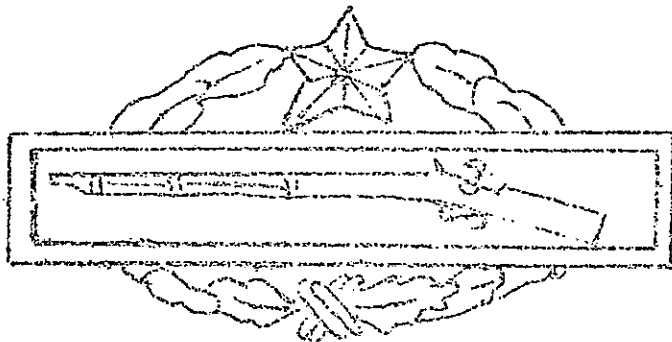
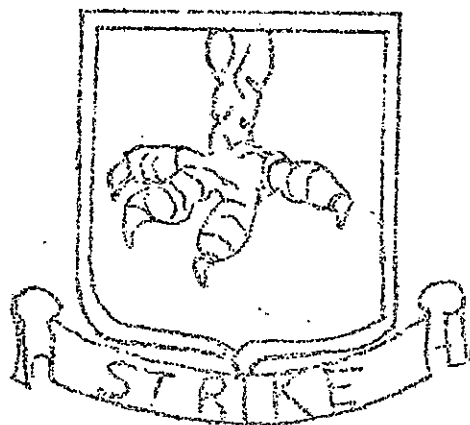


2^D BATTALION (AMBL)
502^D INFANTRY



STRIKE FORCE



1 JAN '71 - 31 DEC '71

THUA THIEN
QUANG TRI

MAI LOC
A SHAU

VIET NAM
1971

UNIT HISTORY

2D BATTALION (AIRMOBILE) 502D INFANTRY
1ST BRIGADE, 101st AIRBORNE DIVISION
APO SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 96383

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FOREWORD

The purpose of this history is to present a concise written narrative of all the major accomplishments of the 2d Battalion (Airmobile) 502d Infantry throughout 1971. Accounts of combat operations are factual, based on official records. No attempt has been made to alter the facts in any way. All figures used are actual figures. Statistics of enemy casualties and losses are based on actual body count or captured weapons count. Approximations are not taken into account in this history.

DEDICATION

This history is dedicated to those members of the STRIKE FORCE Battalion who gave their lives so that others may live in the freedom for which they were willing to make the supreme sacrifice.

| <u>NAME</u> | <u>RANK</u> | <u>UNIT</u> | <u>DATE OF DEATH</u> |
|----------------------|-------------|-------------|----------------------|
| Lankford, Evelyn F. | E7 | Co A | 16 Feb 71 |
| Loden, Larry D. | E4 | Co G | 5 Mar 71 |
| Adakai, Alvin | E3 | Co E | 14 Mar 71 |
| Dozier, John T. | E5 | Co A | 18 Jun 71 |
| Murphy, Frederick W. | E5 | Co A | 2 Jul 71 |
| Beglau, David | E4 | Co D | 22 Jul 71 |
| Mitchell, Lonnie | E4 | HHC | 23 Oct 71 |

ORGANIZATION

The 2d Battalion (Airmobile) 502d Infantry is one of three maneuver Infantry Battalions with the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile). The Strike Force was deployed to Vietnam as part of the 1st Bde Task Force in July 1965, and since that time has conducted combat operations against the Communist Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Armed Forces in South Vietnam.

On 15 May 1965 the 2-502d Inf was reorganized under Department of the Army TOE 7-35F. Headquarters and Headquarters Company was organized under TOE 7-36F, and Rifle Companies "A", "B", "C" under TOE 7-37F. Some months later, "D" and "E" companies were added with "E" company being a Combat Support Company containing the 81mm mortars and 90mm recoilless rifles. Each rifle company consists of 3 rifle platoons with M-60 machine guns and M-79 grenade launchers being organic to the individual platoons. This basic organization was used with some modification in training and combat.

A Reconnaissance Platoon was organized in the Battalion and assigned to "E" company. The Reconnaissance Platoon was unique in that it was designed to work as a highly mobile rifle platoon or in six man reconnaissance teams. It was employed under direct control of the Battalion Commander.

Throughout 1971, the 2-502d Inf continued to vary its techniques and tactics in its untiring effort to combat the enemy and the environment. The ability to react swiftly was evident by the tactical success the Battalion has enjoyed under the airmobile concept.

OPERATION JEFFERSON GLEN

Thua Thien Province

The Strike Force entered 1971 still engaged in Operation Jefferson Glen with the 1st Brigade. The CP remained on OP Checkmate located on Hill 342 approximately 10 miles Southwest of Hue City. Checkmate was a show place and a source of pride to the Strike Force Battalion. It boasted such luxury features as plank sidewalks, hot showers, (for those ambitious enough to carry the water), hard surfaced chopper pads, a barber shop, neatly painted structures and even a television for evening viewing in the briefing room. The bunkers were manned by personnel who for various reasons could not perform in the canopy. These people included temporary and permanent physical profiles, excess cooks, commo personnel, and the like. Their performance was evidence of their pride in the battalion - these were the people who built and defended "The Hill".

