER was the last load of retrograde to be removed from the Tay Ninh Retrograde Yard. In all, the 548th Maintenance Company of the 277th Supply and Service Battalion moved 4,507 tons of retrograde in five months from Tay Ninh to Long Binh (PHOTO BY 1LT MACK D GOODING)



PICK-UP ZONE - Manchu troopers stand poised in a field near Fire Support Base Austin as their comrades are airlifted into Mole City seven miles southeast of Tay Ninh.

Manchu Mole City - Fortified Urban Renewal

TAY NINH - First Brigade Commander Robert L. Fair of San Francisco, Calif., posed the problem: Build a hard base camp in the Viet Cong-infested area seven miles southeast of Tay Ninh..

The Manchus of the 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry, dug deep, hard, and fast for the solution. Mole City would be an underground fortress.

In 24 hours, the Manchus working with Alpha Company of the 65th Engineer Battalion transformed 186,000 pounds of building materials into a low-rise masterpiece chopped out of the ground. The building materials were airlifted into the area by 27 helicopter sorties of the 243d Support Helicopter Company.

When it was finished, Fair told Manchu commander Lieutenant Colonel Lee L. Wilson of Salina, Kan., "This is the finest position I've ever seen constructed in a single day."

The enemy forces had lost 100 killed in a battle with Regional Force elements and elements of the 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry just two weeks prior to the establishment of Mole City. The battle was the first time that U.S. forces had operated in the area in more than a year.

On the construction day, local South Vietnamese Regional Force units working with MACV Advisory Team 33 secured a landing zone for the troop-carrying helicopters of the 187th Assault Helicopter Company that brought the Manchus' Bravo and Charlie companies.

Then, after Fair and Wilson had staked out the exact location for the camp, 21 Chinook and six Super-hook sorties hauled in the necessary building materials.

Bravo Company's Specialist 4 Kenneth E. Shugart, Rock Hill, S.C., said, "If they call this place Mole City, I guess that makes us moles. But I think if old Charlie decides to hunt him some moles, he may be up against a lot tougher animal than he bargained for.

And Private First Class Lars C. Story of Cheyenne, Wyo., Charlie Company added, "Now I know what 'snug as a bug in a rug' means."

The engineers, whom Wilson credited with "doing a real fine job," were satisfied too.

Staff Sergeant Joseph Oliver of Chicago, NCOIC of 65th's Tay Ninh-based Alpha Company demolition team, put it this way, "I think we've shown Charlie that he isn't the only one who can go underground."



FILL IT UP - Manchus work steadily filling a few of the 24,000 sandbags used in the construction of the base. In the background, men of Bravo Company assemble to carry PSP armoring material to their positions on the other side of the perimeter.

REACH FOR THE SKY - A Tropic Lightning platoon leader directs a wire-laden Chinook carrying a part of the massive amounts of materials used to build Mole City.



Story And Photos
By SP4 Henry Tschirner



GLEAMING BRASS - Brigadier General Glen C. Long, then assistant division commander, offers Manchu commander, Lieutenant Colonel Leo L. Wilson, a hearty commendation after inspecting Mole City, an underground fortress constructed by the Manchus in less than 24 hours.



PLAYING IT SAFE - This Manchu bunker of Bravo Company lacks two more layers of sandbags and camouflage before completion. Taking no chances Specialists 4 Otto Graham of Judsonia, Ark., (inside bunker) and Reginald Hankerson of Winter Park, Fla., prepare fields of fire while other members of their fire team continue fortifying their position.

Road Safety - Engineers Style

Story, Photos By SP5 Bill Sluis

DAU TIENG - "We opened this road less than two months ago and Charlie doesn't like it. So far we've found exactly 100 mines."

It was shortly before dawn and members of Delta Company, 65th Engineer Battalion were setting out on a sweep of Route 14, the narrow, dusty link connecting Dau Tieng with hamlets and a fire support base to the south.

