

Rendezvous With Destiny



A Publication of the 101st Airborne Division

It was just over a year ago that the colors of the 101st Airborne Division were unfurled on the shores of Vietnam, marking the beginning of a new "Rendezvous with Destiny." In the expanding history of the 101st Airborne Division, this first year in Vietnam will undoubtedly be remembered as the year a new dimension was added to its illustrious Airborne history. This was the year the Screaming Eagles became experts in the airmobile concept of warfare. By employing the tactics of this concept, the eyes of the Division were extended deep into enemy territory by aerial reconnaissance missions, combat assaults were swiftly executed on remote enemy strongholds, and logistical needs were satisfied by an aerial supply line filled with "hooks" and "Hueys." These operations were supported by an unprecedented spectrum of firepower—a spectrum which extended from the M-16 rifle to the mighty sixteen-inch guns of the battleship New Jersey.




The infantryman has long known the need for the friendly umbrella of fire support. His life and the success of his mission have frequently depended upon it. Under the airmobile organization, the Screaming Eagles of today have greater fire support available to them than ever before in the history of the Division. In addition to the organic firepower of the rifle company, artillery, Air Force tactical air and Naval gunfire, the Division for the first time has fire support available from organic aircraft.

Undoubtedly one of the most significant developments in firepower in Vietnam has been the employment of the armed helicopter. As the war has intensified, the armed helicopter has proven itself an outstanding weapons system with a variety of uses. It combines the mobility and speed of cavalry with the effectiveness and responsiveness of artillery fire. Providing unlimited reconnaissance and covering the battlefield with a lethal volume of fire, the armed helicopter has become an important and welcome addition to the fire support team.

The armed helicopter has added a new dimension to artillery fire support in the airmobile division. This additional fire support comes from the Aerial Rocket Artillery Battalion which has joined Division Artillery. The sleek Cobras of this battalion, armed with rockets, miniguns, and 40 mm grenades, provide a lethal volume of suppressive fires both enroute to and in the objective areas. This battalion has the capability of carrying nearly 3,000 rockets, more than 72,000 rounds of 7.62 ammunition and approximately 11,000 40 mm grenades with which to support ground operations. When these ARA ships are armed with the 17-pound rocket which is approximately equivalent to the 105 mm projectile in coverage, 2,832 tubes are added to Division Artillery's arsenal.

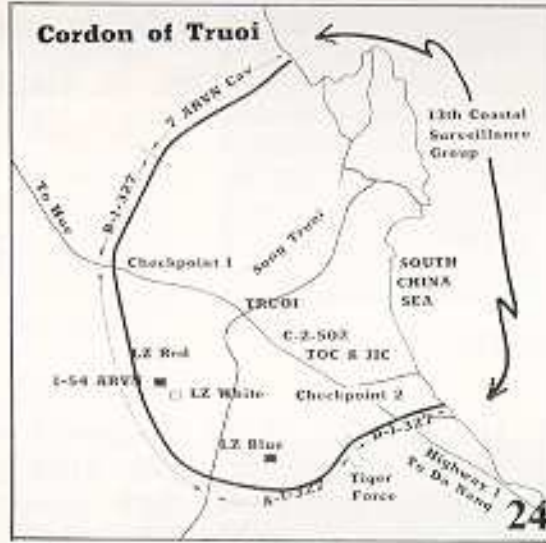
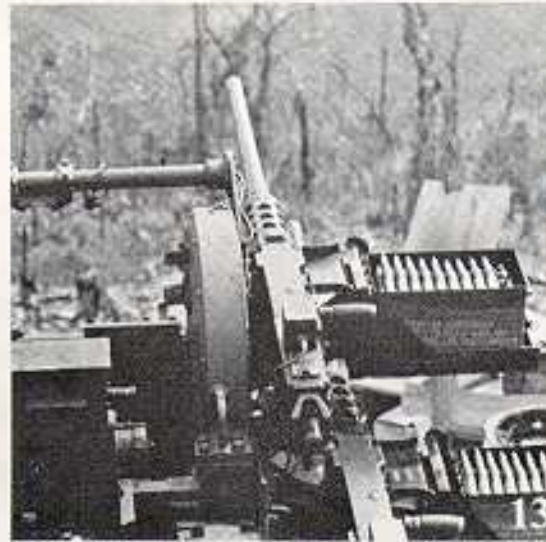
In addition to the Aerial Rocket Artillery, the airmobile Screaming Eagles also have aerial fire support from three Air Cavalry Troops and from two Aerial Weapons Companies from the Aviation Group. These-helicopter gunships, armed with rockets, miniguns, and 40 mm grenades, provide armed escort for airmobile formations and for armed reconnaissance deep into enemy territory.

With superior mobility and increased fire power, the Screaming Eagles have relentlessly sought out the enemy and forged new victories in the jungles, mountains, and rice paddies of Vietnam. In so doing, they are pioneering a new age of mobility and fire power on the Vietnam battlefield which will radically influence the course of future battlefield tactics. The troopers of the 101st Airborne Division are leading the way in this new age with the same confidence, aggressiveness and indomitable spirit that have always been the hall mark of the Screaming Eagles, expressed in our motto—"Airborne—All the Way!"


MELVIN ZAIS
Major General, USA
Commanding

Rendezvous With Destiny

SPRING 1969



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EDITOR'S NOTE:

Operation Nevada Eagle ended on February 28. An article on Page 2 of this edition of *Rendezvous With Destiny* tells of the operation and its results. The other articles complement the Nevada Eagle analysis. "Screaming Eagle Vietnam Diary," Page 5, is a day-by-day account of the last three months of the operation. "Thunder From Above" on Page 13 explores the key to our success in battle—Eagle firepower—including two pages of color on 16 and 17. "Looking for Charlie," Page 24, highlights just one of the many successful cordon and search operations that contributed greatly to winning both the hot war and "The Other War," Page 20. In concluding this issue we take a look at one man as he concludes his Vietnam tour and is "Going Home" on Page 28.

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288 DAYS OF NEVADA EAGLE

A long, steady period of fighting and tracking the enemy reached its end Feb. 28. Screaming Eagles hurt the enemy bad, kept him from a repetition of the 1968 Tet Offensive, kept him away from the populated coastal plains—and also invaded the enemy's own areas, posting invisible signs everywhere in Thua Thien Province: This is Eagle Country.

By Spec. 5 Alan Magary

The country below is spread out like a giant map. There is the pure blue of the South China Sea, then a ribbon of white sand beaches interrupted in places by the jet black rock that jumps the beaches and plunges directly into the boiling water. As you continue to fly with the sun, there are grand expanses of green checkerboard—here and there lines of brown, here a dike, there a trail. Small houses, gardens, palm trees. Tiny figures moving. Quiet and peaceful, a village. Nearby, another. Then—the first outcrop on the plain, a hill with a row of houses nestled beneath it. Then—streaking north and south, a black line: Highway 1. Off to the right, a large walled city, a child's building blocks scattered around according to some plan: Hue, the Imperial City.

But now, below, the rice paddies blend into scrub land and small hills. Now there are clouds, low clouds hung from the sky, overlapping the hills. A mountain jumps out of the earth, its summit hidden in silent, mysterious mist. Another—another—more mountains. There is no sign of life now. Then—the jungle, the triple

canopy, dark and green, forbidden. On the ground, you would be living in a continual half-light, ghostly—the sunlight filtering down—occasionally a clearing. Now—rows and rows of giant peaks—cloud covered. The Valley—the A Shau—the scrubby, jungled darkened plain covered with elephant grass, tangled vegetation. You don't want to go down there. Finally, somewhere below, an invisible line: Laos, a sanctuary.

This is the I Corps Tactical Zone, Thua Thien Province: Hue and environs, the coastal plains, the jungles, the mountains.

This is Eagle Country.

It was not always so. I Corps has been the scene of some of the fiercest fighting of the Vietnam war. Once you were not safe in very many places on that giant map—you were even not that safe in the sky. For hidden in the jungles and mountains, hidden in the villages and towns that dot the coastal plain was—the enemy. The enemy was everywhere. Hue was held for 22 days in February 1968 by the enemy, and was recaptured

only after bloody fighting by American and Vietnamese troops.

Now the situation has changed. Thua Thien Province does not belong to the enemy any longer—it belongs to the people, and the ground troops are steadily taking a tighter hold on the property deed.

During Operation Nevada Eagle, which ended Feb. 28 after 288 days, Screaming Eagles of the 101st Airborne Division, together with the 1st Division, Army of the Republic of Vietnam, and other South Vietnamese forces, have dealt the enemy fatal blows.

Here are the statistics, barren as they are:

—Paratroopers of the 101st killed 1,915 Viet Cong and 1,384 North Vietnamese Army regulars, for a total of 3,299.

—Seven hundred and ninety-eight VC were detained, along with 55 NVA.

—Seven hundred and fourteen communists rallied to the Government of Vietnam under the Chieu Hoi (open arms) program.

—Screaming Eagles broke into the enemy's arms room and seized 3,702 weapons, including more than 300 crew-served weapons.

—The Division raided the enemy's pantry and carried off 667.9 tons of rice.

—Enormous, almost uncounted quantities of munitions and equipment were captured.

The figures have to be translated. Screaming Eagles killed the equivalent of eight 400-man enemy battalions. Two battalions more were captured, and the men of two more battalions surrendered as Hoi Chanhs. At the same time, paratroopers captured enough weapons to arm approximately nine enemy battalions. And the enemy also went hungry—enough rice was captured to feed the men of 10 NVA battalions for about a year.

In compiling these statistics since May 17, 1968, Screaming Eagles stunned the enemy in contacts on the populated coastal plain and sent him reeling into the jungled mountains in the western part of the province and even into Laos to lick his wounds. He could not come back to the lowlands without further penalty.

But the paratroopers used their new Eagle's wings—helicopters—and pursued the enemy to his hiding places in the mountains. The enemy was kept running, kept from organizing and moving to any attack.

And so, in Hue and the other cities in the lowlands, people stood up and began to rebuild.

The operation was conducted by the 1st and 2nd Brigades of the 101st and the 3rd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division until early October 1968, when the Screaming Eagle 3rd Brigade in III Corps and the All Americans of the 82nd changed places. Nevada Eagle was under the command of Maj. Gen. O. M. Barsanti until mid-July, and thereafter of Maj. Gen. Melvin Zais, "Lucky Eagle."

Nevada Eagle started the day after Operations Carentan II and Delaware concluded. In the latter operation, Screaming Eagles of the 1st Brigade and the 1st Bn., 502nd Abn. Inf. blocked off enemy supply routes leading out of the A Shau Valley. (And, shortly after Nevada Eagle ended, Division troopers went back into the valley to initiate Operation Massachusetts Striker).

In August, as part of Nevada Eagle, two battalions—2nd Bn., 502nd Abn. Inf. and 2nd Bn., 327th Abn. Inf.—air-assaulted back into the valley for Operation Somerset Plain. The 17-day raid netted 170 NVA killed, four suspects captured and 58 individual and crew-served weapons captured.

In another highlight of Nevada Eagle, the 2nd Brigade's 1st Bn., 501st Abn. Inf. and ARVN elements combat-assaulted onto Vinh Loc Island, a self-acclaimed haven for the enemy, and established a cordon. One hundred and fifty-four NVA and VC were killed, 370 suspects detained and 178 weapons captured. The operation was so successful that it became a model for cordon operations everywhere in Vietnam and was even added to the curriculum of the Infantry School at Ft. Benning, Ga.

Cordon operations were very frequent after the first week in June, when there was decreasing contact with platoon-size or larger enemy forces. Cordon operations were conducted in Phu Vang District at the end of September, late October and in December and January. Phu Loc and Truoi were cordoned successfully, and further cor-



Griffith

853 prisoners captured...

