

TROPIC LIGHTNING NEWS



Ready To Strike.... Anywhere, Anytime

Vol 4 No. 11

TROPIC LIGHTNING NEWS

March 17, 1969

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February: Cruel Days For Charlie

By PFC Harold Anderson

CU CHI - Fortunately for VC and NVA forces February was a short month. But unfortunately for Charlie, the 28 days of February marked substantial losses in men and material.

During last month Tropic Lightning soldiers killed 1,040 enemy and discovered a mammoth enemy cache containing more than 315 tons of rice. (See pages 4 and 5 for details on rice story.) Division troops also captured 306 enemy small arms and 148 crew-served weapons.

With the approach of the Tet holidays in the middle of the month, intelligence reports indicated that VC and NVA elements planned attacks similar to those they had sprung during Tet, 1968.

Finally, near the end of the month, the enemy came out of hiding and launched coordinated attacks on 25th Division base camps at Dau Tieng and Cu Chi, as well as fire support bases Diamond and Mahone II and other locations.

At Dau Tieng, infantrymen, cooks, clerks and other support elements of the 3d Brigade killed 73 of the enemy who had penetrated portions of the camp's perimeter. During the attack, hundreds of rockets, mortars, and RPG rounds struck the base camp.

With the coming of daylight, the 3d Brigade soldiers had driven the enemy out of the camp, detaining 13.

Enemy munitions captured at Dau Tieng included forty 60 millimeter mortar rounds, 76 B-40 rounds and seven launchers, 26 B-41 rounds and one launcher, 25 AK-47s, 205 satchel charges, 29 RPG boosters, five bangalore torpedoes and three claymore mines.

At Cu Chi, the enemy launched a three-pronged ground assault against division headquarters. Elements of an estimated NVA "sapper" battalion infiltrated the camp's perimeter, but due to quick work by helicopters, artillery, and spookies, they were repelled. Thirty-one enemy were killed and eight more were detained.

Confiscated during the fray were 36 RPG rocket launchers, three AK-47 rifles, 125 satchel charges, 38 grenades, and one bangalore torpedo.

Tropic Lightning soldiers at Fire Support Base Diamond, three miles southwest of Go Dau Ha turned back a hard-hitting attack by an estimated two regiments of NVA. During a 10-hour battle, the small U.S. base put out maximum fire and called in air strikes and artillery to force the enemy into the killing zone.

By the time the enemy was driven off, the Americans tallied 185 enemy killed in two days of action. Weapons captured included 12 AK-47s, seven RPG launchers and 53 rounds, two pistols, three 60mm mortars complete and 15 rounds, and four 82mm mortar rounds.

At Fire Support Base Mahone II, southeast of Dau Tieng, 3d Brigade infantrymen repulsed still another attack by an unknown number of enemy, killing 38 of them.

In Boi Loi Woods

Horsemen Find Battalion's Supplies

CU CHI - Trailing an elusive enemy through the Boi Loi Woods, B and C troops of the 3d Squadron, 4th Cavalry, uncovered enough supply caches to feed and clothe a battalion of North Vietnamese Regulars.

In a two-day sweep, the troopers destroyed more than 100 bunkers, fighting positions and tunnels. The largest of the bunkers measured 50-feet long, six-feet tall and four-feet wide.

The largest complex was dug in at the edge of a thick woodline and surveyed a broad, grassy plain. The area had been heavily saturated by B52 strikes and the bunkers did not seem to be recently occupied.

In another area, fresh blood was found in a bunker used as a dispensary. The area was bombed during the previous night. It was estimated that the enemy had fled a few hours before the Cav arrived.

Some of the clothing was destroyed, but the ARVNs distributed most of it to civilians.

A one-hundred pound bomb, a 155mm howitzer round, two RPGs, 200 rounds of 7.82 ammunition and 500 feet of rope were also found and destroyed. Twenty-six bicycles were discovered. The Cav destroyed some of the bikes while others were transported to Cu Chi base camp for use by the troopers.

In other locations, 7,600 pounds of rice were uncovered. Some of the 100-pound bags of rice were found lying in brush thickets, others were buried at the foot of a large tree, used as a landmark by the NVA. Some of the rice was destroyed by scattering it over the ground; the rest was given to ARVN units working with the Cav on the sweep operation.

Twelve barrels containing more than 700 sets of men's clothing were found in one tunnel complex. The clothing consisted mostly of shirts, trousers and shorts.

Sergeant First Class Donald E. Clark of Laurel, Yd., intelligence NCO, estimated that the clothing was made by communist sympathizers for NVA units infiltrating into the Boi Loi Woods from Cambodia.



WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM OUR FRIENDS - Three soldiers from the 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry, watch as a tactical air strike slams a

suspected enemy position. Major Harry D. Ray, Jr., Dillon, Mont.
(center), Manchu operations officer called in the air strike.
(PHOTO BY PFC RALPH NOVAK)

Decorated

Army Commendation Medal (Heroism)