Inch by inch and step by step, men of the sweep team began the trek to a bridge site more than three miles distant. Supporting the 3d Brigade combat engineers was a company of armored personnel carriers.

"It's slow work, but we can't afford mistakes," said Captain Tadahiko Ono of New York City, commander of Delta Company. "The minesweeper you see my men carrying is heavier than it looks."

A point element of infantrymen walked at the front, followed by flank men, the sweep team, and a column of Alpha Company, 2d Battalion (Mech), 22d Infantry APC's more than a quarter mile long.

Behind the column, Vietnamese bicyclists and pedestrians followed, but were restricted from going ahead of the sweep team.

"We can't have all of these people ahead of us," said Sergeant First Class John J. Sorge of Fayetteville, N.C., third platoon sergeant. "As much as possible, we have to prevent evidence of enemy mines from being covered by bicycle tracks or footprints."

As the sun rose above the sweep team and infantrymen, they plodded southward. Nothing was found. Triple Deuce tracks now flanked both sides of the road as the sweep moved farther from Dau Tieng into an area long regarded as an enemy stronghold.

"If we aren't constantly alert they might try an ambush in this area," said First Lieutenant Zera L. Hair Jr. of Wilmington, Del., platoon leader.

The sweep was not crossing an area of loose laterite which had been crumbled by previous mine craters.

"We've found a lot of them right in this area," said Ono. The engineers have dubbed the area, just north of Ben Tranh, "Checkpoint Mines."

Minutes passed and then Private First Class Victor D. Soltero of Silver City, N.M., operating a mine detector, called out, "I've got one."

A Triple Deuce track opened up on a woodline to flush out any possible enemy ambushers who might be lurking close to the device.

Staff Sergeant Forest H. Lessore of Madison, Maine set a time fuze on the mine, a Russian 30 pounder, and hastened away as the enemy weapon blew skyward in a cloud of dust and smoke.

Moments later Private First Class Lester R. Cohen of Brooklyn, N.Y., spotted a second mine less than 30 meters from the first concussion device. Lessore set a time fuze on this one and it met the same fate as the first find.

"I think both of these had an extra charge of demolitions underneath them, since the explosion was bigger than would be expected," commented Lessore.



AS STAFF SERGEANT Forest H. Lessore of Madison, Maine, marches away, an enemy anti-tank mine explodes in a cloud of smoke and dust. (left)

PROVIDING FLANK security, an armored personnel carrier of Alpha Company, 2d Battalion (Mechanized), 22d Infantry, levels its machinegun towards dense vegetation. In the background is Nui Ba Den, the mountain of the Black Virgin. (right)



LONG SHADOWS trailing behind them in the early morning sun, the sweep team combs Route 14 south of Dau Tieng. Engineers of Delta Company, 65th Engineer Battalion in foreground and Privates First Class Victor D. Soltero of Silver City, N.M., and Lester R. Cohen of Brooklyn, N.Y.

Engineers Aid Victims Of Tet, Give Out American Legion Gifts

CU CHI - A former 65th Engineer Battalion Commander, Lieutenant Colonel H.A. Flertzheim Jr., wanting to do something extra for the Vietnamese people who lost so much during the Tet offensive distributed over 700 pounds of clothing to more than 200 residents of Go Day Ha.

The clothes were solicited by the Alonzo Cudworth American Legion Post No. 23, Milwaukee Wis., under the title Operation Flertzheim, after the originator. After leaving the 65th Engineer Battalion, Flertzheim was assigned to Headquarters USARV, Engineer Section (Construction Division). He is a member of the American Legion post.

"Since we are allowed to request charity materials only as individuals and not as units," Flertzheim said in a letter to Robert D. Chestnutwood, adjutant of ALP No. 23, "you will have to send them (the clothes) by mail or

other commercial channels" at the expense of the sender.