Heavy and frequent rains characterized early 1971 as the monsoon dragged to an end. In the canopy, the "grunt" lived a wet, chilly and uneventful existence through January. Resupply was not regular as aircraft were frequently grounded by bad weather. Few combat assaults were conducted and movement on the ground was kept to a minimum. The area of operations through January and most of February remained the same as the last three months of 1970 - from the Song Bo River to 8 kilometers east and north from FB Veghel about 12 kilometers. Constant patrolling produced extensive coverage of the area effectively denying the enemy a base of operations. One measure of success is the fact that TET, the Vietnamese Lunar New Year celebration, passed quietly without any attacks on Hue City - scene of bloody conflict during TET of 1968. The North Vietnamese were

then heavily engaged in Cambodia which diverted their attention from traditional targets of previous years. Whatever the reasons might have been, it was both satisfying and a relief that TET 1971 passed without incident.

The number one concern of the Strike Force rear area at Camp Eagle was the "Get set for TET" program. The bunker line was improved as much as possible despite a shortage of materials and manpower. A Battalion reaction platoon staged several practice alerts for reinforcement of the bunker line. Bunkers in the cantonment area were improved to provide greater protection in the event of attack.

The men of Company "A" took credit for the only contact of January. While moving towards an LZ, the element observed and engaged three NVA at close range. The action resulted in two enemy KIA without friendly casualties. One AK-47 rifle was captured. Company "A" found 3 recent graves the next day and reported signs of activity and movement around their position but had no further contact with the enemy.

Early in February the "Strike Force" gradually worked into security operations. Charlie company joined Delta company in securing the road from OP Checkmate to FB Veghel. Recon Platoon secured the road east of FB Bastogne and Alpha company secured the road east of FB Birmingham. Bravo company was digging up a tunnel complex near the Song Bo.

Gradually the 2-502d Inf's AO was extended to cover all the area East of the Song Bo, South from the 12 grid line approximately ten kilometers and East past FB Birmingham four kilometers. The basic mission in this AO was to secure Route 547 in support of operations to the West.

Also at this time the companies were moved individually to Camp Eagle for 36 hour standdowns. Delta Company, because they were securing FB Veghel was excluded from these abbreviated standdowns.

"Jump CP" was a saying used quite often at the TOC at OP Checkmate. The Battalion was put on numerous contingency plans and each time a jump CP was readied to meet communications and command requirements.

On the 22-23 of February all Strike Force units were moved to FB Birmingham to stage for an upcoming operation to the South of FB Normandy. Strike Force personnel were resupplied with food and ammunition, had their equipment checked, replaced and/or repaired. This period also enabled the troops to rest, get hot food, and entertainment with a floor show provided on the Re-Larm Pad. The troops also made frequent use of the Huu Trach River to bathe and clean-up.

On 24 February, Alpha Company combat assaulted into the new Area of Operations. As Bravo Company was preparing to combat assault, the Battalion Commander was notified to cancel the existing operation and prepare to move to Quang Tri Province to come under the operational control of the Third Brigade. Our mission was to support Lam Son 719. Alpha Company was brought back to FB Birmingham and with much haste, preparations were made to move north. Coordination at all levels had to be effected and preparations immediately made to move the battalion north. With thorough planning and massive effort, all obstacles were overcome, and on the morning of the 25th of February, "Strike Force" relocated the CP at Mai Loc and moved the companies into the AO ten miles to the southwest of Quang Tri.

At Mai Loc the remaining days of February were spent "digging-in" and fortifying the compound. Troop shelters were built, mess buildings and latrines were erected, and a command post for the bunker line was established. A comprehensive logistic system was set up using three widely separated resupply points. Thus, continuous comfort service support was provided for all field elements throughout the vast area of operations.

Bravo Company, Third Platoon was credited with the only enemy contact during February when on the 19th, they spotted two NVA in a rest area, engaged them with small arms fire, and employed ARA and artillery on the site. Though they failed to find any enemy dead, the platoon captured numerous miscellaneous equipment and several items of value.

February 28 ended Operation Jefferson Glen for the Strike Force troopers as the last week of February ushered in Operation Lan Son 719.

OPERATION LAM SON 719

Quang Tri Province

During the next six weeks the Strike Force Battalion conducted operations against enemy forces in Quang Tri Province. On 26 February 1971 the Strike Force Battalion combat assaulted into AO Green, located east of the city of Quang Tri. Initially, the battalion conducted reconnaissance in force (RIF) operations over the entire area of operations. These RIF operations were used to provide an assessment of the area and gain intelligence. There is no doubt that the combined operations of the 2d Battalion, 502d Infantry and RE/PF forces of Quang Tri Province, coupled with aggressive artillery fire planning, pushed the enemy south across the Quang Tri River.

While Bravo and Charlie Companies were conducting aggressive reconnaissance in the jungle canopy, the Reconnaissance Platoon located elements of an NVA Rocket Artillery Battalion in the Quang Tri Rocket Belt. Bravo Company was immediately lifted into the Rocket Belt and established Ruby II as an outpost while Company C worked along the Quang Tri River in small reconnaissance boats. Additional intelligence indicated a need for additional forces. Therefore, the Strike Force was deployed into the Rocket Belt. "As a result of the Rocket Belt operations, no major enemy attack ever developed against Quang Tri city, during Operation Lam Son 719". (Quote: MG Tarpley, CG, 101st Abn Div, 13 April 1971.)

