

Rendezvous With Destiny



A Publication of the 101st Airborne Division

“When he looks you straight in the eyes,
you suddenly realize why
some men are generals.”

(A Staff Officer, Winter, 1968)



Maj. Gen. Melvin Zais
COMMANDING GENERAL

The pattern of days to come in Vietnam has already been established by the 101st Airborne Division. Our increasingly successful efforts here are a tribute, not only to the gallant men who have served in the mountains, jungles and coastal plains, but to the thousands upon thousands who have nurtured the spirit of the Screaming Eagles in years past.

Never content to rest upon the legacy and laurels of a glorious history, the fighting soldiers of the Division are ever looking ahead to their next “Rendezvous With Destiny.”

Those immortal words, spoken by the first Screaming Eagle, Major General William C. Lee, will be forever in the hearts and souls of soldiers fortunate enough to be assigned to the 101st Airborne Division.

We came to Vietnam and won some of the hardest battles of this war. We confidently have met and destroyed the enemy from Saigon to Hue with interim stops at Phuoc Vinh, Song Be, Phan Thiet, Dak To and the A Shau Valley.

Now we are engaged in what portends to be the most important phase of the Vietnam war so far—pacification and the return of Vietnam to the Vietnamese.

The inhabitants and residents of Thua Thien province are returning to their cherished goal of living as free people without fear of terrorism, restraint by attack or total dependence upon the military presence of outside Allied forces.

The great strides of progress made in Thua Thien, the province of the Screaming Eagles, comes as a direct result of the devotion to duty, the aspirations and sacrifices of every man who proudly wears the 101st Airborne Division shoulder insignia.

The challenge of continuing our vigilance despite an ever-diminishing evidence of enemy troop concentrations and his reluctance to engage units of this Division in prolonged contact, is one that will require the determination, concentration and perseverance of every soldier of the 101st.

It is with great conviction that I have repeated time and again that there are two types of soldiers in the Army—those who are in the 101st and those who wish they were.

I have no doubt that the challenges and mission of returning Thua Thien province to the people and the peaceful existence which they so richly deserve, will be accomplished in only the fashion we know how—**AIRBORNE, ALL THE WAY.**


MELVIN ZAIS
Major General, USA
Commanding

Rendezvous With Destiny

Winter 1968-69



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SCREAMING EAGLE VIETNAM DIARY



Paratroopers of the 101st Airborne Division withdrew from their A Shau thrust to secure Route 1 for the rainy monsoon season. The 3rd Brigade left Phuoc Vinh to complete the Screaming Eagle team in I Corps, where the 1st and 2nd Brigades successfully continued Operation Nevada Eagle. The Division has carried its fight into all fields with an aggressive Chieu Hoi program and materials, food and clothing for Vietnamese projects.



Sept. 1—Heavy contact marked the beginning of the month, with elements of the 101st and the 82nd Airborne's 3rd Brigade inflicting 39 casualties, capturing three enemy, and taking 49 weapons. "Ground pounders" of the 2nd Brigade maintained relentless pursuit of the enemy, killing 10 and seizing hastily abandoned equipment, including 300 gas masks and 180 RPG rounds.

Sept. 2—Increased pressure throughout the 101st area of operations accounted for 13 enemy dead and 69 weapons confiscated. Gunships of D Co., 101st Assault Helicopter Bn., engaged and killed six enemy during a combat assault 10 km north of Hue.

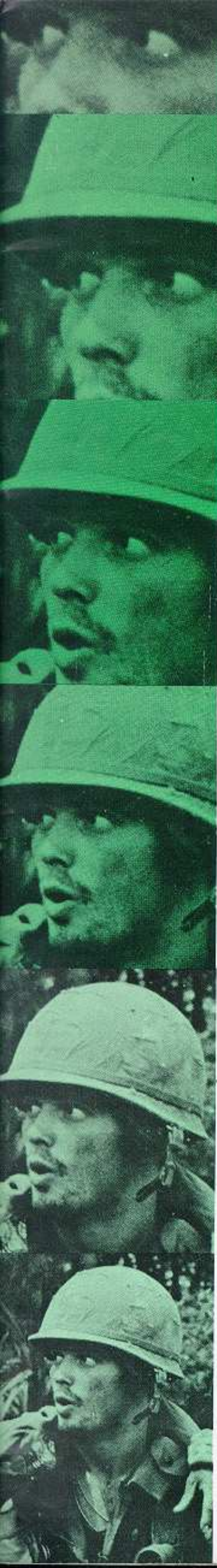
Sept. 3—The civil affairs section provided a MEDCAP to Vinh Loc district, treating 217 patients. Vietnamese in the Hue area received more than 4,600 board feet of lumber from the Division for welfare programs.

Sept. 5—B Co., 2nd Bn., 506th Abn. Inf. contacted a VC platoon and was reinforced immediately by A and D Cos. with support from light fire teams, artillery and airstrikes. A and D Cos., 3rd Bn., 187th Abn. Inf. later were inserted with elements of the 25th Inf. Div. to complete a cordon of the enemy unit.

Sept. 6—Supported by heavy mortar fire, a two-company enemy force directed a human wave attack against A Co., 3rd Bn., 187th Abn. Inf. After a short, vicious assault, the enemy temporarily penetrated the cordon, allowing some to flee. The break quickly was resealed. Results were 141 VC killed, six confirmed prisoners, 118 detainees, nine AK-47s, three AK-50s, three RPDs, two RPG-2s and two SKS rifles captured.

Sept. 7—A platoon from C Co., 3rd Bn., 187th Abn. Inf. was inserted into a hot LZ during an Eagle Flight. The rest of C Co. along with the Recon platoon and A and D Cos., 3rd Bn., 187th Abn. Inf., provided immediate reinforcements. Artillery, light fire teams, airstrikes and Spooky gunships furnished support against an estimated enemy battalion equipped with mortars, automatic and crew-served weapons, RPGs and small arms. A sweep the next morning revealed 38 VC bodies, 2 prisoners, six AK-47s, five SKS rifles, one RPD, two 60 mm mortars, two 82 mm mortars, 15 pounds of medical supplies and assorted ammunition.





Sept. 8—Typhoon "Bess" continued to hamper Screaming Eagle operations and no significant enemy contact was made for several days.

Sept. 9—A sweep of the flooded coastal plain by troopers from the 2nd Brigade gathered 15 detainees. Airborne infantrymen aboard choppers were able to remove stranded suspects on the coastal plain, as "Bess" left the area in watery confusion.

Sept. 12—Increased action in the 2nd Brigade AO accounted for 15 Viet Cong killed. A CO., 2nd Bn., 501st Abn. Inf., netted 11 enemy in coordinated sweeps along the coast.

Sept. 14—Operation Nevada Eagle continued to weaken the enemy around Hue. Daily contact brought operation totals to 1,860 enemy killed, 340 prisoners captured, and 2,621 weapons seized.

Sept. 15—Relentless attacks from the 101st and elements of the 82nd produced 50 enemy losses, with 48 prisoners and 27 weapons captured in action throughout the area. Paratroopers of the 2nd Brigade inflicted the heaviest casualties with A Co., 1st Bn., 501st Inf., killing 19 enemy in Vinh Loc. During the battle, supporting helicopters killed 11 and battalion elements counted eight additional dead. Thirty-six prisoners and 29 weapons were captured in the sharp contact 24 km east of Hue.

Sept. 16—D Co., 3rd Bn., 187th Abn.

Inf. reported 300 NVA moving toward FSB Pope, which began receiving fire from 82 mm mortars, RPGs, M-79s, small arms and automatic weapons. "Rakkasan" elements and B Co., 2nd Bn., 319th Abn. Arty. retaliated with artillery, mortars, claymores, automatic weapons and small arms. A sweep revealed 264 NVA killed, four prisoners, one RPD, six AK-50s, one Chicom carbine and assorted equipment. D Co., 2nd Bn., 506th Abn. Inf. received small arms and automatic weapons fire from an estimated platoon and was reinforced by A Co. Harassed by light fire teams, artillery, and airstrikes, the enemy broke into small units and fled. A search turned up 31 NVA killed, one RPD and five AK-47s, while one RPD and two AK-47s were destroyed. Refugees in the flooded Col Co Beach area received 16,000 pounds of bananas and 2,000 pounds of pineapples from the civil affairs section. Twenty thousand pounds of food were distributed to the refugee center in Phu Bai as the paratroopers fought a war on two fronts.

Sept. 19—A and C Cos., 2nd Bn., 506th Abn. Inf. swept a VC bunker complex, killing 17 enemy.

Sept. 20—Nevada Eagle continued and the Division counted 22 enemy dead and three prisoners captured in sporadic action from combined friendly forces.



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0175
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SCREAMING EAGLE VIETNAM DIARY

Sept. 21—In relatively light contact, a FAC plane spotted an enemy squad attempting to take cover eight km northeast of Hue. A Recon Platoon of the 1st Bn., 501st Abn. Inf., immediately combat-assaulted into the area. One of the helicopters engaged two VC in the open, capturing the harassed soldiers. Five additional members of the enemy squad, who had been hiding in a nearby lagoon, breathing through bamboo reeds, were killed by "Geronimo" troopers

154 enemy dead. The 101st and ARVN units detained and interrogated 87 suspects as the Phu Vang sweep began.

Sept. 30—Paratroopers and ARVN forces combined to kill 11 enemy and capture three weapons in the second day of the Phu Vang operation.

Oct. 1—Infantrymen of the 2nd Bn., 54th ARVN Rgt., killed 12 enemy and captured 39 weapons in the Phu Vang district cordon. The first three days of the operation produced 51 prisoners and assorted caches of ammunition.

Oct. 2—Division Psychological Operations in the Hue area had rallied 210 Hoi Chanhs to the government. PSYOPS had worked closely with airborne infantrymen, exerting pressure on the enemy, convincing the VC soldiers to give up the fight.

Oct. 4—Combined forces killed 14 enemy and captured 23 weapons in the Phu Vang cordon, five km east of Hue. Thus far, the cordon trap had netted 160 Viet Cong prisoners. In the Truoi Mountain region B Co., 2nd Bn., 502nd Abn. Inf., uncovered an enemy cache containing several hundred 82mm mortar rounds, thirty 75mm rockets, and some 60mm mortar shells. D Co. of the same battalion destroyed a small base camp in the dense jungle slopes of Truoi Mountain.

Oct. 7—An early morning patrol with elements of C Co., 1st Bn., 501st Abn. Inf., discovered more than 4,500 lbs. of rice under the floor of an abandoned hut in the

506th Abn. Inf., in a sweep of the surrounding hills. At the same time, the 2nd Sqd., 17th Cav captured 7,000 pounds of rice.

Oct. 16—The civil affairs section, working with local Vietnamese, distributed 13,500 pounds of clothes to refugees in Hue. More than 3,000 needy people benefited from the program.

Oct. 20—Screaming Eagle paratroopers killed six enemy and captured 46 weapons during more activity in Nevada Eagle. C Co., 2nd Bn., 501st Abn. Inf., clashed with an NVA patrol and killed two enemy soldiers. A Co. of the same battalion also made contact, resulting in four kills.

Oct. 21—A new combined forces cordon battered the enemy at Phu Vang, 17 km east of Hue. The search was conducted by troopers of the 1st Bn., 501st Abn. Inf., who apprehended 54 suspects.