The 65th runs three weekly MEDCAP visits to local villages, but Flertzheim did not feel this was enough since "the greatest need of the people is for clothing, and this is virtually unobtainable over here."

In stating the plight of the Vietnamese people, Flertzheim pointed out, "The Communist TET Offensive received widespread coverage in the U.S. press, but only those of us who witnessed it can fully grasp the devastation that it brought to the civilian populace. Whole villages were literally leveled and the people turned into refugees with no possessions other than what they could carry away in their flight.

"An estimated 4,000 homes were destroyed in the 25th Infantry Division area alone, and numerous others damaged," he added.

The distribution at Go Dau Ha was made under the direction of 65th S-5 Officer, Captain Richard Sonsteli of Alexandria, Va., and the present Battalion Commander, Major James W. Argo of Rolla, Mo. First Lieutenant John Ross, Civic Action advisor to Go Dau Ha area, assisted in the coordination of the project.

The town of Go Dau Ha was selected because of its poor economic status and large number of refugees. "E" Company, 65th Engineers, is also in the process of construction of a temporary bridge across a ruined section of the Go Dau Ha Bridge that was blown by Viet Cong last spring.

CSM Helps Solve Critical Problems

DAU TIENG - "Every day it was the same story. Three quarters of a ton of ice were leaving base camp but only a little more than 100 lbs ever reached the Wolfhounds."

Command Sergeant Major Howard A. Brosseau of Highland Falls, N.Y., was telling about one of the many problems besetting infantrymen which come to his attention everyday.

"Working with the Wolfhounds sergeant major we were able to come up with ice chests which saved hundreds of pounds of ice daily," he said.

Brosseau, command sergeant major of the 3d Brigade, has been mastering the workaday difficulties of infantrymen since before World War II. Among items he checks out with the battalion sergeant's major are disposition of the troops, defensive fields of fire, ammo supplies and comfort requirements such as laundry, shower facilities and chow.

"A sergeant major must serve as the principal advisor to his commander on all matters concerning the enlisted men and their needs," said Brosseau.

Since he has ready access to staff officers, a command sergeant major can usually get action. Just before Christmas, Brosseau was instrumental in lining up a PX truck for infantrymen 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Manchus, who, because of operational necessity, were unable to return to Dau Tieng for a stand down.

During 28 year in the Army, Brosseau has spent most of his time with infantry units, including "straight leg," airborne and mechanized battalions. He has been a sergeant major for more than 18 years and has held the supergrade of E9 and command sergeant major since the inception of these two programs.

Before coming to the 25th Infantry Division in Vietnam, he was command sergeant major of the Corps of Cadets at the United States Military Academy, West Point.

Several years ago he was sergeant major of the "Tropic Lightning" division when it was at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, getting organized for its tour in Vietnam.



MUDDY STREAMS, swollen by the last of the rainy season's downfall will soon be dusty, sun-baked ditches - no less an obstacle for these Fire Brigade soldiers from the 2d Battalion, 12th Infantry. (PHOTO BY SP4 CHARLES HAUGHEY)

Lone Lieutenant Village Observer

CU CHI - In order to achieve maximum success in a complex war, Tropic Lightning soldiers are called upon to serve in many varied capacities and in many obscure settings throughout the operational area. One man in particular has a unique assignment.

First Lieutenant Joseph Hiembold, Monmouth Beach, N.J., with the 7th Battalion, 11th Field Artillery, has the distinction of being the only American living in the village of Cao Xa, located in Tay Ninh Province five miles west of Tay Ninh City, and a mere ten miles from Cambodia.

Lieutenant Hiembold serves as a forward observer and the reason for his being in Cao Xa is an important one. Located in the village is a huge Catholic Church with an enormous tower, which is an excellent looking post.

Every night Lieutenant Hiembold climbs to the very top of the tower and assumes his position for night observation. His primary job is to detect any mortar or rocket positions that the enemy could use against Tay Ninh base camp. He also calls in artillery for Cao Xa when needed.

