

TROPIC LIGHTNING NEWS




Ready To Strike.... Anywhere, Anytime

Vol. 4 No. 15

TROPIC LIGHTNING NEWS

April 14, 1969

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Cav, RVN Marines Spar With VC, Nine-Hour Battle Kills 42 Enemy

By SP4 Robinson Truitt

CU CHI - In nine hours of sharp fighting with an estimated Viet Cong company four miles north of Go Dau Ha, the 3d Squadron, 4th Cavalry supporting RVN Marines accounted for 42 enemy dead.

Moving across dry rice paddies and occasional hedgerows C Troop came to the aid of the RVN Marines around noon. They faced a small wooded area with thick underbrush from which the RVN troops had been receiving heavy small arms fire during the morning.

Advancing the wood line, the troopers encountered intense machinegun fire and rocket-propelled grenades.

"The VC were concealed in bunkers and spider holes," explained Private First Class Terry Bradley of East Otto, N.Y. "The RPG's were coming thick and fast, but many were hitting trees. Charlie just popped up out of holes, fired off a round blindly, and dropped down in again."

In some cases, the tanks and tracks were no more than 40 feet from the enemy's bunkers when he opened up. The Horsemen backed out and called in artillery and air strikes. When supporting fire was concluded, they went in again and still met stiff enemy resistance. They pulled back and called in more air strikes.

Four times they went in, firing all their weapons against pinpointed targets.

Responding to C Troop's call for assistance, first B Troop and then A Troop arrived at the scene of contact.

Moving off the main supply route on their way to the embattled area, A Troop found un-detonated RPG rounds all along the path, left there when the enemy hastily retreated to stronger defensive positions in the face of C Troop's advance.

After positioning themselves on line, the three troops once more assaulted the enemy's defenses. They punched through the first line of bunkers and spider holes and poured their devastating fire into the remaining bunkers.

But by this time, many VC had evacuated their holes and were creeping around to the side and behind the troopers. Some tracks began drawing fire from the rear.

Around 9:30 p.m., the strength of the enemy's resistance was broken. When the Horsemen regrouped into their night laager position, more air strikes were called in.

All during the night flares lit up the area and the troopers remained alerted to any signs of enemy activity. But next morning, when they returned to the wood line again, they met no resistance. The enemy had retreated during the night.



MECHANIZED INFANTRYMEN from the First Brigade move on line to drive a large NVA force from their hedgerow fortress north of Cu Chi. (PHOTO BY SP5 DOUG ELLIOT)

Regulars Romp On Campsite

TAY NINH - Working the jungles on the outer edges of War Zone C, Regulars of the 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry surprised and overran an NVA base camp. Nineteen enemy were killed in the ensuing four-hour battle that was supported by artillery, helicopter gunships and tactical airstrikes.

Bravo Company was dropped into the area six and one half miles north of Tay Ninh to search an enemy base camp that had been empty the last time they checked it.

"But this time the 'no vacancy' sign was out," said Specialist 4 Ken Persoon of Tyler, Minn. "We figured it wasn't empty any more because we spotted several new bunkers and some fresh deer meat hanging from a tree branch. Our point man approached the bunker complex very cautiously.

"As he reached the first bunker, two NVA popped up out of the hole and stretched their arms as if they had just woke up. Our point man yelled for them to 'chieu hoi' but they decided to reach for their weapons instead. The point man killed them both."

The first shots woke up the rest of the sleeping enemy force and a fierce fire fight erupted. Alpha Company moved up from the rear to lock the enemy into their own base camp.

There were many acts of heroism. Bravo's second platoon leader, First Lieutenant Gary Schirado of Richland, Wash. charged an enemy bunker to toss a hand grenade into it. His quick action stopped the enemy machinegun which was firing on his men.

Rocket-spewing Cobra ships from the 'Rat Pack' gunship platoon of the 187th Assault Helicopter Company and 3d Battalion, 17th Aviation assisted the Regulars. Heavy artillery pounded the entrenched enemy between the gunship runs. Later, air strikes were called in to eliminate heavy enemy concentrations.

"The complex was large enough to accommodate a regiment, but I'm sure the force occupying the bunkers was less than that," said Specialist 4 Ken Turner of Jamestown, Tenn. "They used small arms and automatic weapons but strangely, no RPG."

Warrior Demo Crews Blast Enemy's Home to Oblivion

CU CHI -As Tropic Lightning troops of the 2d Battalion, 12th Infantry find and engage the enemy in the scorching paddies and hedgerows of the Trang Bang area five miles northwest of Cu Chi, they repeatedly find themselves in temporary possession of bunker and tunnel complexes which the enemy has hastily abandoned.

To assure that he will never return to his lair, the demolition engineers with the Warrior Battalion must work swiftly and with skill to destroy Charlie's underground handiwork.

On an operation eight miles north of Cu Chi, Alpha Company Warriors routed an estimated reinforced enemy platoon from a dense maze of bamboo. Driving into the enemy camp behind a fierce barrage of small arms the Tropic Lightning troopers killed 18 of the VC and NVA soldiers and took complete control of their entrenched fighting positions and bunkers.