Oct. 25—First Brigade infantrymen unleashed a night ambush against a large enemy force southeast of Hue. Six bodies and four weapons were uncovered at dawn.

Oct. 26—A harassing enemy mortar attack was launched against A and D Cos., 2nd Bn., 501st Abn. Inf. as the enemy tried to elude pursuing Screaming Eagles 35 km southeast of Hue. Cobra gunships from the 2nd Sqd. 17th Cav., retaliated and silenced the mortar tubes, killing six enemy. The companies maintained pressure on the enemy causing him to leave three bodies behind.

Oct. 27—Born in battle, but too busy to be christened, Camp Eagle was officially named and designated base camp for the 101st Airborne Division. The lull in recent ground fighting broke with 93 dead accredited to Operation Nevada Eagle. Paratroopers of A Co., 1st Bn., 506th Abn. Inf., discovered 80 bodies in a small base 15 km south of Hue. Nearby, B Co., and C Co. of the same battalion swept the hills and uncovered seven more bodies.

Oct. 28—The Phu Vang cordon went into its thirtieth day. Elements of the 101st and ARVN units had inflicted 28 enemy losses, captured 23 weapons and interrogated 24 prisoners to weaken the cordoned enemy. Hitting the rice trail again as the Recon Platoon, 1st Bn., 501st Abn. Inf., seized 3,300 pounds of paddy rice, raising the tonnage to 431.

Oct. 31—If Halloween was observed by the Division, it was in the form of a night ambush triggered by C Co., 2nd Bn., 327th Abn. Inf. The paratroopers killed two enemy soldiers and captured their weapons in the "trick or treat" action 41 km southeast of Hue.

Nov. 2—President Johnson ordered all air, naval, and artillery bombardment of North Vietnam halted. Several miles south of the no bombing area, troopers from the 101st killed 21 enemy and detained three suspects. In the largest encounter, a LRP squad engaged an enemy reinforced platoon and killed six. Gunships arrived and killed eight more enemy before the LRP patrol was extracted to safety.



You learn to live in the jungle...to fight in it...but you never learn to like it.

of the 501st. One VC elected to rally and five weapons were captured.

Sept. 24—Engineers of the Division helped clear areas of reoccurring contact areas. During the continued operation of Nevada Eagle, they helped in destroying 3,990 bunkers of the enemy.

Sept. 27—The major action was a two-company combat assault into the Truoi River Valley, causing the enemy to flee a previously secure sanctuary.

Sept. 28—A combined forces operation was kicked off in the Phu Vang district to follow the highly successful Vinh Loc operation, which ended after accounting for

Phu Vang district. In addition to the food supplies, the cordoned region yielded a large Viet Cong force. The operation, in its 9th day, had counted 85 enemy killed, 158 captured with 151 weapons. PSYOPS, used to supplement the cordon, had accounted for 35 Hoi Chanhs.

Oct. 10—Operation Nevada Eagle continued to put pressure on all sections of the 101st area of operations, killing 19 enemy in scattered action.

Oct. 12—Third Brigade troopers credited 101st artillery fire for 40 bodies they uncovered 16 km south of Hue. The mass grave was discovered by A Co., 1st Bn.,

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EAGLE 'EYES'



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Nov. 4—A new combined-forces cordon was established 32 km southeast of Hue, near Phu Loc. Forty-nine suspects were interrogated in the hills, where the grip tightened on the enemy-infested region.

Nov. 5—The successful cordon continued. Sweeps produced 109 suspects from the trapped and confused Viet Cong force.

Nov. 7—A lull in action prevailed throughout the Division areas of operation. The cordon around the Phu Vang district had resulted in 60 enemy killed and 74 prisoners taken.

Nov. 8—Four 122mm rockets impacted inside the Camp Eagle perimeter, one round blasting shrapnel into Maj. Gen. Zais' command chopper. Scattered light action in the 101st AO claimed three enemy lives, and the Phu Loc cordon boosted its five-day total to 53 prisoners.

Nov. 10—The Phu Loc cordon ended with 28 VC indentified from more than 1,300 suspects detained during the eight-day operation. The Screaming Eagle rice-denial program continued to deprive the enemy of needed food supplies. C Co., 1st Bn., 501st Abn. Inf., captured 40,000 pounds of harvested rice from four separate caches eight km east of Hue. "Geronimo" infantrymen brought the rice holdings to more than 456 tons.

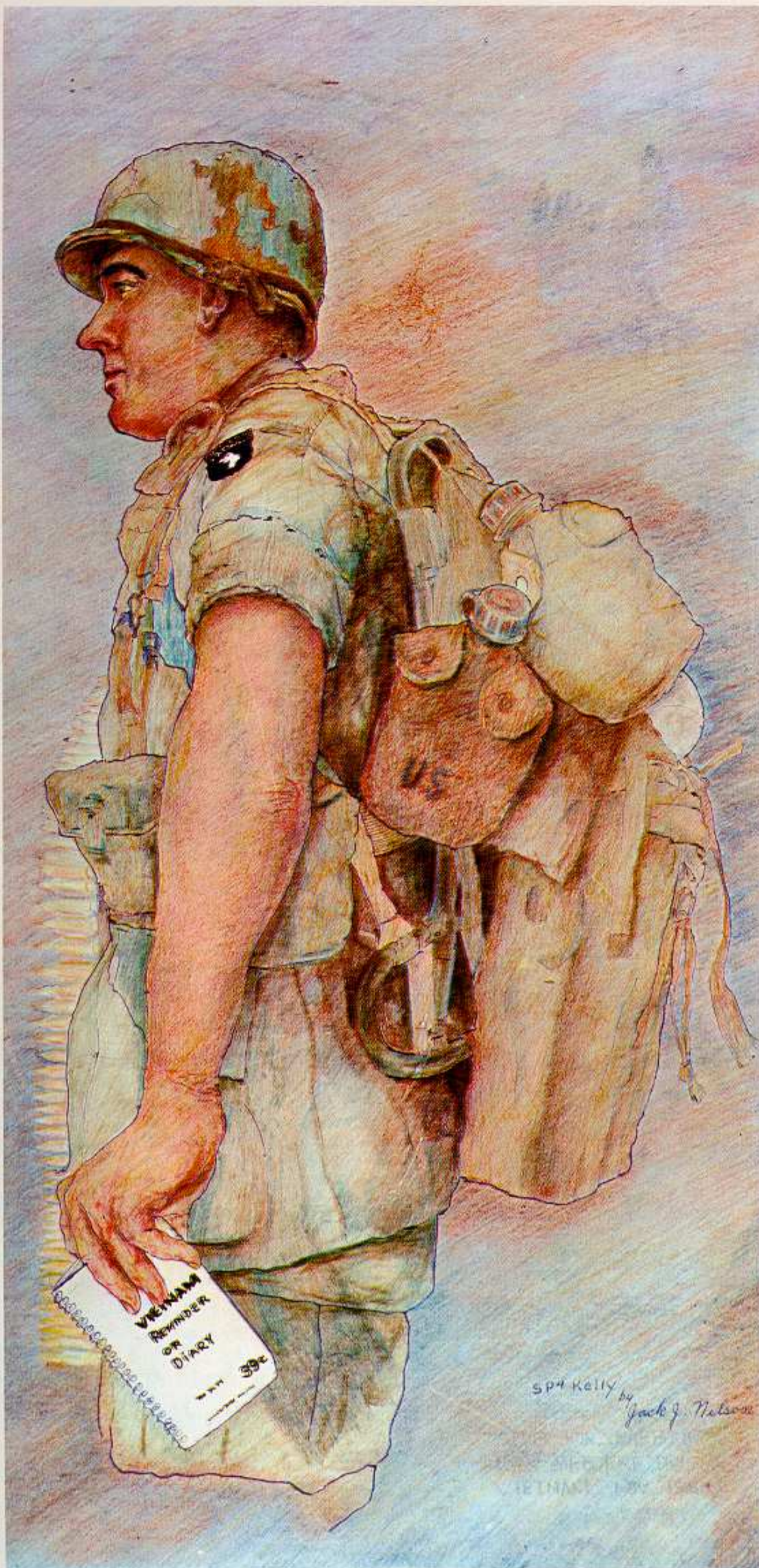
Nov. 12—Enemy contact increased in intensity. Division troopers killed 23 enemy, capturing eight prisoners and throwing up a cordon around the large enemy force six km southeast of Phu Bai. The 1st Bn., 327th Abn. Inf., the 2nd Bn., 502nd Abn. Inf., and an ARVN unit coordinated a precise movement to block possible escape routes while patrol boats plied coastal waters to complete the enclosure. The startled enemy force tried to strike out and were engaged by A Co., 1st Bn., 327th Abn. Inf. Five enemy were killed, and the Viet Cong began retreating to the east. Paratroopers of C Co., 1st Bn., 501st Abn. Inf., air-assaulted into their part to form a blocking force and immediately launched a sweep that netted six kills and 15 prisoners.

Nov. 16—The cordon continued, and troopers from the 1st Brigade concentrated their efforts on the Truoi River, where they apprehended 90 suspects during a day-long sweep. Elsewhere, infantrymen of C

A few hundred meters away, his recon patrol is cut off and surrounded by an NVA battalion...the "old man" is suddenly older.



Van Alstine



Co., 2nd Bn., 501st Abn. Inf., uncovered three enemy bodies and a sizable cache of 570 mortar rounds, 24 cases of SKS ammunition, and numerous explosives.

Nov. 17—Light enemy contact in Operation Nevada Eagle accounted for six killed and 10 captured weapons when C Co., 2nd. Bn., 501st Abn. Inf., pursued a small enemy force into a hut complex 18 km southeast of Hue. The paratroopers confiscated a 122mm rocket launcher and four rockets after gunships pounded the huts. A sweep of the area turned up assorted equipment.

Nov. 21—Operation Nevada Eagle continued to limit hostile activity in I corps with 16 enemy killed. Two of the dead Viet Cong were village chiefs. Rice denial also proved successful as 6,400 pounds were retrieved, bringing the total to more than 470 tons since May 17.

Nov. 22—Increased activity throughout Screaming Eagle territory accounted for 63 killed and 27 enemy weapons captured. In the most significant action, the 1st ARVN Recon Co. uncovered a mass grave containing 30 bodies thought to have been killed during a B-52 strike in the mountains west of Phu Bai. Later, seven km to the north, ARVN forces found a bunker complex with an additional 30 bodies, a result of 101st artillery.

Nov. 25—Enemy contact continued light, as Nevada Eagle accounted for seven enemy killed and 28 weapons captured. A combined forces sweep by the 3rd ARVN and elements from the 2nd Brigade revealed a large cache, including three crew-served machine guns.

Nov. 26—More combined forces operations were conducted southwest of FB Brick. Elements of the 2nd Brigade, along with an ARVN battalion, engaged the enemy briefly, killing one and capturing six weapons. The pursuit continued 25 km south of Hue.

