

# TROPIC LIGHTNING NEWS



Ready To Strike.... Anywhere, Anytime

Vol 4 No. 5

TROPIC LIGHTNING NEWS

February 3, 1969

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## Third Brigade Records Another Bountiful Year

**DAU TIENG** - The 3d Brigade has drawn the curtain on a year in which the Tropic Lightning infantrymen killed more than 4,200 enemy.

In 12 months of fighting which ranged from the streets of Saigon to the jungles of War Zone C, the brigade captured more than 426,000 lbs of rice and countless weapons and ammunition.

The year was highlighted by counterpunches at Soui Cut, where more than 350 enemy died in a single night; near Saigon in the enemy's abortive Tet offensive; around Trang Bang and Tay Ninh City during the enemy thrusts in May and August, and in the area near Dau Tieng base camp during the closing months of the year.

As the year began, the brigade's forces were positioned in Fire Support Base Burt, on the Soui Cut, a small stream 60 miles northwest of Saigon.

In the second largest single day action of the war, forces of the 2d Battalion (Mech), 22d Infantry and 3d Battalion, 22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry dealt death on enemy human waves hurling themselves out of the jungle on the night following New Year's Day.

Aided by guns of the 2d Battalion, 77th Artillery, helicopter gunships and tactical air strikes the infantrymen killed 382 enemy.

During the days following Tet, the brigade's forces were split between the areas around Dau Tieng and Saigon. While the 2d Battalion (Mechanized), 22d Infantry Triple Deuce ranged Dau Tieng to Trang Bang in road sweeps and combat operations, the brigade's other two battalions fought in areas between Cu Chi and Saigon.

In fierce fighting less than 10 miles from Saigon and in Cholon, infantrymen of the 2d Battalion, 12th Infantry and 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry, dealt with enemy in house to house fighting and in battles across rice paddies.

In April, Regulars of the 3d of the 22d, backed by the Triple Deuce, killed 137 enemy in a night battle near the edge of war Zone C.

As the enemy tried yet another offensive in May, Tropic Lightning organized Task Force Daems, bringing

numerous units of the Division under operational control of the 3d Brigade.

In 13 days the Task force accounted for more than 600 enemy in sweeps ranging from Hoc Mon and the Saigon area toward Tay Ninh City. In all, the force accounted for more than 800 enemy killed.

At the conclusion of the summer operations the brigade held the enviable record of not allowing a single enemy rocket or mortar round to be fired from its area of responsibility. Earlier the area had been notorious as part of the enemy rocket belt.

With its return to Dau Tieng near the edge of War Zone C, 45 miles northwest of Saigon, the brigade has concentrated on thrusts into the Boi Loi Woods and Trapezoid areas, as well as longtime enemy strongholds in the Mushroom, Crescent and Onion.

Operations by the 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Wolfhounds in the Trapezoid and in deserted rubber plantations resulted in the uncovering of many substantial caches. One of the largest finds included a hospital and more than 1,000 lbs of medical supplies as well as a grenade factory.

Meanwhile the Triple Deuce killed 73 attackers who attempted to ambush a convoy in the Ben Cui Rubber Plantation.

A major step along the way to pacification was the reopening of route 14, which serves as the main artery of transportation on the east side of the Saigon River south of Dau Tieng.

## Warriors, Air Strikes Doom 16 Viet Cong

By SP4 Charles Haughey

**CU CHI** - Second Brigade soldiers of the 2d Battalion, 12th Infantry, killed 16 Viet Cong in two days of fierce fighting nine miles north of Cu Chi.

The First platoon of the battalion's Charlie Company spotted oversized rice shocks near a distant weed line just outside the small jungle village of Bo Hea.

"The shocks were fat and looked as though they were hiding something," said platoon leader First Lieutenant Louis M Gietka from Clarks Summit, Pa. "It seemed too obvious," he continued, "So I directed my grenadiers to drop M79 rounds into the area."

Just as the round landed to expose what appeared to be a mortar tube, the Fire Brigade soldiers began receiving .51 caliber fire from their right flank.

Reacting quickly, Gietka maneuvered his platoon into a nearby hedgerow. By this time the Warriors were receiving fire from several directions.

Air strikes, artillery and cobra gunships were called in to assist the battling infantrymen. As the gunships and Air Force Jets took their toll, the enemy firepower slowed and finally stopped.

The Charlie Company soldiers assaulted the enemy positions overrunning some of the bunkers.

"We had moved about 200 meters when all hell broke loose," Gietka continued. "We suddenly were being hit from three sides."

Maneuvering swiftly to the southwest, the Warriors for a short time lost contact with the estimated reinforced enemy company. They took this opportunity to form a night defensive position.

Roaring into a nearby clearing, helicopters landed five ships at a time depositing the Warrior's Bravo Company in the ravaged area, amid sporadic bursts of enemy small arms fire.

Bravo Company, commanded by Captain Allan R. Wissinger, San Diego, joined the battle to reinforce the night laager.

Working feverishly by the flickering light of flares, the two companies prepared for a night battle.

At 4:30 a.m. the enemy began an all out attack consisting of barrages of over 100 RPG rounds from all sides.