MAJ Jerome Johnson, HHC, 3d Bn, 22d Inf
SGT Jack A. Gainey, Co B, 3d Bn, 22d Inf
SGT Darwin Duane German, Co B, 3d Bn, 22d Inf
SGT Miguel Cruz, Co. A, 1st Bn, 5th Inf
SGT Clovis Cook, Co B, 3d Bn, 22d Inf
SP5 Daniel F. Farren, Co B, 25th Avn Bn
SP5 Edward T. Lyons, Co B, 25th Avn Bn
CPL Otis Fortson, C Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
CPL Jerome Vice, C Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
CPL Albert L. Franklin, B Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
CPL Michael Fletcher, B Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
CPL Jesus Rivera, B Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
CPL Francis K. Whitney, Jr., B Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
SP4 George J. Maies, B Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
SP4 Joseph K. Verdugo, B Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
SP4 William Mitchell, B Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
SP4 John R. McKee, B Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
SP4 Able A. Garcia, B Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
SP4 Victor B. Hernandez, B Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
SP4 David Miller, B Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
SP4 Carline Guffey, Jr., B Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
SP4 Gerald H. Krell, B Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
SP4 James B. Squires, B Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
SP4 William T. Linebaugh, Co B, 25th Avn Bn
SP4 Harry J. Leberherz III, B Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
SP4 Richard Rodrigues, Co B, 25th Avn Bn
SP4 John Howe, Co B, 3d Bn, 22d Inf
SP4 Bruce Williamson, Co B, 3d Bn, 22d Inf
SP4 William Washington, Co B, 3d Bn, 22d Inf
SP4 Phillip McFarland, Co A, 1st Bn, 5th Inf
SP4 Kenneth E. Melton, Trp B, W Sqdn, 4th Cav
SP4 Rufus Eggleton, Co B, 3d Bn, 22d Inf
PFC David J. Lively, C Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
PFC James E. Scannell, Co A, 1st Bn, 5th Inf

PFC Willie Wittkopf, Co B, 3d Bn, 22d Inf
PFC Randy Wicklace, Co B, 22d Inf
PFC Angel Escobar, Co A, 1st Bn, 5th Inf
PFC Fred Marcus, Co B, 3d Bn, 22d Inf
PFC Louis Yussim, Co A, 1st Bn, 5th Inf
PFC Thomas P. Lazarz, Co A, 1st Bn, 5th Inf
PFC Robert Colquitt, Co B, 3d Bn, 22d Inf
PFC Michael Davidson, Co B, 3d Bn, 22d Inf
PFC Billy W. Disheroon, A Trp, 3d Sqdn, 4th Cav
PFC Charles Potts, C Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
PFC Gerald Bussell, C Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
PFC Larry Thompson, B Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
PFC William A. Stapleton, C Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
PFC Douglas Jenkins, C Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
PFC Eugene P. Morse, B Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
PFC Arthur Swanson, C Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
PFC Willie Stamper, C Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
PFC Joseph Johnson, C Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
PFC Paul Lamicellia, C Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
PFC Anthony Mitravich, C Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
PFC Arthur Cole, C Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
PFC Leslie Mathews, C Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
PFC Dennis Mullins, C Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
PFC Richard L. Bell, Jr, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
PFC Fred Pelegrini, C Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
PFC David Stairs, C Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
PFC Tommy Sims, C Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
PFC Rodney M. Boswell, B Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
PFC Alvin L. Garner, Jr, B Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
PFC Charles Burley, B Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
PFC Carl Blackburn, B Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
PFC Donald Bennett, C Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
PFC David L. Binion, B Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
PFC Darold Schaetz, C Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty

Think 'Weapons Safety,' It's A Very Vital Thing

Betcha didn't know that during a recent four month period, nearly a platoon of men were thoughtlessly killed by friendly weapons in familiar surroundings by their buddies.

Stupid acts and silly games cause all too many accidents. Most men find it hard to carry around a 105mm howitzer or "quick draw" an 81mm mortar. So, naturally this isn't what is doing the damage to our pals. The weapon most frequently toted by the troops seems to be the natural for causing the most accidents.

Perhaps a reward should be posted — WANTED ALIVE, ALL HANDLERS OF THE M16. They sure aren't going to be of any value dead or lying in the hospital. This weapon has been involved in the most accidents - 27 per cent during the four month period.

Pardner, the M16 was built to kill, and for that reason most men keep it close to them. The trouble is that some guys tend to become too careless with it. You wouldn't relax with the "two-step" snake next to you, you'd be mighty careful. The M16 can strike twice as fast!

"Quick-draw McGraw" that's what some boys favor themselves as. Men wouldn't be so blasted foolish. Boys discard the issue holster for the .45 caliber automatic and buy one of those low slung, hip huggin', fast draw getups with a belt for all the cartridges. Then they swagger around practicing their quick-draw bit.

Soldier, did you ever try to slap leather with an Army issue .45? 'Bout the only thing you're gonna do is shoot yourself in the leg. That smarts.

But big, tough, shoot 'em up cowboys can take care of themselves. They're really doing their part in this war when they're laid up in the hospital recovering from their self-inflicted wounds. Some people never grow up.

Although the M16 and the .45 are tops in the accident listings the M14 and M79 grenade launcher do their part to keep the averages high. Of course the weapon isn't to blame. It's the loose nut behind the trigger.

There are other telling statistics. The 19, 20, and 21-year-old privates first class pull between 40 and 50 per cent of the stunts that put their buddies in the hospital or six feet under. Twenty-five per cent of those involved in accidents were E4s. Some of these careless statistic makers reached the ripe old age of 22. And some didn't.

Perhaps it is because men tend to relax in base camps that more than half of the accidental shootings occur there. This is where most soldiers clean their weapons, are on guard duty and are off duty.

A little less than 10 per cent of the incidents occur with soldiers on guard duty. One fatal accident took place when one young man was riding in the back of a quarter ton. His rifle, an M16, was resting on the floor with the muzzle leaning against the man's thigh. The jeep hit a hole in the road and the weapon discharged. He died as a result of chest injuries.

Activities like burning trash and tampering with ammunition took their toll. One man was seriously injured when he took a steel rod and hit the primer in a 105 round. The round exploded! There have even been incidents of injuries resulting after some fool dropped live ordnance into burning trash.