Swiftly locating the six major fortifications in the camp, the demolition men put in a call for heavy explosives. Within minutes a Huey slick was enroute with a load of 15 pound shape charges.

With just a short half-hour left before an eagle flight was to lift the weary company out of the area, the engineers had to accomplish the monumental task of destroying the six huge bunkers and a number of smaller fortifications. A demo team set to work.

Directing the distribution of the heavy charges to strategic locations, the 65th Engineer Battalion experts started at the far end of the complex. Working leap-frog fashion, meeting only to exchange tools and cut carefully measured lengths of fuse from a roll of orange cord, the team set quickly to work.

Expertly crimping delicate, high explosive blasting caps to the time fuse and inserting them into a small hole in the end of the cone-shaped charges, the team used hand signals to indicate when a charge was ready to be ignited.

After he ignited the first fuse, one of the team members rose and raced to the location of the second charge, where his comrade was already preparing to light the fuse.

"Three minutes," he called as he passed enroute to number three where 30 pounds of explosives were waiting. He dropped to his knees and worked quickly.

Behind him now were two lighted fuses. His comrade passed him heading for number four. Just as the third fuse was ignited, the first thundering explosion shook the countryside.

"All charges had to be blown before the choppers landed," said 65th Engineer Battalion First Lieutenant Lovell Nester of St Joseph, Mo. "Working this 'leap-frog' method is not standard procedure but the men on the scene were competent, well-trained soldiers and they made the decisions based on time available and the job to be done."

Just before the eagle flight roared in over a distant tree line, the two engineers turned and looked back.

Two hundred meters away the ground erupted. A plume of smoke and debris burst silently a hundred feet into the air. A second later the sound came.

Turning back toward the landing zone the team signaled, "Last charge. All clear " to Alpha Company commander First Lieutenant Richard N. Wiggins of St. Petersburg, Fla.

The choppers were on their way.

Every soldier in the Tropic Lightning has what is known as common sense. We have to use it each day in order to perform our mission. Safety is often said to be the application of common sense. The large number of accidents that happen to people over here proves that common sense is not common enough. When was the last time you forgot to use common sense? The consequences could be disastrous.

Decorated

ARMY COMMENDATION MEDAL (HEROISM)

CPT Thomas E. Buck, HHC, 2d Bn, 22d Inf
 CPT Harry K. Jowers, C Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
 CPT Donald L. Strong, Co B, 25th Avn Bn
 CPT Carl Sweatman, HHC, 3d Bn, 22d Inf
 1LT Donald P. Caldwell, Co D, 2d Bn, 27th Inf
 1LT Dorothle J. Gillespie, Co D, 2d Bn, 14th Inf
 1LT Gilbert D. Lilly, Co C, 2d Bn, 22nd Inf
 1LT Michael D. Balser, HHC, 3d Bn, 22d Inf
 2LT Miles I. Forsyth, Co D, 2d Bn, 27th Inf
 2LT Thomas J. Bowes, Co D, 2d Bn, 27th Inf
 2LT Martin H. Beach, Co A, 2d Bn, 12th Inf
 2LT Craig Bambrough, C Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
 WO2 Miner D. Cobb, HHB, 2d Bn, 77th Arty
 SFC Hubert H. Barnett, Adv Tm 99
 SFC John Ellison, Co B, 3d Bn, 22d Inf
 SSG George Evans, B Trp, 3d Sqdn, 4th Cav
 SSG Donald L. Maiberger, Co A, 2d Bn, 22d Inf
 SSG Robert L. Horan, Co F, 50th Inf (LRP)
 SSG Ray H. Wallace, Co D, 2d Bn, 12th Inf
 SSG Forest F. Randolph, Co C, 65th Engr Bn
 SSG Anthony Ruffin, Co D, 2d Bn, 27th Inf
 SSG Charles Sweatt, C Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
 SSG Bernard T. Hayward, B Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
 SSG Adam M. Flores, B Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
 SSG Michael Carey, C Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
 SGT Gerald Vankirk, HHC, 3d Bn, 22d Inf
 SGT Jack C. Wurm, Co C, 1st Bn, 5th Inf
 SGT Guillermo L. Castillo, Jr., Co D, 2d Bn, 27th Inf
 SGT Ralph D. Allen, HHC, 2d Bn, 14th Inf
 SGT Richard L. Wade, Co A, 2d Bn, 22d Inf
 SGT Robert E. Clark, Co D, 3d Bn, 22d Inf
 SGT James E. Wallace, Co D, 2d Bn, 27th Inf
 SGT John S. Chattam, Co D, 2d Bn, 27th Inf
 SGT Loyd E. Lightfoot, C Btry, 1st Bn, 8th Arty
 SGT Kurtis M. Boyter, HHC, 3d Bn, 22d Inf
 SGT Mathine Resendez, C Btry, 1st Bn, 8th Arty
 SGT James Belmudez, C Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
 SGT Larry D. Feters, B Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
 SGT Charles R. Collins, B Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
 SGT George L. Bryant, C Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
 SGT Donald Hutsell, C Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
 SP5 Daniel O. Pina, B Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
 SP5 Tommy Morr, C Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
 SP5 Luke S. Dease, Jr., A Trp, 3d Sqdn, 4th Cav
 SP5 Robert A. Acosta, C Trp, 3d Sqdn, 4th Cav
 SP4 Daniel Rothstein, A Co, 2d Bn, 14th Inf