In the meantime, the Artillery "Tiger Plan" caused a member of the local sapper force company to Chieu Hoi. Information from the Chieu Hoi revealed that the Headquarters of an enemy sapper unit was located between the Quang Tri River and

the Ia Krong River. Their mission was to provide intelligence on U.S./ARVN units that could be utilized by their special combat elements. The battalion jumped on this lead and got an extension of the already large AO and kicked off operation Bald Eagle. (The Strike Force Battalion's AO now covered 605 square miles.)

Alpha and Delta companies were inserted into AO Bald Eagle. Alpha company's first two aircraft into the LZ received fire but the fire was quickly suppressed by the escort gunships. On the third day of the operation Delta company initiated contact with an NVA unit. Alpha company was brought up to block the enemy's withdrawal and reinforce the action, while artillery, ARA, and flame were poured into the contact point. Again, the next day Delta company engaged the enemy in a bunker complex. After close in fighting with LAW's and hand grenades, one NVA soldier surrendered. Meanwhile, Alpha company discovered valuable documents in another area of the enemy base camp. The POW and captured documents provided extensive intelligence on the enemy unit, its AO, strength, weakness, and propaganda mission. (The NVA POW had been in South Vietnam only 17 days.) Based on the POW's information an extensive artillery fire plan was initiated against the confirmed targets. Following three days of artillery fire a combined US/ARVN reconnaissance intelligence raid was launched to wrap up the operation.

During the last week of March the battalion learned through reliable intelligence sources, that an NVA unit was moving into Cam Lo District. Again, Strike Force extended the AO and conducted another combined US/ARVN operation north and west of Cam Lo. Charlie company assaulted and swept east while two RF companies came under intense B-40 rocket and automatic small arms fire. As Charlie company accelerated their movement to the contact point, artillery, ARA, and air strikes using napalm were directed on the enemy. Charlie company got into the action and routed the enemy using small unit fire and maneuver. (One NVA was carrying a letter which was post marked in Vinh Linh, four days before the day he was killed.

Vinh Linh is 35 miles, as a crow flies, across the DMZ in North Vietnam.)

Information from a POW captured by Charlie company caused the battalion to stay overnight in the area and pursue the operation further. The next day Charlie company located the NVA Regiment's base of operations which included heavily fortified bunkers, watch towers, weapons, and ammunition and supply caches. This operation proved to be of immediate importance to the Cam Lo District forces.

During early April the battalion received indications of an enemy build up and extensive movement in the area north and east of Firebase Ann. In reaction to this, Alpha company, three reconnaissance teams, and a sniper team were inserted into the area. The workings of these units provided much intelligence on the enemy movements in the area. After a reconnaissance team had made contact and developed the situation it was learned that one of the enemy KIA was a company commander of an enemy operating in Trieu Phong District, Quang Tri Province.

Many documents were gathered and reported. Notification was made to the Quang Tri Province Advisers and the results of this intelligence had far reaching effects on the VC/NVA units in the area.

It must be recognized that ARVN bore the heavy fighting across the border in Laos. Certainly, the hard battles of the ARVN Rangers, the ARVN Airborne Division, and the 1st ARVN Division supported by air from the 101st Airborne Division, contributed in a major way to the success of Lam Son 719. Lam Son has added to their confidence and experience and materially aided Vietnamization.

Nevertheless, it was the Strike Force soldier who accomplished the 2-502d Inf

mission. Valuable intelligence could not have been gathered without the detailed, patient and careful scouring of the jungle by the Infantrymen of the 2/502d.

Lam Son 719 rapidly drew to an end in early April as Mai Loc was used as a re-deployment point. Thousands of pieces of equipment and men were moved into the area as operations in the west were closed out. The Bn CO became the Regional Commander and had the awesome task of tactically situating and protecting all these men and materiel. The airstrip at Mai Loc obtained the appearance of a major supply depot, for at times there were a hundred or more aircraft of all types in the area.

However, to insure noteworthy completion of our part in Lam Son 719, RCN Team 2 detonated two claymore mines when they detected movement outside their perimeter. This command ambush netted 3 NVA KIA's, 1 AK-47, 1-9mm parabellum pistol, numerous documents, and a couple of days at Eagle Beach for Team 2. Co A, not to be outclassed, discovered a cache site on April 7 that contained 30 individual weapons, (SKS's, Mausers, and rifles) and 4 crew served weapons (BAR's).

The following day the battalion started its move back to Camp Eagle for stand-down. On the 9th of April the entire battalion was relocated at Camp Eagle for a nine day refresher standdown.

Standdown time proved to be a great booster of morale for the "men in the bush". The battalion had gone 100 days without a standdown and the relaxation was sorely needed as well as much deserved.

Emphasis in training was put on tactics and skills that would be used in the upcoming operation. High speed extraction techniques, field SOP, Medevac, Consec, employment of ARA, Arty, and Air Strikes, and safety classes were presented to the men in the battalion. Still there was time allotted for athletics, Commander's time, administrative time, and general free time. Entertainment was readily available as movies were shown every night and some of Vietnam's best floor shows were presented to the battalion.