The Commander's Supply & Maintenance Handbook is now available from pinpoint distribution centers. The handbook, DA Pamphlet 700-2 (December, 1968), is particularly helpful to commanders at company and battalion levels on supply and maintenance operations.

Your commander has a copy - Do you?

VA. Pamphlet Explains SGLI

A Veterans Administration pamphlet explaining insurance protection and the conversion privilege under the Servicemen's Group Life Insurance (SGLI) Program will soon be included in a soldier's separation papers.

Information pertaining to SGLI coverage is now contained on DD Form 214 (Armed Forces of the United States Report of Transfer of Discharge) which will be used to establish conversion eligibility. Thus, it will no longer be necessary for an ex-serviceman to send VA Form 29-8284 to the SGLI office to obtain specific authorization to convert to an individual policy.

Additionally, within 30 days following separation, VA will send each person covered by SGLI additional insurance information together with a list of all participating companies.



A COOL TEN Gs - SP5 Ronnie W. Gholson got it, the largest re-up bonus paid by the 25th in Vietnam, for re-enlisting with A Company, 125th Signal. Watching him protect his loot are (from left) MSGT H. J. Donahue, career counselor; CPT J. R. Peterson, re-enlistment officer; LTC B. P. Matthey, 125th Signal Battalion CO; and SFC S. L. Roach, career counselor.

Log Officers Needed, EM Can Apply For Direct Commission

To alleviate the serious shortage of infantry lieutenants in Vietnam, qualified personnel in grades E5 through E9 are urged to apply for direct appointment as commissioned officers in the infantry.

Applicants must have completed at least six months honorable active duty as a warrant officer or enlisted man in grades E5 through E9 in any component of the armed forces.

Completion of the Army pre-commission extension course is not required but is desirable for personnel without wartime service. Applicants must not have reached their 28th birthday at date of appointment. Waiver of maximum age limitations can be considered in certain cases.

Complete details concerning application for direct commission are contained in AR 135-100 and DA Circular 601-24.

The infantry is concerned not only with acquiring new officers through the direct commission program, but is equally interested in retaining company grade officers it now has.

Approximately half of the officers on active duty have less than two years service. More than two-thirds of these young lieutenants leave the Army after two years rather than staying on long enough to be promoted to captain.

Junior officers serving initial two year obligated tours can greatly enhance their Army Reserve {USAR} promotion status by remaining on active duty for an extra year. This will permit them to be advanced to AUS captain and to fulfill the additional active duty commitment that goes with this promotion. The officer would then be appointed to the permanent grade of USAR captain upon release from active service.

Officers separated from active duty as first lieutenants are appointed 1LT, USAR and are not eligible for promotion in the Reserves until completing: (1) two years in grade if affiliated with a Reserve unit and (2) four years in grade and six years total commissioned service if not affiliated with a Reserve unit.

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MG Ellis W. Williamson Commanding General
MAJ John C. Fairbank Information Officer
2LT Don A. Eriksson Officer-in-Charge
SP4 Stephen Lochen Editor
SP4 Charles Withrow Assistant Editor
SP4 Jim Brayer Production Supervisor

Crater Analysis Team Braves In-Coming Rocket-Mortar Fire

By SP4 Pete Freeman

TAY NINH - The prompt and effective reaction to enemy shelling of fire support bases and base camps depends on a rapid determination of the location of the enemy weapons and direction from which the rounds were fired.

One of the most positive methods of obtaining information concerning enemy weapons locations, new types of ammunition, and tactics, is by the systematic examination of craters and shell fragments.

For this reason, each artillery battery in the 25th Infantry Division has its own crater analysis team. The members are specially trained in crater analysis and must know all the many different types of communist made mortars and rockets.

Headquarters Battery, 7th Battalion, 11th Field Artillery's team is made up of First Lieutenant Ronald L. Schuckman, Cincinnati, Ohio; Sergeant First Class Ignacio Sanchez, San Antonio, Tex.; Sergeant First Class Lawrence E. Howe, Salt Lake City, Utah; and Specialist Four Gregg Lenegar, Greensburg, Kan. The team covers the whole Tay Ninh base camp, Tay Ninh East and surrounding hamlets.

The initial step in crater analysis is to locate a usable crater for determining the direction to the hostile weapon. The crater should make a clearly defined pattern on the ground, indicating the trajectory of the projectile, and should be reasonably fresh. For this reason, it is necessary for the crater team to move quickly to the location where incoming rounds are landing.

After determining the direction, they shoot back azimuths and draw the line of direction on a map. This information is then radioed in to the fire direction center so that immediate counter-fire can be effectively placed on the enemy firing position. Besides locating the direction from which the round was fired, the crater analysis team must also identify the type and caliber of weapon.

Knowing the type of weapon being used and its maximum range, plus the line of direction and the angle of the crater, the crater analysis team then calls in a complete "Shelrep" to the fire direction center (FDC). At this time FDC knows exactly where the enemy is firing from. Their maps show confirmed locations which the enemy has surveyed and repeatedly used.

Golden Dragons Touch The Hearts Of Many

By SP4 Robert Ames

CU CHI - Occasionally in the violence of war, an event takes place which restores our faith in mankind. Such an event occurred recently in the 25th Infantry Division.

Soldiers of the 2d Brigade of Tropic Lightning had the chance to bid farewell to a young Vietnamese boy who is taking his first trip to the United States.

The boy's trip is not a pleasure trip. Upon his arrival in Miami he will begin a fight for his life. The youth's name is Thi Van Liep who, since the age of 10, has suffered from a severe heart defect.