SP4 Gary Buchner, A Co, 65th Engr Bn
 SP4 William W. Gadday, HHC, 3d Bn, 22d Inf
 SP4 Antonio R. Gonzalez, HHB, 2d Bn, 77th Arty
 SP4 Robert N. Lee, HHB, 2d Bn, 77th Arty
 SP4 William A. Spirk, HHB, 2d Bn, 77th Arty
 SP4 Ralph Wanke, C Btry, 7th Bn, 11th Arty
 SP4 Anthony Mantuano, Co A, 2d Bn, 22d Inf
 SP4 Alvin L. Peckhem, HHC, 3d Bn, 22d Inf
 SP4 Steven L. Shafer, Co A, 2d Bn, 22d Inf
 SP4 Anthony Gouveia, Co D, 65th Engr Bn
 SP4 Dale C. Carlson, Co A, 2d Bn, 22d Inf
 SP4 Arnold Doll, Co D, 65th Engr Bn
 SP4 Renard R. Godwin, Co D, 1st Bn, 5th Inf
 SP4 Theodore C. Angus, Co C, 2d Bn, 22d Inf
 SP4 Ronald J. Pavlak, Co D, 2d Bn, 27th Inf
 SP4 Clarence E. Wilson, Co D, 2d Bn, 27th Inf
 SP4 Henry J. Eldridge, Co D, 2d Bn, 27th Inf
 SP4 Jose J. R. Mayo, Co A, 2d Bn, 34th Armor
 SP4 Percy K. Oviatt, Co D, 2d Bn, 27th Inf
 SP4 Richard W. Zimmerman, B Trp, 3d Sqdn, 4th Cav
 SP4 Ronald E. Wachtler, Co A, 2d Bn, 34th Armor
 SP4 Aguilar E. Perez, Co D, 2d Bn, 27th Inf
 SP4 John D. Eli, Co D, 2d Bn, 27th Inf
 PFC Fred Gambarella, D Co, 3d Bn, 22d Inf
 PFC Victor Talmasjewicz, A Co, 65th Engr Bn
 PFC Douglas Syvertson, HHC, 3d Bn, 22d Inf
 PFC Melvin Blair, D Co, 2d Bn, 14th Inf
 PFC Haskell Grogan, D Co, 3d Bn, 22d Inf
 PFC James Rimple, B Trp, 3d Sqdn, 4th Cav
 PFC Gary Crabbe, 25th MP Co
 PFC Lambert A. Jacquot, Co C, 65th Engr Bn
 PFC Jerry W. Davis, Co A, 2d Bn, 27th Inf
 PFC Perry C. Clevenger, Co A, 2d Bn, 27th Inf
 PFC Forrest Janis, C Btry, 2d Bn, 77th Arty
 PFC George McDonald, Co B, 2d Bn, 12th Inf
 PFC Oliver J. Parr Jr., Co A, 2d Bn, 22d Inf
 PFC Stephen L. Nelson, Co A, 2d Bn, 22d Inf
 PFC Jerry Parker, Co A, 2d Bn, 22d Inf
 PFC Clark A. Brooks, HHC, 3d Bn, 22d Inf
 PFC Jimmy Page, Co B, 1st Bn, 27th Inf
 PFC Eugene W. Olnes, Co D, 2d Bn, 27th Inf
 PFC Gregory A. Lieberman, Co D, 2d Bn, 27th Inf
 PFC James N. Hochthanner, Co D, 2d Bn, 27th Inf
 PFC Joseph Liggins, Co D, 2d Bn, 27th Inf
 PVT Leroy Cochran, A Co, 1st Bn, 5th Inf

Customs Tag Stressed

If you want your PACEX mail-order gift to reach its destination without delay and unencumbered with unnecessary customs charges be sure to do two things: 1) complete the required customs declaration (POD Form

2966) with the purchase order; and 2) sign the purchase order attesting to your status of entitlement.

The Pacific Exchange System has pointed out that there has been a lack of uniformity in customs declarations for articles bought in Vietnam through the PACEX Mail-Order Section in Japan.

There have been instances of parcels qualifying as bona fide gifts arriving in the United States from Vietnam without the proper endorsement. Without this endorsement customs officials have no alternative but to charge the full customs fee prior to delivery.

In all cases, PACEX advised, the customer must complete both sides of the customs declaration tag and enclose it with his order.

Military personnel in Vietnam may send bona fide gifts valued at \$50 or less duty free. They may not mail gifts to themselves. For sets of items mailed in two or more packages because of size and weight limitations, customers must fill out as many customs tags as there are packages.

VRE customer service specialists and responsible personnel in the Exchange retail outlets have been alerted to assist customers with the proper ordering procedures.