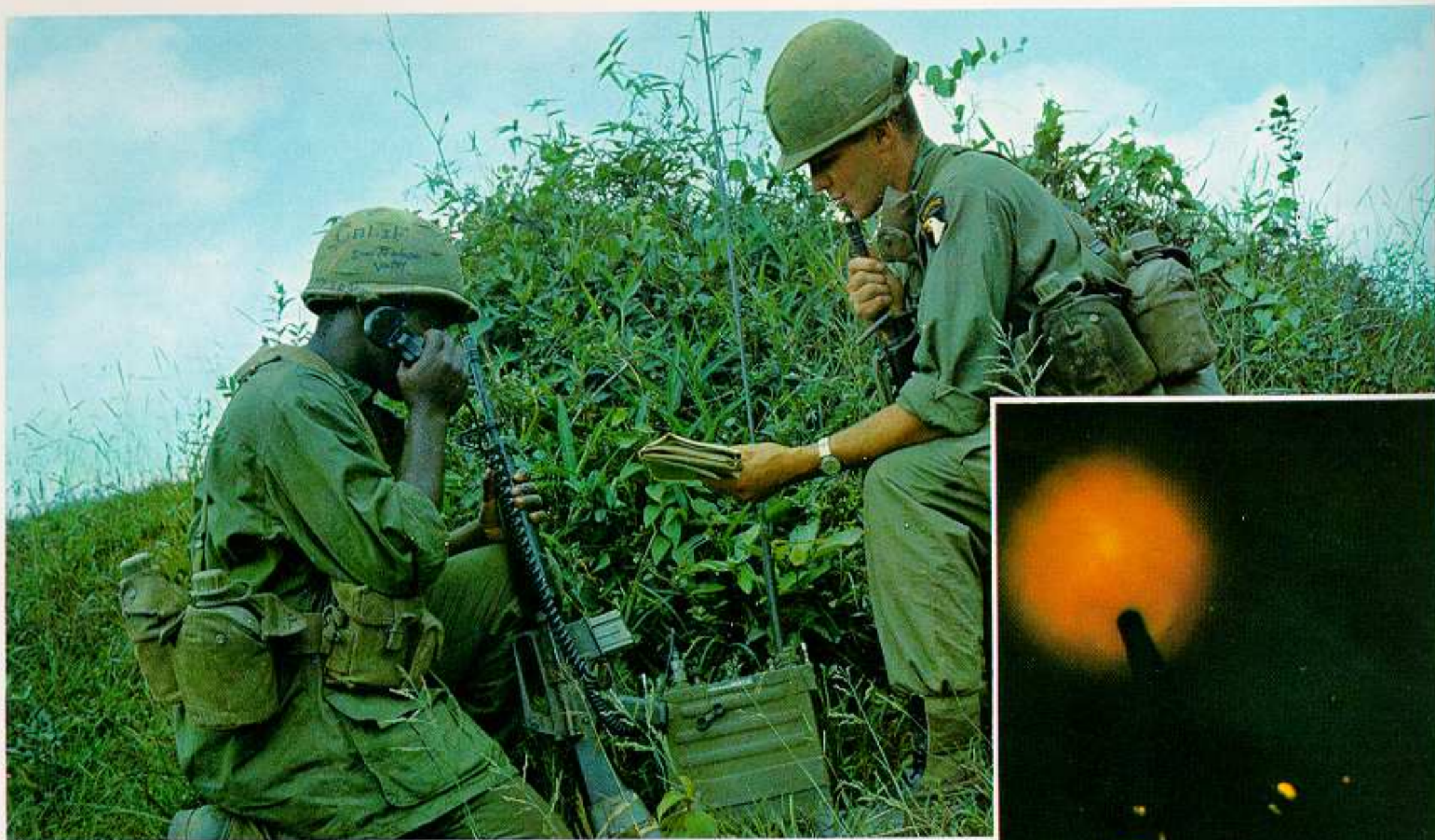
Nov. 28—There was scattered contact in Operation Nevada Eagle. One enemy soldier with an AK-47 was killed by paratroopers of D CO., 2nd Bn., 502nd Abn. Inf., on the coastal plain south of Hue.

Nov. 29—Aerial spotters for the USS New Jersey, reported at least 13 secondary explosions when the ship's 16 inch guns were fired into triple canopy mountainside south of Hue. The outgoing shells traveled 20 miles from ship to target and reached a maximum height of 4 miles to become 1,900 screaming pounds of high explosives when they impacted. Action picked up in the 101st area of operations with 21 enemy counted dead and two weapons captured.

Nov. 30—Elements of the 2nd Bn., 501st Abn. Inf., maintained enemy contact throughout the day 23 km south of Hue. Five enemy were killed and three prisoners detained. The prisoners said the unit had killed an additional 12 VC.

DENY THE ENEMY continued to be the watchwords of the 101st Airborne Division. Screaming Eagle paratroopers have engaged the enemy repeatedly in Operation Nevada Eagle, counting 2,759 enemy dead, 792 prisoners and 3,259 weapons captured as this publication goes to press.





Downs



Downs

Dean K. Phillips

Specialist Five

FIRE For Effect

A 20-man reconnaissance team carefully picked its way through the thick jungle on the edge of "War Zone D" near the 3rd Brigade base camp. The jungle fatigues of a husky radio-telephone operator were saturated with perspiration. He hesitated momentarily as he eyed a strand of linked ammunition on the ground. Alarm bells clanged inside his brain—it wasn't M-60 ammunition.

Fifty meters to his front, the point element opened up with a blistering volley. All 20 Americans hugged the ground as enemy small arms fire began snapping over their heads.

A baby-faced second lieutenant crawled over to the RTO clutching a map. "Get me battalion arty," said the artillery forward observer.

A forward air-controller circled overhead. "I have you spotted," the pilot reported. "Your element is encircled by an estimated reinforced enemy company," crackled the voice over the radio.

The artillery FO quickly reported his position, and the paratrooper force frantically put out a heavy volume of fire from their organic weapons to avoid being overrun.

The enemy pulled back and the Americans breathed a short-lived sigh of relief as 60mm mortar rounds began to drop among them.

"They're going to chew us to pieces," an angry NCO snarled.

But the FO had other plans . . .

He skillfully began directing two artillery batteries from the 2nd Bn., 319th Abn. Arty. and 105mm rounds came thundering down 300 meters to the left flank of the recon team. The FO gingerly edged the rounds to within 60 meters of his position as an effective blocking force.

He then directed the other battery, and rounds crashed into the jungle 75 meters to his flank.

The recon team now was protected from the enemy force 10 times its size by a wall of steel provided by twelve 105mm howitzers.

The young lieutenant then directed the second battery 50 more meters to the right flank, and he and the platoon leader ordered the paratroopers to move in that direction.

They moved out, still enclosed in their mobile wall of steel. He filled in the 100 meter gap left behind them by directing the first battery 50 meters to the right.

In this manner, the recon team was able to move 450 meters to an LZ where they received an emergency extraction.

"The two artillery batteries practically took us by the hand and walked us into that LZ," the amazed platoon leader later remarked.



Berry Sennott





IO Photo

Thanks to the FO's skillful manipulation, the 20 men escaped without a scratch. Fourteen VC were confirmed killed and 100 estimated killed.

Incidents like these are not uncommon in Vietnam. They occur everyday.

Normally, an Infantry line company is assigned one FO, his RTO, and at least one reconnaissance non-commissioned officer. The FO usually travels with the company commander, with his RTO at his side.

In a short time, the FO becomes a key member of his company. A strong bond of friendship and respect develops between him and the Infantrymen.

The FO has numerous responsibilities. He must know the exact location of his unit at all times in case of a contact mission, as well as the position of all friendly units in the area.

"Probably one of the most difficult things is to keep track of all our maneuver elements during a firefight," explained one FO. "Our recon NCO's usually move with the elements and keep reporting their locations to me on the radio."

There are lighter moments during lulls in combat, and paratroopers like to remember one such incident that happened between the FO and CO of D Co., 1st Bn., 506th Abn. Inf.

"One night our FO spotted fresh tracks around our company perimeter—he said they were sandal or shower shoe tracks, and we thought we'd track down some VC," an Infantryman explained.

"We set out with the CO and followed the tracks. They led to a nearby woodline and back to the CP . . . right up to the CO.

"The CO stood there with a sort of quizzical look on his face, then broke out into a roar of half-rage, half-laughter and pointed to his own feet. He had a bad case of emersion foot and had been wearing shower shoes at night."

The FO-turned-pathfinder's face turned as red as his auburn hair, and he disappeared into the darkness.

However, FOs have a habit of reappearing when there is real trouble for their company.

Infantrymen of A Co., 2nd Bn., 506th Abn. Inf. will never forget their FO, a first lieutenant from Florida.

"He'd been out in the field with us for more than eight months and pulled us out of more than a few tight spots," explained a squad leader from California.

"Then the word came down from the battalion to pull him off the line. None of us liked it, including him."

Later, the company was back at Cu Chi for a short rest when the battalion was pegged for a night helicopter assault.

"A lot of us were real scared," the sergeant said. "Intelligence reported 12 to 14 enemy 50 caliber machine guns. They were even firing on the F-100s and C-47 flare ships."

Members of A Co. huddled inside their helicopters, waiting to be lifted into blocking positions.

Suddenly, a lone, familiar figure made a dash for the second chopper. Someone tossed him an M-16 as he scrambled into the ship. The sergeant leaned over in his seat just far enough to see a first lieutenant's bar on the newcomer's collar.

The night air was filled with bands of red, green and white tracers as the chopper lifted the Infantrymen of A Co. into that colorful sea of potential death.

The sergeant was still scared, and a chill ran up his spine as they prepared to land. However, he couldn't help but smile. The first lieutenant opposite him grinned from ear to ear ready to fire a mission in support of *his* company.



- "Fire mission, over."**
- "Send your mission, over."**
- "Shot, over."**
- "Shot, out."**
- "Fire for effect."**