During the standdown the battalion was honored by a visit from the Division Commander, Major General Tarpley. At a ceremony on the Strike Force Parade Grounds, the 2d Bn, 502d Inf, "STRIKE FORCE", received the Presidential Unit Citation for actions in an operation during August 1970 in the vicinity of "Comeback Ridge" and FB Barnett.

On April 17 the Battalion returned to the field. This time the TOC located at FB Jack. Most of the remaining time in April was spent getting ready for operation Lam Son 720, and the return into the "Big Valley".

OPERATION LAM SON 720

Thua Thien Province

In early April it became obvious that the NVA was making extensive use of the A Shau Valley to move troops, equipment and supplies. The 1st Brigade was assigned the overall mission of disrupting the enemy's logistic system and impeding his use of the A Shau Valley Area. The Brigade Commander elected to employ airmobile raid tactics with rapid operations of a short duration. For five days the companies patrolled the area around FB Jack and took turns refining rappelling techniques at FB Jack. On 22 April, Alpha Company took the initiative with a night combat patrol north of A Loui Airfield and south of the Razorback. Echo Company followed with a reconnaissance assault and mortar raid on Eagle Nest where they established a patrol base for Alpha's raid on the Valley floor. These operations were conducted professionally and reflected the extensive training conducted in the staging area. The result that the company created was the illusion that the entire Strike Force was employed in the A Shau Valley, thus delaying and restricting the enemy's use of the area. Bravo company was directed to assist the 17th Cav in an aircraft rescue mission in the southern portion of the A Shau Valley. In typical Strike Force fashion, Bravo Company, minus one platoon, with one platoon of Charlie Company attached combat assaulted into the valley late one evening and moved to secure the high ground. The next morning they attacked south against heavy resistance and secured the downed helicopters. Company B and company C, 2d platoon then returned to FB Jack. Due to unflyable weather over the planned area of operation, the battalion spent four days at FB Jack receiving additional training.

On the 30th of April, the weather cleared allowing a small element of the battalion to be inserted on Co Pung Mountain. One thousand fifteen meters in height, Co Pung commands the eastern approach to the upper A Shau Valley. To enjoy any success in the upper valley Co Pung had to be held. It was to be a 1st Brigade support base for future raids in and around Tiger Mountain. Strike Force was called upon to seize and hold Co Pung Mountain. Following B-52 strikes, fighter bomber attacks, and extensive artillery fire, the battalion landed on Co Pung fighting bad weather and a determined enemy. On the initial sortie onto the mountain two of the lift ships crashed on the LZ resulting in five Strike Force Troopers KIA and 10 WIA. Recon and Bravo quickly seized the high ground and the engineers expanded the LZ's. Delta and Charlie companies took the southern and eastern sides respectively. On 2 May the enemy in the surrounding areas launched the first of many mortar attacks against Co Pung. On 5 May the Command and Control aircraft for the battalion spotted thirty NVA approximately 1000 meters from Co Pung and engaged them with gunships with unknown results. Because the battalion was the first allied force to assault that area on the fringe of the A Shau Valley, an enormous amount of enemy activity was discovered and an endless collection of intelligence data was collected. During a nine day stay on Co Pung the battalion received eleven 60/81mm mortar attacks and seven 57/75mm recoilless rifle attacks without one single injury to a Strike Force soldier. This was credited to effective counter mortar programming using air, artillery, and mortars; radio discipline (the enemy was never told where his rounds were impacting); sound combat patrolling (both day and night) and outstanding soldiering by individuals and fighting units. Some 101st troopers made the ultimate sacrifice on Co Pung and some Strike Force troops suffered injuries.

Most Strike Force troopers will remember Co Pung for the hardships created by unusually bad weather and the numerous enemy attacks but the capture of Co Pung opened the gate for the 1st ARVN Division in the upper A Shau Valley. Major General Tarpley, Commanding General, 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile), told many troopers on the day of the battalion's return from Co Pung that the Strike Force troopers were the first Americans to set foot on the mountain. On the 8th of May an ARVN unit located at Co Pung and the Strike Force battalion were extracted back to FB Jack (vic YD 4928) to prepare for insertion on the following day into the area west of OP Checkmate and north of FB Veghel. The return to OP Checkmate and the surrounding AO on 9 May lasted only ten days. During the period 9-18 May the battalion patrolled the area surrounding FB Veghel. On 17 May one team of the Recon platoon air assaulted into FB Shock (Vic 5105). Also on that day, 3rd platoon, C company observed and engaged three NVA's. The following day A Company discovered an old bunker complex and approximately 300 pounds of printing type. On the 18th, Delta and Echo (-) combat assaulted into an area in the vicinity of FB Veghel. D Company moved onto and secured FB Veghel while the remaining elements of the battalion conducted "Search and Clear" missions three to five kilometers south of FB Veghel. Prior to our battalion's assault into this AO, a unit of Vietnamese Marines had been operating in this area and had numerous enemy contacts. From the sum of intelligence collected, it was concluded that the NVA had a major base of operations located east of the Song Bo river. The battalion's mission was to move into the area forcing this base west of the Song Bo, at which time B-52 strikes, FAC airstrikes, and artillery would be dropped on their suspected location. While the 3rd ARVN Regiment was heavily engaged

with the 6th NVA Regiment west of the Song Bo River and south of route 547, the "Always First" Brigade moved to secure their eastern flank. Echo company, 2-502d Infantry secured Dong A Vo mountain while Alpha and Bravo attacked south with extensive fire support. Charlie joined in the final assault on Hill 608. This operation turned out to be a true infantry ground attack.