Customs declaration forms are available for customer use at the 60 VRE customer service counters and at the post office.

Transition

A new program has been devised to help servicemen obtain valuable skills for use after separation from the service.

Project Transition is a Department of Defense sponsored program to provide in-service training opportunities for separating personnel who have not acquired a civilian-related skill.

Persons with up to six months remaining before their scheduled separation, and who are not going to re-enlist, can apply for a variety of special job training or education courses.

Project Transition is offered at 55 different CONUS installations.

Over 243 kinds of vocational courses are offered, ranging from Accounting to X-ray repair.

You can apply prior to separation by completing a questionnaire upon which you indicate the career you wish to pursue and the training you desire. Project Transition is a CONUS program only. Take advantage of it.

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Fire Brigade Alters Cong Haberdashery

TAY NINH - Was it a PX tailor shop? No, the only alterations that took place in this jungle setting were performed on VC clothing.

Mechanized infantrymen of the 1st Brigade found two sewing machines deep in the jungle while conducting operations 12 miles east of Tay Ninh City.

The two portable sewing machines were situated on top of two tables five meters apart. Strewn about the area were rolls of thread, cloth, partly made black pajamas, and khaki uniforms.

"We've been finding some strange items in this vicinity. But these two sewing machines are the strangest yet," said Specialist 4 Michael Belobraydic of Collinsville, Ill.

"By the looks of the area it must have been a one-night stopover spot for the enemy. They had their clothes repaired, cleaned up, ate a meal and then went back to their unit. The only permanent structure was the set-up used by the tailor," said Private First Class Dominick J Raso, a native of New York City.

Said Captain Jack E. Lewis of Marion, Ill., the unit commander, "It looks like the local VC will be wearing ragged clothes from now on."

Gunships Rake VC

CU CHI - Vengeance fell like a thunderbolt on five VC who fired on a LOH only to draw the attention of an accompanying Cobra.

Flying a visual recon mission with the LOH dodging about just over the tree tops, First Lieutenant Terry Tally of St. Joseph, Tenn., spotted a VC close to a hedgerow. With a noise like a racing engine winding out, Talley's mini-gun scorched the VC.

But the enemy had gotten off a burst simultaneously, wounding Tally in the head and impairing his vision. He stayed in the area long enough to spot two more VC and called in the Cobra gunship.

With its mini-gun blazing, the Cobra raked the area with fire, killing four more VC.

WASTED ENERGY - A VC anti-tanks mine, planted near Trung Lap, is blown in place by 65th Engineer Battalion. The mines were discovered just before a task force returning from the Boi Loi Woods was scheduled to come through the area.
(PHOTO BY SP5 DOUG ELLIOT)



Ambush Ruins Day For NVA

TAY NINH - A 1st Brigade ambush patrol scored again killing one NVA soldier, capturing one AR-47 rifle, 4 magazines and a set of NVA web gear.

The ambush was set up west of Tay Ninh base camp on a small trail leading through a thickly vegetated area. Everything was quiet until platoon sergeant Alejandro Marqueen of Columbus, Ohio, came on guard. At 3 a.m.,

he began to scan the area with a night vision device when he saw a blur moving quickly toward his position.

"It happened so fast that I didn't have a chance to reach for my weapon . . . there were two, one right behind the other so I leaped on the first one," reported Marqueen.

He grabbed the enemy weapon from the NVA soldier, threw the enemy to the ground and yelled for machinegun cover.

Specialist 4 Larry LaMere of Bay City, Mich., witnessed the thrashing in the dense undergrowth and opened fire with his M-60 machinegun when he heard Marqueen's call.

The second NVA soldier beat a hasty retreat, but not before firing a few short ineffective bursts at the American patrol.

At dawn the body of one NVA soldier lay within 10 feet of the ambush site.

Find Mortars Near Tay Ninh

TAY NINH - The residents of Tay Ninh base camp will sleep a little easier for the next few nights thanks to the efforts of 1st Brigade infantry elements.

Sixteen mortar and rocket rounds that will never be used against the defenders of Tay Ninh were confiscated by the Tropic Lightning troops in an air assault operation north of Tay Ninh City.

Captain John Dorsey, Jr., of Yonkers, N.Y., a 1st Brigade company commander, discovered two 81mm mortar rounds and four 81mm tail fins wrapped in cloth which had been torn to shreds by the nearby blast of an artillery round.

One company of infantrymen jumped off choppers into the heart of a recently deserted NVA base camp.

"There were about 50 bunkers and 20 of them were new," said First Lieutenant William Ervin Jr., of Springfield, Va., the company commander. "The older ones showed recent improvements. When we searched the area we found the 11 hastily buried 120mm mortar rounds and three 107 rockets. We've definitely taken some of the punch away from Charlie."

Enemy 'Burma Shave' Signs Aimed at U.S.

Photos & Story By
SP4 Dave DeMauro

TAY NINH - Strung out like signs on an American highway, Viet Cong "liberation" posters were discovered recently along Highway 22 in front of Fire Support Base Washington.