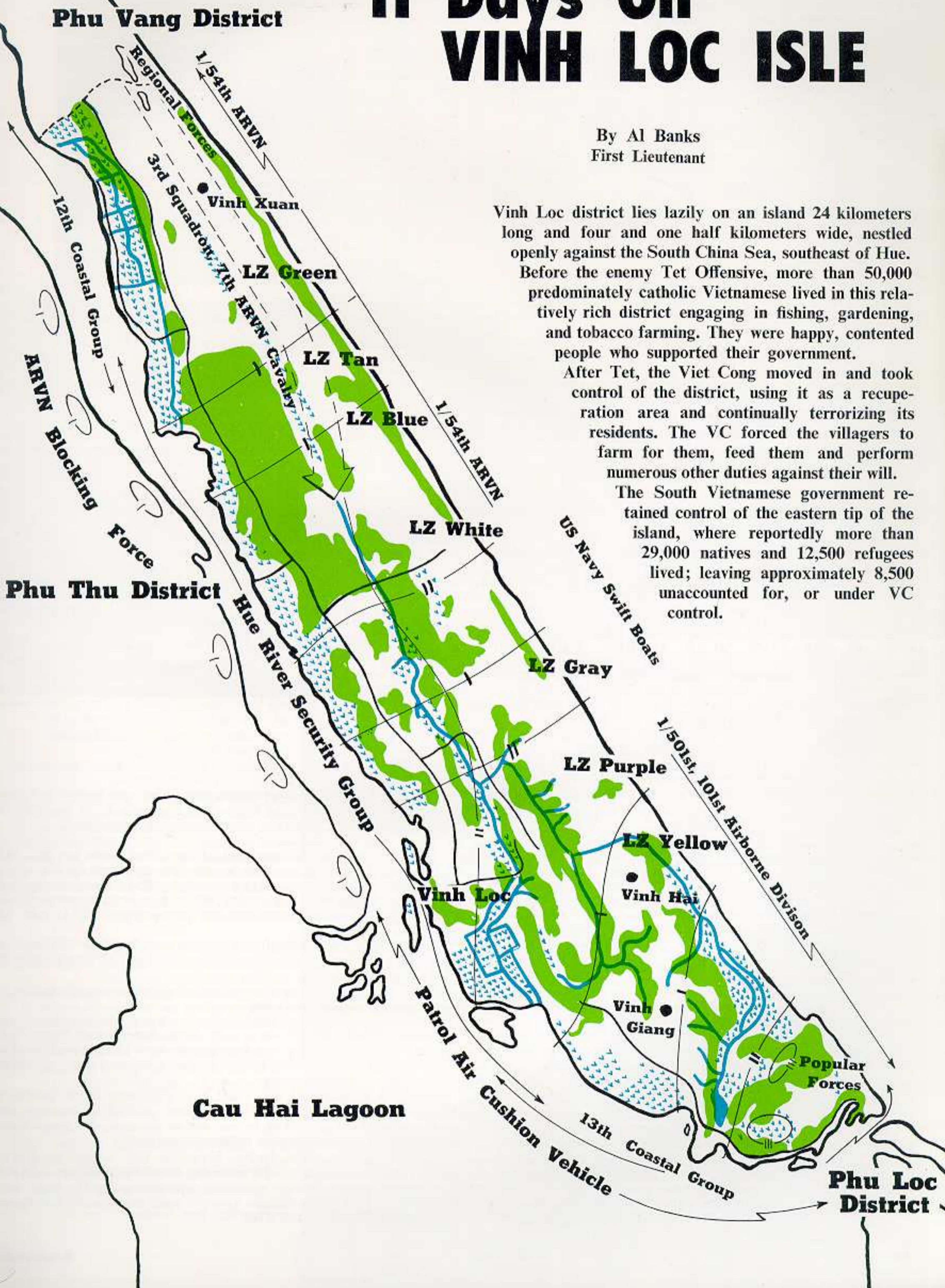
11 Days On VINH LOC ISLE

By Al Banks
First Lieutenant

Vinh Loc district lies lazily on an island 24 kilometers long and four and one half kilometers wide, nestled openly against the South China Sea, southeast of Hue. Before the enemy Tet Offensive, more than 50,000 predominately catholic Vietnamese lived in this relatively rich district engaging in fishing, gardening, and tobacco farming. They were happy, contented people who supported their government.

After Tet, the Viet Cong moved in and took control of the district, using it as a recuperation area and continually terrorizing its residents. The VC forced the villagers to farm for them, feed them and perform numerous other duties against their will.

The South Vietnamese government retained control of the eastern tip of the island, where reportedly more than 29,000 natives and 12,500 refugees lived; leaving approximately 8,500 unaccounted for, or under VC control.



Phu Vang District

Phu Thu District

Cau Hai Lagoon

Phu Loc District



▲ A solemn moment passes between the captor and the captive as an 11 day chase nears its end.

Lying in the mud of a shallow canal and breathing through a reed used to be a good trick. ▶



Garcia

Maj. Gen. Melvin Zais, commanding general of the Screaming Eagles, assigned the mission of rooting out the enemy insurgents to the 2nd Brigade as part of a combined force operation. The 2nd Brigade commander called upon his seasoned battalion commander to lead the mass combat assault.

On Sept. 11, as the morning mist attempted to hold off the first rays of the sun, the swishing sound of helicopter blades could be heard faintly over the murmuring roar of the South China Sea. The VC were lounging content with their surroundings, for never before had they been seriously bothered in their self-acclaimed haven. That day, it was to be different. The plan was to cordon the district without alerting the enemy.

This was done. Maneuver forces landed on the ocean side of the island and drove straight into predesignated objectives.

During the night, all blocking forces moved into position, thereby disrupting enemy communications and denying normal escape routes.

Throughout the operation, preparatory fires were limited to barren ground around landing zones. Supporting fires were to be used only in the case of organized resistance, which never was encountered.

Early the next morning, 7th ARVN Cavalry armored personnel carriers drove into the western end of the island while 1st Bn., 54th ARVN Regt. troops simultaneously assaulted into three landing zones. Two Regional Forces companies force-marched to an oceanside position, and Screaming Eagles of the 1st Bn., 501st Abn. Inf. air-assaulted into three landing zones on the eastern end of the island. By 11 a.m., all units were in position.

As the largest combined forces combat assault of the Vietnam war began, the enemy in the area were caught completely off guard and went scurrying in all directions.

Some made a last-ditch effort to bury their weapons and ran toward sampans in the South China Sea.

However, Navy "Pistol Pete" patrol boats and paratroopers on air-cushioned vehicles were there to stop them. Enterprising North Vietnamese Army soldiers attempted to change their clothes and blend in with the villagers, but special teams of allied soldiers quickly separated the natives from the imposters.

Enemy elements that did make it to the coast found patrolling U.S. Naval vessels waiting for them. Besides picking up suspects and searching sampans attempting to slip out of the area, the patrol boats transported hoards of detainees to questioning points.

Paratroopers of A Co., 1st Bn., 501st Abn. Inf. swept the district for two days with ARVN troops, searching abandoned bunkers, huts and underground tunnels, while uprooting insurgents. On the third day, paratroopers took up positions along a deep rice paddy and began systematically searching the dikes.

The stillness of the early I Corps morning is broken by the thrashing sound of incoming troop-filled Hueys.



Van Alstine

During the search, two Viet Cong soldiers were spotted, giving away their positions. Paratroopers opened up with small arms, M-79 grenade, and machine gun fire and attacked the positions, killing 23 insurgents.

One group of 215 detainees proved especially cooperative. As their CH-47 helicopter set down at a collection point, the suspects filed out, somewhat bewildered by their first chopper ride.

An imaginative national policeman sensed their puzzlement and shouted, "All members of the K-4 Battalion over here, those with the C-118 over there!"

When the dust had cleared, 63 of the suspects had fallen in as directed. An amazed group of paratroopers, their interrogation chores shortened considerably, quickly confirmed the suspects as members of those units.

As intelligence was gathered from Hoi Chanh (ralliers to the government) and detainees, the nearest troops were lifted to enemy concentrations. All detainees were delivered to Vinh Loc district headquarters, where the combined forces, tactical operations center was located. The detainees were processed by combined intelligence teams on a 24-hour basis.

The results of the operation are self-explanatory and mirror the success of the combined forces actions.

One hundred and fifty-four enemy were killed, 178 individual and crew-served weapons captured and 370 suspects detained, of which 126 were identified as members of the local Viet Cong infrastructure. In addition, 32 Hoi Chanh rallied to the South Vietnamese Government.

Screaming Eagles filter into Vinh Loc...and a shadow government, secure since the fury of Tet, is voted out of office.



Garcia



The leash suddenly springs taut, signaling the scout dog's handler... the bunker is still occupied. A Vietnamese Nat'l policeman gives the trapped VC a choice— "Surrender or die!"

Three paratroopers were wounded and Vietnamese casualties were reported light. No Screaming Eagles were killed.

Through mobility and careful planning, the Vinh Loc campaign illustrated the conclusiveness and success of combined forces operations. Before the operation began, smooth coordination was established among 101st Airborne, ARVN forces, national policemen, U.S. Navy swift boat and river assault groups, and supporting psychological operations teams.

By carefully consolidating and analyzing intelligence information, it was learned that friendly forces never before had stayed for any length of time in Vinh Loc. It was decided that this time, combined forces would maintain blocking forces throughout the operation. This strategy surprised the enemy, and as the days wore on, the VC became hungry and gave up their more sophisticated hiding places and later surrendered in droves.

By the fifth day, armored personnel carriers were rolling through the district at will, while blocking forces steadfastly remained in place, proving an insurmountable barrier to enemy escape plans.

The enemy had been outsmarted, surprised and badly beaten.

As an epilogue to any successful operation in Vietnam, a program must be developed to insure that the enemy does not return to the area.

Immediately after the victory, two revolutionary development teams moved into Vinh Loc district to help the people get resettled. Regional and Popular Forces were assigned to protect the district and its people.

Self-defense groups have been expanded to each village, and additional weapons are being carried by local police forces. ARVN and Airborne troops remain constantly in view and serve to convince the people of a lasting security.

Markets are well-stocked and fishing remains good, barbed wire, pickets and weapons for self-defense are available. Vinh Loc district is being restored to its pristine past. The villagers no longer are afraid of VC reprisals.



By Sept. 20, the VC are through on Vinh Loc. In the void, replacing the VC terror and oppression, there is room for the people to grow and prosper.