Approximately four months ago Thi's condition was discovered by the men of the 2d Battalion, 14th Infantry, while questioning possible VC suspects at Fire Support Base Keene. Brought to the attention of Doctor Richard Tessler of Miami, Fla., the youth's condition was diagnosed as severe enough for consultation with a heart specialist in Saigon.

The results of the examination showed the boy's condition as critical. Without special heart surgery Thi would die in less than one year.

Upon his arrival back at Cu Chi, the men urged him to look into the possibility of treatment outside Vietnam.

After more than four months of seeing Vietnamese and American officials, Tessler arranged for the boy to undergo surgery free of charge.

Tessler said of the Golden Dragons, "I have never seen such enthusiasm in a group of men to try and help someone as I have seen in these men.

"They just didn't seem to be able to do enough. They donated \$500, which paid for the child's partial ticket that we had to buy from San Francisco to Miami," Tessler continued. "They chipped in enthusiastically and paid much more than we had asked for that part of the ticket. We had to clothe him and buy him toiletries. All this money was also donated by the Golden Dragons."

Tessler concluded, "Everyone from our battalion commander down to the newest PFC in the battalion has done everything he could."

A boy who for the past five years watched American technology perform the tasks of war will get a chance to see what Americans are most proud of - the use of skills and technology in the art of saving lives and making life a little more comfortable.



CRATER ANALYSIS - First Lieutenant Ronald Schuckman determines the line of direction of an incoming round during a mortar attack. He gets little help from a curious friend. **(PHOTO BY SP4 PETE FREEMAN)**

East No Mystery To Manchu

TAY NINH - Most U.S. servicemen in Vietnam are seeing Asia for the first time, but when Specialist 4 Philip R. Schoonmaker of the 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Manchus arrived at Bien Hoa he was returning to the continent where he has spent 15 of the 20 years of his life.

The son of missionary parents, Schoonmaker has always lived in India except for five scattered year-long stays in the States.

Schoonmaker, a Charlie Company mortarman, spent a homesick year at a Missouri college before he volunteered for the draft in 1967 "to try to get better adjusted to American life."

"There's a colony of American missionaries where we live at the foot of the Himalayan mountains, with an all-American high school and everything," he says.

"So we don't live much differently than Americans do in the States, and we keep up with the music, fashions, and things like that. But when I went to college I was really homesick, so badly that I was physically sick."

Even though he felt at home in India, living there didn't make it easier for him to adjust to Vietnam.

"The war being what it is, I haven't had much opportunity to learn about the Vietnamese or their culture, so I can't even compare them with Indians except to say that the Vietnamese appear healthier because they have more food here."

"I wasn't even prepared for the heat and terrain, because our part of India is relatively cool, and the land isn't anything like the endless rice paddies you see here."

India did, however, familiarize Schoonmaker with the reputedly universal Asian trait American soldiers hear so much about - patience.

"They believe that their present life is just one of millions they've had in the past and will have in the future, so why should they get upset about anything that happens today when they have all of eternity to make up for it?"

He's also looking forward to returning to his favorite hobby - hunting tigers, panthers and Himalayan bears in the hills and rain forest near his home.

His parents, the Rev. and Mrs. Paul D. Schoonmaker, are living in Hartford, Conn., while his father finishes

work on his Ph.D. in theology at Hartford Theological Seminary. Schoonmaker says his father, who formerly did village evangelistic work, now tapes broadcasts for the Far East Radio Network.

OOOOOOO! - Specialist 5 Keith Caylor of Kevil, Ky., gives an inoculation to a young villager who imagines all sorts of evil things. (PHOTO BY SGT. JAN ANDERSON)



It Was A Real Rice Day

Lancers Find Huge Cache In Tay Ninh Province

TAY NINH - One of the largest rice caches ever found in Tay Ninh Province was recently uncovered by the 1st Brigade, 11 and one-half miles northwest of Tay Ninh City. The Tropic Lightning soldiers unearthed more than 315 tons of contraband rice and a VC sanctuary used for months as a training camp for NVA troops.

A herd of about 100 oxen walking along a small trail in Vietnam near the Cambodian border provided the initial clue that led to the discovery of the camp, setting a massive plan in motion involving every branch of allied combat forces.

A few days before the operation began, Major John R. Bodie of Albuquerque, N.M., a 1st Brigade forward air controller, spotted the oxen while on a visual reconnaissance mission in his OV-10 spotter plane.

"I swept in to take a close look and the oxen dispersed into a wood line," said Bodie. "I felt someone was up to the old Sioux Indian trick of slinging arms and ammunition underneath the animal."

"Major Bodie asked me to fly and take a closer look," said 1st Lieutenant Daniel W. Goins of East Point, Ga., the pilot of a light observation helicopter from Charlie Troop, 3d Squadron, 17th Cavalry.

"I skimmed in at treetop level and spotted 12 graves with bags of rice on them, command bunkers, chickens, clothing, hootches with tin roofs, and several shower stalls," continued Goins. "I was so close that I could smell cooking odors in the area as I flew over. The stockpiles of rice were hard to spot because they were camouflaged with green plastic."

Soon Major Bodie was airborne again calling air strikes into the complex.

"We kept bombing, and the more we bombed the more we uncovered," said Bodie. "In two days we called in 22 air strikes."

In preparation for his company's sweep of the area, Captain John Dorsey, Jr., of Yonkers, N.Y., commanding officer of Company D, 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry, flew over the site to familiarize himself with the terrain.

"The pilot dived straight down at the base camp, and we were surrounded by .51 caliber tracers," said Dorsey. "They formed a cone of red around us. We couldn't break out of the dive so we continued on down."