Charlie Company, 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry exited the perimeter wire at Washington to begin a local reconnaissance-in-force mission only to discover twenty signs and two banners scattered along the highway pleading with the GI's to turn themselves in to the "Liberation Army."

Leaflets were attached to the signs spelling out the treatment that would be extended any reverse "hoi chanhs."

The leaflets promised "mosquito nets, blankets, hammocks, plenty to eat, and clothing adequate to the climate." But the propaganda did not prove very effective because the men of Charlie Company did not throw down their weapons to accept the 'generous' offer.

"We found the signs very amusing," said First Lieutenant Gerald Henish of Virginia Beach, Va. "The men got a big kick out of gathering up the sheet metal signs and reading the misspelled notes. We were really surprised to find them and appreciated the humor."

The signs were taken to Tay Ninh base camp where the 1st Brigade S-5 repainted them with new slogans.

Sample repainted signs read:

"Attention VC! Why do you destroy what the people of Vietnam build every day?"

"Attention VC! Do you know how to save yourself from a dishonorable death?" followed by the words "Chieu Hoi—Chieu Hoi."

Major Clarence DeYoung of San Diego, Calif., had a special notice for the VC political officer. It read,

"Attention VC political officer! Thank you for the sign boards. I can always use the material. Signed 1st Brigade S-5."

"**ATTENTION VC!** Why do you destroy what the people of South Vietnam build every day?" Major Clarence DeYoung of San Diego, Calif. (left) and Sergeant Nham of the Vietnamese National Police, and Sergeant Denny Wells of Midwest City, Okla., place one of the signs back into place, this time with a different slogan.



VC LEAVE BEHIND FRESH SIGNS - C
Company, 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry
found these signs with propaganda
leaflets attached to them on Highway 22
in front of Fire Support Base
Washington.

D'naughts, Bobcats, Warriors Do Their Thing

Photo Feature By Specialist 5 Doug Elliott



THUNDERING THROUGH - Tankers of the 2d Battalion, 34th Armor Dreadnaughts surge over a low rice paddy dike on their way to engage an enemy battalion located by a company of the 2d Battalion, 12th Infantry Warriors.

CRUNCH - A Dreadnaught tank breaks through a tangled hedgerow to engage the enemy.



When a company of the 2d Battalion, 12th Infantry Warriors located an estimated North Vietnamese battalion, the enemy were treated to a demonstration of the speed Lightning strikes.

Quickly vectored to the aid of the embattled company were elements of the 2d Battalion, 34th Armor Dreadnaughts and the 1st Battalion (Mechanized), 5th Infantry Bobcats who were sweeping through the Boi Loi to the Ho Bo Woods when the call came.

The Dreadnaughts broke through a massive hedgerow, charged across the last mile of rice paddies like Sheridan to Shenandoah, and formed into line while an air strike pounded the enemy positions.

With the Bobcat infantryman following, tanks and APCs charged into the hedgerow fortress with guns blazing. One row was taken. Then the tanks swung around the enemy flank, catching Charlie in a hot crossfire.

The enemy was dug into elaborate bunkers and emplacements, and strong resistance sometimes kept gains to inches. But the Bobcats, Warriors and Dreadnaughts, using small arms, mortars, grenades and the 90mm main guns of the tanks, blasted the hostile bunkers one by one.

Contact was broken in the evening but the fight was renewed the next morning and continued through that day.

Total body count for the rough two days work was 141 enemy soldiers.

Mute evidence to the sheer volume of the fire came to light when one soldier picked up an AK-47 with a 3-inch piece of metal from a 90mm high explosive round jammed down the barrel.

FORWARD - (Above, left) An infantryman of the 1st Battalion (Mechanized), 5th Infantry moves toward the sound of guns on the smoke-shrouded battle field.



THUNDER - A Dreadnaught tank punches into the enemy position with its big gun.



BAD NEWS - Out to outflank Charlie, a tank from the 2d Battalion, 34th Armor moves along a hedgerow.

BY INCHES - Under the firepower of the Dreadnaught's 90mm guns, infantrymen move on the enemy's position.





INSPIRATION - No Molly Pitcher she, but the picture of the young lady may have had something to do with the attitude that put a 90mm round on a target bunker in the hedgerow.

COVER FIRE - Firing the .50 caliber and 7.62 coax machine gun, a Dreadnaught tank commander keeps the enemy's head down while Bobcat infantrymen advance.



AMBUSHED - Only seconds after soldiers of the 2d Brigade were caught in an ambush in the Citadel area northwest of Cu Chi, they began to pour out defensive firepower while maneuvering into a superior offensive position.
(PHOTO BY SGT JAN ANDERSON)





NOT SO COMFORTABLE - This Tropic Lightning soldier shows a look of disgust as he slogs his way through one of the few remaining streams left during the dry season. Wait 'til it starts raining again! (25th INF DIV PHOTO)

Can't Swing in the Sunshine Without His Hard-Core Shades

By SGT Jan Anderson

CU CHI - When Specialist 4 Thomas N. Borders, a 2d Brigade soldier, drove his armored personnel carrier within five feet of an enemy RPG position, he thought his future looked a little bleak - especially when he could look through his sights and see Charlie's eye squinting for an accurate shot.