The combat assaults of the Vietnamese Marines and elements of the 1st ARVN Division into the known location of the 6th NVA Regiment around FB Veghel was heartening to the Strike Force troopers. While the battalion of the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division were deployed along a line north and east of FB Veghel, the south Vietnamese Marines and Army units struck deep into 6th NVA territory. This operation vividly demonstrated the combat effectiveness of our Vietnamese counterparts. This was the first time that American units had been passed by Vietnamese units in pursuit of the enemy. The combined operation with the 3rd ARVN Regiment at FB Veghel was a perfect example of this. While the battalion was securing their artillery and headquarters at FB Veghel, the 3d ARVN Regiment attacked the 6th NVA Regiment at Dong A Tay Mountain.

Having completed the operation south of FB Veghel (vic 5503), companies A, C, D, and E (~) CA'd into the AO north of FB Veghel while company B continued to secure firebases.

On 6 June the battalion CA'd into the AO north of FB Bastogne (vic YD 6209), companies moving onto OP Lion (Co A), OP Viper (Co B), FB Bastogne (Co C), OP King (Co E), and Co D securing route 547. The mission was to interdict any enemy activity such as food agents or tax collectors traveling back and forth from Hue to the Song Bo river area. Companies A and B, closed OP's Lion and Viper and moved off them to patrol the AO.

The AO the battalion was assigned to patrol was one of considerable enemy activity. Though the 1/327th Infantry and the ARVN had patrolled this area for the past 2 years, the battalion found innumerable enemy bunker complexes, high speed trails and sleeping positions. The Strike Force Battalion took charge and on 21 June the sniper platoon spotted and engaged 5 NVA, wounding one and capturing him a short time later. This POW was a food carrier/agent for the NVA and was carrying rice and supplies out to the area NW of FB Bastogne where he was to link up with an NVA Sapper unit. The POW related that because of increased presence (2-502d Inf) in the area the enemy units were critically short of food. The following day the Sniper Platoon found several sets of fresh footprints and a satchel charge.

During the month all the units were able to get two days at Eagle Beach for a short R&R period. However, Company E spent more time there than most because of their outstanding performance. To add to the Snipers capture of 21 June, Recon Team 1, on 25 June, observed, engaged, and killed 1 NVA. Sgt Rathert was leading the patrol when he spotted the NVA walking toward him on the same trail. Reacting instantly, Sgt Rathert killed this NVA and began to take necessary precautions for other NVA being in the same area. However, there were no others. One AK-47 and some documents were captured. On 24 June, 3rd Platoon, Company A conducted a combined operation with Regional Force companies from Nam Hoa District. Several days later, on 28 June, the battalion moved to FB Tennessee (vic YC 5596) to conduct operations in that area. Company B and a forward TOC were located on FB Tennessee. On 29 June the other companies of Strike Force CA'd into the area surrounding FB Tennessee. From the onset of

this operation there were numerous signs of enemy activity. Company D found fresh footprints, bunkers, and a tunnel. Company C found some bamboo hootches; Company A discovered very fresh footprints of 1 NVA and tracks of one dog. These operations were not without price. On 17 June, the Platoon Leader, point man, and Kit Carson Scout of 2d Platoon, Company A were wounded when a booby trap detonated. The next day the platoon observed and engaged an unknown size enemy force resulting in one Strike Force trooper WIA. Later that day, one RPG round from an unknown size enemy force killed one Strike Force trooper and wounded another.

July saw the Strike Force Battalion still in Operation Lam Son 720. The mission of the battalion was to fix the position of the K-2 NVA Battalion, believed to be operating near FB Tennessee and to interdict enemy traffic. At all times, the basic mission of the battalion was to deny the enemy food, freedom of movement and flexibility of operations. This was accomplished by conducting preplanned air strikes and artillery fires.

On 2 July, the point element of A Company detonated a booby trap resulting in one Strike Force Trooper KIA and three others WIA. Personnel operating in the FB Tennessee area became wary when approaching suspected enemy locations. On one occasion, elements of D Company received two rounds of incoming mortar near their location without suffering any casualties. Sweep operations continued in the AO and members of the battalion found numerous trails, huts, and bunkers. The operation on and around FB Tennessee revealed there was substantial enemy activity in that area. Increased air strikes, flame drops, and artillery fires were placed on the suspected enemy locations. In mid-month, the battalions moved off FB Tennessee and established FB Spear. This move was to

provide support for operations in that area and to provide screening elements for the southern area of operations. During this period, the battalion TOC was located at FB Normandy, with the unit continuing its operations in the AO without any significant contact with the enemy. The Strike Force Battalion continued its successful interdiction of enemy infiltration routes and denied the enemy its basic needs. The end of July brought to a close Operation Lam Son 720 and ushered in the renewal of Operation Jefferson Glen.