"I guess the VC thought we were going to play kamikaze with them because they scattered all over the place."

Just as I thought we were going to crash, the pilot pulled out and made a stomach-rattling roll that took us out of the enemy's range," continued Dorsey.

The following morning Bravo and Delta companies of the 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry Regulars air-assaulted into a landing zone near the Cambodian border. Air Force Super Sabres had been plastering the area since dawn.

Under the protective wing of Company A, 4th Battalion (Mechanized), 23d Infantry, and Charlie Company, 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry, battling Bravo of the 7th Battalion, 11th Artillery, had moved their 105mm Howitzers from Fire Support Base Washington to support the Regulars, and 155s from the 1st Battalion, 27th Artillery, jumped out from Fire Support Base Rawlings to lend a little extra punch.

As soon as the artillery preparation ended, a smokey ship laid a protective screen while the 187th Assault Helicopter Company operating out of Tay Ninh and the Hornets from Cu Chi carried Regulars into the fray.

Bravo Company secured the landing zone.

"I expected just about anything to happen when we hit the ground," said Bravo Company commander, 1st Lieutenant Hugh E. Stephans of Charleston, S.C. "From the heavy volume of anti-aircraft fire that had been reported we figured there would certainly be a welcoming party waiting to greet us," Stephans said.

Delta Company landed immediately after Bravo and headed straight for the objective. "As soon as we got to the camp we started to find bunkers and sleeping hootches," said Specialist 4 Gary W. Kirkpatrick of Whittier, Calif. "They were largely constructed of bamboo and tin, but artillery and air strikes leveled almost all of them. We walked right in and grabbed 27 cases of mortar rounds along with all that rice right from under their noses."

The enemy gave little resistance to the operation.

"We received a call to fire a contact mission for the Regulars when they received several incoming mortar rounds while evacuating the rice," said B Battery commander Captain John Ricca of Clark, N.J. "We knew they might really be up against something so we prepared to give them everything they needed. The enemy tubes were quieted after we fired 580 rounds." No casualties resulted from the ineffective enemy mortar fire.

Several training aids were found inside the base camp. Staging platforms and benches indicated that enemy troops were being trained in the camp.

"Apparently Charlie thought that he was safe in that location because there was no defensive perimeter set up," said Dorsey. "The bunkers were for protection from air strikes and artillery only. They had no fighting bunkers."

Lieutenant Colonel Robert B. Carmichael of Columbus, Ga., commanding officer of the 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry, hovered anxiously in his command and control helicopter as a CH-47 Chinook helicopter lowered a three-quarter ton truck into the enemy camp.

"The truck was to be used to transport the huge bags of rice from their six camouflaged storage areas throughout the camp over to the pickup zone," said Carmichael. "Things had been going extremely well up to that point, but I was anticipating an enemy attempt to shoot down the Chinook or truck. None was made, however."

"The 3d of the 22d and their elements handled their tasks so efficiently that the operation was completed in record time with minimum enemy interference," said Colonel Charles W. Hayward of Andover Mass., commanding officer of the 1st Brigade. "The insertion of the infantry was so rapid and so well covered by air strikes artillery, and gunships that the enemy could only stand off at a distance and throw in a few harassment mortar rounds, all of which were way off target."

During the five-day action 1st Brigade forward air controllers were credited with killing five enemy. Charlie Troop of the 3d Battalion, 17th Infantry killed two. Charlie Troop also detonated 45 ammo boxes suspected of containing 120mm mortar rounds with several secondary explosions resulting.

The Regulars evacuated 105 tons of rice, 62 rounds of 82mm mortar rounds and six 60mm mortar rounds. The entire operation including artillery and air strikes accounted for 315 tons of rice destroyed or evacuated.

"The NVA officer who signed the hand receipts for that rice will certainly have a little explaining to do," quipped Captain Dorsey as he headed into the 1st Brigade tactical operations center for a quick debriefing.



A **CH-47 CHINOOK** helicopter totes a three-quarter ton truck and rice back to Tay Ninh base camp. The move was not without incident. During the evacuation 20 mortar rounds were fired but were off target. Those mortars were the only resistance offered by the enemy, and much of the 315 tons of rice was evacuated.

RICE TRUCK - A three-quarter ton truck that was dropped (gently) by a CH-47 Chinook helicopter was loaded with rice from stalls in the NVA base camp. After being loaded, the truck moved to a pickup zone and was carried away the same way it arrived. Approximately 105 tons of rice were lifted out by the Regulars.



**Story And Photos
By
SP4 David DeMauro**



SNOW IN VIETNAM? - It seems that way as Specialist 4 Gary Schattman of Ogden, Utah, shovels rice. Looking on are Specialist 4 John Zukovich of Tomaqua, Pa., and 1st Lieutenant Leslie R. Fransworth of Bohemia, N.Y.



CARRYING a load of 82mm mortar rounds from the NVA base camp are members of D Company, 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry. Front to rear are PFC David J. Horsch of Hastings, Mich., SP4 Russ Andrews of St. Louis, SGT Howard N. Nance of Petersburg, Ill., and SP4 Mike Finneran of Detroit.

MORE THAN RICE - Specialist 4 Dennis Rhoades of Vernon, Ill., lifted 27 boxes of 82mm mortar ammo out of one bunker.



AN OUTGOING Chinook lifts part of the 315 tons of rice found by 1st Brigade troops.

SLASHING OPEN bags of rice are Specialist 4 Billy Perry of Marquette, Mich. (left), and Sergeant John E. Larson of Twin Falls, Idah. The bags were cut to let enough rice out so the rice could be carried away.