Fortunate for Borders, who comes from Sidney, Ohio, he was sitting on top of his APC using extended laterals to guide his vehicle. Just as the VC soldier fired, Borders closed his eyes and the rocket hit right below him, piercing the APC's armor shell and sending shrapnel flying.

Borders was unhurt, but the concussion generated by the explosion knocked off his sunglasses and sent them tumbling to the ground, near the enemy's position.

Borders and his sunglasses are an inseparable team, as anyone in his platoon will verify.

He immediately jumped from the track not only to seek cover, but to plan a method of retrieving his sunglasses as well.

Borders concluded that the same Viet Cong who fired the RPG had also "stolen" his sunglasses when they fell to the ground.

As Borders peered around his track, which was his shield, he saw the suspect facing the other direction ready to squeeze off another RPG round at the flank APC.

Borders also saw his sunglasses lying near the spider hole. Quickly he sprinted near enough to pick up his shades, tossed a grenade into the hole and ran for cover.

"When the VC turned around and saw me just before the grenade went off, his hair stood straight up," Borders said later. "I guess he thought the first RPG had gotten me."

Borders later learned that four VC bodies were found in the hole. The incident netted the Fire Brigade soldier a three day pass, a four body count, a tale to tell and one pair of combat-hardened sunglasses.

New Type Grade Level Comes Into Cu Chi High

CU CHI - The Civil Affairs Section, Division Headquarters arranged for the use of a division grader last week to clean the area around Cu Chi High School in preparation for a playground to be constructed there later this spring.

The area, which has been the site for the building of three new schools recently, was covered with the rubble of heavy construction. Working with Major Stan Curbow, Senior District Advisor, and Major Juan Benitez, Division Transportation Officer, Captain William Menzel of the DISCON S-5 section arranged to bring the busy grader to the school on Sunday afternoon.

With a Vietnamese boy riding "shotgun," a Tropic Lightning engineer cleared the area to a level plain, paving the way for the next project - the construction of swings, seesaws, and other playground items.

First Lieutenant Trung Luat, a Cu Chi District staff officer representing the village chief, explained that in the past the rubble around the school had made it difficult for the children to play safely.

"We discovered that the only area they had was in the middle of the construction zone, not a safe area at all," said Luat. "Now that the land has been cleared we hope to provide them with a real recreation area."

Lancers In Jungle Fight, Doom 4 VC

TAY NINH - Deep in the jungle of the Crescent area nine miles northeast of Tay Ninh City, elements of the 1st Brigade fought a fierce battle with an unknown size enemy force.

After placing their armored personnel carriers in night laager position, the Tropic Lightning soldiers spread out to search the tangled overgrowth. While moving through the jungle, they received small arms fire from an enemy trench line. In the ensuing fire fight the Lancer Brigade troopers killed four enemy.

"This was some of the thickest jungle we've been in. It was a hard and brief fight but we tore them up good. We suffered only two minor casualties," said Specialist 4 James Paet of Honolulu, Hawaii.

Merit Commendation To Third Bde Unit

DAU TIENG - Cannoneers of 1st Battalion, 27th Artillery were awarded the Meritorious Unit Commendation recently in a ceremony held at the Brigade base camp.

The ceremony also marked the firing of the battalion's half millionth round since entering the Vietnam war.

Colonel Harold G. DeArment, commander of the 23d Artillery Group, presented the Meritorious Unit Citation to 1/27th's battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Joseph J. Skaff.

The battalion was cited for its support of military operations from September 11, 1967 to July 31, 1968. "Displaying exceptional versatility and unflagging determination, the men of the unit supplied consistently superb artillery support to four United States Army divisions and two Army of the Republic of Vietnam divisions," the citation read.

In addition to being cited for its combat operations, the battalion received recognition for its medical assistance programs, high school scholarships and construction projects in nearby Vietnamese villages.

DeArment said that through the battalion's valiant performance of duty and selfless determination, the unit's members contributed immeasurably to the Free World's struggle against communism in the Republic of Vietnam.



COLONEL HAROLD G. DEARMENT, commander of the 23rd Artillery Group (center) attaches a Meritorious Unit Commendation streamer to 1st Battalion, 27th Artillery's guidon. Lieutenant Colonel Joseph J. Skaff, (left) accepted the award in behalf of the the battalion, and Sergeant Major Richard T. Flynn, the battalion sergeant major, assisted in the ceremony. (PHOTO BY SP4 LARRY HAMILTON)

Biggest Ceremony Cites Cav



LARGEST CEREMONY - Eighty six members of Bravo Troop, 3d Squadron, 4th Cavalry form up during the largest company-sized ceremony ever held by the Division. Awards including the Silver Star were presented by the Cav's commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Robert S. MacGowan. See story below. (PHOTO BY SP4 HAROLD ANDERSON)

CU CHI - The largest awards ceremony ever given to a company-sized unit in the history of the Division was held for Bravo Troop 3d Squadron, 4th Cavalry recently at Cu Chi base camp. Making the presentations was Lieutenant Colonel Robert S. McGowan, commanding officer of the 3/4 Cavalry.