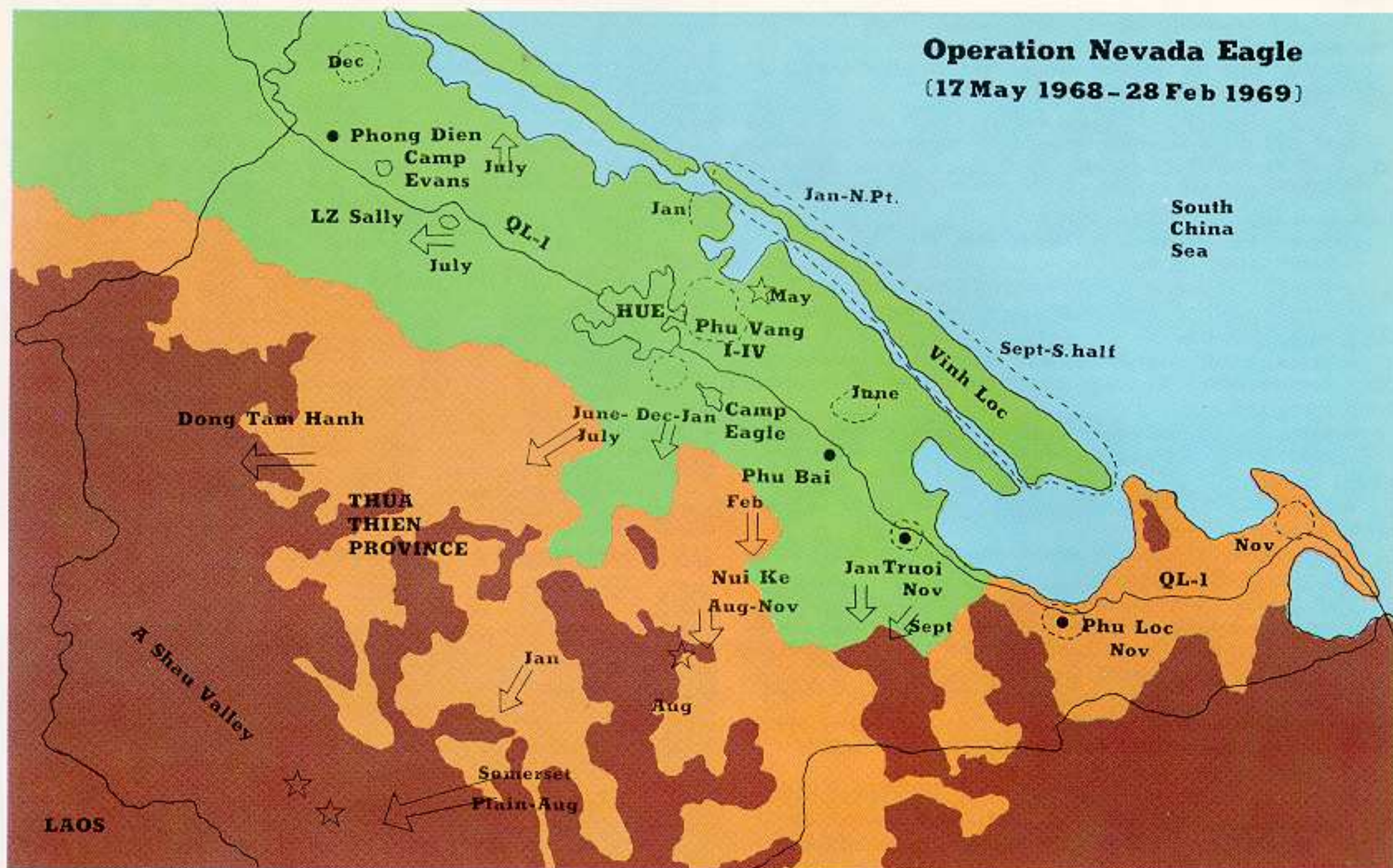


Steckel

...3,702 weapons seized...



...667.9 tons of rice discovered.



sons were established on Vinh Loc Island. The enemy was impressed by the skill shown by combined forces and the thoroughness of the tactics. Maj. Hoang Ban Trung, a Viet Cong assigned as a troop proselytizer, wrote in despair to his superiors:

"The enemy is using the 'sweep and occupy' tactics. . . So doing, they cause a lot of headaches to us. . . Most of the military action cadre were killed. . . (After a cordon is established) they push forward the communist denunciation movement, keep pressure and watch closely our infrastructure, some of them already defected, or were detected by ralliers. This caused much trouble among the people; the people now lose confidence in the final victory of the people revolution. . .

"Even our secret agents surrendered to the enemy. It is very difficult to build up new agents or infrastructure now. We could not go into the hamlets to get in touch with our men because the enemy has a very effective control and checking system. . . No one is left now to carry out the military action program, and even if there are some left, it would do no good now. . .

"As to me, I have no problem with my health but I am very thin and tense every moment now. . ."

Three weeks after writing this, Trung was killed by paratroopers of D Co., 1st Bn., 502nd Abn. Inf., and his letter was captured.

Trung's comrades in the mountains must have been in despair also. Everywhere they went, there was the Eagle waiting for them. If they stayed too long in one place, the Eagle came down from the sky to find them. If they moved to a safer place, the Eagle found them, and called in artillery, gunships, air strikes.

Shortly after Nevada Eagle terminated, Maj. Gen. Zais paid simple tribute to his soldiers:

"They are truly men to match the

mountains and jungles."

The Eagle flies with the sun, westward. He passes over the churning sea, the ribbon of beach, the pattern of rice paddies and villages—the hills that become mountains, the continuous clouds. He passes over the mountains, to the valley.

His country, Eagle Country. The parts which are not his soon will be.



Downs

SCREAMING EAGLE VIETNAM DIARY

With the enemy withdrawing into their jungle and mountain hideaways, Paratroopers of the 101st Airborne Division pursued them and kept them running. It was the "twilight war" with short, fleeting contacts with small enemy groups, with rarely a major contact as Nevada Eagle ended. But the stage was set for another A Shau thrust.

Dec. 1—As the Division was ending its first year in Vietnam, Operation Nevada Eagle was still proving successful in severely limiting enemy activity in Thua Thien Province, including Hue and its environs. From May 7, when Nevada Eagle started, to the beginning of December, 2,759 enemy had been killed and 803 prisoners captured, along with enormous quantities of arms, munitions, equipment and rice. During the first day of the new month, 24 enemy were killed, 12 weapons and one prisoner were captured. Three enemy soldiers on a rice-collection and propaganda-distribution mission turned themselves in to paratroopers of A/2/506 northeast of Firebase Jeanne. Delta Company troopers of 1/327 discovered a small base camp and two weapons southwest of Los Banos. Nearby the soldiers found 15 fresh graves containing NVA believed to have been killed by artillery, tactical air strikes and small arms one or two days before. A/1/502 killed one enemy in one contact, later killed another and captured a third. Currahees of C/2/506 ambushed two sampans, killing three Viet Cong. The other



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SCREAMING EAGLE VIETNAM DIARY

enemy in the boats beached the sampans and moved out on foot before being engaged again by Charlie Company paratroopers, who took one weapon. Maj. Gen. Melvin Zais, Division Commander, began the month by pulling the lanyard of a 105 mm howitzer at FB Sandy to send the Screaming Eagles' one millionth round against the enemy. One year before to the day, a gun of the 2/319 Artillery had fired the Division's first round in III Corps action. And, in a report early in the month, it was learned the milestone of 10,000 enemy killed by the 101st was reached late in November.

Dec. 2—Screaming Eagles added 16 enemy killed, one prisoner and eight weapons to Nevada Eagle totals. West of FB Quick a Ranger team engaged three VC and took a prisoner and four weapons. In reaction to the contact, the Aero-Rifle Platoon of D/1/1 Cav was inserted into the area and killed one enemy soldier and captured another. Two pink teams (each comprised of a Cobra gunship and a light observation helicopter) in support of 3rd Brigade operations killed two enemy with rockets and minigun fire. The brigade also initiated a combined cordon operation along the O Lua River, netting 32 suspects the first day.

Dec. 3—Fifteen enemy were killed, three prisoners taken and seven weapons captured in action throughout the AO. A/1/501 engaged six enemy, killing five and capturing another plus four weapons. C/2/506, in a night defensive position north of FB Long, killed two enemy with claymores. A 2/17 Cav red team



(two gunships) and a CAP (Combined Action Platoon) team engaged an enemy platoon near Sandy, resulting in three enemy killed.

Dec. 4—A DivArty aerial recon craft spotted three enemy bodies during a day of light contact. FB Brick, on Leech Island, was closed with the extraction of the Delta Raiders of 2/501.

Dec. 5—Six enemy were killed and six weapons captured in the AO. Two night ambushes, one near FB Boise by the 2/502 Recondos and the other near Jeanne by D/1/502, were successful, with three enemy killed. Company A of the 1st Battalion Geronimos captured two enemy after engaging an unknown size force near Sandy.

Dec. 7—Rakkasans of C/3/187 engaged four enemy in a sampan on the Song Bo River west of FB T-Bone, killing all four and sinking the sampan.

Dec. 8—Two enemy were killed and seven weapons captured in scattered action. A 2/17 Cav aircraft destroyed one heavy machine gun after engaging an enemy automatic weapons position.

Dec. 9—Screaming Eagles killed four enemy, captured two prisoners and eight weapons in the AO. A/1/327 discovered six German Mauser rifles in a hut south of FB Tomahawk. Recon/1/502 ambushed and killed two enemy northwest of FB Omaha. A/1/501 captured two VC near the coast.

Dec. 10—A 2nd Brigade aircraft, fired at southwest of Sandy, returned fire, and an infantry sweep revealed two enemy killed and two AK-47s. C/2/327 ambushed two enemy, killing one, west of Hill 88.

Dec. 11—Two combined forces cordon operations were established. With air and amphibious assaults, 1/501 with

**Whatever you called
him--VC or Charlie
you always had to
look for him...**



Oberg

ARVN troops, the Hue River Security Group and National Police cordoned the northern part of Vinh Loc Island, where an earlier cordon was so successful that it served as a model for cordons all over Vietnam. On the first day, 500 persons were screened, with five classified as VC. In the second cordon, in northern Quang Dien District, the 3/5 Cav combined with Popular Forces and the Hue River Security Group. In scattered action throughout the AO, three enemy were killed and five weapons captured.

Dec. 12—No Slack paratroopers of C Company engaged nine enemy southwest of Hill 88, killing three and capturing an RPG launcher and miscellaneous ammo. The Tiger Force of 1/327 ambushed three enemy south of Old Hickory, killing two.

Dec. 13—In the day's heaviest fighting, near Leech Island, Rangers engaged seven enemy and killed four. The 2nd Brigade CO's C&C aircraft killed two enemy just southeast of Hue. Elsewhere, two other enemy were killed by Screaming Eagles, with one prisoner and two weapons taken. One year ago this day, the Division's 2nd and 3rd Brigades officially reported for combat in Vietnam. And, it was reported, almost 2000 Screaming Eagles, mostly in infantry battalions, extended their Vietnam tours by six months.

Dec. 14—Two 101st AHB gunships teamed up with ARVN troops to kill 13 NVA in Phu Vang District near



the South China Sea. Nearby, in the second phase of the Vinh Loc cordon, Alpha and Charlie Companies of 1/501 captured seven prisoners and four weapons. Recon/1/506 surprised five NVA near FB Long and killed two, also capturing an SKS. Five other enemy killed were accounted for in the AO.

Dec. 16—Two villagers provided Screaming Eagles information that led to the killing of one enemy and the discovery of two other enemy killed near Phu Loc. Recon/1/502—the Chain Gang—engaged two armed VC, who discarded their weapons and fled into a group of civilians.

Dec. 17—On the third day of the combined forces Phu Vang IV operation, two enemy were killed. The 3rd Brigade conducted multi-battalion air assaults into landing zones near FB Maureen, initiating a new operation aimed at the 6th NVA Regiment base area. Screaming Eagle units were 1/506 and 3/187.