OPERATION JEFFERSON GLEN

Thua Thien Province

The mission of the battalion during the early part of August was to provide security for FB Normandy, to provide security along the southern flank of the 1st Brigade area of operations, and to patrol the Camp Eagle Rocket Belt. These missions prevented the enemy from disrupting local elections that were taking place during the month of August.

During the first week of August, the Recon and Sniper platoons were operating in the Camp Eagle Rocket Belt. During that operation, they were credited with one NVA KIA and one NVA WIA. In the third week of August the battalion changed AO's and was given a new mission. The mission was to provide security for FB Birmingham/Camp Bulldog, to patrol the Hue City Rocket Belt, to provide security of route 547 and to conduct company refresher training at Camp Bulldog. The "Strike Force" accomplished all its assigned missions and a varied number of tasks with a high degree of efficiency. Enemy contacts were few with a limited amount of trail activity indicating "Charlie" was still in the area though not in large numbers.

During the first two weeks of September the battalion continued to provide security for FB Birmingham, provide security in the northern portion of the 1st Brigade area of operations, provide security for route 547 and to conduct company refresher training at Camp Bulldog.

In early September, intelligence reports indicated a large buildup of enemy troops west of the FB Veghel area. The 1st Brigade conceived a deception plan in which one company each from 2-502d Inf, 1-327th Inf, and 2-327th Inf would be combat assaulted in three separate locations. The combat assaults each had false . . .

artillery preps and false insertions giving the impression of larger forces being inserted. Air strikes by USAF F4 Phantoms preceded each of the combat assaults.

On 3 September, D Company and a mortar section from E Company were combat assaulted into the area west of FB Tennessee and searched the area hit by air strikes and artillery preps. Within 300 meters of the LZ, the company discovered enemy bunkers sufficient to quarter a battalion size force. The company also detected the odor of dead bodies though none were found. Late that afternoon, the company was extracted simulating a reinforcement by another company.

Concurrently, with the false and actual combat assaults, a team consisting of 3 REB's led by CPT Cassidy, the Strike Force intelligence officer, began a planned simulation of radio traffic normally heard from 3 companies conducting reconnaissance in force operations. This special team simulated traffic for a total of six days to portray movement of the battalion toward FB Rendezvous located in the A Shau Valley. The deception operation was considered a large success. Initial G-2 reports indicated two NVA battalions had withdrawn from the area west of Tennessee to their traditional sanctuaries in the northern A Shau Valley.

During the last two weeks of the month, the mission of the battalion was to secure and improve FB Bastogne, OP Checkmate and FB Kim Quy, provide security for Route 547, and provide security in the western portion of the 1st Brigade area of operations. The battalion TOC was located at FB Bastogne during this period. One company was used to provide security of FB Bastogne while the remaining companies conducted reconnaissance in force operations in the surrounding area. The indications of the enemy's presence appeared throughout the AO, but the

enemy avoided contact and remained hidden. The battalion was extremely successful in preventing the enemy from infiltrating into the lowlands to disrupt the national elections and commit acts of terrorism.

On the 21-24 September, elements of 2-327th Inf received attacks by fire on their battalion command post located on OP Apollo. On 24 September, B Company 2-502d Inf was placed OPCON to 2-327th Inf and combat assaulted on the ridgeline of hills 500-600, a predominant hill mass dominating the southwest portion of the 2-327th Inf AO. Immediately, elements of the company came under small arms fire from an unknown size enemy force. From 25-30 September, B Company initiated two contacts with the enemy while the enemy initiated the same. On 30 September, B Company engaged what appeared to be a platoon size or larger enemy force located in a large bunker complex. An intense firefight ensued with ARA, artillery, groundtroops and air strikes controlled and employed by 1LT Ankley, the B Company commander. The result of the contact between B company and an estimated company size force was 26 NVA killed 13 NVA wounded and three large bunker complexes destroyed, one capable of holding an 80 man force. B Company suffered only 3 wounded from booby traps in the entire operation.

OPERATION MONSOON DYNAMIC DEFENSE

Thua Thien Province

The battalion ended Operation Jefferson Glen and began the 1st Brigade Moonson plan on 9 October. The change in operation orders was simultaneous with the change in AO's for the 2-502d Inf. The Strike Force Battalion had the mission of securing the southern portion of the 1st Brigade AO, preventing enemy infiltration to the lowlands through our AO and disrupting enemy attempts to attack Camp Eagle by fire and maintaining OP Apollo. Though the construction of the hill defenses had been initiated in July by Strike Force Troopers, there was an enormous amount of work yet to be done. The battalion returned to Camp Eagle for a week of refitting and training 14-21 October.

On 20 October while conducting a sweep operation outside the perimeter of Camp Eagle, A Company made contact with three VC which resulted in three VC KIA and the capture of three AK-47 automatic rifles, 50lbs of rice, one stove, a bag of documents and a diary. On 21 October, the battalion again assumed responsibility of OP Apollo and its surrounding area.