"The enemy tried to overrun our west defenses, but our machine-gunners stopped him before he really got started," said platoon leader Gietka who was himself wounded in action.



**WOLFHOUNDS LOAD MORTARS AND RICE** - Tropic Lightning troopers from the 2d Battalion, 27th Infantry Wolfhounds load captured mortar rounds and rice on waiting choppers. The 2d Brigade soldiers found the large cache near Fire Support Base Reed II. (PHOTO BY SP4 KARL KARLGAARD)

## Manchu MEDCAP Roots Out Villagers Dental Problems

By 1Lt. Mack D. Gooding

**TAY NINH** - Happiness, or at least relief, was a visit to the dentist for 30 villagers who had teeth pulled during a recent medical civic action program. The MEDCAP was conducted by a team from the 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Manchus.

Battalion surgeon Captain Thomas R. Thurman of North English, Iowa, performed the dentistry. Thurman and his two medics, Specialist 5 Mike Devine of Girardville, Pa., and Specialist 4 Robert L. Henderson of Vallejo, Calif., treated 220 other People during the eight-hour MEDCAP at Ben Cau hamlet, eight miles southeast of Tay Ninh.

The MEDCAP team was most enthusiastic about the dental work.

Henderson said the visit had done "a real service for the people here, brought results they could see right away."

"Another thing is the language barrier isn't such a problem with dental work," Henderson said, "If someone comes in with abdominal pains it takes a lot of translating to figure out what's bothering him, but it's usually pretty easy to see when someone has a bad tooth."

Thurman agreed, calling the mission "a real rewarding trip, rewarding medically for the people of Ben Cau, rewarding for us in terms of a feeling of satisfaction at having helped them."

## VC Cache Cashiered

**CU CHI** - Specialist 4 Fred G. Horn, Jr., of Allentown, N.J., and ARVN soldier, Hurynh Baen Ngoc, discovered five 122mm rockets, disassembled for shipment, on a sweep a mile and a half south of Tropic Lightning's Cu Chi base camp.

Elements of the 5th ARVN Division, advised by Captain Stephan Rominsky of Macon, Ga., were working with

the tank section of Headquarters Company, 2d Battalion, 34th Armor, when the find was made.

Major Benjamin Beasley of Gainesville, Fla., operations officer, remarked, "The absence of a launcher indicated that the cache is a portion of a logistical supply route to the outskirts of Saigon, where the rockets were probably intended for use."

In the nearly six-foot high bunkers were two M-2 carbines, one M-1, 200 rounds of M-2 ammo, one AR-47, two M-26 fragmentation grenades, several claymore mines and several documents.

## Decorated

### SILVER STAR

LTC Mark L. Reese, HHC, 1st Bn, 25th Inf Div  
 MAJ Wilber McPherson, HHC, 3d Bde, 25th Inf Div  
 MAJ William N. Parish, HHC, 2d Bn, 12th Inf  
 MAJ Joe Rigby, HHC, 2d Bn, 12th Inf  
 CPT James P. Hales, Co B, 4th Bn, 23d Inf  
 CPT Harry M. Foster, A Btry, 1st Bn, 8th Arty  
 CPT Guy Laboa, Co A, 1st Bn, 5th Inf  
 CPT Lansing T. Hewitt, Co A, 2d Bn, 12th Inf  
 CPT Ramon T. Pulliam, Co C, 4th Bn, 9th Inf  
 CPT Gary J. Norton, HHC, 1st Bn, 5th Inf  
 1LT William T. Orendorff, Co C, 4th Bn, 9th Inf  
 1LT Stephen Giroux, Co B, 4th Bn, 9th Inf  
 1LT Dennis T. Reeder, Co B, 4th Bn, 23d Inf  
 1LT Arthur Tomaschek, Co F, 50th Inf  
 1LT Danial J. Belobradjic, Co C, 1st Bn, 5th Inf  
 1LT Douglas M. Stewart, Co D, 1st Bn, 27th Inf  
 1LT John E. Bean, A Btry, 2d Bn, 77th Arty  
 1LT William T. Damron, Co C, 1st Bn, 27th Inf  
 1LT Jon Bray, Co A, 2d Bn, 27th Inf

WO1 Grant S. Parmalee, HHC, 1st Bde  
 PSG David K. Kauhane, Co B, 4th Bn, 9th Inf  
 SSG Willard R. Ethridge, Co F, 50th Inf  
 SFC Edward Segers, Co A, 65th Engr Bn  
 SFC William T. Landman, Co C, 3d Bn, 22d Inf  
 SP6 Juan Zamarripa, 2d Bn, 27th Inf  
 SGT Jose D. Olea, Co C, 4th Bn, 9th Inf  
 SGT Douglas Nichols, HHC, 3d Sqdn, 4th Cav  
 SGT David P. Miller, Co C, 4th Bn, 9th Inf  
 SGT Pedring Gonzales, HHC, 1st Bn, 5th Inf  
 SP4 Emanuel V. Marino, Co B, 4th Bn, 9th Inf  
 SP4 Arthur O'Bryan, Co B, 25th Sup & Trans Bn  
 PFC Robert B. Chavous, Co B, 4th Bn, 9th Inf  
 PFC Cleveland, Co B, 4th Bn, 9th Inf  
 PFC William K. Chamberlain, Co B, 4th Bn, 9th Inf  
 PFC Michael McClellan, Co B, 4th Bn, 9th Inf  
 PFC Darrel L. Spence, Co B, 2d Bn, 12th Inf  
 PFC Larry M. Wallace, Co B, 4th Bn, 9th Inf