Terry McCauley
Specialist Four

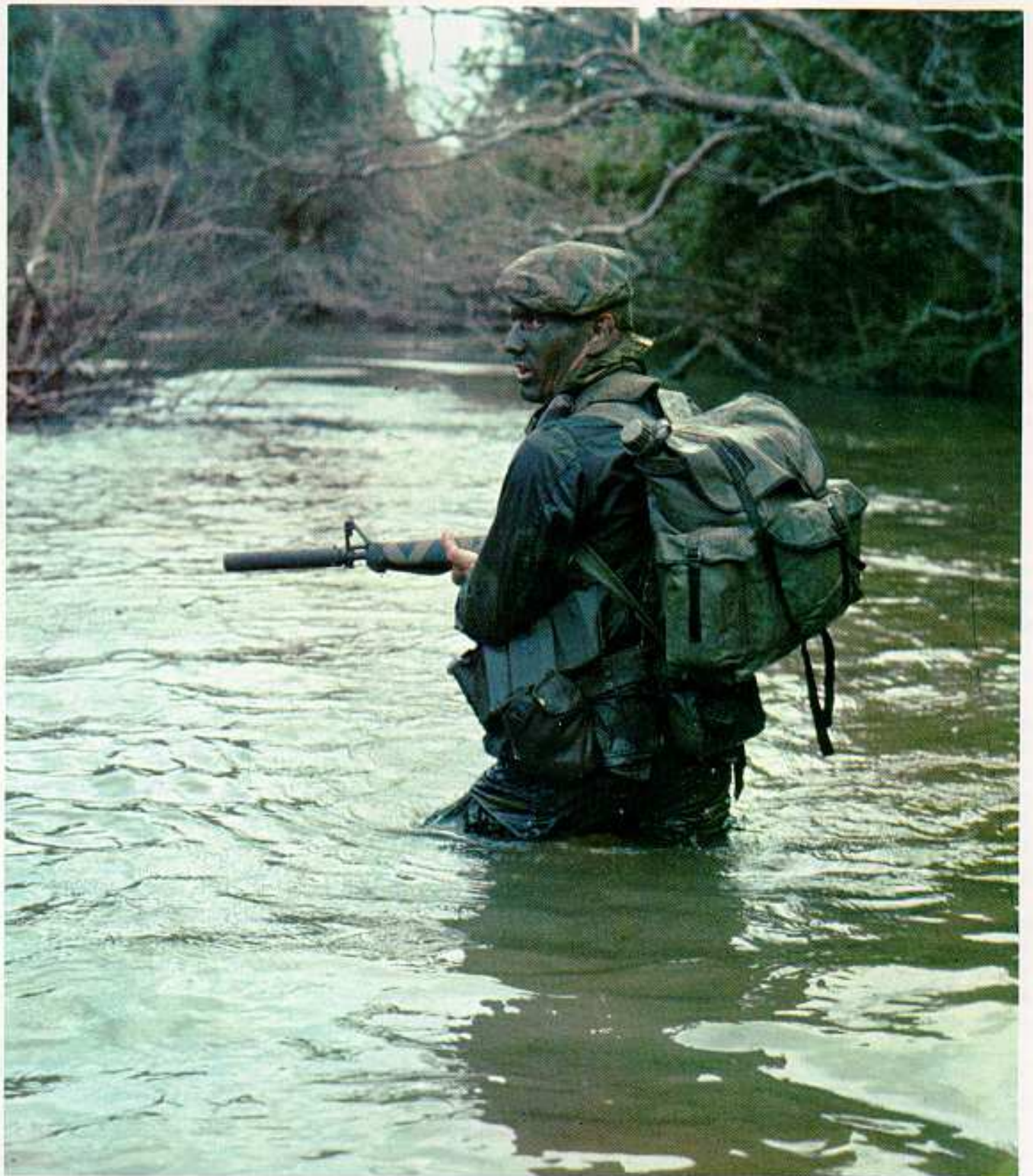
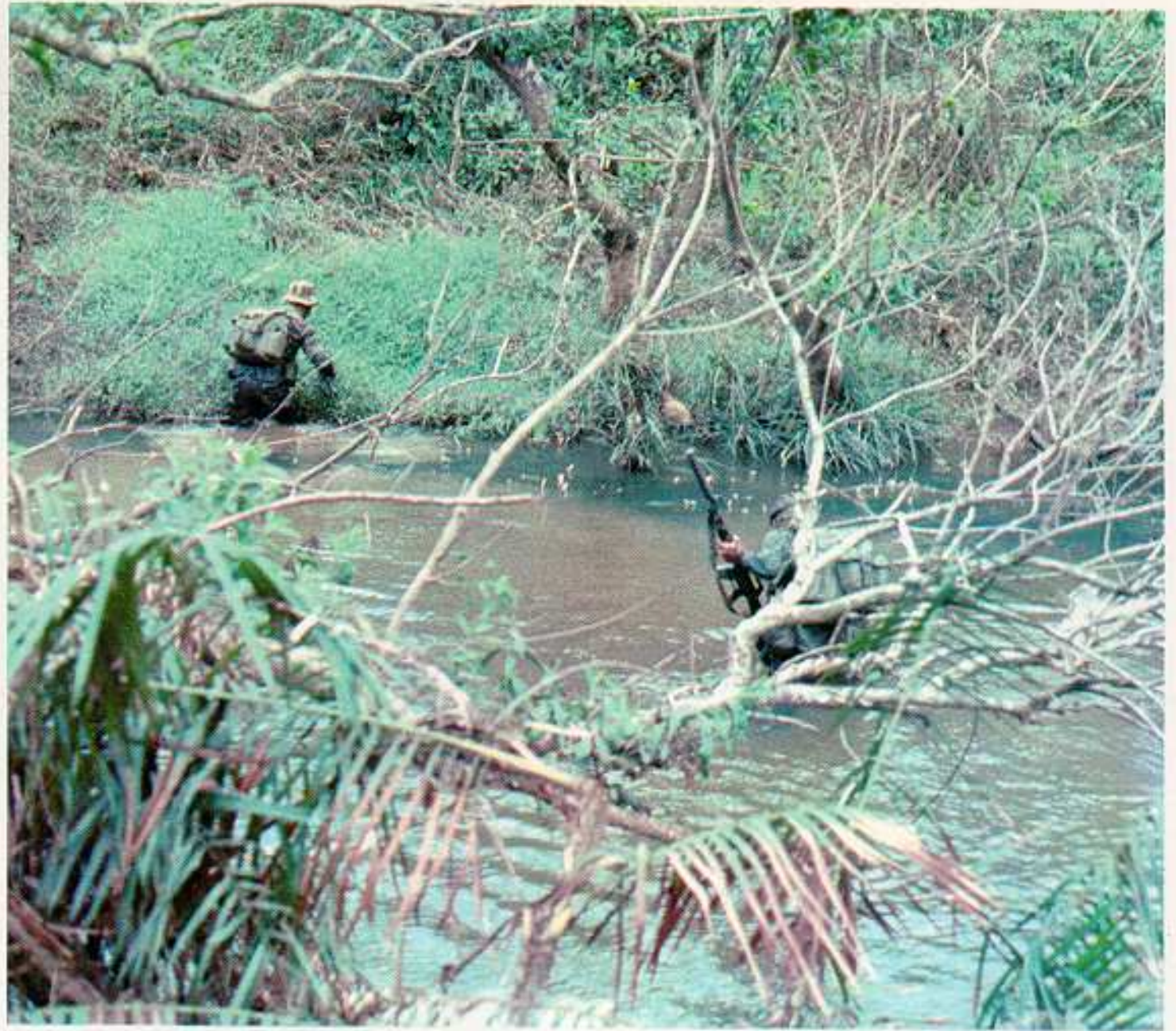
A small hole in the defoliated jungle became visible as the Huey neared the landing zone. As the two escorting Cobras began to circle the LZ, the log ship pilot eased forward on the control stick and the chopper slipped sideways into a steep dive. With dust and debris rushing toward the plexiglass window, the pilot sent the ship skimming across the top of a small hill, slowed and hovered. Five camouflaged figures were out of the craft and sprinting for the woodline to begin another long range patrol.

LRP: The Silent Search



Illustration by Charles R. Anderson





The men from Co. F, 58th Inf. (Airmobile) (LRP) have many missions in the 101st area of operation, often in preparation for regular line company insertion. This mission was to be no different. "Our job is to determine if Charlie is in the area," one veteran explained. "We're not out there to fight him if we can help it, not with only five men." The teams are often used to assess the affects of bomb and artillery strikes.

With faces blackened by camouflage stick, clad in tiger fatigues and small indiginous "rucks," the "behind the lines" troopers are capable of moving fast and avoiding detection.

Each carries a compass, signal mirror and other items that may be needed in the event the team is broken up. Before the mission began, extensive preparations were made.

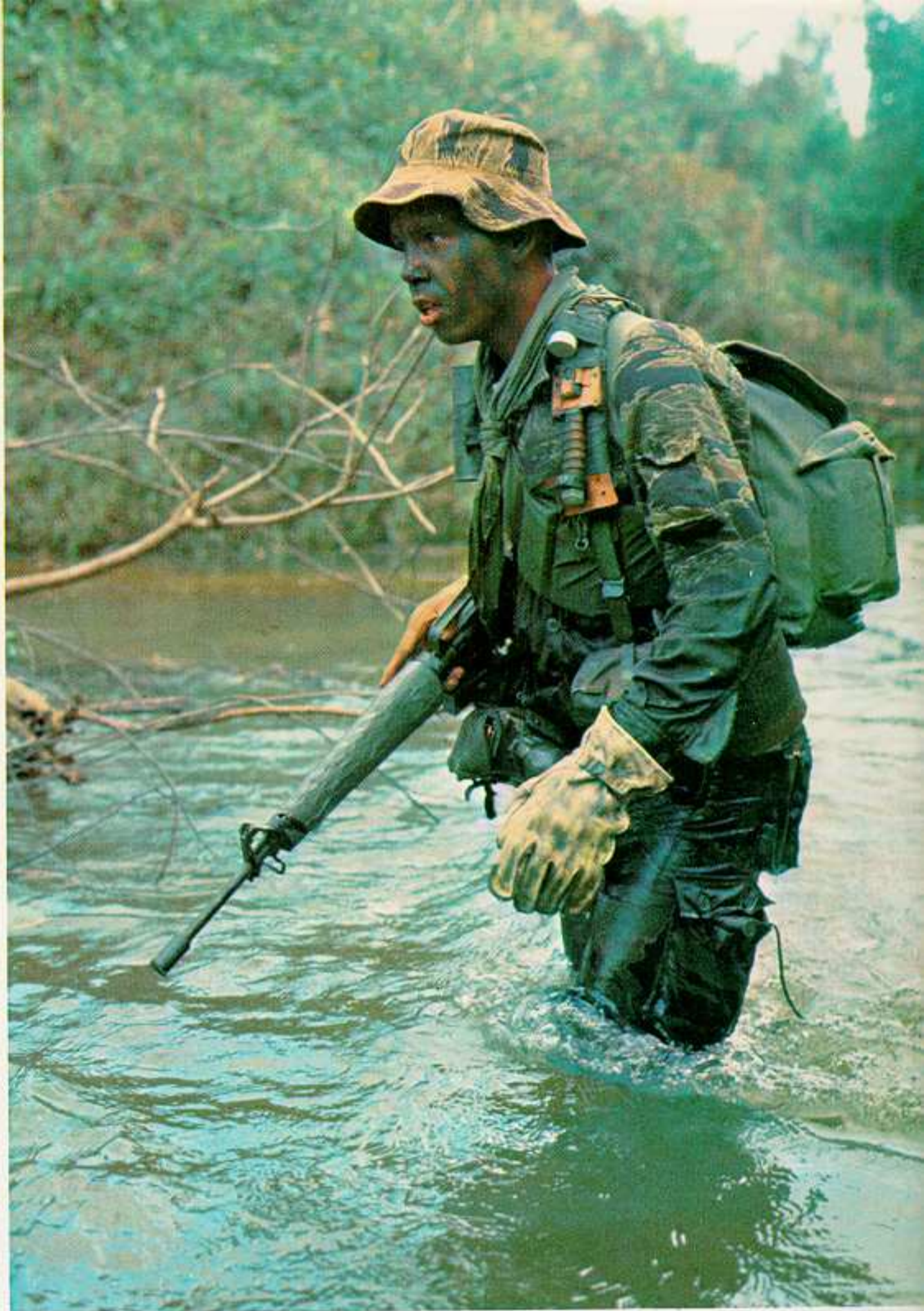
The best route out of the area of operation for escape and evasion was explained to each member of the team.

As the squad reached the edge of the dried jungle, they hurriedly took cover. With a motion of his hand, the team leader gave his RTO the message to make a communication check with the artillery support unit. Hand signals are the primary means of communication among the team.

Absolute silence is important when working with such a small group.

LRP: THE SILENT SEARCH

McCaughey



Cool but dangerous—a man crossing a stream is one of war's easier targets.

A minimum ration of food and water was carried. Many of the luxuries afforded regular "line doggies" were left behind. Food had to be eaten cold because tell-tale fires were prohibited. Smokers would have to abstain while in the field. Talking, in the form of a whisper, would be used only when necessary. No, nothing unusual about this mission.

The team moved most of the 1st day, occasionally stopping to monitor trails and note other pertinent information. Upon finding an extremely well-traveled series of trails, they disappeared into the underbrush to begin what would be a long, hot watch.

Sweat dampened tiger fatigues clung to their bodies as the mid-day sun loomed overhead. One of the troopers opened a pack of gum and passed it down the line until an empty Juicy Fruit package was buried. As they waited, their minds wandered—to home, girls and better days.

Suddenly the crack of a breaking branch and a distant voice betrayed the approach of an unwary enemy. Muscles tightened and hearts beat faster, but no one moved. Twenty meters down the trail they would pass the Screaming Eagles' position. As they passed through the crossroads, they could be seen laughing and joking.

After waiting a safe period for the enemy soldiers to pass, they called in to report that eye contact had been made with an enemy unit. Charlie was there. With that fact established, the mission was half complete.

Late in the third day, the team increased its pace. Tomorrow would bring extraction and a hot meal. With night quickly descending, the men pulled into a small circle. Each cleared his area of anything that might make a sound as he slept.