Out of an authorized total strength of 192 troopers; 86 members of Bravo Troop were awarded 133 awards, including 10 Silver Stars.

All but 12 of the awards were for actions which occurred since Jan. 1, 1969. The others were for December, 1968.

Sergeant First Class Robert H. Maxey of Salina, Kan., was awarded three Silver Stars and his second purple heart. The Silver Stars were for heroic actions on Jan. 4, 6, and 26.

Sergeant Jay V. Aliffe of Savannah, Ga., won two Silver Stars for actions on Jan. 16 and 26. He was also awarded three Bronze stars for valor and an Army commendation medal for valor.

Specialist 4 Fernando Herrera of San Antonio, Tex., and Specialist 4 David Goss of Wetherford Tex., each won a Silver Star, two bronze stars for valor, and an Army commendation medal for valor.

Sergeant Stephen F. Baily of Marietta, S.C., was awarded a Silver Star and two bronze stars for valor, and Specialist 4 Charles Blackman of Ressemen, Ala., won a Silver Star and a bronze star for valor.

Sergeant Dennis Roe of Metamora, Mich., was awarded his second Silver Star.

During the first two months of 1989, Bravo Troop accomplished a record in confiscating 125,000 pounds of enemy rice, 15,400 pounds of salt and 1,200 pairs of plastic sandals found in NVA caches. The Horsemen also killed 92 North Vietnamese soldiers.

'Moonlighter's Build Hootches

CU CHI - The 2d Battalion, 12th Infantry motor pool's main function is to "keep 'em rollin'." In this they do an admirable job. But when the work day comes to an end at the motor pool they continue to work.

During the past month the Lightning mechanics have been busy building new living quarters, multi-purpose grease rack and improving their area in general.

The most outstanding project is an attractive, strong and comfortable home for the enlisted men. "The new quarters are a vast improvement over the places the men previously used," stated Staff Sergeant Gary Neff, Tacoma, Wash.

"My old hootch leaked and was often visited by mosquitoes, ants and even a snake once," related Specialist 4 Gene Snyder, Adah, Pa., "we had to have an improvement."

The first step was to design a structure for the needs of the men. Staff Sergeant William Santos, Puerto Rico, determined what the housing should consist of and made a blueprint for the structure.

Following the design of the building came the problem of materials. This was solved by Company D, 554th Engineers through a self-help program. They provided virtually all the lumber, roofing, screen doors and screen wire.

"Construction began and continued to completion with everyone working as a team," said Specialist 4 Lamar Merritt, Atlanta, Ga.

The new enlisted man's hootch - or house - is 21 feet by 36 feet with eight-foot ceilings. Each man has his own room. The walls are of sheet plywood. The floor is solid wood with no cracks. Screens cover every window and door.

"The screened-in porch adds a homey atmosphere," according to Specialist 5 Paul Laughton of Brainer, Minn. Specialist 4 James Powell of Kent, Ohio, sums up the new structure as an attractive, comfortable insect free, classy hootch.

The Fire Brigade carpenters are not finished yet, though. Plans for a patio, day room, senior mechanics hootch and wash pit have been initiated.

"We may not get the full benefit of our labors but some GI will and the work sure helps the time go by faster," said Santos, organizer of the project.

Cong Taste Armor Sting

CU CHI - The surprise of an ambush and the rumble of Company A, 2d Battalion, 34th Armor, tanks let Charlie know the air around the 2d Brigade is not healthy for him any longer.

The armor and infantry at the ARVN night laager was commanded by Captain Richard E. Lovisone, West Hartford, Conn., who set up an ambush site surrounding the position.

Around 8:30 p.m. the Tropic Lightning soldiers made contact with an estimated enemy platoon. Tanks were brought on line to fire on suspected routes of escape.

An immediate search of the area revealed one enemy dead. The following morning another VC body was found along with one VC medical bag and documents.

Ambition Gets SP4 Some Rank Takes One Week To Make E-6

TAY NINH - In a series of events that struck with Tropic lightning speed, Joseph P. Kern of the 1st Brigade became a staff sergeant without ever knowing that he had made sergeant.

Kern, a mortarman, was a Specialist 4 when he left Tay Ninh to go to the Lightning Combat Leadership Course at Cu Chi.

While he was gone, orders promoting him to sergeant came through to his unit's headquarters, and Kern earned himself another boost in rank by finishing on top of his LCLC class after the ten rigorous days of the course.

"I never even knew I'd made sergeant," Kern said later.

His platoon leader, Platoon Sergeant Steve L. Meredith of Ft. Meade, Md., was just as surprised.

"That's the first time I've ever seen anyone go from being a gunner with a mortar squad to a platoon sergeant in a week," Meredith said.

Meredith's naming of Kern as his platoon sergeant, however, showed he didn't believe the promotions were unjustified.