***Tropic Lightning Tots***  
**The Commanding General Welcomes**  
**The Following Tropic Lightning Tots**  
**To The 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division - As**  
**Reported By The American Red Cross.**  
**Born To:**

January 7

SGT Walter J. Cockrell, Co D, 1st Bn, 5th Inf, a son  
 SP4 Richard Boer, Co A, 125th Sig Bn, a daughter  
 PFC Duane L. Twite, Co B, 65th Engr Bn, a daughter

January 8

PFC George W. Lynch, Co D, 2d Bn, 12th Inf, a daughter

January 9

PFC Dayrl E. Bingham, Co A, 2d Bn, 14th Inf, a daughter

January 11

1LT James S. Branyon, Hq & Co A, 25th Med Bn, a son  
 WO1 Eugene F. Gibson, HHC, 2d Bn, 34th Armor, daughter

January 12

WO1 R.S. Norduane, Co A, 25th Avn Bn, a daughter  
 PFC Paul A. Weaver, A Btry, 1st Bn, 8th Arty, a son

January 14

CPT John R. Moran, HHC, 25th S&T Bn, a daughter  
 1LT Mark R. Custer, Co A, 2d Bn, 34th Armor, a daughter

## Marijuana and Soldier in War Makes Very Unhealthy Situation

You are one soldier among some 350,000 in Vietnam. You are all concerned with the same thing - getting home safely after a tour in Vietnam.

All soldiers have problems but some are confronted with more serious ones than others. Marijuana can be a major problem in anyone's life, especially for a soldier in a combat zone.

Why the big flap over pot?

What does it have to do with you?

And whose business is it, anyway, what you think or do about marijuana?

The answers to the above questions are not easy, but they may mean the difference between life and death to you while you're in Vietnam.

Drugs have their place in Vietnam, and when medically prescribed and properly used, can prevent diseases and infections. However, drugs should be treated with respect and common sense.

A hallucinogen - a drug that can cause delusions - can damage your mind and have no known medical benefit whatsoever.

Marijuana is such a drug. It is easiest to obtain in Vietnam and is the most frequently abused of the hallucinogenic drugs today.

Little is known about the long-term effects of marijuana use. The effects vary with the individual, and you cannot be certain that even a mild form or dose of pot is totally safe for you.

While under the influence of the weed, an individual's concept of time and space can be radically distorted. He responds slowly and unpredictably to emergency situations, and in Vietnam this costs lives.

The lives of all the men on a patrol depend on the alertness of the point man. Each member of a fire team is dependent on his buddies for survival in a combat situation.

The success of an aircraft mission may depend on the ground maintenance crew whose mind is not dulled by drugs. No one can afford to trust the fate of his unit, helicopter or tank to any man who may be under the influence of marijuana.

Use of marijuana is not only a Federal offense with stiff penalties, even for first offenses, but it is also a violation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Court martial and the possibility of five years in prison are consequences a military user of marijuana chances.

The abuser of drugs in Vietnam is truly more your enemy than your friend. In the States he will be a drag on his friends, his family, and his community.

It is very difficult to admire such a man.

It would be tragic to be one.

### Tropic Lightning

## Combat Honor Roll



Specialist 4 Gary L. Frankhouse distinguished himself by heroic actions on December 24, 1968, while serving as a squad leader with Company D, 2d Battalion, 12th Infantry.

While on a combat operation, Company D came under a treacherous barrage of Communist automatic weapons and RPG fire.

Frankhouse, reacting immediately, dauntlessly exposed himself to the fierce Viet Cong shelling as he placed lethal suppressive fire on the enemy positions.

Observing a wounded comrade in severe pain, and in an exposed position, he courageously moved through the bullet-swept area toward the endangered soldier.

Although seriously wounded while attempting to reach his comrade, he ignored his injury and continued through the hail of exploding projectiles to the aid of his colleague.

Upon reaching his fellow soldier, Frankhouse immediately applied life saving aid, simultaneously placing blazing M-16 fire on the fanatical aggressors.

With complete disregard for his personal safety, he remained in an exposed position protecting his injured

comrade until the enemy attack was thwarted.

His valorous actions were responsible for saving his comrade's life.

Frankhouse's 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.

## ***Punch Cards On R&R Trip***

Effective immediately, block number '2' of the MACV Ration Card (MACV Form 333) will be punched at the R&R processing center at the time an individual goes on R&R.

Any person who arrives at the R&R processing center whose card is punched in block number '2' will be removed from the plane manifest.

The only exception will be for personnel whose orders indicate they are authorized a second R&R due to an extension of their foreign service tour for a period of 90 days or more.

R&R orders will be properly annotated by the issuing authority.