With him is an ARVN liaison man who serves as an interpreter and also supplies intelligence reports. Also accompanying him on the tower are six villagers who man the guns if attacked. The tower is well-fortified and is supplied with over 50,000 rounds of ammunition.

The idea of placing a forward observer in the church tower was first thought of by the village priest, Father Du, to help curb rising enemy infiltration coming from Cambodia. In 1954 Father Du took his entire parish out of North Vietnam and built the village of Cao Xa. Today it is a thriving community of 6,000 and one of the most secure villages in all South Vietnam.

An interesting aspect is that this is Lieutenant Hiembold's first duty assignment in Vietnam. Lieutenant Hiembold feels this duty is very rewarding. Already he has managed to learn quite a bit of the Vietnamese language. It has also given him an excellent opportunity to get to know the Vietnamese people first hand by living and working with them.

When asked if at times he becomes lonely, he replied: "There is no chance to become lonely here because I am treated too well. The people treat me like a king, and their friendliness and sense of humor is fantastic."

Find VC Post

TAY NINH - A North Vietnamese Army regimental command post fled in a decidedly disorderly retreat when the 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Manchu's manning Mole City, a patrol base 16 miles southeast of Tay Ninh, fought off a human-wave attack recently.

Two days after the attack, which left 106 NVA bodies scattered around the perimeter of the Manchu's underground camp near the Cambodian border, elements of the Manchu's sweeping 900 meters from Mole City, found the command post remains.

Charlie Company Commander, Captain George Dias, Fayetteville, N.C., who led the sweep, said the enemy command post was a solidly entrenched room for a platoon-sized defense force. It contained communications wire connecting its positions and a .51 caliber anti-aircraft gun.

"They were about 400 meters behind their main force, and when they saw the attack had failed and our artillery was getting closer, they must have left in a hurry," Dias said. "Anything they dropped just stayed there."

The Tropic Lightning troops found abandoned hand grenades, AK-47 rifles, helmets, RPG rockets and .51 caliber ammunition.

Conscientious Objector Medic Wins Three Heroism Awards

CU CHI - Tropic Lightning Sergeant Kenneth F. Blakely is a senior medic with the Fire Brigade's 2d Battalion, 12th Infantry, who has three times been decorated for gallantry. He is also a conscientious objector who carries no weapon as he travels the rice paddies and jungles of south-central Vietnam.

He is a quiet, unpretentious man who speaks firmly and confidently of his faith in God. His overseas tour ended in December, 1968, and Blakely returned to National City, Calif., knowing that he had left a year of personal contribution in Vietnam.

As a dedicated medic he has traveled the length and breadth of the 25th Infantry Division's area of operation with the Warrior battalion's Delta Company.

Through operation Yellowstone and the Tet offensive, the 21-year-old Californian participated in the battles of Tan Hoa and Hoc Mon. He carried his life-saving skill through many unnamed enemy encounters in the HoBo Woods, the Viet Cong infested Iron Triangle, and along the border near Tay Ninh.

Armed only with a cumbersome medical bag, a thorough knowledge of his job, and a devotion to duty capable of generating an endless wealth of courage, the young sergeant on more than one occasion risked his life to rescue a wounded soldier.

"He was ever tolerant of his personal pain and discomfort but ever mindful of the pain and comfort of his comrades," said Captain Michael E. Byrne from White City, Ore., former commander of Delta Company. "Such traits under combat conditions are difficult to find and impossible to show just gratitude for," he added.

Blakely won a Silver Star for actions on April 17, 1968. During a fierce firefight, he moved from position to position administering first aid to his wounded friends. When the injured had been attended to, he began carrying his comrades to safety.

Hearing a cry for help outside the hastily formed perimeter, Blakely courageously ran through a hail of exploding projectiles to the wounded man. He immediately evacuated the soldier to the safety of the perimeter. His actions on that April day were an example of his continuous dedication throughout the year.