Dec. 18—Six enemy dead were accounted for in scattered action.

Dec. 19—In a bizarre incident, B/2/502 reported four enemy dressed as ARVN troops approached their night defensive position early in the evening. One was heard speaking English before opening fire. The disguised enemy fled, breaking the contact. Near Phan Thiet, D/3/506 engaged 15 VC and killed three.

Dec. 20—In response to intelligence, C/2/502 engaged an enemy squad, killing seven and capturing seven weapons, later killing another. The 3rd Brigade continued a major effort against the NVA and Viet Cong in the Dong Tam Hanh Mountain area during a combined forces operation. D/3/187, after engaging two enemy near Rao Trang, captured an RPG launcher and later found a submachine gun. An ambush still later resulted in one enemy killed.

Dec. 21—It was the busiest day in a month for Screaming Eagles. Three incidents involving gunships netted seven enemy killed in the Phu Loc area, and a dozen enemy were killed elsewhere. 2/17 Cav accounted for six enemy killed in three encounters.

Dec. 23—Linda Giese of San Mateo, Calif., sister of a paratrooper killed in action, met members of his company, A/1/327, at FB Old Hickory. When she left Camp Eagle three days later, Mrs. Giese said, "I feel like I have a hundred brothers in the company. I love them all." San Mateo had adopted Alpha Company.

Dec. 24—Seven km east of Hue, A/1/501, after receiving small arms fire from a bunker, returned fire and captured three prisoners and two of their weapons. In the evening, paratroopers moved into defensive positions to observe the Christmas ceasefire.

Dec. 25—Christmas night, Strike Force troopers of C/2/502 killed three enemy and captured their weapons near FB Anzio when the enemy attempted a probe of the Screaming Eagle perimeter. Paratroopers of the 101st extended their Christmas celebration to the people of Thua Thien Province. The 3rd Brigade, for instance, sent a convoy of presents to Gia Long II hamlet. Among the gifts were 50 cases of canned goods, 80 bags of rice and 200 bags of candy.



Choppers added mobility--and relieved your feet.

Dec. 26—In a running fight with the enemy, A/2/502—Attack Company—engaged 25 enemy soldiers who were leaving a village early in the morning. The paratroopers killed seven in all, captured a prisoner and took six individual weapons. The 2nd Brigade S-3, in a C&C aircraft, engaged two enemy, killing one and capturing another.

Dec. 28—The assistant S-3 of 3/5 Cav, on a visual reconnaissance in a LOH, observed seven enemy and engaged them with an M-16, killing one. A sweep by B/1/506 netted three wounded VC as a result of the contact.

Dec. 29—An enemy soldier carrying a sketch map and other documents was ambushed and killed 3 km north of Camp Eagle by 2/17 Cav. Four other enemy were killed in other contacts in the AO. 2/502 Recondos found a cache of seven weapons and miscellaneous munitions near FB Boise. While on ambush south of Phan Thiet in II Corps, elements of D/3/506 detonated claymores and grenades on an unknown size enemy force, killing two. The next day, Delta Company paratroopers engaged five enemy, killing them and taking their weapons.

Dec. 31—Screaming Eagles initiated a year-end offensive, a combined forces operation in Nam Hoa District aimed at NVA battalions. It was started with multiple air assaults by 1/506 and ARVN troops along the Song Thao Ma. Elements of 3/506 in southern II Corps killed two VC in two contacts and captured large quantities of food and medical supplies.

Jan. 1—The recon element and D Company of 1/506 discovered a smoldering cache near FB Mexico that included the barrels of seven individual weapons and one crew-served weapon along with the remains of \$400,000 in

VC tax scrip—receipts to be given villagers by the enemy for seizure of rice and other commodities.

Jan. 2—In an ambush near Old Hickory, A/2/327 killed three enemy while the No Slack recon element—the Hawks—killed another after a combat assault. Recon craft of D/1/1 Cav killed three enemy in the Ruong Ruong Valley east of the A Shau.

Jan. 3—Seven enemy were killed and two captured in action in the AO.

Jan. 4—While searching an area 7 km southwest of Hue, C/1/502 picked up one Viet Cong officer and three weapons. In two contacts near FB Quick, for two enemy killed and four weapons Charlie Company of 2/502 accounted captured.

Jan. 5—Paratroopers of 1/501 supported the initiation of a 2/54 ARVN soft cordon of the northern end of Vinh Loc Island.

Jan. 7—The 1st Brigade initiated a new operation in the Ruong Ruong Valley aimed at the enemy's rear supply and base areas. The operation started with an air assault by 2/502 into an LZ northeast of the valley and the establishment of FB Dagger.

Jan. 9—Twenty NVA engaged an ambush patrol of B/2/327 near the Nuoc Ngot Bridge. The troopers killed seven and captured one prisoner and seven AK-47s and a pistol. Near the coast, artillery fire called in on two enemy sampans killed two Viet Cong. Screaming Eagles accounted for 18 other enemy dead elsewhere in the AO.

Jan. 11—Gunships of 2/17 Cav with air support accounted for four enemy killed and an RPG launcher captured 20 km southeast of Hue. One prisoner was captured in another contact. Elements of 3/506 killed three enemy and captured documents near Phan Thiet.



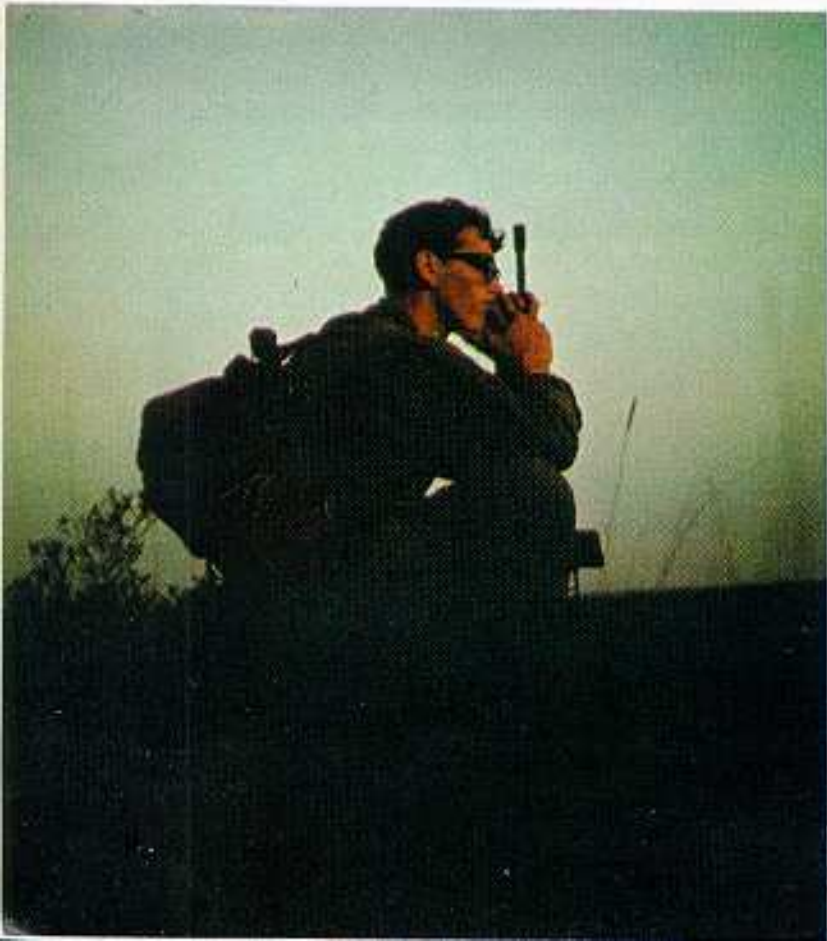
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SCREAMING EAGLE VIETNAM DIARY

Jan. 12—Early in the morning, Camp Eagle and Gia Le received seven to ten 122 mm rockets, causing light damage and no casualties. In light action, five enemy killed and one weapon were added to Nevada Eagle totals. A/3/506 discovered an enemy supply point near Phan Thiet and destroyed seven structures and eight tons of rice.

Jan. 13—Delta Company paratroopers of 2/327 killed three and captured their weapons when they ambushed an eight-man rice carrying element near the South China Sea coast. Enemy movement of supplies was further foiled when Currahees of C/2/506 killed one enemy and sank two sampans on the Song Bo as the communists tried to move south. The soft cordon on Vinh Loc Island was terminated with the extraction of the 1st Battalion Geronimos. The 3rd Brigade's operation ended with good results as 1/506 and two 1st ARVN Division battalions were extracted from locations in Nam Hoa District. The two-week operation resulted in 12 enemy killed and 26 individual weapons captured.

Jan. 14—Near Phan Thiet, 3/506 Currahees killed three while supporting gunships killed eight.

Jan. 16—In the day's only heavy contact, an element of C/2/327 engaged 25 NVA soldiers attempting to cross QL-1 near Thua Luu Bridge. The No Slack platoon allowed the enemy to get within 30 meters of their position before opening fire. As the North Vietnamese soldiers fled to the south, artillery was called in to block withdrawal routes. An initial sweep revealed 12 enemy killed and six weapons. Six more enemy dead and four more weapons were found the next morning.

Jan. 17—As enemy activity continued in the 1st Brigade AO, B/2/327 engaged an enemy squad, killing five and taking a prisoner and five weapons, including a B-40 rocket launcher.

Jan. 18—C/1/501 Geronimos sank four sampans on a unauthorized waterway, killing two VC and capturing their AKs. Paratroopers of 2/501 completed air assaults into landing zones north of the Khe Lo Moi Valley.

Jan. 19—As the battalion invaded

enemy areas, B/2/501 killed three and captured two weapons. Paratroopers of D/3/506 killed two VC with claymores near Phan Thiet.

Jan. 22—In an air strike supporting ARVN Black Panthers southwest of Leech Island, an F-4 Phantom crashed and its pilots were attacked by enemy ground forces. While covering the evacuation of the airmen, 4/77 Arty ARA and gunships from D/101 AHB killed three NVA. Elsewhere, gunships killed two enemy soldiers who fired at sniffer aircraft.

Jan. 23—D/2/327 paratroopers engaged 12 enemy near the coast with small arms and artillery, killing two and capturing three AKs.

Jan. 24—The 3rd Brigade initiated a new operation in the western part of

two VC on a paymaster team. They killed one of them and captured 45,000 piasters.

Jan. 26—The 2nd Brigade operation continued with air assaults into LZ Son. In the area, the CO of the 101st AHB spotted several NVA and a 37 mm antiaircraft gun. Delta Company gunships were called in, resulting in two NVA killed and the AA gun destroyed. In the 3rd Brigade operation, C/2/506 discovered a cache of 24 SKS rifles, three RPDs, one RPG launcher, 30 60 mm mortar rounds and 30 RPG rounds in an elaborate hut-bunker complex in the mountains west of Camp Evans. The 1st Brigade's operation continued near FB Quick II with light contact. The 2/502 Recondos engaged an NVA platoon, killed two, and later found a cache of four weapons.

Krieger



the AO, again aimed at the 6th NVA Regiment base area. It began with air assaults by Rakkasans of 3/187 into LZs Barbara and Mexico and continued with 2/506 and 1st ARVN assaults into Carol, Heidi and Davis.

Jan. 25—Continuing a new Screaming Eagle series of offensives in enemy base areas, elements of the 2nd Brigade initiated an operation aimed at cutting off enemy movement out of the A Shau along Highway 547A. Air assaults were conducted into FB Bastogne. Elsewhere in the AO, 101st Paratroopers accounted for 18 enemy dead, one prisoner, one Hoi Chanh and four captured weapons. A/2/501 discovered a sizeable grave complex containing 16 enemy bodies in the Leech Island area. Part of Delta Company of 3/506 Currahees encountered

Jan. 27—Screaming Eagle offensives continued, with 11 enemy killed and one prisoner captured. 2/502 killed six enemy while 1/327 troopers killed two enemy near FB Anzio. A Ranger team operating east of FB Strike had three contacts resulting in two enemy killed.