While one of the soldiers remained awake to guard the small perimeter, the others slept through intermittent drizzles, the distant thunder of friendly artillery and the steady hum of jungle life.

With morning came a hurried breakfast of chili con carne and a chocolate bar. All wrappers and waste were buried, and leaves were scattered to conceal the team's night position. As the five tired troopers donned web gear and rucksacks, it was less painful knowing they would soon be back at camp.

The column moved silently and swiftly, stopping a few yards from the landing zone. As the team leader scribbled in his notebook, the others listened to be sure no enemy were approaching their position. "Ten minutes out," announced the RTO. The point man began rummaging through the pocket of his ruck for a smoke grenade, as the radio man informed the ship to have ladders ready.

The violet smoke rose into a small tornado as the pilot lowered his craft as far into the jungle ceiling as possible. As it hovered, rope ladders were thrown from both sides of the Huey. Two LRP's hit the lifelines as the rest of the squad kept security on the woodline.

Once all five were on the chopper floor, tangled in web gear, rifles and rope, the ship lifted its nose and headed for home.

The team leader pulled a pack of crumpled cigarettes from his breast pocket and passed them around. The point man searched for his flop hat. It had been blown out of the Huey while he was helping pull his buddy aboard.

Looking at each other, the team members smiled slightly and with the familiar thumbs up agreed: "Good mission."



C A H L A P R H L A I E

In the eye of a raging storm—there is calm.

By Michael McLaughlin

Specialist Four

There's a thrashing, chopping, beating roar to the engine of your UH-1D Huey chopper as it lumbers over the area of the combat assault (CA). For a second, the engine labors harder and the sound deepens in the pitch almost to a hacking argument between man's machine and God's gravity. Then, you start to descend. There have been others like it—different, maybe, in terrain and what you may find once you touch down. But the general idea of the combat assault is not new to you.

With a bump, a little less painful and jarring than you expected, the Huey touches ground and simultaneously spills a bulky load of men. Infantrymen, heavy with packs and ready for war. You scramble with them. You're one of them. The prattle of the blaring M-60 rounds spraying out from the door-gunners makes your muscles tense.

Your legs scoot you across the floor of the chopper and out onto the ground. As you leave the shade of the fuselage, the harsh morning sun bleaches your eyesight and for a second or two you focus on very little.

You move almost automatically, an "automatic soldier." Those months in Basic and AIT and all that barking and jumping asking "How high?" on the way up has been for this moment. But you don't have time to think about that, so you don't think about it. You just go.

There's green all around you now and experience tells you that it's elephant grass. In that instant flash of consciousness, you notice that the grass is taller than you had pictured from the air as the ground came up to meet you. As your buddies scrambled ahead of you into the tall grass, they sank to their chests in the foliage.

But before this stream of consciousness has the time to register, the "automatic soldier" in you has led you to follow. Suddenly you are chest deep in green and moving out. With one eye on your squad leader, you join your buddies in a natural perimeter-like formation that you sort of feel by instinct.

You take up the standard 10 to 15 meter interval between men and move out, even if that distance might look like 10 to 15 miles. You might even think for a minute you're very much alone now. But you're not.

You're not alone in even a loose definition of the word. The five or 10 minute flight that dropped you here has evolved through the talent, training and skill of hundreds of men. And it's taken days of careful planning and hard work—the vital ingredients of a successful combat assault.

It all began with S-2 intelligence. Experts piece together bits of a puzzle based on aerial recon reports, "Red Haze" (infrared detection) reports, "Sniffer" missions (employing an amazing device that detects human odor) and they finally come up with a general pattern of enemy activity.

This enemy situation usually becomes more specific when checked and double checked against reported sightings from pilots and friendly units previously in the suspected area. Often, local agents working for the Vietnamese government have valuable information, and the reports of Hoi Chanh rallying to the national cause are as important as all the rest. Sometimes, the key information comes from units in the field.

Anyway, long before you knew you would be a part of this combat assault, the S-2 people had reliable information pertaining to the number, weapons, location, and habits of the enemy units lurking in the suspected area.



The aviation company's role in this combat assault, like any other, is monumental. It begins with a briefing, and there is much to discuss.

Aviation personnel must know the artillery "prep" zones, the exact timing of the operation, and what tactical air support is being planned. They must know how much and when ARA (aerial rocket artillery) will be used, and any other special requirements such as whether a smoke ship will be employed to block out the enemy's observation.

Also at the briefing, they will discuss a predesignated chain of command for the operation from the command and control

(C&C) chopper on down. They will have absolute control over the slicks and Chinooks—everything concerning the mobility of the troops of this combat assault.

They coordinate plans for any possible friendly casualties and know at any given time and place which routes are available and fastest for the Medevac choppers.

After the briefing, the aviation personnel use this information to plot flight routes and establish altitude requirements. They designate an area of orbit, out of the firing zone, for C&C ships, observation choppers and any friendly aircraft that will be flying in the area.

Smokey swoops low to shroud the LZ in protective billows.



*With the aid of his C&C chopper,
the battalion commander of today
exercises control over his maneuver
elements never before experienced
in a combat situation.*



Johnston

This is no easy job. The traffic patterns are as complicated as the proverbial Japanese trigonometry. Enroute to the landing zone, you usually fly in what's called a "staggered trail" formation which provides the most control, security and flexibility.

One or two days before the assault, pilots fly reconnaissance over the area to see if the proposed pick-up and landing zones are acceptable. Next, the aviation section works out intricate timing schedules covering the route and checkpoints along the way.

Checkpoints are established from known

terrain features so that the pilots can vary their speed, and maintain the crucial timing of the mission.

From the data of these reconnaissance flights, detailed maps of the landing zones are drawn up so the pilots will know exactly what to look for at exactly the right time.

An extensive briefing with the aircraft commanders covers pertinent map sheets, the units they're supporting, the total number of aircraft involved, and the number of sorties and lifts required for the CA.

They discuss the rules of engagement and

refueling and rearming procedures. Every effort is concentrated on split-second timing and utter professionalism. Every man knows his job. The pilots flying your CA have a minimum of 300 hours of combat flying time and will have been in country at least three months.

Some of the aviation officers who have planned for this CA have from 600 to 1500 hours combat flying time and more than six months in country. They know what they're doing.

Empty slicks claw for altitude as the foot soldier inherits the war.





All in all, from 50 to 75 people do the actual planning for the aviation part of your CA alone. But that number easily doubles considering all the maintenance, checking and double checking, that's pulled on the aircraft. Then, there are the ammunition quotas that have to be prepared and filled.

The night before a CA, your aircraft

will be cranked up at least three times. This maintenance includes avionics (radio personnel and equipment). The complicated radio procedures for your CA demand top flight equipment and experienced personnel.

Additionally, a spare aircraft sits ready in case any unforeseen engine problems come up. It is complete with stand-by crew—briefed and waiting.

Somewhere in your flight pattern, there's a maintenance ship carrying two qualified maintenance officers, and a gunner and crew chief—both of whom double as mechanics. There are two additional mechanics with tool boxes and spare parts handy. The maintenance ship also carries a flight surgeon and a medic.

Even the M-60 machine guns mounted on

His stomach is churning as fast as the Huey's blades, but the world's lowest paid professional man jumps anyway.



the aircraft for the doorgunners are test-fired just before flight time.

Then consider the artillery. There's the LNO (liaison officer), the key to planning the fire support for your CA. He works closely with your Infantry commander in designing the plan for the proposed LZ. He makes a fire plan and selects targets based on his intelligence information.

It must be determined which artillery batteries are within range of the proposed LZ. Depending on the size of the operation, the number of batteries and the intensity of fire, support can be coordinated just to move you from one place to another.

The LNO picks out critical targets and establishes priority. The plan returns to the artillery battalion's fire direction control for final draft and approval. The data on target locations is distributed to the batteries and supporting units. After another intricate communications check, a timing schedule is worked out.

Before you land, artillery pounds the landing zone and "preps" the scene for your arrival, including likely avenues of enemy access to the LZ. The fire intensifies just as your chopper arrives above the area. Everything's on cue.

Suddenly the artillery halts and billows of white phosphorus smoke mark the final rounds. Leading the flight of troopships is a "Smokey" helicopter, swooping low along the LZ to lay a heavy smoke layer to shield you and your buddies from possible enemy fire. You begin to descend. ARA begins and the gunships zero in on the LZ with lightning speed, keeping the enemy under constant fire while you start to lose altitude. The timing is fantastic. As you get closer to the ground, gunships flanking your formation spray suppressing fire and your Huey touches solid ground. The M-60's open fire. GO!

You have come into this unsecure area with the maximum fire power and technical prowess known to this war. You're hardly alone. You scramble from the aircraft, the Huey extracts from the LZ according to plan. There's the same beating, thrashing sound in the air.

According to technical definition, your combat assault is complete. But the support and teamwork of the CA continues throughout your mission. The Artillery LNO is flying in orbit with a C&C ship in constant communication with the forward observer accompanying you on the ground. Preplanned on-call targets are ready to be hit hard at the asking. The communications and heavy support at your side are best in the world—no soldier in history has ever been quite so unalone.




Life or death is a distinction often based on millimeters.