Combined Recon Patrol Uses A New Approach For APCs

DAU TIENG - A new approach to the use of armored personnel carriers is paying off for infantrymen of the 2d Battalion (Mechanized), 22d Infantry.

For more than two months the Triple Deuce has been using a patrol of the armored transports in a new role: reconnaissance. The small, special purpose force has proved its worth by incorporating special abilities in serving as a listening post for enemy activities. At the same time it has given no quarter in its fighting ability.

"With a small unit like this we are able to get close to the people," said First Lieutenant Michael Andrews of Jacksonville, N.C., commander of the combined Reconnaissance Patrol (CRP).

"We are lucky to have ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) soldiers as part of CRP since they can talk with the people and have a detailed knowledge of the terrain," he explained. The ARVNs, all of them volunteers, supplement 3d Brigade Tropic Lightning soldiers in the unit.

During the day and frequently at night, CRP is active in its goal of rooting out members of the Viet Cong infrastructure (VCI). Their armored personnel carriers give the patrol swift mobility and massive firepower.

On one recent night the mechanized infantrymen set out shortly before midnight to surround a hamlet in the Ben Cui Rubber Plantation, seizing a trio of women known to supply enemy uniforms and food.

The unit lives separate from the remainder of the battalion operating out of Bao Don district headquarters, 40 miles northwest of Saigon.

In its special role, CRP does not usually take part in the Triple Deuce road sweeps and reconnaissance in force operations that comprise the bulk of an infantry battalion's mission. But when a firefight breaks out CRP may be among the first units called in to reinforce a Triple Deuce line company.

During the first few weeks as members of the new team, CRP infantrymen accounted for the capture of 65 known Viet Cong agents and killed another 25 enemy in small engagements. The unit also captured more than 3,000 pounds of enemy rice, 30 weapons, 300 pounds of high explosives and hundreds of rounds of ammunition.



HELP OUT - An RTO comes in handy once in a while as Sergeant First Class William J. Woidyla, State College, Pa, will agree. Specialist 4 Donald Winn, Wicheta, Kans, helps him from a soft spot in a swampy area. Both soldiers are from the 2d Brigade's 2d Battalion, 27th Infantry Wolfhounds. (PHOTO BY SP4 KARL KARLGAARD)

Aimed At Base Camp

Regulars Find Enemy Rockets

TAY NINH - Three enemy 107 rockets were ready to fire and aimed directly at 1st Brigade base camp at Tay Ninh.

Fortunately the rockets were captured by Charlie Company of the 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry on an airmobile operation 11 miles west of Tay Ninh City. Three NVA soldiers were readying the rockets for launch when the Regulars closed in and began firing. The NVA fled, leaving three 107 rockets, two CHICOM hand grenades, one 60mm mortar, and an aiming quadrant used to zero in rockets.

Tay Ninh base camp had recently been hit with several rockets launched from the rocket belt west of the base camp. Alpha and Charlie Companies of the Regulars were heli-lifted into the area to apprehend the enemy and confiscate the missiles.

Jumping off choppers into separate landing zones, the companies closed towards the suspected launching positions. Three NVA were lowering their weapons to fire when Sergeant William Bangley of Suffix, Va., and Private First Class Ignacio C. Castro of Monterey, Calif., spotted them.

The Regulars have kept the area under strict surveillance keeping the rocket belt clear of VCN-VA forces.

By keeping the enemy on the move, the Regulars have taken away his ability to organize and launch significant attacks.

Combined Task Force Uncovers VC Caches

CU CHI - One of the largest combined operations in the 25th Infantry Division area of operations in recent months was conducted by Vietnamese and elements of Tropic Lightning's 2d Brigade at Phu Hoa Dong under the direction of Task Force Commander Lieutenant Colonel Jack P. Grisham, Anna, Ill., Brigade Executive Officer.

The task force cordoned the village complex of Phu Hoa Dong during the first 48 hours. Over the remaining 11 days of the operation, more than 9,000 villagers were questioned for information concerning widespread VC activity in the district.

Search-and-clear missions turned up numerous caches, enemy documents and equipment.

U.S. forces taking part in the action were 2d Battalion, 12th Infantry, 2d Battalion, 27th Infantry, 1st Battalion (Mechanized), 5th Infantry, 2d Battalion, 34th Armor, and the 2d Battalion, 3rd Infantry attached to the 2d Brigade from the 199th Light Infantry Brigade, plus artillery and air support.

The U.S. accounted for 31 VC/NVA killed.

The Fire Brigade Task Force captured 800 rounds of AK ammunition, a small quantity of medical supplies, 500

pounds of rice plus dozens of rifles, mortars machineguns, grenades, personal gear and ammunition.

ARVNs from the 7th Regiment, along with National Police, RF/PF elements killed 12 VC, apprehended 45 confirmed VC, and questioned 8,831 villagers.

Also, 658 tunnels were destroyed, and one outpost constructed. The operation was a concentrated effort to eliminate enemy control in what has been a VC hot spot.

Fire Brigade Has New Commander

CU CHI - In ceremonies at Warrior Hall in Cu Chi, Colonel H.S. Long, Jr., Gallatin, Mo. took command of Tropic Lightning's 2d Brigade.

Colonel Long succeeds Colonel Eugene M. Lynch, Green Bay, Wisc., who returns to the states short of a normal year's tour because of ear injuries suffered in a booby trap incident.

Major General Ellis W. Williamson, 25th Infantry Division Commanding General passed the Fire Brigade colors to Colonel Long from the outgoing commander.