Jan. 28—Three contacts by 2/502 in the 1st Brigade operation were reported, with two enemy killed. The pointman of Charlie Company engaged five VC, who fled leaving behind two weapons. Elsewhere in the AO, seven enemy were killed.

Jan. 29—Strike Force troopers accounted for three enemy killed near FB Quick II. Near Phan Thiet, 3/506 paratroopers killed three VC.

Jan. 31—Screaming Eagles killed four enemy and captured one weapon.

SCREAMING EAGLE VIETNAM DIARY



Kelsen

with B/2/327 killing one and taking a weapon in a clash northwest of the Nuoc Ngot Bridge. Two prisoners and another weapon were picked up the next morning. Operation McLain, conducted by 3/506 Currahees near Phan Thiet, terminated. The battalion, under the operational control of Task Force South of I Field Force, accounted for 831 enemy killed, more than 300 detained and 490 weapons seized. The operation lasted nearly a year.

Feb. 1—The enemy increased his standoff activities with four incidents of mortar and rocket attacks on allied positions and otherwise continued to evade physical contact. Nine 122 mm rockets hit Camp Evans (only four inside the perimeter), causing no casualties and only minor damage. Counterbattery fire was immediately employed.

Feb. 2—Bravo Company of 2/327 killed two enemy and captured two weapons southwest of Nuoc Ngot Bridge following a mortar attack on FB Tomahawk. Also attacked was Camp Eagle, where seven 122s landed, causing one minor wound.

Feb. 4—In two heavy contacts seven minutes apart near Phu Loc, No Slack paratroopers of B and C Companies accounted for 17 Viet Cong killed, three prisoners and 18 weapons captured. Two more weapons were found the next morning.

Feb. 5—The 1st Brigade terminated its operation in the Ruong Ruong Valley. Always First paratroopers killed 80 enemy, captured 10 prisoners, 80 individual weapons and one crew-served weapon in the 30-day operation, which was part of Nevada Eagle.

Feb. 6—In three contacts west of FB Quick, A/2/502 killed two and captured three weapons. Also southeast of the Citadel, recon troopers of 1/501 en-

gaged three VC in a bunker, killing them and taking a weapon.

Feb. 8—FB Veghel closed as the 2nd Brigade began to phase out its operation against enemy supply routes out of the A Shau. The 1st Brigade's O-Deuce continued to RIF deeper into the 4th NVA Regiment base area southeast of Phu Loc. Near Phan Thiet, 3/506 surprised five VC at a rice supply point, killed one and captured the other four in addition to 2100 pounds of rice.

Feb. 9—Combined forces in the 1st Brigade AO engaged two enemy, killing five and capturing the other five. 2/502 paratroopers with 1st ARVN soldiers killed two and captured two weapons. The Ready To Go 2nd Brigade terminated its operation. FB Bastogne, near the A Shau, was closed. In II Corps, D/3/506 killed three NVA in a firefight. At Camp Eagle, the Division Memorial Chapel was dedicated by Maj. Gen. Francis Sampson, Army Chief of Chaplains.

Feb. 10—Penetration into enemy base areas and extensive operations on the plains resulted in occasional contacts with squad- to platoon-size elements. As 2/501 pursued the 5th NVA Regiment near Nui Ke, A Company killed two enemy. The 3rd Brigade initiated a new phase of its operation. Camp Evans received two 122 mm rockets, one landing inside the perimeter. In a 20-minute firefight, B/3/506 killed four of 10 enemy and took four weapons and documents.

Feb. 11—Nevada Eagle totals were raised by four enemy killed, one prisoner and three weapons captured in scattered contact.

Feb. 12—The Screaming Eagle Division's "orphan" battalion in II Corps, the 3/506 Currahees, was in heavy contact. Charlie Company combat assaulted into a hot LZ in support of RFs and

was immediately engaged by the NVA. In a seven-hour firefight, the paratroopers killed 20 enemy while D/2/320 Arty killed five. Other elements of I Field Force's Task Force South accounted for another 28 enemy killed. Back in I Corps, the 1st Brigade opened a new offensive operation with a combat assault by 2/502 north and east of FB Brick. The 2nd Brigade's 1/501 established a new cordon southwest of FB Sandy. Elsewhere, Screaming Eagles deployed to complement the disposition of ARVN troops for the Tet holidays.

Feb. 13—The new Leech Island operation continued as 2/502 searched for an enemy sapper battalion. 2/501 continued to recon in the Nui Ke area, killing three enemy. 2/17 Cav gunships, while supporting the 9th Marines' Operation Dewey Canyon north of the A Shau, killed five enemy. 3/506 Currahees discovered 22½ tons of rice.

Feb. 14—The 3rd Brigade initiated a new phase of its operation against the 6th NVA Regiment with 1/506 completing an air assault and beginning a RIF toward FB Sword. Screaming Eagles conducted extensive patrol and RIF operations aimed at thwarting enemy attempts to position for a repetition of 1968's Tet Offensive. Four enemy were killed and 16 weapons captured during the day. The largest haul, of 12 weapons, was found in a hut near Leech Island by Strike Force troopers. Included in the find were nine M-2 carbines, two Chicom SMGs and a Russian SMG. Near Nui Ke, paratroopers of 2/501 killed two VC and captured an RPG launcher and an AK-47.

Feb. 15—Scattered contact with squad-size or smaller enemy forces resulted in 11 enemy killed, two prisoners and 16 weapons captured. 2/502 found seven enemy dead, later discovered five weapons in a tunnel during patrols north,

and east of FB Brick. In two brief contacts in the rocket belt, 1/502 killed one enemy, captured another and took an AK and an RPG launcher. Rakkasans of Company A engaged a squad, killing one enemy, taking a prisoner and four AK-47s, two machine guns and two RPG launchers northwest of FB Katy.

Feb. 16—Screaming Eagles moved into defensive positions in the evening for a 24-hour Tet holiday ceasefire. Earlier encounters with small enemy groups resulted in six killed and nine weapons captured. B/2/502 found seven hooches with bunkers and five weapons. First Strike troopers killed two enemy and captured their weapons.

Feb. 17—Screaming Eagles joined with the people of Thua Thien Province in celebrating the Tet holidays. The 501st Signal threw a party at Tay Loc orphanage, inside the Hue Citadel. The orphanage had been destroyed in last year's Tet Offensive but rebuilt with the 101st's aid. Support Command and Division Artillery also gave parties at orphanages, and the three brigades gave a total of 15 parties at schools and orphanages. The Division band played at three locations, and Screaming Eagles were provided with newly minted coins and specially printed holiday greetings to give to the people of the province. The Division also ex-

Whenever you looked up, there were helicopters, and somebody to bring them in.



Not only mountains and jungles, but water too...

tended the helping hand to the widows and orphans of 1st ARVN Division soldiers who died defending their homeland.

Feb. 18—Seven enemy were killed and one weapon captured in scattered action. 1st Brigade paratroopers killed six in the lowlands along QL-1 and in RIFs northwest of FB Brick.

Feb. 19—Nine enemy were killed and 10 weapons captured in the AO. 2/501, while patrolling the Nui Ke rocket belt, killed four enemy and captured five weapons. Gunships supporting sniffer aircraft killed three enemy in two contacts southeast of FB Tennessee.

Feb. 20—The 1st Brigade initiated a new offensive operation with assaults south of FB Normandy for probes into the 5th NVA Regiment base area. In search and clear operations northwest of Bastogne, A/1/502 killed one enemy and captured one weapon when they spotted a VC installing a booby trap. B/3/506 Currahees found 1200 pounds of rice in an area surrounded by 105 booby traps; the next day, the paratroopers discovered 1500 pounds of rice.

Feb. 21—Combined forces in the 2nd Brigade AO killed four enemy and took two weapons, and the allies in the 3rd Brigade AO captured two prisoners and one weapon.

Feb. 22—Rockets and mortars hit targets all over Vietnam—except in the Screaming Eagle AO—as the enemy launched its long awaited offensive after the Tet holidays ended. Division Rear at Bien Hoa was hit with enemy rockets and mortars during communist attacks, including ground assaults, in the Saigon-Long Binh-Bien Hoa area. The 3rd Currahee battalion at Phan Thiet was the only Screaming Eagle combat unit to become a target. Enemy mortars buffeted LZ Betty as the offensive began early in the morning. An enemy force estimated at two VC companies attacked the base in two places. Echo Company mortar-men fought the VC sapper teams on the fringes of the company area, repulsing

the ground attack. Contact continued until dawn. The Currahees accounted for 14 enemy killed, one prisoner taken and eight AK-47s and large amounts of explosives and satchel charges captured. Meanwhile, in the Division AO in I Corps, there was light and scattered contact.

Feb. 23—The weather broke to permit the 1st Brigade's offensive to continue. Rakkasans conducted a combat assault into LZ Susan in the Khe Lo Moi Valley southwest of FB Brick. While flying support for the assault, 4/77 Aerial Rocket Artillery killed three enemy, and D/101 AHB killed another. The 3rd Brigade's operation continued as elements of 1/506 killed three enemy while repelling an attack on Firebase Sword early in the morning. Sword received mortars, RPG rounds and sporadic small arms fire in what was possibly the only enemy-initiated contact of the new offensive in the 101st's AO.

Feb. 24—Ten enemy were killed and 10 weapons were captured in the AO. The 1st Brigade operation continued despite poor weather as elements of 3/187 with ARA and artillery support killed two enemy and captured five SKS rifles and a carbine southwest of FB Brick. C/2/327 killed two and took one weapon southwest of Phu Loc. The 3rd Brigade began the third phase of an operation as 1/506 discovered a hut and four bunkers, two RPDs and an AK, also killing six NVA when A Co. engaged 20 to 30 NVA fleeing the area.

Feb. 25—C and D Cos. of 2/502 combat assaulted into LZ Red. In four contacts, 3/187 killed two enemy and captured two weapons southwest of FB Brick. The 2nd Brigade initiated a combined cordon southeast of Sandy, with elements of 1/501, 1/502, C/2/34 Armor, ARVN troops, RFs, PFs and National Police. Elsewhere, B/2/501 engaged three NVA, killing one and capturing two AK-47s, one carbine, a 60 mm mortar tube and 10 mortar rounds.

Feb. 26—A and D Cos. of the Rak-

SCREAMING EAGLE VIETNAM DIARY

At the end of a long week, a time in the half-light of the jungle to pray, possibly, for safety the next week.

kasans, in three contacts, killed three VC and captured one crew-served and one individual weapon. B/1/502 captured two tons of paddy rice in the combined cordon near Sandy. A combined cordon was established along the west bank of the Song Bo south of the An Lo Bridge by 3rd Brigade and ARVN elements.

Feb. 27—The short Song Bo cordon was terminated, with combined forces netting six members of the VC infrastructure and one M-60 machine gun.

Feb. 28—The month drew to a close with an important day in 101st Airborne history: Operation Nevada Eagle terminated at midnight. (See "288 Days of Nevada Eagle," P. 2.) On the last day of Nevada Eagle, four enemy were killed and one crew-served weapon was captured. 2/502 and 3/187 continued to probe deeper into enemy base areas. In rocket belt RIF operations, D/1/502 captured a complete 60 mm mortar. Also terminating with Nevada Eagle was the 3rd Brigade's operation as elements of

1/506 discovered four enemy dead. In the 36-day operation, Screaming Eagles accounted for 40 enemy killed, one prisoner and 46 individual and 10 crew-served weapons captured.