The weather conditions began to worsen the day the battalion assumed the AO. Typhoon Hester struck the AO on 24 October and by 25 October the winds had reached 90 m.p.h. Nevertheless, the companies in the field patrolled their areas very aggressively as exemplified by Charlie Company. On 25 October, a patrol from C Company, while moving in to check three grass huts, observed and engaged one NVA. Three other NVA fled from one of the huts and were engaged by the patrol which resulted in an unknown number of casualties. The company followed the blood trails in an attempt to locate the enemy but had to give up the chase because of heavy rain and wind from Typhoon Hester. The following day the

2d Platoon of Charlie Company received fire from an unknown size enemy force resulting in negative casualties. On 28 October, 1st Platoon of A Company observed and engaged 6 NVA soldiers who apparently were searching for food in an old US FDP. The same day during the evening, Recon teams 1 and 3 observed and directed artillery on a sampan from which lights were blinking believed to be signaling to enemy elements in the lowlands. No trace of the sampan was found the next morning. On 30 October, Recon Team-2 received sniper fire within one kilometer of OP Apollo. On 31 October, Recon Teams 1 and 3 received a suspected RPG wound from an unknown size enemy force resulting in the team's medic receiving a slight fragmentation wound. The battalion continued to discover and destroy numerous grass huts, bunkers, and booby traps throughout the month. Constant surveillance of enemy high speed trails prevented the enemy from infiltrating to the lowlands to acquire their basic needs. The many bunkers and tunnel complexes destroyed by "Strike Force" personnel denied the enemy their much needed shelter for the monsoon season. The "Strike Force", by aggressive and continuous patrolling, was successful in denying the enemy the time required to employ their rockets against the cities of Hue and Phu Bai and Camp Eagle.

During the month of November, the battalion continued to provide security and prevent infiltration into the southern portion of the 1st Brigade AO. Enemy activity remained on a low level with only four contacts, two enemy initiated and two friendly initiated.

On 6 November, the Reconnaissance Platoon observed and engaged with unknown results, one NVA walking along a trail on the ridgeline of Hill 500. On 11 Nov the Command and Control helicopter received small arms fire from an unknown size

enemy force. On 20 November, 2d Platoon, B Company engaged with automatic and small arms fire an unknown size enemy force. The platoon leader utilized close in ambush training and directed his platoon to assault the ambush. The platoon leader utilized close-in ambush training and directed his platoon to assault the ambush. The platoon quickly gained fire superiority and routed the enemy. ARA and Artillery were employed on the suspected enemy location with unknown results. The last contact of November occurred on the 28th in which the 2d Plt, Co A observed and engaged with unknown results, 1 NVA soldier moving along a ridgeline east of hill 500. In addition to the contacts, Strike Force personnel continued to observe and monitor numerous indications of enemy presence in the battalion AO such as freshly made footprints on trails and streambeds, bunker complexes, lights shining at night, and numerous sensor activations.

One highlight of the month was the formation of a security honor guard for OP Apollo. Strike Force troopers with a minimum of six months in the field were allowed to volunteer for the privilege of serving in the Honor Guard Platoon.

On 19 November, OP Apollo was defended completely by the Honor Guard. This event enabled LTC Snodgrass to employ all frontline companies in the field without the necessity of employing one as security for OP Apollo. This action provided an additional threat to the enemy's movement and infiltration through Strike Force's AO.

On 1 December, the Battalion Commander, LTC John C. Snodgrass received official notification that the 1st Brigade less the 2-327th Infantry was going to stand-down. The battalion's standdown period was to begin on 28 December and end on 17 January. The battalion was to be reduced to an equipment escort detachment

of up to 20% of authorized strength to be deployed with equipment to Fort Campbell, for retention in the active army. The outstanding combat record of the "Strike Force" was to end with the passing of the year.

Even with the standown of the battalion so close, Strike Force personnel continued their search for the elusive enemy in the battalion's AO. On 5 December, 2d Platoon, A Company observed and engaged with unknown results one NVA soldier near Hill 500. Two days later on the night of the 7th, a mechanical ambush set by 2d Platoon, A Company detonated, killing one NVA soldier. Equipment found on or near the body was one AK-47 rifle in poor condition, two AK-47 magazines, one satchel/back pack, one hand made Bowie type knife with sheath, one Chicom compass and Chicom webb gear.

During the same period, a tragic CH-47 crash claimed 34 101st Airborne Division Troopers. D Company, 2-502d Inf was placed under Brigade control and was given the mission of securing the crash site located near WE Roy. The company also had the task of recovering the bodies of the dead troopers. Enroute to the crash site one Strike Force trooper detonated an old VC booby trap and was wounded. Upon arrival at the crash site, D Company accomplished their mission with efficiency and great dignity.

The last contact between Strike Force troopers and the enemy occurred on 17 December when 1st Platoon, Company A observed and engaged one NVA with unknown results in the Valley south of Nui Khe.

The battalion continued reconnaissance in force operations with all four lettered companies and the Recon Platoon up to the 26th, the last day of operations in the field for Strike Force.

Thus, the day after Christmas, the Strike Force Battalion airlifted out of the CP Apollo Area of Operations and began standdown operation in preparation for its first trip to the United States since 8 July, 1965.