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# ***Lightnin' Is Strikin'***



**MACHINE GUNNER** - Specialist 4 James A. Leviscek from Fling, Mich., opens up on a suspected enemy position during a Tropic Lightning sweep near Trung Lap. Leviscek is from the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion (Mechanized) 5<sup>th</sup> infantry. (PHOTO BY PFC RYAN POSTELL)



**DUST BOWL** - With a dust trail blocking out the view of the tank's rear, the mounted infantry-armor soldiers of the 2d Brigade keep an eye out for Charlie. The tank is from the 2d Battalion, 34<sup>th</sup> Armor. **(PHOTO BY SP5 DOUG ELLIOT)**

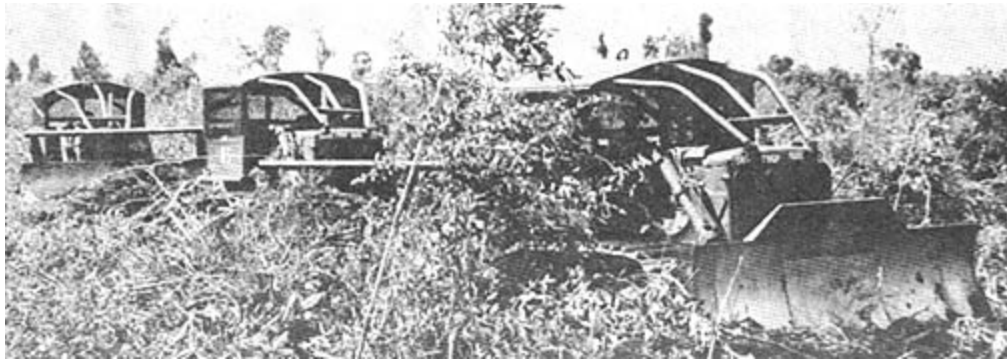
**SNOOPY RIDES AGAIN** with Tropic Lightning pilots for the command and control ship of the 116<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Company. The Hornet ship is flying for the 2d Brigade's 2d Battalion, 14<sup>th</sup> Infantry. **(PHOTO BY 1LT J. N. BLACK)**



**SEARCH** - A Fire Brigade soldier with the 2d Battalion, 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry Wolfhounds walks along a hedgerow. The rifleman was on a reconnaissance-in-force mission in Hau Nghia Province. **(PHOTO BY SP4 BILL CLEVINGER)**

**UNUSUAL TRAJECTORY?** Cannoneers of the 2d Battalion, 77<sup>th</sup> Artillery blast away during fire mission at Fire Support Base Wood. Captured in the photo is the round from a sister gun just to the right of the one pictured. **(PHOTO BY SP5 BILL SLUIS)**





**DEPRIVING CHARLIE OF A HOME** - Ripping their way through the dense jungle near Dau Tieng, Rome Plows of the 168<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion level the jungles of the Ben Cui rubber plantation, secured by the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion (Mechanized) 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry. Operations like this deprive the Viet Cong of cover for infiltration routes and base camps in the Division's area of operations. (PHOTO BY SP4 DON MOSSEAU)

**ANOTHER SAMPAN** is found, adding to the growing list of supplies and munitions uncovered during 'Big Muddy'.





**INFANTRYMEN BECOME WATERBORNE** to search an inlet for Viet Cong supply and staging areas. Patrol boats, unable to pass in these shallow inlets, stand by ready to provide suppressive fire if needed.

## Riverine Forces Meet On The 'Big Muddy' Near War Zone C

**Dau Tieng** - Tom Sawyer met Huck Finn on the Big Muddy - but under circumstances quite different from those related in the classics of Mark Twain.

An operation Big Muddy, on the Saigon River near Dau Tieng, 45 miles northwest of Saigon, turned up enemy weapons caches and destroyed bunkers and staging areas.

The operation linked riverine forces of the United States and Vietnamese Navies with Tropic Lightning infantrymen of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade.

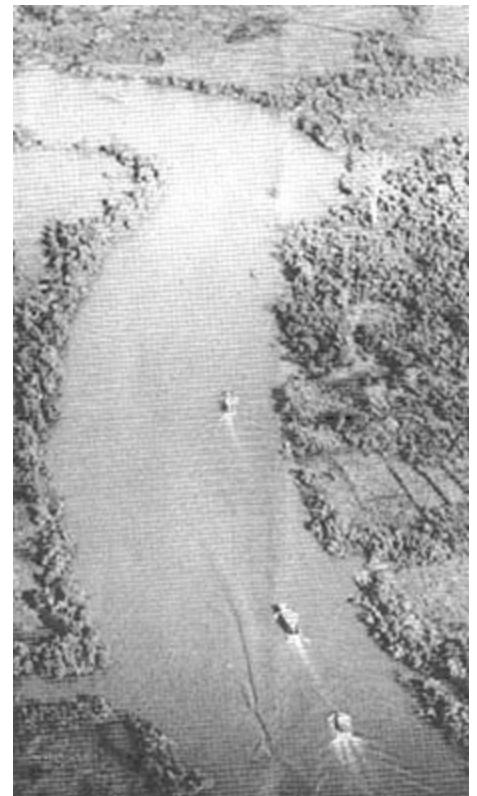
Conducting the river sweeps were Huck Finn forces of the Republic of Vietnam's 28<sup>th</sup> River Assault Group and Tom Sawyer river patrol boats (PBRs) of the U.S. Navy's River Division 594.