March 1—The first day of March was also a red-letter day for the 101st as the Division-wide Operation Kentucky Jumper started. D/2/501 conducted a combat assault south of FB Tennessee to construct Firebase Whip. A/1/327 accounted for the first enemy killed during Kentucky Jumper when the paratroopers engaged two VC, killing one and taking his weapon. Elements of the 1st and 3rd Brigades began assuming new positions in expanded AOs in preparation for a combined forces thrust by the 2nd Brigade and ARVN troops deep into the A Shau Valley—Operation Massachusetts Striker. The 101st Airborne was going back into the valley, hopefully to strike a fatal blow to the enemy.



Oberg





Each new Screaming Eagle was told during jungle training that he had some awesome power at his disposal if he met the enemy. It was the truth--a Paratrooper could always bring in on the enemy

THUNDER FROM ABOVE

By Sgt. Wayne Krieger



Its ammo and fuel exhausted temporarily, the gunship lands to replenish.

Garcia

THUNDER FROM ABOVE

As paratroopers crouch at the base of a jungled mountain, Air Force jets and Army helicopter gunships pound Hill 891 in preparation for an infantry assault. Since being heli-lifted into the area several days before, the men of Co. C, 2nd Bn., 506th Abn. Inf. have pursued the enemy trying to establish contact. . . Now they

are about to come to grips.

As friendly fire lifts, the paratroopers move to enter the battle. It is a swift, professional assault. The enemy, stunned and confused by the preparatory fire, flees his position as Currahee paratroopers sweep across the mountain-top objective near the A Shau Valley.

Jets and gunships enter the fray again, this time joined by artillery fire, to further hammer the fleeing enemy. Under the cover of protective fire, the infantrymen dig in and prepare to defend their newly won position.

Throughout the night the paratroopers wait expectantly for an enemy counter-attack. None materializes.

The enemy, badly mauled in the previ-

ous day's fighting, elects not to face the firepower of the 3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division again.

The action on Hill 891, with its combined cooperation among infantry, artillery and air support units, exemplifies the professionalism which has made the 101st feared by the enemy. By implementing the concept of airmobility to maneuver combat elements, along with supporting fire anywhere in the area of operations, the Division has become a multi-winged Eagle ready to swoop down anywhere, anytime, to deliver Thunder From Above.

Artillery

The infantryman receives a tremendous morale boost from the ever-present, swift and accurate support of artillery.

On one occasion, C Btry., 2nd Bn., 319th Abn. Arty. expended more than 300 rounds, many in direct fire, in defense of a battalion firebase. The artillerymen combined with the infantry to repel a fierce enemy attack, killing 131 North Vietnamese Army regulars and aborting their attempt to overrun the firebase.

The majority of fire missions are initiated in the field. Through quick and accurate assessments of situations by forward observers, the fire direction center (FDC) makes necessary computations and has rounds of the way minutes after the initial request for fire.

Based on the data received at the FDC, the appropriate round and fuses are selected for terrain, location and type of target.

Should the enemy be caught in the open, high explosive (HE) rounds with either point-detonating or variable time fuses are selected. If the enemy is entrenched in bunkers, rounds with delayed fuses are utilized to give penetrating capabilities before the round explodes.

The enemy can no longer rely on the protective cover of darkness. The use of

Board the Hueys and go find Charlie.

Keiser



high-illumination rounds takes the night away from him, and harassment and interdiction fire on routes of infiltration keeps him further off balance. If ground troops should exceed the distance of gun capabilities, CH-47 Chinooks or CH-54 Flying Cranes air-lift the guns to a closer firing position.

One artilleryman summed up the mission of the artillery this way: "It isn't easy to hump rounds day and night, but those infantrymen in the field depend on us for support, and that makes little things like sleep unimportant."

Gunships

Providing gunship support for the ground troops of the 3rd Brigade are elements of the 4th Bn. (ARA), 77th Abn. Arty., which have often proven the value and dependability of close air support. The recent arrival at Camp Evans, headquarters of the brigade, of the 158th Aslt. Hel. Bn. gunships has added striking power sufficient to cope with any enemy threat.

Aerial Rocket Artillery (ARA) is utilized when the ground commander requires support at close range against a specific target. Within minutes of receiving the alert, ARA crews race to their ships and are in the air, heading for a target. Once they arrive over the area, the gunships are directed by forward observers or company commanders.

Armed with seventy 2.75-inch rockets, miniguns and a 40 mm automatic grenade launcher, an AH-1G Cobra gunship presents a formidable threat to the enemy. The massive striking power of each ship cannot be fully realized until one con-

Peterson



A Mortar dealt death from far away, a Quad-50 was good for close fighting.



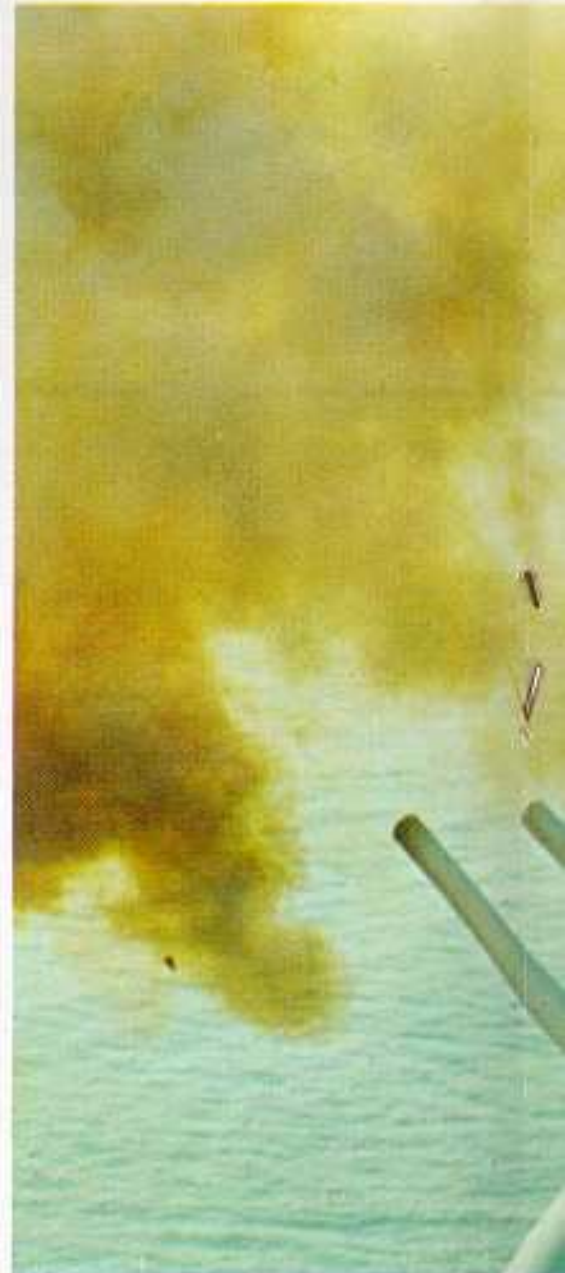


EA

McCabe



Cardinal



J.K. McCabe
RVA 4000



EAGLE FIREPOWER

McCabe





siders each rocket the Cobra sends streaking toward its target carries from 10 to 17 pounds of explosive. Few enemy soldiers emerge alive after being blanketed with such intense fire.

Contributing to the deadliness of gunship strikes is the ability of the pilot to place his first round directly on target, without making subsequent adjustments. To send a rocket blazing toward its target, the pilot simply aims his ship at the strike location by means of a sight mounted in front of his seat.

After identifying his target, the pilot makes a firing run. As he descends, he aligns his ship with the target and prepares to fire. At an altitude of 1000 feet, with a slant range of approximately 1500 feet, the Cobra pilot launches his death-dealing rockets at the enemy.

"The big advantage of gunships is to provide closer, more concentrated fire than artillery," one veteran Cobra pilot explained.

The infantrymen in the field are the first to admit how valuable gunship support can be. Consider the case of D Co., 1st Bn., 506th Abn. Inf., operating in the mountains west of Camp Evans.

"A chopper had just come in to pick up a Hoi Chanh who had come in to us," recalled one of the paratroopers. "All of a sudden the LZ turned into a psychedelic light show."

The light show was from a command-detonated 250-pound bomb and, for an encore, the NVA added a chorus of AK-47s. As the paratroopers returned fire, an urgent call for help was sent out. Within minutes, a pair of gunships arrived to help the beleaguered troops drive the enemy from their hiding places.

"I've never seen a prettier sight than those choppers working out on the side of that hill," a paratrooper remarked. "Once they got into the fight, we quickly drove the enemy off."

Air Strikes

When the fighting is thickest, the combined strength of the infantry, artillery and gunships have another team member to bring into play—the Forward Air Controller (FAC).

The FAC has one of the most demanding jobs in Vietnam. Many times in the course of his normal duties, the FAC has responsibility for the safety of an entire company or battalion.

Not all pilots are willing to accept the awesome responsibility. Every FAC is a fully qualified fighter pilot who is able to understand the problems and dangers faced by the pilots he directs.

When the FAC receives a call for assistance, he immediately flies to the area and determines the exact location of the

Thank the quickness and accuracy of the redlegs.

Chearing



Denstard

Every round a hit.

Help is not far behind the arrival of the FAC's light observation plane. One veteran FAC said he never has to wait more than five minutes for fighters to arrive once he puts out the call. Often, the planes are on station and ready to strike long before that.

With the arrival of the fighters, the FAC must conduct a quick, concise briefing as a prelude to the air strike. He gives them a target description, weather report, friendly and enemy troop locations, the possibility of ground fire, and emergency procedures to follow should they be hit.

After completing his briefing, the FAC aims his vulnerable craft at the target and dives toward it to fire a marking rocket as a guide for the fighters. Then, as each fighter makes its bombing or strafing run, the FAC swings his plane in right behind the "war bird" to provide himself a better view of the strike's effect. Sometimes it becomes necessary to make subsequent marking runs to insure the safety of friendly troops in the area.

After the fighters have expended their ordnance, the FAC gives a bomb damage assessment to the fighters, which includes target coordinates, damage to the target, and a report on the accuracy of the bombing and strafing.

Just how valuable such support can be was illustrated by the experience of the 3rd Bn., 187th Abn. Inf.

"We had woods to the front and left of us, and Charlie was really pouring fire into us," recalled one Rakkasan. "My company was under fire for nearly an hour, and even the gunships were having difficulty silencing the fire coming from those woods."

At this point, a FAC was summoned, and it soon arrived accompanied by two F-100s. The FAC directed the fighters into position for their bomb runs, and they began dropping 500-pound bombs on the entrenched enemy.

"When the air strike was over, we walked into those woods," the trooper said, "and all we found were some bodies, a few weapons and a lot of bomb craters."

Forward Air Controllers see nothing extraordinary in their work—to them it's just a job to be done. But to the men they support, the FAC is something special. The combat infantryman reserves one of his most prized possessions for the FAC and his fighter pilots—respect.

The Vietnam war is a conflict of dimensions that requires a fighting force with depth. Ground forces combined with artillery and air power capabilities make the 101st, now fully airmobile, a formidable foe that can, in keeping with the Airborne tradition, deliver Thunder From Above.



friendly unit as well as the proximity of enemy forces.

Sometimes it becomes necessary to make a low-level reconnaissance to find exactly where the enemy is. At such time, the FAC is particularly vulnerable to ground fire.

"Fortunately, the enemy has learned the inadvisability of firing on a FAC plane," one pilot observed. "He knows if he does, his position can be pinpointed, and this means trouble."

Peterson



When the air strike was over, we walked into the woods.

It has long been known as "the other war" but soon it may become the only war--the war for the hearts and minds of the people. Devoted to pacification is one section of Division Headquarters: G-5. Its weapons are words, not rifles.

Like the infantry, G-5—civil affairs and psychological operations—is working to displace the communist adversary.

As the 101st Airborne Division combat units physically seek out and destroy the enemy, especially in the populous coastal plain around Hue, civil affairs personnel seek to rebuild Vietnamese institutions destroyed by the communist terrorists, and PsyOps personnel travel the countryside telling the people about the Government of Vietnam as well as Charlie.