SUMMARY

In 1971, the Strike Force Battalion concluded its combat role in the Republic of Vietnam and prepared itself for the redeployment to Fort Campbell, Kentucky. Throughout the year, the Strike Force troopers faced in battle a variety of soldiers varying from the local guerrilla to the well trained NVA. Tactics and methods of operations constantly changed, according to the enemy situation. Under the able leadership of LTC Charles J. SHAY, LTC Lloyd N. COSBY and LTC John C. SNODGRASS, the Strike Force Battalion met the challenge with professionalism regardless of difficult mountain terrain, heavily canopied hills, adverse weather conditions, and the skillful and elusive enemy. Over 46 enemy soldiers were killed, 23 confirmed enemy wounded, 2 captured, and over 85 individual and crew served weapons were captured. The Strike Force also destroyed numerous enemy base installations and bunker complexes.

The statistics amassed by the battalion stand as overt testimony to the professionalism and combat effectiveness of the officers and men who served with distinction in the STRIKE FORCE Battalion during 1971.

PASS IN REVIEW

BATTALION COMMANDERS

| | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| LTC SHAY, Charles J. | 6 May 1970 - 24 Jan 71 |
| LTC COSBY, Lloyd N. | 25 Jan 1971 - 4 Aug 71 |
| LTC SNODGRASS, John C. | 5 Aug 1971 - present |

COMPANY COMMANDERS

| <u>HHC</u> | <u>FROM</u> |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| CPT RUDDY, Merton E. | 29 Nov 70 |
| CPT RETZLAFF, Aloysius P. | 7 Jul 71 |

| <u>CO A</u> | |
|------------------------|-----------|
| CPT OAKLAND, Gerald D. | 30 Sep 70 |
| CPT DIX, Drew D. | 23 Apr 71 |

| <u>CO B</u> | |
|------------------------|----------|
| CPT CLUETT, John H Jr. | 6 Oct 70 |
| CPT ANKLEY, William | 7 Jul 71 |

| <u>CO C</u> | |
|-------------------------|-----------|
| 1LT BRIDGES, Hubert Jr. | 24 Dec 70 |
| CPT ALLEN, Eddie | 4 Mar 71 |
| CPT ELLIOT, William | 25 Aug 71 |

| <u>CO D</u> | |
|-------------------------|-----------|
| CPT MORRIS, Edward L. | 27 Dec 70 |
| CPT D'ORLANDO, Leonard | 28 Sep 71 |
| 1LT PETERSON, Fredolph | 24 May 71 |
| CPT PHILLIPS, Robert J. | 18 Jul 71 |

| <u>CO E</u> | |
|-----------------------|-----------|
| CPT CATLIN, James A. | 14 Oct 70 |
| CPT FORRESTER, Robert | 18 Mar 71 |
| CPT PUMPELLY, Howard | 27 May 71 |
| CPT MANICCIA, Bruno | 17 Sep 71 |

EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

MAJ JORDAN, Herbert A. Jr.
MAJ ESWORTHY, Bert
MAJ REID, Tilden R.

FROM

1 Dec 70
6 Jan 71
9 Jun 71

BATTALION S-3

MAJ SEIBERT, Gunter P.
MAJ ESWORTHY, Bert
CPT UTTER, George B.

30 Nov 71⁷⁰
9 Jun 71
9 Dec 71

S-1

1LT HEATON, Chad G.
CPT REIZLAFF, Aloysius
CPT CLUETT, John H.
CPT FHELPS, Gary A.

1 Jan 71
15 Mar 71
6 Jul 71
1 Dec 71

S-2

CPT REIZLAFF, Aloysius P.
CPT CROWLEY, Kenneth V.
1LT PETERSON, Fredolph W.
CPT CASSIDY, Richard P.

24 Feb 71
15 Mar 71
25 Jul 71
12 Aug 71

S-4

CPT PEABODY, Frank
CPT HUGUS, David K.
CPT KNOLL, Jeffery A.

1 Jan 71
6 Apr 71
17 Jul 71

BIBLIOGRAPHY

This history of the 2d Battalion (Airmobile) 502d Infantry for the year 1971 was constructed from the following:

- 1 Daily Situation Reports
- Operation and Frag Orders
- " After Action Reports
- 3 Strike Force Weekly Intsums

GLOSSARY

AO - - - - - Area of Operation
ARA - - - - - Aerial Rocket Artillery
ARVN - - - - - Army of the Republic of Vietnam
Bn - - - - - Battalion
CA - - - - - Combat Assault
Canopy - - - - - Heavily wooded area
Co - - - - - Company
CP - - - - - Command Post
FSB - - - - - Fire Support Base
KBA - - - - - Killed by Air or Artillery
KHA - - - - - Killed by Hostile Action
KNHA - - - - - Killed by Non-Hostile Action
KIA - - - - - Killed in Action
LZ - - - - - Helicopter Landing Zone
NDP - - - - - Night Defensive Position
NVA - - - - - North Vietnamese Army
POW - - - - - Prisoner of War
PZ - - - - - Helicopter Pick-up Zone
Recon Platoon - - - - - Reconnaissance Platoon
RIF - - - - - Reconnaissance in Force
TOC - - - - - Tactical Operations Center
WIA - - - - - Wounded in Action
WNHA - - - - - Wounded by Non-Hostile Action
VC - - - - - Viet Cong

NORTH VIETNAM