The naval vessels patrolled the vital tributary almost to the edge of War Zone C as they cut enemy supply and communication lines leading toward the Saigon area.

Riding the patrol boats of both forces were Wolfhounds of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry and Vietnamese National Police. They frequently went ashore to search out suspected enemy positions flanking the waterway.

During the first days of the operation the Wolfhounds unearthed more than 24,000 rounds of 7.62 rifle ammunition, 69 rounds of 60mm and 82mm mortars, 1,100 rounds of .51 caliber machinegun ammo and 500 rifle grenades in caches near the riverbanks.

Tactically, the Tropic Lightning brigade's first large-scale riverine operation was a big success. Not only was the enemy denied the use of one of his favorite supply lines, but he will have a lot of digging to do if he hopes to relocate his base camps and staging areas along the Saigon River.



**ARMED PATROL BOATS**, minesweepers, and troop carriers (above right) from the Vietnamese Navy's 28<sup>th</sup> River

Assault Group transport soldiers of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry Wolfhounds up the Saigon River during the operation nicknamed 'Big Muddy'.

**Story And Photos  
By SGT Hector Nadal**

**CAUTIONSLY CHECKING** for possible booby traps, SP4 Clifford L. Green of St. Marys, Pa., probes under the lid of a Viet Cong ammunition box.



**A LAST MINUTE** communications check is made before moving to conduct sweeps along the Saigon River.



**WOLFHOOUNDS** (above) examine some of the more than 400 rifle grenades captured during 'Big Muddy'.

**SERGEANT HECTOR NADAL** (left), of San Francisco, a combat correspondent who covered the operation shown on these pages, displays one of the 106 rifle grenades he discovered in a spider hole near the Saigon River, 45 miles northwest of the capital. **(PHOTO BY 2LT DENNIS HICKS)**

## Fire Brigade Throws Festival For Two Vietnamese Hamlets

**CU CHI** - In extending the efforts to pacify the once VC controlled hamlets of Thai My and Bau Dieu, Division units recently conducted a district festival for Vietnamese Civilians in that area.

Sponsored by the 2d Brigade Civic Action Office, the festival provided food, gifts, and entertainment for some 1500 Vietnamese who attended.

Joint MEDCAPs by 2d Brigade units, the Division Support Command and Division Artillery treated nearly 600 patients and provided soap, health information, literature and other sundries for those present.

Gifts for the 600 children present included T-shirts, shorts soccer balls, kites, shoes, candy and Vietnamese Flags. For the adults there were sewing kits, clothing, food, cooking oils, newspapers and cigarettes.

A part of the intended result was to meet the people and establish a common ground of understanding, and to foster in the people a desire to help build a united Vietnam.

"The people have a natural fear of the unknown," said Colonel Eugene M. Lynch, Fire Brigade commander. "We have two unknowns here. The people don't know the government and the government doesn't know the people. Therefore they seem to have had a fear of each other.

"It's when we get the two unknowns together like this and overcome the fears that we begin to make progress. Our concern here is nation-building," he continued, "but the people have to want to help. The festival helped to get them together, and I think it came off very well."

Major Calvin Swinson, brigade civic action officer said, "We hoped to show the people that the government of Vietnam is supporting them and that their hamlets are now secure. I think we were very successful in that the people were able to come together, which they are rarely able to do. They were all there from the District Chief, Village Chief on down."



**SECOND BRIGADE  
COMMANDER** Colonel Eugene M. Lynch enlists the aid of ARVN Captain Nguyen Ding Dao, Fire Brigade liaison officer, to chat with a young student from the Phuoc Hiop school at the recent district festival near Bau Dieu. **(PHOTO BY SP4 FRANK HEINY)**

## Tay Ninh MEDCAP Treats Over 2,000

By 1LT Mack D. Gooding

**TAY NINH** - One of the largest MEDCAPs (Medical Civic Action Programs) ever held in South Vietnam was conducted by the 1st Brigade at Tay Ninh base camp. It treated 2,448 patients.

The MEDCAP consisted of giving plague inoculations to Vietnamese who work at the 1st Brigade base camp. As each laborer reported for work he was greeted by medics of Delta Company, 25th Medical Battalion, and 1st Brigade civic action personnel. Each laborer, to include National Policemen and interpreters, was given a plague shot and a shot record. Treating approximately 600 patients per hour, the giant MEDCAP was completed in four in short hours.

The mass inoculation MEDCAP was part of a Vietnamese program to inoculate all Vietnamese by mid-January 1969 as decreed by the Vietnamese Minister of Health.

"Today's effort was just the beginning," stated Major Clarence M. DeYoung of San Diego, Calif., civil affairs officer for the brigade. "We will immunize during all future MEDCAPs, in an effort to help the provinces reach their target date," he continued.

Tay Ninh officials have inoculated 11 per cent (40,000) of the province's 387,000 inhabitants, exclusive of the 1st Brigade. Four province health teams will be combined with future brigade MEDCAP teams giving the teams the potential of inoculating 15,000 to 25,000 per day.