Schools, orphanages even marketplaces are being rebuilt. More important, the confidence the people may have lost in the bona fide government is being revived.

Civil affairs personnel travel to the villages and hamlets of Thua Thien Province to discuss possible projects with local leaders. When they find a bridge or a school the people themselves would like to see rebuilt, G-5 arranges for approval through village and province channels. When the inspiration is there, civil affairs personnel seek to supply the materials. The people themselves do the work.

"It's amazing what these people can do with a piece of scrap wood we pick up at Camp Eagle," said Capt. Michael A. McDermott, Highmore, S. Dak., assistant civil affairs officer. "They are really ingenious."

"They take more pride in a project if they do it themselves. Then they have a personal interest in its security and won't just stand by and let it be destroyed should the VC decide to go on a rampage."

The Division has seen 48 "major" projects completed, including 30 schools, six orphanages, six dispensaries and three marketplaces. Lt. Erwin Craig, Whittier, Calif., emphasized that "major" projects are those "that take more than a week—those that really take planning and effort and persistence." There are 59 more major projects in progress.

The funds for tin roofing and cement, among other building materials, come mostly from the MACV Psychological Warfare-Civil Affairs Fund. (Such basic staples as rice and cooking oil, also distributed by G-5, come from such organizations as the Catholic Relief Society and the U.S. Agency for International Development.)

Densford

By 1st Lt. Benito C. Castillo



THE OTHER WAR: PACIFICATION

opment). Scrap lumber and perforated steel plank (PSP) are obtained by scrounging. Cement is purchased in Hue.

The other main function of G-5 is psychological operations. This includes leaflets and loudspeaker broadcasts that make offers to both the people and the enemy. Some offer a better life to hardcore communists who come in under the Chieu Hoi program; others offer rewards to villagers who participate in the Volunteer Informant Program (VIP) by turning over weapons or supplies or giving information about the enemy and his movements. Leaflets, banners, posters, broadcasts are designed to help uproot the Viet Cong by taking away his will to fight or by making him the target of local civilians.

A typical leaflet-dropping and loudspeaker mission takes planning. G-2 (intelligence) provides G-5 information about, say, the location or suspected location of an enemy unit. In one case, two Hoi Chanh came in from an NVA regiment, and two days later were in a G-5 helicopter over the same area telling their former comrades to rally also.

On one recent mission, Billy, a 17-year-old VC-turned-interpreter, carefully studied the messages he was to broadcast. Before the chopper took off, a 100-pound loudspeaker system with 16 speakers was mounted on one side, and the power source and microphone were hooked up. Leaflets were put aboard, then Billy and another former VC and a U.S. PsyOps officer climbed aboard.

Once airborne, the chopper flew over suspected enemy areas. Leaflets filtered down through the air and the two former VC "told it like it is," telling the enemy the truth about the war, about the GVN, about the Chieu Hoi and VIP programs.

The messages were read and reread. The two men also strayed to ad lib their own messages. Billy told of how he had been drafted into the Viet Cong ranks and later escaped. He told of his hardships as an unwilling communist infantryman and compared it with his present duties.

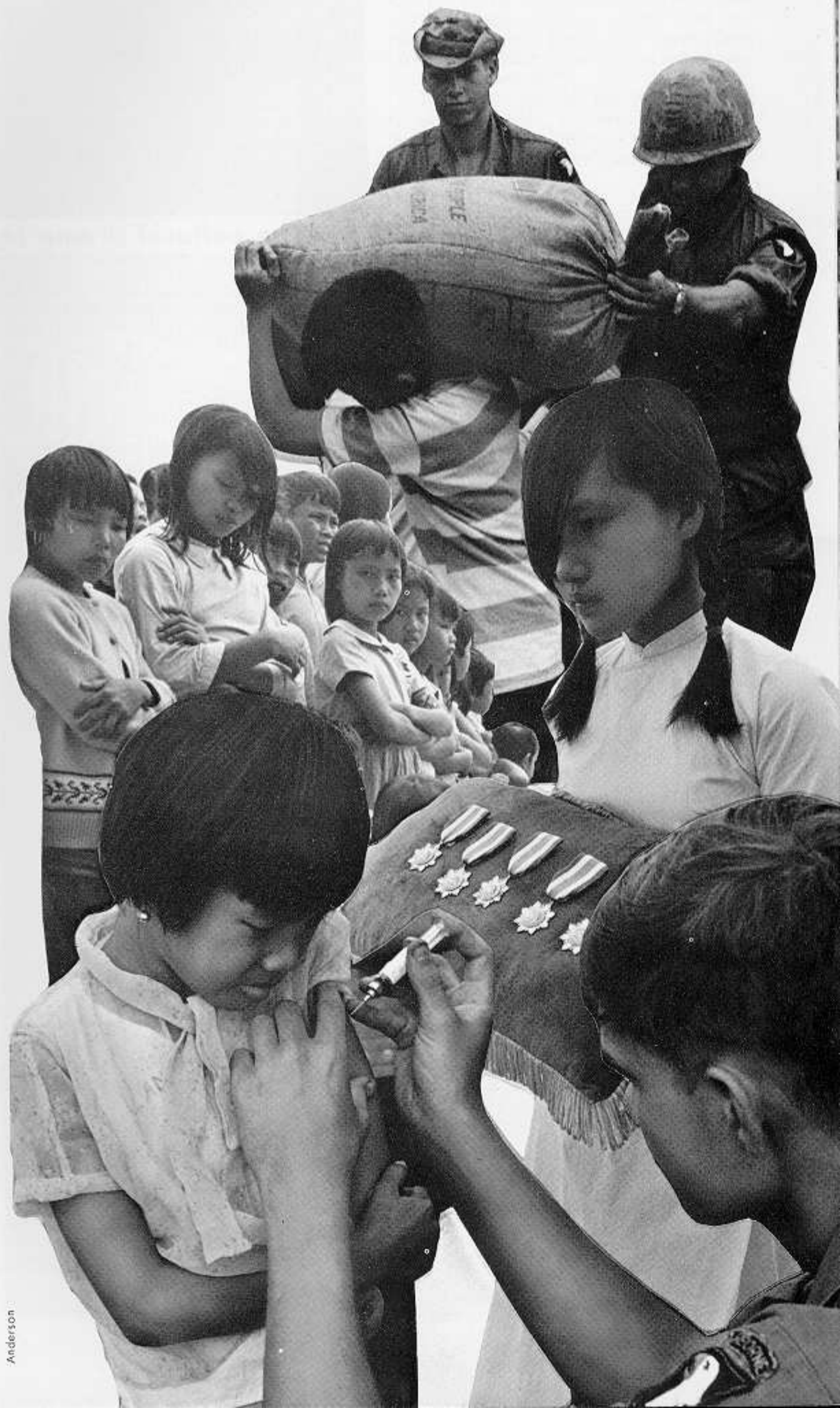
The next day, Billy accompanied the Division psychological operations officer, Capt. Jimmy P. Ashworth, Corpus Christi, Tex., on an all-day "county fair" at a small village on the Song Bo River near LZ Sally, home of the 2nd Brigade. It was a rainy day with low cloud ceilings, but was good enough weather for pacification efforts. Despite the weather, most of the villagers waited expectantly for the action to begin.

One "star" of the show was the doctor from the 2nd Brigade who would run a MEDCAP, always a good way to show the people that the Americans and GVN are concerned about their welfare.

Also present on this particular mission were audio-visual, armed propaganda, combat intelligence and cultural drama teams.

On the way to the village, Ashworth noted that across the road, on trees and on the sides of the road there were signs and posters urging VC and VC sympathizers to rally to the Government side.

The convoy pulled into the village, and "the doctor was in," attending to the ill and hurts of the people. After the MEDCAP, and armed propaganda team



The Other War ; Pacification



Ashworth

The cultural drama team is the PsyOps nightcap.

went to work. The men were all former communist fighting men, either NVA or VC, and most of them had been junior officers. In Vietnamese, they told of the difference between the ideologies involved. The people listened intently—they were getting information they considered vital, right from the ralliers themselves.

The combat intelligence team was present "only to see if we can pick up any useful information," according to one team member. They passed out soap,

candy and leaflets, once again aimed at converting the hard-core communists. The leaflets stressed the Volunteer Informant Program with its offers of rewards for enemy materiel or intelligence.

At suppertime, the captain and his party were invited, as Billy put it, "to eat Vietnamese chow." The people consider it an honor for an outsider to accept their hospitality; it is an insult if they are refused. The menu was typically Vietnamese—rice, noodles, fish, sauce—eaten with chopsticks. Spoons were offered, but the Americans preferred the chopsticks.

It was almost dark after supper—time to relax before the movies. The combat intelligence team and the medics left, and the movie team set up its equipment.

First there were the movies with an international language—Donald Duck, Mickey Mouse, Tom and Jerry cartoons. The audience again was attentive. Some were amazed—they went behind the

makeshift screen, a bedsheet, to see where the images were coming from.

After a quick reel change, the more direct approach to the "other war" was projected. It was a movie of the VC in action. One youngster poked one of the visiting Americans on the leg and pointed at the screen. "VC . . . beaucoup bad. . ."

Then came the nightcap. All day two young ladies and their six male companions had stood by and patiently watched. The people now saw that they were



Ashworth

A former NVA lieutenant speaks to villagers--and they listen to what he says.



singers, actors—the cultural drama team. From the time the movies were over at 8:30 p.m. until 11:30, they kept the audience entertained with songs, skits, jokes. It was all in Vietnamese, but the laughter they drew was easily recognizable.

It had been a long day, and the Americans were tired. As the people scattered to their homes after the performance, the Screaming Eagles were led by the village chief to a home where they would spend the night.

The Americans had no security other than the village's own People's Self Defense Force. "Show them you have enough confidence in them to put your life in their hands and you gain their trust," Ashworth said.

They woke the next morning to a cool mist, had breakfast and left. On the way back, Billy pointed out to his *dai-uy* (captain) where he used to operate during his days as a VC. "Beyond that clump of trees we bedded down one night. Beyond that mountain we regrouped. . . ." He had been drafted when he was 16, but escaped four months later and had worked for the Americans ever since.

"Where did he learn English?"

"He just picked it up. He's a smart boy," Ashworth said.

They got back to Camp Eagle, Division base camp, in time to meet McDermott, who was on his way out with another load of lumber and cement. "Remember those people who asked about materials for their high school and their elementary school? They seem anxious to start work," he said, "so we're going to see how fast we can help them get started."

Pacification's aim is to help the people stand up together as a nation, unite against the common communist enemy. Progress

is often quite apparent. For instance, the number of Hoi Chanh over the past year—about 1200, or more than three per day—is tangible evidence that the VC and NVA are getting the word. "They give themselves up waving leaflets intended as a pass—leaflets we drop out of helicopters," Ashworth said.

All the ralliers are screened at the Chieu Hoi Center in Hue before their future is decided. Former communist soldiers who spent time as infantrymen may volunteer and be chosen as Kit Carson scouts, and become an integral part of the American effort. Others are sometimes allowed to live at the Chieu Hoi center, where they and their families are provided room and board until they can start earning their own living "as part of a productive society," according to Ashworth.