BROTHERS IN DESTINY

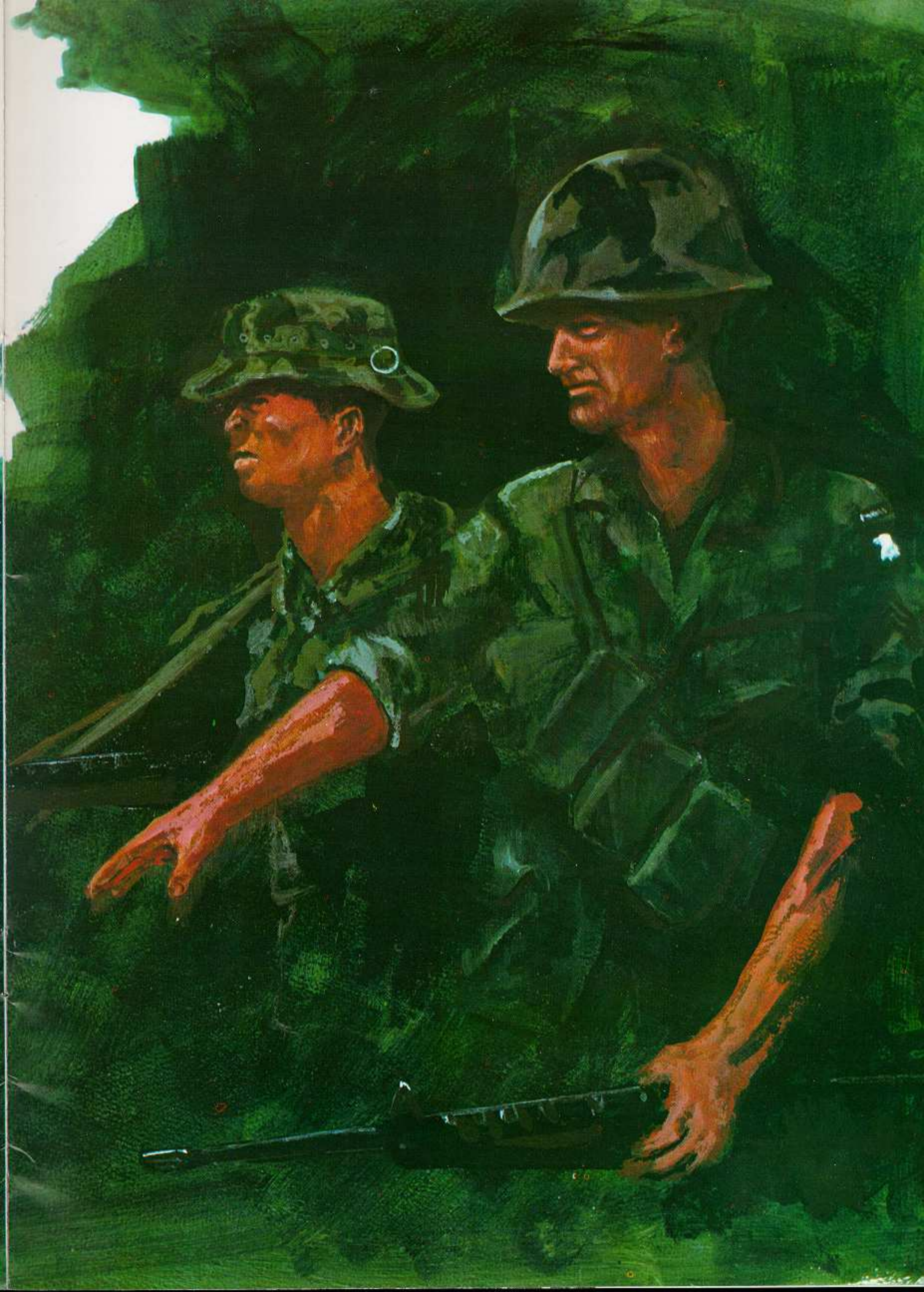
Richard Cardinali

Captain



Throughout history, the United States fighting man has served side by side with soldiers of many countries. The conflict in Vietnam finds yet another ally at our side . . . the Vietnamese soldier.

Since the start of the war, our men have conducted countless operations with the Vietnamese. Today, nearly all major operations are joint operations. So successful have these combined forces been that major American field commanders have praised their Vietnamese counterparts as combat equals.





To an American Gulliver, all the people of Lilliput look alike. But this Vietnamese scout knows his enemy as well as he knows his own brother.

The 1st Division of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam has compiled an especially impressive record, combining with the 101st Airborne Division to kill more than 18,000 enemy since February. The pacification programs of these two divisions have resulted in more than 30,000 refugees moving into more than 30 secure hamlets. They have pacified Thua Thien province to the extent that the Hue-Phu Bai railroad line has become operative after months of labor, providing a large boost to the economy of the area.

Since the Screaming Eagles entered I Corps in February, Vietnamese forces have worked with them in all major operations. The elite 1st Division Black Panther Co. accounted for more than 100 enemy killed during the successful Phouc Yen cordon, in which 2nd Brigade paratroopers encircled the 8th Bn., 90th NVA Regt., killing 429 soldiers and capturing 107. Three Popular Forces companies have been used on reconnaissance-in-force operations and ambushes. The Vietnamese have proven invaluable, saving many lives with their knowledge of the terrain, enemy concealment areas, and booby traps.

One of the most successful ARVN-Airborne operations was a series of combined assaults into the North Vietnamese stronghold, the A Shau valley, 25 miles west of Hue. First Brigade paratroopers initiated the raid by assaulting into the valley on Aug. 4th. The next day, they were joined by two battalions from the 1st ARVN Division. They split and swept the valley to the south on both sides of the battle area.

Fighting intensified on the sixth day, when the 3rd Bn., 1st ARVN Regt., engaged

an estimated NVA Battalion. The NVA, who had hoped for a quick victory, were stopped by a counter-attack from the hard fighting ARVN troops. After three days of bitter combat, the enemy broke contact, leaving behind 40 bodies.

In what has been termed one of the largest allied combat assaults of the Vietnamese war, 154 NVA and Viet Cong were killed, 370 suspects were detained and 178 crew-served and individual weapons were captured by combined Vietnamese and American forces on the island district of Vinh Loc, southeast of Hue. The operation incorporated paratroopers of the 1st Bn., 501st Abn. Inf., 1st Bn., 54th ARVN Regt., elements of the 7th ARVN Squadron, and all available Vietnamese paramilitary forces.

Combined forces cordon operations in the Phu Vang district east of Hue proved successful in flushing out members of the Viet Cong infrastructure and isolating enemy forces. During a month of combined cordon and search operations in the eastern outskirts of Hue, allied forces killed 246 enemy, captured 544 and received 104 Hoi Chanh. The operations were well planned, and smooth coordination was established among U.S. paratroopers, soldiers of the 1st ARVN Division, Popular Forces, national and local police and Vietnamese Coastal Patrol groups. According to operation officers, the successes may have significance for the future of Hue and possibly the entire war.

There can be no "number one" in combined forces operations. It is "equal partners" or it is nothing.





Estrada

Vietnamese make the best tunnel rats. This ARVN soldier just uncovered two AK-47s and enough explosives to blow up his family's entire village.



Croxton

All these victories were accomplished with a spirit of unparalleled co-operation, mutual help and teamwork never before witnessed between Americans and Vietnamese on such a grand scale. The Vietnamese National Police also have proven helpful in separating VC from local villagers during cordon and search operations. In the past many VC have tried to join in with the villagers and pretend to be farmers. However, Vietnamese National and Local Police have curtailed this practice by identifying the imposters.

Characteristic of lessons learned from joint operations are tactics employed by the 54th ARVN Regt., to lure Viet Cong from spider holes or underground tunnels. A common practice is to move a battalion into an area for six to eight days. These areas are small enough to be covered by company-size maneuver elements.

Meanwhile, the battalion command group and company command posts are moved into populated areas to maintain surveillance over civilians, and stop resupply efforts to the VC. Search and sweep operations are conducted during daylight and ambushes at night. Eventually, the Viet Cong are forced to seek food supplies and are caught by the patrols. In one 30 day period, this method accounted for 65 per cent of Viet Cong captured.

Joint civil affairs projects begin with surveys which estimate and give priorities to needs of the people. Medical facilities may be needed in some areas, while land improvement may be required in others. If the Vietnamese are unable to solve a problem, the U.S. government may be requested to assist.



THEY SCENT

Daniel D. Densford

First Lieutenant

The American fighting man is the best equipped in the world. When he enters combat, he is supported with the most modern, most effective weaponry of any war in history.

But, Vietnam is a different war. It is a war of ambushes and booby traps, of surprise and lightning-quick skirmishes.

Here, the most sophisticated fire systems are useless without one important element—the enemy must be found and fixed. And Charlie is a wary enemy who vanishes, leaving behind a deadly array of booby traps and mines.

To overcome these problems paratroopers of the 1st Brigade make extensive use of the 42nd Infantry Dog Platoon.

“Our mission is to provide infantry units with silent, early warning,” said Lt. Harold L. Bircumshaw, Spokane, Wash., the platoon leader. “We have 22 teams, consisting of a dog and his handler.”

“Our dogs get the best care,” added the platoon sergeant. “We feed them four pounds of horsemeat and meal each day.”

The platoon carries a veterinarian technician who can do everything except major surgery. There is even one dog with a gold capped tooth. “One thing we don’t have is a dog psychiatrist,” grinned the NCO. “They generally hash out their own problems.”

When the scout dogs, all German shepherds, arrive in country, they are sent to a training center at Bien Hoa, where they meet their new teammate, their handler for the next year. For two weeks, the pair get acquainted and undergo extensive training in patrolling procedures.



THY DOOM

"We have an obstacle course for them, which keeps them sharp and completely reliable," he added.

Scout dogs operate by taking scent from the air, as well as using their extremely accurate senses of hearing and sight. A blindfolded dog is capable of stopping in front of a trip wire stretched across his path, merely from hearing its vibration in a breeze.

The dogs work best in open areas on clear days since rain drives the scent to the ground. To compensate for Vietnam's weather, the dogs' training is partially conducted under adverse conditions.

"Heat is a big problem," said Staff Sgt. Errol A. Hunter, Bradenton, Fla., a handler with the 42nd. "Their heavy fur coats really make them miserable in the hot summer sun."

The close feeling that the men develop for their dogs was illustrated during a steamy June day. "Spook," a 70 pound scout dog, was working in the mountains near Hue when he collapsed from heat exhaustion. "We thought he was dead," recalled Hunter. "His heart had stopped and he wasn't breathing." The veterinarian technician applied continuous heart massage and mouth to mouth resuscitation. After 15 minutes, Spook began breathing and a little later, he regained consciousness. However, he was retired because of permanent brain damage and sent to the training center at Bien Hoa.

Scout dogs have saved the lives of many paratroopers on patrol. "I entrust my life to my dog every time I go out," one handler said. "The Infantry troops feel much better when moving through unfamiliar territory if there is a dog walking point," added another.

Paratroopers of B Co., 2nd Bn., 502nd Abn. Inf. learned the value of scout dogs on a reconnaissance-in-force operation in the heavy jungle west of Hue. The paratroopers were caught by heavy rains, and called for a scout team.

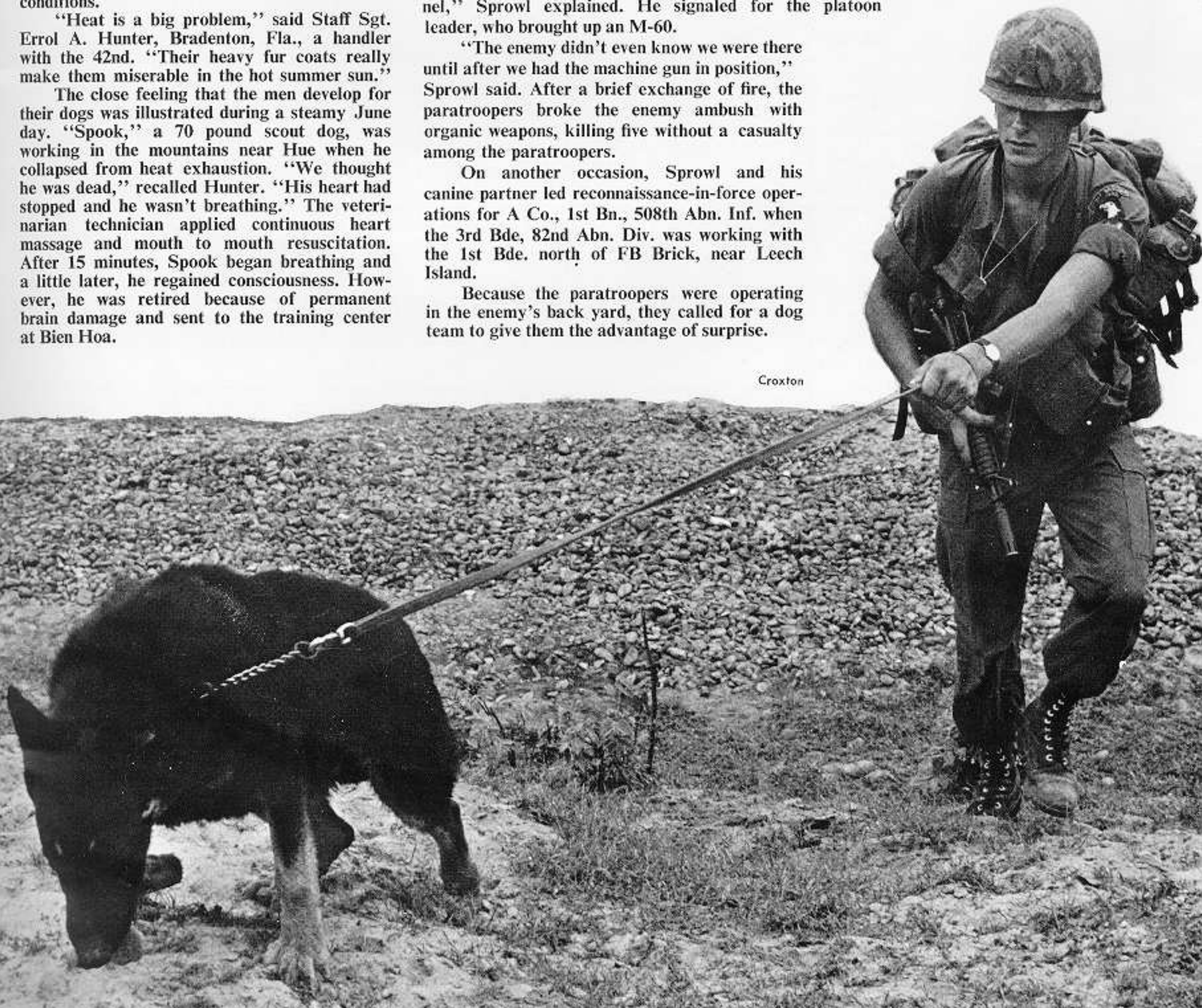
Spec. 4 Robert Sprowl, Reseda, Calif. and his dog "Flare" took up the point and moved into the downpour. "We were moving slowly because of the rain. Flare had to keep his head down to get any scent at all. The jungle didn't help any," Sprowl said. Suddenly, Flare jerked his head up, his body went rigid, and his ears went up. "That's his alert for personnel," Sprowl explained. He signaled for the platoon leader, who brought up an M-60.