In addition to the heroism awards and a Purple Heart, Blakely has also been awarded a Bronze Star Medal for



meritorious service. This award was prompted primarily by the sergeant's extensive contributions to medical civic action programs (MEDCAPs) undertaken by the Warrior Battalion.

Commanding a six men medical team during regularly scheduled MEDCAPs in the Tan Son Nhut and Trang Bang areas has given the sergeant a feeling of accomplishment.

"Many Vietnamese children that we have treated for infection and disease might well have died or lost limbs without our help . . . and when kids get well they come back just to be around us. It's a great feeling to know that you've given something to someone that they really needed and could not have obtained for themselves," commented the sergeant.

Anxious to return to his wife and home, and pick up where he left off in his study of dentistry, Blakely says of Vietnam: "It's a bad situation to be in but it's something we have to do. We are definitely needed here, especially by those who bring the knowledge and practice of medicine."

HERO WITHOUT A WEAPON -(Above) Conscientious objector Sergeant Kenneth F Blakely recently returned to his National City, Calif., home after serving a year as a medic with the 2d Battalion, 12th Infantry. Blakely was awarded the Silver Star and two Bronze Stars for heroism during his tour in Vietnam. **(PHOTO BY SP4 CHARLES HAUGHEY)**

Tomahawks, Engineers Combine Efforts, In Renovating Supply Route Near Mole

TAY NINH - U.S. Forces have recently spearheaded an engineer road construction team two miles east of Cambodia and 18 miles southeast of Tay Ninh City, in an area never touched by U.S. engineers.

The engineers will perform major repair work on a dirt road between Highway 1 and Patrol Base Mole, in the Renegade Woods. The road will be used as a resupply route for troops operating in that vicinity.

One of the most vital positions in the area, Patrol Base Mole, will rely on the resupply road. The patrol base was the scene of a recent human-wave attack in which Tropic Lightning killed 106 Reds. In addition, farmers will use the newly repaired road for access to Highway 1, the main road to Saigon.

The task of rebuilding the road was given to Company A, 65th Engineers, and security was handled by the 4th Battalion (Mechanized), 23d Infantry. Braving the nearness of Cambodia and the ever-present NVA and VC, Bravo and Charlie Companies went to work. They secured the immediate area so that the engineers could complete their mission in as little time as possible.

The first day of work passed quickly as the engineers succeeded in clearing about three-quarters of the area. During that first day, they were also able to lay a foundation of rock.

By using 18 dump trucks filled with gravel the engineers were able to wrap up the first part of the operation the following day. As a final touch they smoothed the surface of the newly repaired road.



SECURITY IS SET - Company B, 4th Battalion (Mechanized), 23d Infantry, has just moved its armored personnel carriers into position to provide protection for Company A, 65th Engineers. The engineers were rebuilding part of a dirt road that leads from Highway 1 to the Renegade Woods.

THE TOMAHAWKS stand guard as the 65th bulldozers start the job of plowing up the rutted road.



Photos, Story By SP4 Roger Welt

After the engineers accomplished that part of the mission, they moved up the road to the southern edge of the Renegade Woods. From the edge of the woods the engineers will swing to the northwest and perform the same type operation to their objective, Patrol Base Mole.

When this stretch of road is completed the link-up between Patrol Base Mole and Highway 1 will be ready for use. This type of operation isn't anything new to the Tomahawks, but it's been a long time since they've been so close to Cambodia.

"Being so close to the border provides the elusive enemy an excellent chance to attack and disappear to safety in a matter of minutes," said Private First Class John Rigney, of New York City. But the Tropic Lightning troops are ready to handle any unwelcome visitors.

Regulars Capture 'Rich' VC

TAY NINH - Five VC suspects tried to rush past Company D of the 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry, and escape to Nui Ba Den Mountain but were literally run to earth by First Lieutenant Dale Richey of Fayetteville, N.C., and his Vietnamese Kit Carson Scout, Tom Nelson.