Ashworth said the results appear in other ways, too. "Remember the night we spent at that one village? There were all kinds of young men carrying all kinds of weapons, right? They are the pro-

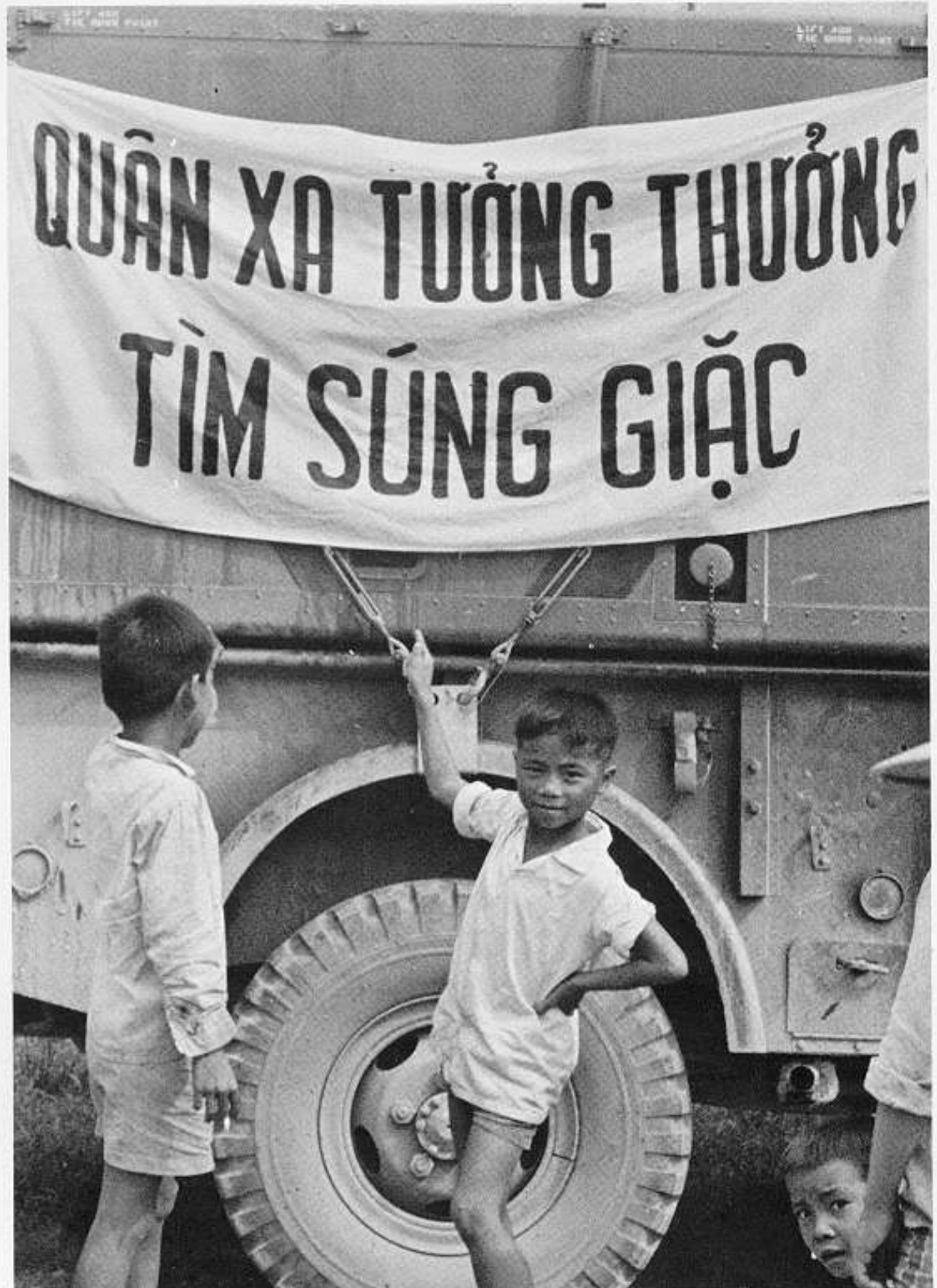
tectors of the village. They are the ones who defy the Viet Cong in his effort to take over. They are the ones who turn him in if he's a cadre member. They are the ones who defend the village. They are the village's own People's Self Defense Force.

"And remember that other village we passed on the way? Where Billy said he once operated? On one of our missions, there was a little old man—a typical elder who would just as soon ignore the war and be left alone by both sides. He told us the communist tax collector was due in a couple of nights to collect rice. We told the village chief and his defense force ambushed the collector—killed him and two of his body guards. It shows these people are taking an active interest in protecting themselves."

It's a slow process, but the Viet Cong is being uprooted, exposed and defeated, and G-5 is contributing every effort to make the process more rapid.



Smith



On trucks, trees, buildings, across roads, the signs are everywhere offering the people rewards for enemy materiel or information.

Loc



by Sgt. John Neely

A systematic method of cordon operation. The midnight assault using

"We're going on a *what?*" Spec. 4 Dewayne Christensen of Wisconsin Rapids, Wis., asked his squad leader.

Co. A, 1st Bn., 327th Abn. Inf. had just walked down from the hills south of Phu Loc to Firebase Old Hickory. As the afternoon dragged on, the weary troops grew restless, knowing that something big must be coming. Many tried to guess, but no one was close. Then they were told.

"You heard me. I didn't stutter," replied Staff Sgt. Michael K. Goshern, Muncie, Ind. "We're going to make a midnight heliborne assault."

"Sounds like more work for me," growled Spec. 4 Donald "Doc Magoo" Ackerman of Pekin, Ill., as he packed his medical aid bag.

King for Charlie



finding Charlie was discovered in the soft cordon of Truoi had an added ingredient: a Chinooks.

The Above the Rest battalion was going to conduct a midnight assault, and there was a good reason for it.

The problem was to conduct a cordon and search of the village of Truoi, southeast of Hue, and the complex of hamlets, fields and rice paddies stretching approximately three kilometers from Truoi in every direction. The area was one of the larger population centers on Highway 1 between Hue and Da Nang. The majority of the people were either sympathetic to the South Vietnamese government or neutral.

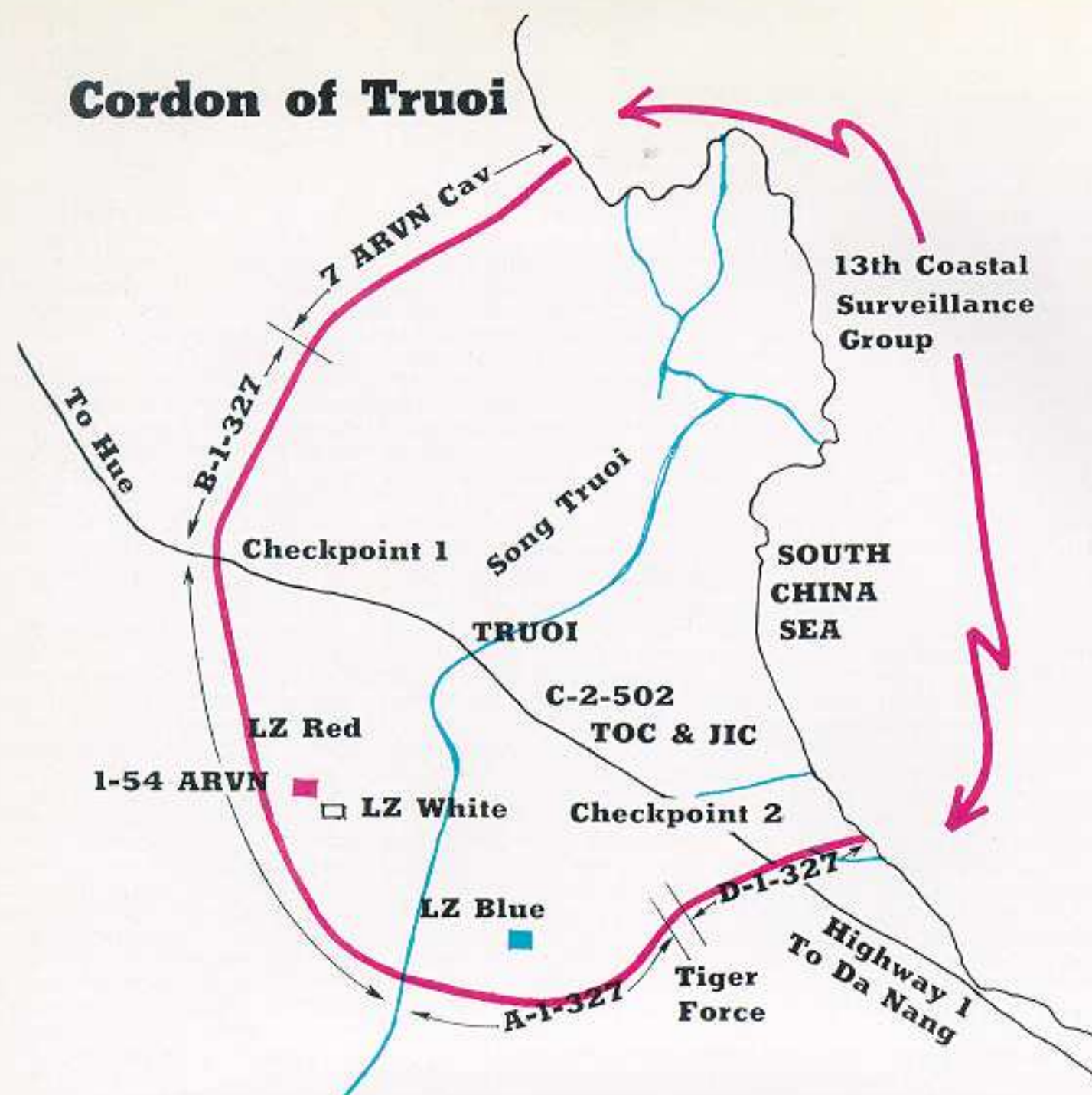
There was a firmly entrenched Viet Cong infrastructure, however, and VC units frequently operated in the area. More important, North Vietnamese patrols from the mountains to the south and

west regularly visited the Truoi area seeking rice, supplies and information.

Co. C, 2nd Bn., 502nd Abn. Inf. had been guarding the two bridges across the Song Truoi for a month and normally had two platoons engaged in patrols and ambushes. These forces were able to harass the enemy, but they were far from enough to decisively engage him. Nor could they close more than a few of the many access routes to Truoi.

Lt. Col. Raymond C. Smith of Old Hickory, Tenn., was given a complex group of forces with which to conduct a cordon. In addition to Co. C of the O-Deuce, "Big Daddy" had his own battalion, the 1st of the 327th (minus Co. C), the 1st Bn., 54th ARVN Regt., a troop from the 7th ARVN Cav., a com-

Cordon of Truoi



pany of Popular Forces, Military Police from the 101st Airborne's 1st Brigade, Vietnamese National Police and elements of the 13th Coastal Surveillance Group.

Much of the plan was standard for cordon and search operations. All of the cordon elements would approach from the outside the arrive at their respective sectors of the cordon at approximately the same time.

Co. D, 1st Bn., 327th Inf. and the battalion reconnaissance platoon—the Tiger Force—would reach the southern sector of the cordon by forced march along QL 1.

Co. B would ride down the highway to the northern sector on the armored personnel carriers of the 7th ARVN Cav.

Alpha Company, 1st of the 327th, and the ARVN 1st Bn., 54th Regt. would deploy by helicopter to the west.

Co. C of the O-Deuce and the Tactical Operations Center of Task Force Truoi would be based in the center of the operation, in Truoi itself. Sealing off the coast to the east would be the naval elements.

Theoretically, it could not fail to trap and eventually uncover the enemy. But Col. Smith knew that too many similar operations had failed because the enemy was given a short warning. He usually needed only a few minutes to escape. Troop movements in staging areas and into the cordon area frequently warned the enemy before the cordon was intact.

With this problem in mind, Col. Smith decided to use tactics never before attempted by the 1st Brigade: troops would make a night combat assault, and they would do it using CH-47 Chinooks as the assault vehicle. The cordon would be

closed at midnight. This meant the final process of staging and all troop movements into the Truoi area would take place under cover of darkness.

But it also meant a night heliborne assault for Co. A, 1st of the 327th, and the ARVN 1st of the 54th—five companies in all. Chinooks would be used to place all the troops comprising the cordon into position simultaneously.