"The enemy didn't even know we were there until after we had the machine gun in position," Sprowl said. After a brief exchange of fire, the paratroopers broke the enemy ambush with organic weapons, killing five without a casualty among the paratroopers.

On another occasion, Sprowl and his canine partner led reconnaissance-in-force operations for A Co., 1st Bn., 508th Abn. Inf. when the 3rd Bde, 82nd Abn. Div. was working with the 1st Bde. north of FB Brick, near Leech Island.

Because the paratroopers were operating in the enemy's back yard, they called for a dog team to give them the advantage of surprise.

Croxtan





D. Smith

"Flare won't stop to rest unless I force him to. I think he believes he's Airborne."

Once again the "Dynamic Duo" took the lead in heavy jungle. They were moving in a creek bed with high ground on both sides. "Flare gave his personnel alert toward the hill on our right," Sprowl said. "We called up the main body and advanced up the hill. We sure were surprised when we reached the top. There was a hut complex in the heavy jungle."

The paratroopers engaged the enemy in a battle that ended with the capture of one of the largest caches of Operation Nevada Eagle. One prisoner was taken, and 160 SKS rifles, 200 mortars, many rockets, claymores and rice were included in the cache.

"The dogs have other uses beside pointing out the enemy," Hunter explained. "They are useful in cordon and search operations to

Scout Dog Patrol

101st Airborne Division

help handle the large numbers of people we have to deal with, and to spot booby traps."

In the Phu Loc cordon, dogs were used to search the village hooches. "All the strange smells and sights made the dogs nervous at first," Hunter said, "but they soon got their noses to the grindstone."

The dogs are adept at trip wires, punji pits, holes in which food or weapons are

buried, and even mines. After a preliminary search, the dogs are used to facilitate movement of large numbers of people.

"They don't have to do anything during this phase," grinned Hunter. "Just the presence of our big dogs is enough."

The 42nd Scout Dog Platoon has completed more than 70 missions during Operation Nevada Eagle, and have earned the motto: THY SCENT, THY DOOM. "The field commanders are getting to know our dogs by name and are requesting their favorite teams," Bircumshaw said.

Working closely with the scout dog platoon is another dog platoon with a different mission. The 557th Infantry Platoon Combat Tracker Team (CTT) has the mission of tracking the enemy to re-establish contact.



IO Photo

The "tracker dog" platoon is composed of three tracker teams. Each team contains four men: a visual tracker, a team leader, a dog and handler, and a cover man.

"Tracker dogs work by getting a scent off the ground, such as a blood trail, a footprint, or some clothes," explained PFC Larry L. Smith, Parkersburg, W. Va., a handler. "This is the main difference between tracker and scout dogs. Our dogs take a

scent off a trail and follow it until we reach the enemy, while the scouts take a scent from the air to warn of any nearby danger," Smith explained.

When the trackers get a mission, a combat team is dispatched to the requesting unit. They are taken to the last point of contact. Here, the visual tracker inspects the site and decides the best method for the dog to track. "Blood trails provide the best



Mont

The jungle is rough on a dog. But without him, the jungle may be fatal to men.

scent for our Labrador retrievers," said SFC George A. Wade, Decatur, Ill., the platoon sergeant. "But, we can track on anything but a memory."

"Our average mission will last about one hour," said Lt. Michael A. Sapp, the tracker platoon leader, "but we will stay on a scent until we are out of the unit's area of operations if necessary."

A combat tracker team was with the "Tigers", the reconnaissance platoon of the 1st Bn., 327th Abn. Inf. when they captured two Russian 85mm cannon during vicious fighting in the A Chau valley. The elusive NVA broke contact at every opportunity, only to be tracked down and forced to fight by canine sleuths.

A combat tracker team often is used to trace remnants of ambush parties from the ambush zone to their rally point. Trackers, when shown the firing point, can follow the scent of enemy mortar and rocket crews after an attack on friendly units.

A Co., 1st Bn., 327th Abn. Inf., after springing a night ambush in the open terrain west of FB Anzio, called for a combat tracker team at first light to pursue the broken enemy force. Spec. 4 Thomas M. Kimbrough, Albion, Mich., and his dog "Tarka" were dispatched by helicopter as part of a team.

"They took us to the site of the ambush," Kimbrough recalled, "and the visual tracker began to look for a scent to start Tarka on." The visual tracker, Sgt. Joe R. Erickson, Elgin, Ore., found a good footprint in the mud of a rice paddy. Tarka got a sniff and the hunt started.

"We had traveled about 50 meters when Tarka raised his head and ears, and pulled on his leash," Kimbrough recalled. "The unit passed by us and discovered one enemy had been killed in the last night's ambush. We put Tarka on some fresher tracks around the body, and started again," he continued. "Shortly after that, we got another alert from Tarka, as a sign the scent he was on was getting much stronger. This time when the unit moved past us, they found 20 Vietnamese in a rice paddy working around some water buffalo."

A Co. captured the natives, 10 of which later were identified as Viet Cong.

Kimbrough, who once was a scout dog handler, has cross-trained his partner to avoid various booby traps. "On quite a few occasions Tarka has refused to go further, in spite of my persistence. I have found trip wires, mines, and punji pits in our path, which he wouldn't let me walk into."

Kimbrough expressed a common sentiment among dog handlers by ending his story with a faraway look in his eyes and saying with a deep sigh, "We've been together for a long time."

If the owner of this VC hat is still in the vicinity, he will soon be a prisoner... or a statistic.

“The United States has always been a nation that stood for freedom, and a nation that was willing to fight for that freedom. The 1st Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division has fought for that tradition in Vietnam and is exemplary of the courage and dedication to duty it takes to see it through.” (Abrams, November, 1968)



Presidential Unit Citation—Extraordinary heroism during Operation Hawthorne near Dak To in June, 1966.

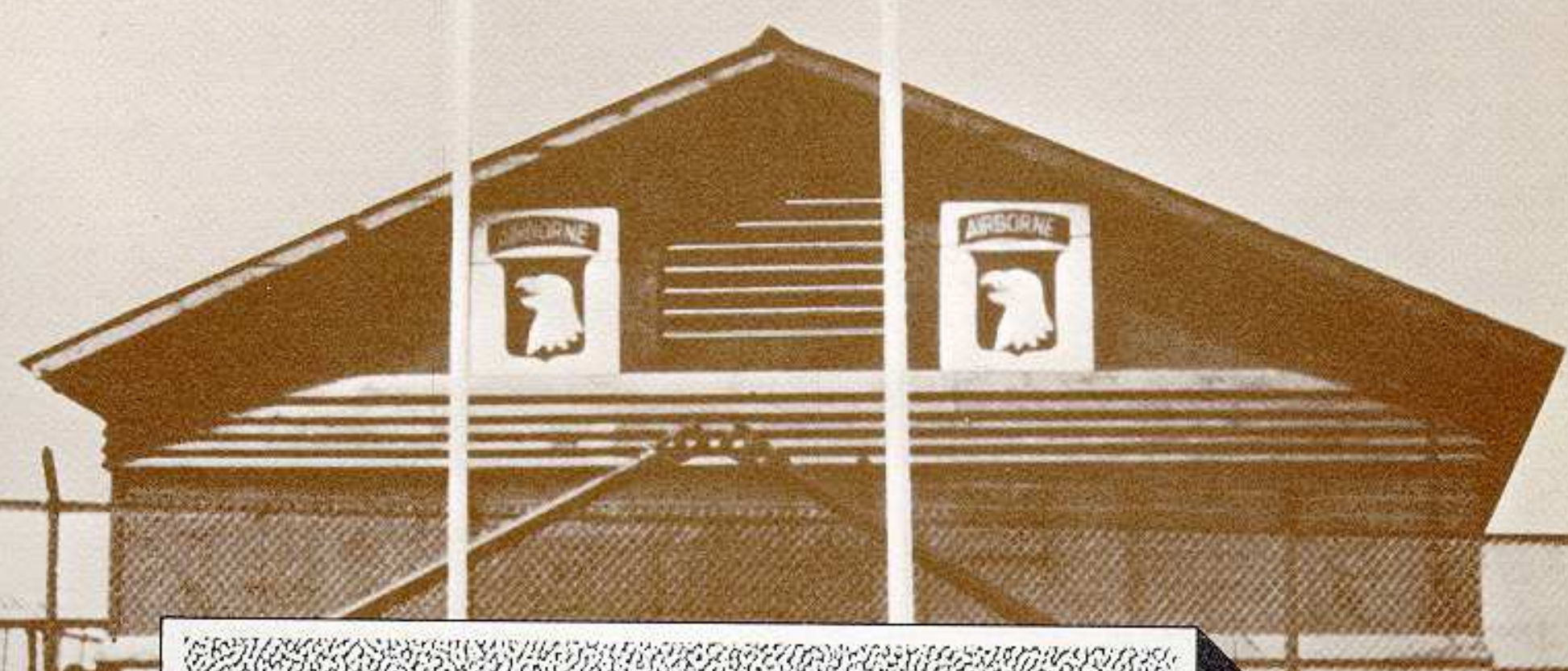
Valorous Unit Citation—Operations Van Buren and Harrison in the Tuy Hoa area from January to March, 1966.

Meritorious Unit Commendation—For exceptional service during the period July, 1965 to October, 1966.



Born in battle, but too busy for a christening...

*“Camp Eagle is a symbol, a monument to the supreme sacrifice made by many men who have given their lives to the noble cause of defending freedom and democracy.”
(Zais, October, 1968)*



Camp Eagle, Headquarters, 101st Airborne Division, Established 8 March 1968, at this site while in battle near Hue, Thua Thien Province, Republic of Vietnam. This was a Rendezvous with Destiny.