The inoculation of the Vietnamese labor force has other ramifications according to DeYoung. "Besides the obvious effects, the inoculations show our interest in the people. It also shows them how to improve their own health standards."

Vaccine for the MEDCAP was provided by the Tay Ninh Province Hospital. Mass inoculation against cholera and small pox will be undertaken in the future as the vaccine becomes available.

## Singing GI Goes To Dogs

**TAY NINH** - GIs who like to find a quiet corner to strum a guitar and sing have enough trouble eluding the ever-present sounds of AFVN radio, and now the dogs may be turning against them too.

Sergeant Larry W. Jennings, Dallas, Tex., a mail clerk with the 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry, was in a hootch at Tay Ninh base camp one night recently playing and singing "Once A Day" when he was suddenly - without invitation - joined by a passing mongrel who howled along in tempo.

Unflustered, Jennings called out, "What are you, a music critic? I don't criticize your barking, do I?"

With that the dog stopped his accompaniment, lifted his nose in the air just slightly, and trotted off.

**READY TO GO** - Fire Brigade Soldiers from the 2d Battalion, 27th Infantry Wolfhounds hurry into position to catch the next lift during eagle flight operations near Cu Chi. (PHOTO BY SP4 BILL CLEVINGER)



## Safety Signs For Highway

**CU CHI** - Highway 8A, which for some time has carried enough traffic to be considered a huge international thoroughfare, now has the road signs it deserves. Second Brigade soldiers from the 2d Battalion, 34th Armor, have seen to that.

Sergeant First Class Billie P. Brown of Campbellsville, Ky., originator of the idea, gathered together scrap metal and, with the help of Specialists 4 Arthur Hale of Anchorage, Alaska, and Kenneth Hall of Frederick, Md. cut and built the yellow and black, triangular signs. Lieutenant Colonel Theodore E. O'Connor of College Point, Tex., Dreadnaught commander, supported the effort.

Upon completion of the signs, the 5th ARVN Regiment's civic action personnel helped place the signs at school sites along the bustling 8A.

What's next? The Tropic Lightning soldiers and ARVN personnel are now preparing speed and other highway signs for the heavily populated areas along 8 Alpha.

## Many Masters For Support Platoon

**TAY NINH** - Rarely honored but always appreciated is the Support Platoon of the 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry.

Led by First Lieutenant Joseph J. Mattoni of Toledo, Ohio, the unit is responsible for resupplying the entire battalion which is scattered over three fire support bases, a defensive perimeter on Nui Ba Den mountain and Tay Ninh base camp.

The platoon has only two NCOs and 12 enlisted men, and has its hands full meeting tight schedules and stringent resupply requirements.

Warrant Officer James E. Ross of Elizabethtown, Ky., has the tough job of maintaining the nine 2 1/2 ton trucks, five water trailers, one jeep and other equipment ranging from huge power generators to small buzz saws.

"We are constantly plagued with mechanical failures," he maintains. "The roads we have to cover are extremely hard on vehicles. Our trucks aren't exactly the newest in the world, but we've found that steady preventive maintenance has paid off with fewer mechanical failures."

Ross and his crew work as long as necessary to keep all of the equipment in top operational order. Their normal working day comprises 16 hours of tough delivery and repair.

Not only does the equipment have to be kept in top working order, it also must be clean. Along with the dry

season has come the dust. To keep the dust down, Penaprime (a tar-like substance) is spread in dusty areas.

The billowing dust creates an enormous safety problem. Chopper pilots cannot see through the swirling dirt.

Specialist 4 Charles North of Nu Mine, Pa., commented, "Sure it's a messy job and cleaning the trucks afterward is quite a job. A lot of the tasks we have to perform are not pleasant, but they have to be done."

Support also maintains its own parts shop. Stocking parts for everything from machine guns to large trucks, the platoon is responsible for providing weapons parts as need arises for them in the forward locations.

When lead is unloaded on Charlie, Support picks up ammunition from its own ammo dump and whisks it out to where it is needed.

Recently the platoon has completed a grease rack to give faster and easier lubrication to and repair of vehicles. Every other week each vehicle is given an oil change and a grease job.

Batteries are checked on a daily basis and recharged as necessary. Because of the extremely dusty conditions air and oil filters must be changed frequently to protect the inner working parts.

Establishing fire support bases has been a major task for Support. Recently they were called upon to aid the Regulars' D Company in building a fire support base south of Tay Ninh and at the same time relocate a fire support base occupied by C Company located north of Tay Ninh.

Dividing their assets, Support moved out before daybreak and remained on location until after sunset when the job was completed. Twenty truckloads were required to set up Delta's location while C Company used over thirty loads to move their base camp which had been originally set up to be occupied by two companies.

Fighting mines, ambushes, sniper fire and flat tires, the trucks moved out to the fire support base with only one man riding as shotgun for security. Frequently the roads traveled have not been swept for mines but the trips must be made to deliver the urgently needed supplies.

Private First Class Joseph C. Phillips of Costa Mesa, Calif., claims, "The best way to avoid ambush is to drive as fast as possible, but unfortunately the condition of the roads does not permit this. Because of the holes, our speed is cut to a mere crawl." They may have to move slowly but they always get there on time.