Directing his remarks to Colonel Lynch, General Williamson said, "I must once again express my appreciation and admiration in the manner which he combined the attributes of thoughtfulness, thinking his way through an action, insuring that his subordinates understand what is wanted and actively supervising the operation itself."

Colonel Long, a West Point graduate, has been awarded the Joint Service Commendation Medal, the Bronze Star with Oak Leaf cluster, the Army Commendation Medal with oak leaf cluster and the second award of the Combat Infantryman Badge.

Manchus Recover U.S. Ammunition

TAY NINH - If the Viet Cong are going around calling GIs 'Indian givers' these days, you can blame the 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Manchus.

A patrol of the Manchus' Charlie Company recently retrieved a load of U.S. ammunition from an enemy cache while on a sweep near the 1st Brigade battalion's Fire Support Base Sedgwick, 16 miles southeast of Tay Ninh.

The Tropic Lightning soldiers reclaimed 12,000 rounds of M-16 ammunition in 78 bandoliers, 6,800 rounds of M-60 ammunition and four M-79 grenades. The cache also included a North Vietnamese field radio.



FERRY CROSS THE MERSEY - Not this time, but this sampan captain helps make river crossing at III Corps Sugar Mill interesting and easy. The youngsters who have become close friends of the GIs provide their services for fun and profit. (PHOTO BY 1LT J. N. BLACK)

Uptight 7/11 Arty Is Ready To Blast Charlie Anytime

TAY NINH - "Hermit India this is Scull Zero 2, Fire Mission! . . . Over. Grid279619. . . Nature of target - estimated NVA company in open. . . Method of fire - Battery One Round, HE. . . . Over."

The grid coordinates are quickly charted at the Battery Fire Direction Center. Seconds later, six 105mm howitzer rounds are fired.

This is an example of a forward observer calling for artillery support from B Battery, 7th Battalion, 11th Artillery, at a fire support base northeast of Tay Ninh City. Throughout this particular fire mission, Battling Bravo displayed speed and accuracy to accomplish their objective.

Proficiency in their job is by no means accidental, but comes through much preparation. An unpublicized but vital function of the artillery is the necessary procedural steps needed to prepare for the fire mission.

Maintenance on the howitzers is performed daily to insure each gun is in top working condition. Ammunition is also re-supplied daily to insure a sufficient amount at all times. The artillery can never be caught short of ammunition. Each gun section in the battery keeps an adequate supply of ready rounds, mostly HE (high explosive).

After ammunition is delivered, the rounds are uncrated and fused. The fuses are screwed on to the projectile with a fuse wrench. The two main types of fuses are VT (variable time) and PD (point detonating).

Whenever a fire mission is called, the guns must be adjusted to their proper positions with the correct firing data settings. In the artillery this is termed laying the guns. The gunner then adjusts a sight picture on the aiming posts, and the gun is ready to fire.

Day or night, B Battery must be prepared for a fire mission, anytime a voice may scream: "Fire Mission! ... Battery Adjust! "Firing data is quickly set on all six guns. Cannoneers break out ammunition and set given times on the fuses. Next, comes the command: "Battery one round ... fire for effect!" A round is chambered into each gun. Then, "Battery ... Fire!" Six 105mm howitzer rounds go airborne.

Bravo Battery is the direct support element for a Tropic Lightning infantry battalion. Their fire support enables the infantry to accomplish their objective, whether to provide blocking fire for a recon-by-fire mission, or to a landing zone.

The fire out by the artillery neutralizes or subdues the enemy and gives the infantry the advantage. The artillery's role: to provide continuous, close fire to support the infantry.

Any maneuver element, operating in Vietnam, must have direct support from an artillery unit to insure a successful mission.



SERGEANT Leonard W. Sears, from Woodward, Okla., chambers another 105mm round during a recent fire mission performed by Uptight cannoneers northeast of Tay Ninh City.

MAINTENANCE - A gun section from B Battery, 7th Battalion, 11th Artillery, pulls daily maintenance on their 105mm howitzer. From left to right are Private First Class Michael Garcia, Hawthorne, Nev., Private First Class Dwayne Turner, Ava, Mo., and Corporal John Banks, Effingham, Kans.



FIRE MISSION COMING - Tropic Lightning artilleryman, Corporal John Banks from Effington, Kans., of the 7th Battalion, 11th Artillery, screws a time fuse onto a 105mm howitzer round.

**Story and Photos
By
SP4 Pete Freeman**



SLIGHT ALIGNMENT - A gun section from B Battery, 7th Battalion, 11th Artillery, 'lay' their howitzer by shifting the trails as the gunner takes up a correct sight alignment while the section chief, on the phone, receives firing data from the executive officer.



"BATTERY ... FIRE!" - The assistant gunner pulls the lanyard and another artillery round is sent airborne by B Battery, firing in direct support of the Infantry from a fire support base near Tay Ninh.

Bobcats Kill 25 NVA With Aid From Air

CU CHI - Infantrymen of the 1st Battalion (Mechanized), 5th Infantry, made a wholesale disruption of one NVA unit's plans.

Near midday of a long sweep near the southeast corner of the Hobo Woods, men of Bravo Company's third platoon spotted three men wearing NVA uniforms. Air strikes and gunships covered the area with fire power as Bobcat companies Alpha and Bravo joined, readying themselves for contact.

The advancing Fire Brigade soldiers began to maneuver into a superior tactical position. In the process a nearby hedgerow suddenly came alive with enemy soldiers firing RPGs and AK-47s.