The 1st Brigade Tropic Lightning soldiers were on a reconnaissance-in-force mission two miles southeast of Nui Ba Den when they spotted five Vietnamese pedaling bicycles. Richey and Nelson moved forward and called upon the suspects to halt, but finally had to run them down before they stopped.

Nelson, who speaks very little English, turned to Richey and said, "You better call the cops."

A search of the detainees' belongings revealed 34,000 piasters. A sharp-eyed forward observer, First Lieutenant Frank Catafamo of Port Chester, N.Y., found a shopping list containing a tabulation of types and quantities of medical supplies to be bought on the South Vietnamese economy.

The suspects were sent to Fire Support Base Buell where they were immediately turned over to the officials in Tay Ninh and the National Police for questioning.

Never Think Twice, Says Manchu Medic

TAY NINH - "When you hear someone yell 'medic,' you don't stop to think about what you're doing, or you might just stop and go jump back in a hole."

That's Specialist 5 Mike F. Devine of Girardville, Pa., a medic with the 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Manchu, reflecting on a fierce North Vietnamese attack on Mole City, a Manchu base camp 16 miles southeast of Tay Ninh.

The NVA forces left 106 bodies strewn around the perimeter of the 1st Brigade troops' camp, a trench-connected complex of bunkers near the Cambodian border. But there were also U.S. killed and wounded, and Devine; the senior medic in camp, and 12 colleagues were kept busy during a seven-hour battle.

"About half our medics were new men who hadn't been in contact before, but everyone did his job, and everything went the way it was supposed to," Devine said. "I think the value of our training showed too, because we didn't have time to think over what needed to be done but had to react right away."

Although the Tropic Lightning medics scurried through Mole City's trench system most of the night, only one was wounded. "The next morning I checked myself over about 12 times," Devine recalled. "I just couldn't believe all that stuff flying around had missed me."

In addition to praising his medics, Devine complimented the Manchu 4.2 mortar crews, who were hard hit. "I was the only medic in their part of the camp, and I needed their help," he said. "I got it."

It was still, however, a long night, Devine remembered. "I just kept looking at my watch and saying to myself, 'When is that damn sun going to come up?'"

Regulars Spy Launch Sites

TAY NINH - Elements of the 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry, recently discovered enemy mortar anti-aircraft and recoilless rifle positions four miles northwest of Tay Ninh.

While the Battalion's Combined Reconnaissance and Intelligence Patrol swept in from the south, Delta Company combat assaulted into the marshes and jungles searching for the NVA-VC forces suspected of shelling Tay Ninh base camp.

Soon thereafter, Delta Company discovered six additional bunkers which had been occupied in the last twenty-four hours. Urging caution, Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Hunt of Wealder, Tex., commanding officer of 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry, instructed the elements to carefully probe the area and search out any suspected locations for hidden enemy weapons. Several fresh signs were found as well as an anti-aircraft position scattered with spent cartridges.



POP SMOKE - First Lieutenant Melvin B. Gard of Springfield, Ill., took out a smoke grenade to mark the location of several fresh bunkers found by D Company, 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry, near the Cambodian border. Watching are Sergeant John E. Larson (left) of Twin Falls, Idaho, and Specialist 4 Dennis L. Rhoads of Mt. Vernon, Ill. **(PHOTO BY SP4 DAVE DEMAURO)**

Move FSB Washington Through Half-Day of Cooperative Effort

CU CHI - In just twelve hours, the men of Company C, 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry, moved Fire Support Base Washington, complete with sandbags and overhead cover, to a new location.