FORMER SPECIALIST FOUR Joseph P. Kern (above, right) went from that rank to sergeant E-6 in a couple of days, and never had a chance to be a sergeant E-5. A regular promotion was followed by a special one for excellence in the LCLC course. (PHOTO BY PFC RALPH NOVAK)



3/4 Cav Wallops Ambush

CU CHI - During a search-and-clear mission in a dense jungle portion of the Boi Loi Woods six miles north-northwest of Cu Chi, elements of the 3d squadron, 4th cavalry pitched into an unknown number of enemy soldiers.

The cavalrymen were making their sweep through bamboo thickets during the early part of the afternoon. It was a sweltering day and the troopers were watching for any sign of movement as they pushed their way through the wilderness.

"Something seemed fishy," said one trooper in the 3d Platoon. "Our dismounts were on the ground making a check of the area when a smoke grenade went off to our rear. I knew that someone was watching us. We learned later that it was a scout's warning to the NVA unit that an armored unit was approaching their position.

First Lieutenant Gary W. Carlson of Peekskill, N.Y., recalls, "The enemy was well concealed in the heavy brush which allowed him to throw the first punch. It didn't take long before we had his positions pinpointed, though. His defenses were set in long, wide trench lines with bamboo as cover."

The vehicles proceeded deeper into the underbrush until they came to a clearing.

Then two rocket-propelled grenades slammed into the cavalry's armor from hidden NVA positions. Small arms and automatic weapons fire whizzed past the troopers as they swung their machineguns and 152mm Sheridan main guns around at the enemy.

Helicopter gunships were called in along with a heavy barrage of Tropic Lightning artillery which battered the enemy bunkers. The troopers then positioned themselves on line and assaulted the enemy trenches.

"It took us nearly four hours to rout the enemy from his bunkers," said Sergeant Michael H. McClain of Sandy Point, Okla., a tank commander in the 3d Platoon. "As we came upon their bunkers, our dismounted troopers tossed hand grenades into each of the gunports."

A complete search of the bunkers and trenches revealed 19 NVA killed and one detained. An RPG with ammunition was also found.

Hoi Chanh 'Recruits' 5

DAU TIENG - "If ya can't beat 'em, join 'em."

This may not be a word for word translation of the message a Kit Carson Scout gave local Viet Cong guerrillas in Michelin rubber plantation near Dau Tieng, but whatever he said it was enough to get five of the guerrillas and two Vietnamese laborers to change sides.

Regardless of the motives behind their surrender, the enemy soldiers are now an integral part of the 25th Infantry Division's participation in the Government of Vietnam's Chieu Hoi Program - a program designed to let former enemies of the government prove their allegiance by aiding the Allied war effort.

The Kit Carson Scout who talked them into surrendering was home on leave for the Tet holidays. He is a former Viet Cong soldier himself, which points out exactly what the Chieu Hoi Program is all about according to Major Anthony J. Gallo of Rutland, Vt., the division's 3d Brigade intelligence officer.

"In many cases, Kit Carson Scouts continue and reestablish ties with cohorts in the field and by this means can encourage them back to Vietnamese government control," he said. "Every Hoi Chanh we get is another means of helping pacify local guerrillas."

So what's in store for the seven Hoi Chanh's received at Dau Tieng?

"We plan to have them make tape recordings, encouraging their former allies to surrender," said First Lieutenant Kevin M. Walters, the 3rd Brigade's psychological operations officer.

"We will also have them write messages describing their good treatment in our hands, to be dropped in the form of leaflets."

Whatever the official ramifications of the Chieu Hoi Program may be, unofficially it is certainly one of mutual benefits.

The seven ralliers received at Dau Tieng are now enjoying the fruits of the democratic process, and the Allied cause is benefiting from their knowledge of Viet Cong tactics and their willingness to persuade their friends to switch instead of fight.

Action Casualties Treated, Evacuated Within Minutes

TAY NINH—Bullets whizzed everywhere; a brief but savage fire fight had just erupted. A Tropic Lightning soldier from the 1st Brigade falls with an AK-47 slug in his leg.

The wheels of modern warfare medical procedure immediately start to roll.

A fellow trooper crawls through the devastating fire and carries his buddy out of the kill zone. Then a combat medic goes to work.

A quick, effective patch-up job and the wounded man is on his way out of the dense jungle to a secure area where the medical armored personnel carrier, commonly called the 'band aid wagon,' is waiting.

Soon a helicopter dustoff ship arrives and the temporarily sidetracked soldier is whisked away to modern medical facilities in Tay Ninh base camp.

The entire rescue takes less than five minutes.

DUST OFF - A medevac chopper lifts off with the wounded men to speed him the medical attention at the 45th Surgical Hospital in Tay Ninh. The dustoff is the final step in getting the wounded man to a doctor's attention. **(PHOTO BY SGT ROGER WELT)**



AID - The band aid wagon, otherwise known as a medic track, speeds to the scene of a wounded soldier deep in the Crescent area northeast of Tay Ninh City. **(PHOTO BY SGT ROGER WELT)**

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