Support has been absolutely necessary in the past and continues to set higher standards for itself daily. During the August-September Battle of Tay Ninh, the platoon was responsible for moving over 73 tons of ammunition in three days. Working around the clock, they prepared the delicate cargo into slings to be lifted out by Chinooks.

Because of the exceptional work of this small unit, the Tropic Lightning troops it serves can count on having their rations, munitions and equipment for their fortifications as quickly as the need arises.



**CRANK HER UP** - Ready to start a chain saw they have just repaired are Warrant Officer James E. Ross of Elizabethtown, Ky., and Specialist 4 David H. Munce, right, Columbus, Ohio. Ross is in charge of all repair work done for the Regulars.



**A COOL JOB** - Dividing up ice to be taken out to two fire support bases are (from left), Specialist 5 Paul H Kupperman of New York City, Specialist 4 Dennis R. Bolton of Auburn Heights, Mich., and Private First Class Bill Graham of Grand Lodge, Mich. Each is in the Support Platoon of the 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry.

## Logic Dictates 'No Can Do', But Engineers Rebuild Bridge

By 2Lt Larry M. Nichols

**CU CHI** - Construction engineers said it couldn't be done - not short of full restoration - but the 65th Engineer's Echo Company has repaired the Go Dau Ha Bridge.

The Echo Engineers used a 144-foot double-triple Bailey Bridge capable of carrying division-load vehicles.

The middle span of the 500-foot existing concrete bridge was blown by the Communists on March 29, 1968. The bridge is the only span across the Oriental River in Vietnam and the major link on National Highway 2 between Saigon and the Cambodian border.

Opening ceremonies were held with Major General Ellis W. Williamson, division commander, and Colonel Nguyen Quang Thong, Tay Ninh province chief, giving keynote addresses.

Plans for the construction of the Bailey were begun in early November and considered to be of such importance that Captain Michael Foster, Echo Company commander, extended his tour by 20 days in order to complete the project.

Repair of the bridge was an engineering feat rarely attempted by combat engineers in a war zone, according to Major John Pearson, former Assistant division engineer for the 65th and project engineer.

"The erection of the bridge for this particular span was unique," Pearson said, "in that the span had to be built at half its normal width and then shoved across the gap before it could be widened to its full 16 feet."

Bailey bridges are normally 16 feet wide and erected completely on the near shore of the gap. Once they are shoved across the gap, treadway and other finishing work such as approaches are completed.

The Go Dau Ha Bridge was erected in skeleton form on the near shore, and then pushed across the gap. Once the bridge was set, the half-sized transoms were removed and lowered to a barge 50 feet below.

After this part was completed, the bridge trusses were spread to normal width, full-sized transoms were emplaced and the remaining three stories of panels, chess and decking put in place.

"So far, as we have been able to tell," Pearson said, "a Bailey erection of this type has never been attempted before."

Before construction on the Bailey could be started, fifth Engineers were faced with the problem of constructing a far shore bent that would hold the load of the 130 ton completed bridge plus its anticipated division load traffic.

"It's the kind of job that normally would be given to a port construction engineer company," Foster said, "but all we had was one platoon plus whomever we could borrow from the heavy equipment platoon of Headquarters Company. It was enough, though, and three days after we started, we had our bent waiting for our bridge."



**BRIDGE OPENING** - Major General E. W. Williamson, commanding general of Tropic Lightning (right), and Colonel Nguyen Quang Thong, Tay Ninh province chief, cut the ribbon to officially open the newly repaired Go Dau Ha bridge.

**THE TWAIN WILL MEET** - The nose of the 144-foot skeleton Bailey Bridge reaches out across the Oriental River. The 65th Engineer Battalion made repairs on the bridge. Picturesque Nui Ba Den mountain is in the background. (PHOTOS BY 2LT LARRY M. NICHOLS)



Story, Photos By SP4 Dave DeMauro

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TROPIC LIGHTNING NEWS

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**A PRESENT FOR CHARLIE** - A gun section from A Battery, 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 11<sup>th</sup> Artillery, is shown in action as a cannoneer chambers one of the 1,500 105mm howitzer rounds fired in a three-hour period during a fire mission at Fire Support Base Washington, five miles north of Tay Ninh. A Battery was firing in support of the 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry who had become engaged in heavy contact.

## Arty Piles It On For Regulars

**TAY NINH** - An urgent request for artillery support was answered with 1,500 105mm howitzer rounds in a three-hour period by A Battery, 7th Battalion, 11th Field Artillery.

Battery A, located at Fire Support Base Washington, five miles south of Tay Ninh Base Camp, was firing in support of the 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry. As the Infantry's direct support artillery, the unit was responsible for providing the major share of artillery fire in support of this operation.

Within seconds after the Infantry became engaged in combat, a high volume of fire was delivered in close proximity to the maneuver units in "danger close" missions.

The battery continued firing all night long, and by morning a total of over 2,500 rounds had been fired within a

17-hour period in support of the operations. It was called a "superb performance" by Lieutenant Colonel Walter A. Wood III, 7th Battalion, 11th Field Artillery Commander.

In addition, A Battery was joined by four 105mm howitzers from B Battery, 7th Battalion, 11th Field Artillery, the following morning. B Battery set up their guns in a laager adjacent to Fire Support Base Washington to provide additional fire power.