One armored personnel carrier driver, Specialist 4 Percy J. Jennings, Starksborough, Vt., from Bravo Company's third platoon was practically on top of the action.

Jennings said, "I was 30 meters from the hedgerow when I saw a flash coming toward me."

Jennings jumped clear of an RPG aimed directly at him, receiving only minor shrapnel wounds in the leg.

As darkness moved in, enemy fire had been silenced. The two companies set up a night laager with the aid of concertina wire and extra ammo dropped by a Chinook.

Early the next morning aided by Charlie Company of the Tropic Lightning, soldiers swept through the area tabulating the score of the previous day's battle as they advanced. Twenty-two NVA bodies were found, and other blood trails indicated that the Bobcats had seriously damaged the NVA unit. Aside from the body count, the three companies discovered several caches.

Staff Sergeant Richard L. Hautekeete, Grinnel, Iowa, Bravo Company second platoon sergeant, in leading his platoon through the burned-out area noticed an unnatural depression near a tree. Further examination proved Hautekeete's suspicion. A wooden trap door hastily camouflaged pointed the way to a large tunnel full of small arms ammunition - 23,400 rounds.

Sergeant Lonnie Cruise, Fair Oaks, Calif. discovered a camouflaged hole filled with 82mm mortar rounds, 60mm mortar rounds, recoilless rifle rounds and small arms ammunition.

In yet another tunnel, Private First Class Roger D. Champion Birmingham, Ala., pulled an outgoing bag of NVA mail. Not to be left out of the spoils were the men of Charlie Company who detained one suspect.

At the end of the day, the 2nd Brigade soldiers had captured 84 82mm rounds, 48 fuzes, two mortar sights, one 82mm mortar tube, four 60mm mortar rounds, nine 57mm recoilless rifle rounds, three 75mm recoilless rifle rounds, three RPG-2 rounds, one RPG-7 round, one RPG launcher, three AK-47s and several documents.



HELMET CALENDAR - Specialist 4 Clyde Pless, Winston Salem, N C, crosses off another month on his helmet calendar. Pless is a medic with the 2nd Battalion 27th Infantry Wolfhounds. (PHOTO BY SP4 KARL KARLGAARD)

A Tet Party For 3/4 Cav

CU CHI - Last Christmas Eve, the troopers of the 3rd Squadron, 4th Cavalry, gave a party for the children of Bac Ha's orphanage.

Recently, the orphanage responded with an invitation to the troopers to come to a party of their own. This one was in celebration of Tet.

The children, ages 7 to 12 years old, had written poems for the occasion of the soldiers' visit and sang songs and danced for them. The GIs in turn sang American folk songs for the children. When they sang "Auld Lang Syne," the children responded with the same tune sung in Vietnamese lyrics.

Father Phan, the head of the orphanage, explained the significance of Tet to the men from Tropic Lightning.

"For us, Tet is Christmas, New Years, Easter, the 4th of July and our birthdays all rolled into one holiday. Everyone becomes a year older during Tet. This is the beginning of the Lunar Year. We are ushering in the Year of the Cock; last year was the Year of the Monkey. During the Tet season, all the children are on vacation, and we give parties such as this one we invited you to."

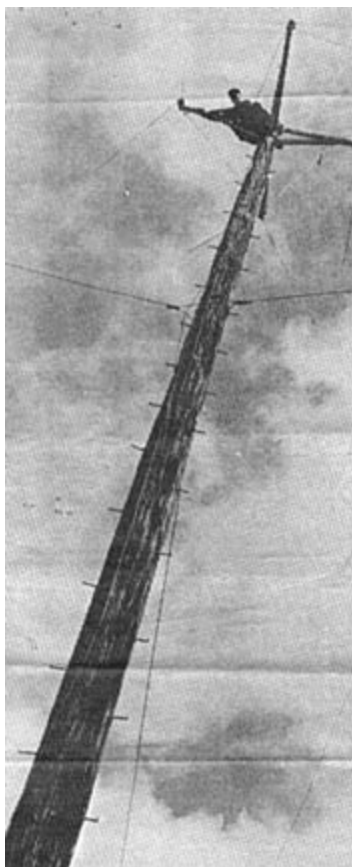
Regulars Join In Act - Find VC Hideout

TAY NINH - While on an airmobile operation six and one-half miles northwest of Tay Ninh, Charlie Company of the 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry Regulars uncovered a VC mess hall equipped to accommodate a company-sized enemy force. Destroyed was one large hut six cooking pits, three bunkers, 100 pounds of rice, a sampan dock and assorted eating utensils.

The complex was found on the banks of the Rach Ben Da River, deep in the VC-infested jungles of War Zone C. It was estimated to have been built seven days before and used up to a few hours before the Regulars moved in.

"It was a great setup for a barbecue," said Captain Donald Haramoto of Makawao, Maui, Hawaii. "The pots and pans were still on the fire and the tables were set up with the utensils in place. From the looks of the setup, it appeared that the mess hall had its own staff to prepare the meals and feed the VC who would dock their sampans and leave after they finished eating."

The mess hall was constructed out of bamboo and palm. Surrounding it were several tables and chairs and three large bunkers with eight feet of overhead cover. The six cooking stoves were constructed like huge barbecue pits with the coals still glowing red when the Regulars arrived.



HELLO DOWN THERE - Specialist 4 Cranston Haiku, wire team chief with DIVARTY's Headquarters Company, gets a different outlook on the world 90 feet skyward. Haiku hails from Honolulu and was stationed with the 3d Battalion, 13th Artillery when it was at Schofield Barracks. **(PHOTO BY SGT KARL GUTKNECHT)**

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