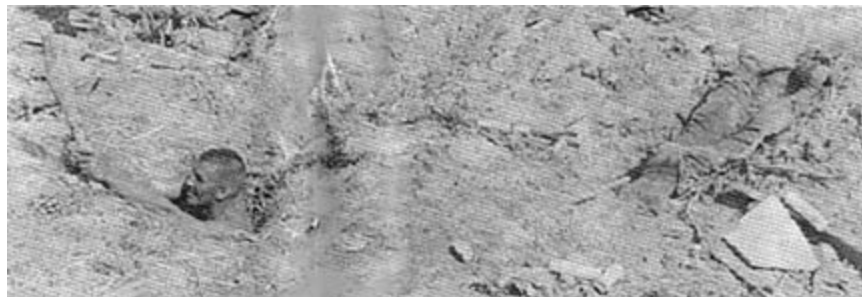
It was just another morning for the 1st Brigade soldiers as they moved out on another reconnaissance-in-force mission northwest of Tay Ninh City. The Regulars had just completed a four-hour sweep to the Rach Ben Da River when the word came down, "C Company will immediately return to its night location at Fire Support Base Washington, tear it down, ready the materials for transportation and relocate in a strategic position."

Not hesitating a moment, the men of Charlie Company began emptying sand bags and stacking the heavy sheets of steel plate on trucks to be moved to the new location. Trucks from A Company, 115th Engineers, soon arrived and were fully loaded.

Half of the company escorted the trucks to the new location to the defensive positions and started digging in. By the time the first truck loads were arriving, bulldozers detached from the 65th Engineers had already cleared the new site, established the new position to be filled by A Battery and had raised a protective berm.

While the new site was being built, the tearing down and packing continued at the old laager. The sand bags had been emptied, the sheets had been stacked, ammunition was sorted and secured for safe transport, sleeping positions were destroyed, and the surrounding concertina wire was gathered.

"Tremendous organization and support enabled us to complete this mission," said Captain Donald I. Haramoto, commanding officer of C Company from Makawao, Maui, Hawaii. "Good security was kept throughout the entire operation as the element was moved with tremendous co-operation among all involved."



RUBBER MAN - Private First Class James Raver, Columbus, Ohio, seems to be stretching things a bit too far as he recovers an RPG-7 round from an enemy tunnel. Actually, Private First Class Alger LaHood, Grosse Pointe, Mich., is bringing up the rear. Both are from the 2d Battalion, 14th Infantry, who found the cache while working on a detail near Fire Support Base Keene. **(PHOTO BY SP4 E. R. JAMES)**

Maintenance Sarge With Division Five Years, Couldn't Leave Pals

CU CHI - The man has been with the 25th Infantry Division more than five years, and he's only been in the Army for about eight.

Staff Sergeant Noe O. Garza was assigned to Tropic Lightning in November, 1963, when the unit was in Hawaii. At Schofield Barracks he attended artillery school and took an advanced course in chemicals. Between 1963 and 1965 Tropic Lightning underwent extensive training in preparation for the big move to Vietnam. During this time, Garza was getting 'short,' soon to be discharged from the Army.

Garza commented, "I almost felt guilty that the rest of my buddies were coming this direction and I was heading in the opposite - back to the States."

Being single and having no real commitments in civilian life, Garza reenlisted "to come over here with the rest of the men." Now "the rest of the men" are gone, and he believes he is probably the only soldier left in the division who was part of the original Hawaii group.

Garza is presently an armament platoon sergeant with Headquarters and Company A, 725th Maintenance Battalion. His duty is to insure proper functioning of all weapons in the division, as well as chemical equipment and fire direction control instruments.

"We work on everything from the M-16 rifle to eight-inch howitzers, and just make sure equipment is ready when it's needed," Garza said. He pointed out that in one month's time, as many as 150 small arms and six or seven big guns are repaired by his crew.

Thanks to
Mack D. Gooding, 15th PID, 1st Bde., for sharing this issue,
Kirk Ramsey, 2nd Bn., 14th Inf. for creating this page.

This page last modified 8-12-2004

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