That morning the two batteries fired over 500 rounds in a 15-minute prep mission, firing preparation rounds for an air combat assault operation. Major General Ellis W. Williamson, division commander, commented about the operation, "This is the finest preparation I have witnessed in Vietnam."

## **'Quack' Outfit Arrives At Go Dau Ha Bridge**

By SGT Herb Burdett

**TAY NINH** - When First Lieutenant Lesley Witmer of Leola, Pa., thinks about those he has commanded, his thoughts naturally wander to a squad of 'Quack' troops that waddle and honk a lot.

Witmer is a member of the 1st Brigade Impact Team charged with expediting the delivery of eight garrulous geese to the Go Dau Ha Bridge where they will act as anti-intrusion devices for the Tropic Lightning troops.

"When I was serving with the 2d Battalion, 12th Infantry on the Hoc Mon Bridge we used a pair of geese as an early warning system, and they sure kicked up a fuss when anyone came near them," said Witmer.

"We placed them next to an avenue of approach that was hard to observe. Sure enough, as soon as some one came within 50 or 75 meters of their pen they started squawking," continued Witmer. "We tested and retested the geese and they worked every time."

"Our new squad of honkers will provide the answer to a rather sticky problem at Go Dau Ha," said Witmer. "One of the approaches to the bridge is hard to scan and is extremely wet and marshy, making it impossible to build a bunker out there. Placing the geese in a pen at this location will provide just the warning system we need."

Other units in the Division have had much success using geese as warning systems. Company B of the 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry, used a cantankerous bird named Phu Cong when they were stationed on the Phu Cuong Bridge. "Our goose could honk with the best of them and did so whenever anyone approached," said Captain George Featherston of Houston, Bravo Company Commander. "We became so attached to the animal that we took him with us to Fire Support Buell and then up to Nui Ba Den Mountain'," continued Featherston. "He just loved scrambled eggs and was authorized to go through the chow line, but we had to keep an eye on him, or he would go back for seconds."

## **Manchus Answer Call For Scubas**

**TAY NINH** - Although anyone who has slogged through rice paddies during the rainy season might dispute the point, infantrymen are not usually expected to be scuba divers.

But when Tropic Lightning's 1st Brigade headquarters at Tay Ninh flashed a "help wanted" call for divers to help retrieve a helicopter that had crashed in a nearby river, two volunteers from the 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Manchus were ready to respond.

Both First Lieutenant Harry D. Barnes, Orlando, Fla., the battalion artillery liaison officer, and Specialist 4 Mike Hellman, Kiowa, Kan., a Bravo Company medic, were helilifted to the crash site from the Manchus' Mole City patrol base 16 miles southeast of Tay Ninh. Both Barnes, who has dived off Bermuda and Florida, and Hellman, who has gone underwater sightseeing off California beaches, were ready.

But the diving equipment they needed to go into the 40-foot deep river didn't arrive until two hours later, and when it came it was accompanied by divers from the 65th Engineers Group, who retrieved the crashed chopper.

The Manchus were ready and willing to go waterborne, but this time they weren't needed.

## Wells Yield 3 Chicom Mines

**CU CHI** - Antitank mines are often costly traps for armored giants. The mines were found in shallow wells along Highway 8A, halfway between Cu Chi and the Phu Cuong Bridge.

The combined sweep consisted of members of the 2d Battalion, 34th Armor's scout platoon and an element of the 7th ARVN Regiment. The units were under control of Major Benjamin B. Beasley of Gainesville, Fla.

Specialist 4 Delbert C. Jackson of Martinsville, Va., the major's driver started things off when he strolled over to one of the many wells in the area and looked down at a metal object.

Searching the area, the Tropic Lightning soldier found two other mines in nearby wells. Also found were two artillery rounds.

**HAPPY FIND** - Specialist 4 Delbert Jackson, Martinsville, Va., a 2d Brigade soldier kneels beside the anti-tank mines he discovered on a recent sweep led by 2d Battalion, 34th Armor. (PHOTO BY SP4 DOUG EILIOT)



## 2-22 Repairs Kids School

**DAU TIENG** - The enlisted men of the 3d Brigade's Triple Deuce are working hard to rebuild schools that the Viet Cong are going to great pains to tear down.

"The project is to repair and rebuild schools in this area that the VC destroy, and give the kids a better place to be educated," summarized First Sergeant Alfred J. Macias, of Hattiesburg, Miss., a member of the board of governors.

Not knowing the best site to institute the program, SGM Robert L. Goltz, of Loveland, Colo., asked the battalion civil affairs officer First Lieutenant P. Devereaux, of Chicago, to select a needy site.

"I know just the place," explained Devereaux, "the small school of Ben Cui II was heavily damaged during a VC mortar attack, and was the perfect place to start our program."

"The necessary roofing tile, lumber, and cement will be purchased by us on the local market, and the labor will be provided from the local resources," said Devereaux. "This way we rebuild the school, and help the local economy at the same time," he noted.

The people of the area were quick to recognize the good intentions of the men of the 2d Battalion (Mech), 22d Infantry. As work began on the school, several requests for English classes were received.

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