It was late at night, and dark. In the 1st Brigade's area of operations, more than one thousand men were preparing to descend upon Truoi. The men of Co. A, with an attached platoon of Popular Forces, boarded the Chinooks near Old Hickory. Twenty-five kilometers to the northwest, the ARVN soldiers were boarding more choppers. Elsewhere, the troopers of Co. D and the Tiger Force had been walking for hours and were only a short distance from their objective. Co. B and the ARVN Cavalry unit were rumbling down QL 1 on their APCs.

Three special UH-1 Hueys, each carrying a team of pathfinders, were already airborne on the way to Truoi. Each team was dropped off on a predetermined landing zone (LZ), and the men set out colored lights.

The helicopters bearing Alpha Company landed within minutes on LZ Blue, while the ARVN troops were set down on LZs Red and White. As more than 600 men jumped from their helicopters, the clock struck midnight, and Operation Truoi was underway.

"Everything went as smooth as silk," recalled Col. Smith. "I was airborne most of the night in my 'Charlie-Charlie.' Ele-

ments of my command post and two mortar gun teams moved by air to a Popular Forces compound in the center of the cordoned area. The Air Force flareship appeared overhead right at midnight, and provided good illumination along the entire length of the cordon."

Everything was going well, but speed and careful coordination on the ground were still essential. The ground elements of Task Force Truoi had reached the area at the same time at five widely scattered points. Now, each element had to spread out for more than one kilometer in two directions and link up precisely with troops on either side. The light from the flares helped a little, but it was still not easy to move quickly and accurately through the hedgerows, rice paddies and streams.

Co. A deployed quickly and smoothly, linking up with the Tiger Force to the southeast and stretching to the Song Truoi to the northwest. Their sector was the most critical of the cordon, for through it lay the most direct routes to the nearby mountains. The paratroopers had a difficult task—the sector was almost two kilometers long. In some cases, 50 meters separated two-man positions. But flareship illumination and the open area chosen for the cordon made success possible.

Capt. Christian Shore was in the process of double-checking all of A Company's positions right after they had been spread into place when he saw five dark figures approaching. "I thought they might have been some of my men, so I challenged them," recalled Shore. "When I did, they started to run."

The enemy soldiers ran straight up a trail into the camouflaged position of Pfc. James Burnett of Huntsville, Ala., and Pfc. Nathaniel Jerger of Rochester, N.Y.

"When they were about 10 feet from us," said Burnett, "we opened up with our M-16s. The point man ran past us for about 25 feet and collapsed. Two more died on the spot. The others opened up, and the bullets were hitting so close in front that they splashed mud all over us. I just about crawled inside my steel pot. But they broke off immediately and fled back inside the cordon."

Throughout the night, small groups of VC probed Alpha Company's section of the closed circle in trying to reach the refuge of the mountains. Brief firefights erupted all along the lines as the enemy tried one route, found it blocked, then tried another.

Jerger's weapon had jammed with mud at the end of the last firefight, so he picked up an AK-47 from one of the VC he had killed. "It sure came in handy when two more tried to get through," Jerger said.

When the sun finally rose, Burnett recalled he let out a deep breath and said, "That's the longest night I've ever spent."

But daybreak did not mean the end of the operation. The Truoi area was divided among the elements of the task force. Each unit left a skeleton force on the cordon line and moved the rest of its sleepless soldiers in to search the paddies, orchards and homes for the enemy, his sympathizers and his supplies.

Charlie Company paratroopers made the most significant contacts of the first

day. In the morning, some of the troopers almost tripped over two VC hiding in spider holes. Although armed with an AK-47 and a B-40 rocket launcher, they were so overawed by the suddenness of the allied cordon that they surrendered without firing a shot.

In less than two hours, however, Co. C encountered five VC who fought with the desperation of trapped animals. They could not hide and they could not run, so they decided to fight. A platoon was on line in crossing an open field when the VC opened up from a hedgerow. Two GIs were wounded, but once the paratroopers opened up, the VC never had a chance.

"Big Daddy" was on the ground in his LOH before the brief firefight was ended. He helped one of the wounded into his helicopter, but the other had suffered a serious head wound and required a Huey for evacuation. Col. Smith flew the one soldier to the TOC aid station and brought back Capt. Marc G. Englis of Provo, Utah, his battalion surgeon, to help the second man. Meanwhile, the platoon was already sweeping through the hedgerow. Their firepower had been devastating; the five VC lay dead where they had fought.

That evening, all of the troops returned to their previous positions for another night of watch on the cordon.

The next morning they moved out again to search the same areas a second time. The PF platoon attached to Co. A covered the same area it had before. As they returned to the cordon, Spec. 4 John DiDominic, one of the five men detached from Co. A to assist the PFs, noticed something strange. "As I stepped over a ditch," recalled the RTO from Somerdale, N.J., "I thought I saw the dead grass in it move. I poked my rifle in, and up popped a VC. He had an AK and a satchel charge, but he was in no mood to fight."

Day after day the relentless search continued. Col. Smith, knowing how easy it is to hide some ammunition, a weapon or even a man in the hedgerows, ditches and houses, insisted that his men go through the same areas time and again. Only when the daily searches produced negligible results was he satisfied.

While the ARVNs and the GIs were sweating, losing sleep and cursing the rain, an equally important drama was unfolding at the temporary TOC in the center of Truoi.

A Joint Interrogation Center was established at the TOC to screen the entire population. Each person was examined by representatives from Phu Loc District Headquarters, the Census Grievance Committee, village officials, hamlet officials, and the Police Special Branch.

Anyone not classified by all agencies as an innocent civilian was detained for further interrogation. Civilians were questioned and classified by a civilian team, and military prisoners were interrogated by an ARVN team.

By the end of the week-long Operation Truoi, the Joint Interrogation Center had eliminated many more of the enemy—23 infrastructure members—than had the troops in the field. A large number of the infrastructure members and a smaller number of active VC who had tried to masquerade as civilians were detained for

prosecution or sent to prisoner of war camps.

At the same time, a PsyOps team from Division headquarters moved through the area in trucks, choppers and Swift boats and by foot to reach everyone within the cordon by loudspeaker. The message was two-fold. The Viet Cong were told to surrender because their cause was hopeless, while the rest of the people were encouraged either to affirm or reaffirm their loyalty to the Saigon government.

The second morning of the operation, after another night of unsuccessful attempted escapes from the cordon, the first of several Hoi Chanh (returnees) walked up to a Popular Forces position. He turned in his brand-new AK-47 and said he had had enough of "the Airborne."

Meanwhile, serious efforts were made to win the support of the people. "Doc" Englis and a team of experienced medics set up a permanent MEDCAP at the JIC. Hundreds of patients received treatment.

Outdoor movies were shown in the evenings at several schools. A "war movie with a message" filmed by the South Vietnamese Government was followed by three Walt Disney cartoons.

When it became apparent that a continued search was yielding only minor results, and the men from the cordon force were needed elsewhere, the operation was terminated. As the ARVN and American soldiers folded up the poncho "hooches" which had ringed Truoi, they realized that a formula that might shorten the struggle for South Vietnam may have been perfected. The Truoi cordon was not the first, by any means, but the addition of a midnight assault to the standard cordon and search operation had certainly "brought smoke" on Charlie.



Neely



Neely

A cordon operation took patience. The ground, houses, fields--all had to be searched.

THE STORY OF D. SCOTT'S LAST VIETNAM BEFORE HIS RIDE ON BIRD.

When dawn broke over LZ Sally, it was like any other morning in northern I Corps. The sun broke away from the States and home, slid over the Pacific and dropped into Southeast Asia like a giant egg. Like it always did, the gentle morning light grew more intense and by mid-morning, it was a sizzling fry.

Pop drops two on the grill and looks up, "How ya want 'em?"

"Over easy."

This is the last time Sgt. Ronald D. Scott, Delta Raiders, 2nd Bn., 501st Abn. Inf., will go through this morning ritual at Sally. Today he is starting an adventure that doesn't happen every day to a "line doggie" in Vietnam—DEROS. He's going home.

Anticipation is far too feeble a word to describe what it's like to wait for rotation. Maybe it's better to say that it has been a long, long year. As a hundred versions of the proverbial "short-timer's calendar" can testify, he has reached his Date Expected to Return from Over Seas.

Sgt. Scott came in from the field only two days ago after nearly twelve months on line. Twelve long months. He thought about this day many times, but this is really it—the last two eggs.

After breakfast there's a short scene at the Raiders' orderly room door as a few friends gather around to wish him well. The sign over the door shows a bow and arrow and reads "Delta Raiders." It's the insignia on the patch on their helmets. Scottie helped design it when the infantry company was organized at Ft. Campbell in September 1967.

He struggles into his rucksack hardly blinking an eye. He's done it enough times before. A steel pot, his weapon

and an AWOL bag complete the load, and he's ready to leave.

As he walks down the dusty road to the main gate, a chopper lands at a nearby pad. A violent column of dust rises into the air. The focus and color of everything fades to a hazy light brown for a minute and Scottie pulls his collar tight, but does not stop walking. This is LZ Sally. You get used to it. Scottie was here even before Sally had her name.

Scottie remembers the day after Valentine's Day, 1968. The Raiders were sweeping toward Hue through the very spot they later knew as Sally when they came across a battalion-size NVA force. There was a firefight; a bad one, he recalls.

The chopper settles and with it the swirling dust, but not the memories.

By March, Sally had begun to take form, and another base camp with its own atmosphere, rules and regulations was born. It was the same Sally he was leaving today, a sophisticated and well organized world of its own. The home of the 2nd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division Screaming Eagles.

A sharp MP jeep rolls up beside Scottie.

"Going to the gate?" he asks.

"That's affirm. Jump in," comes the answer.

They pass the familiar laundry stand and barber shop and are soon at Sally's main gate. He can thumb on to the Phu Bai airport from here.

A vehicle with its accompanying plume of dust approaches the gate where Scottie stands. It's a "deuce and a half" loaded with laundry headed for Phu Bai.

Two more men join Scottie for the ride—his platoon sergeant for more than



GOING

HOME

SGT. RONALD A FEW DAYS IN THE DEROSES AND THE FREEDOM

McLaughlin



nine months, James Deland, of Darlington, S.C., and Sgt. Lonnie Nale, of Cedartowns, Ga. They lived and fought together the whole year. They were more than friends. They were buddies.

Nestling inside the truck among all the OD green laundry bags, the trio settles down for the 45-minute ride through Hue to Phu Bai and the airport.

Framed by the dirty canvas topping and the truck's rusty tailgate is the last picture of Sally they'd ever have. Scottie looks at his watch. 10 a.m.

Waiting momentarily for their turn to take the old railroad bridge across the Song Huong River, a half dozen little urchins poke their faces in the back of the truck and jabber in a language more "GI" than Vietnamese or English.

"Remember when we ate the boiled eggs with the little ducks inside?" laughs Deland, pointing down a familiar street in the Imperial City.

Scottie nods, raises a corner of his lip and smiles. Then they all laugh. What a year it has been. They'll never forget it.

The vehicle maneuvers through the harrowing traffic of Hue and lumbers on into Phu Bai. It is 10:45. At the airport, just a "bag drag" from where the truck stops, is a sign: "DEROS PERSONNEL REPORT HERE." Through a yellow archway and down taped-off lanes, the trio processes onto the manifest for the C-130 leaving for Bien Hoa.

Airfield personnel have erected tents at the ends of the lanes, and Scottie sits down in the shade with others on their way home. The trio has become a group of 34. Creases of 34 different personalities shape the hats of those waiting. And, in turn, the hats reflect the same number

of different stories they'd tell of their year in Vietnam.

It's 11:10 when they clamber on the plane two at a time through the rear side doors. The big ramp at the back of the fuselage is already stacked with cargo. Eighty-four passengers with rucksacks, weapons and baggage more than fill it up.

Once everyone is on board and seated in rows of eight, the huge rear ramp screams shut. The temperature in here is well above a hundred degrees, but Scottie knows it will cool down as the plane gains altitude.

The flight commander gives the usual briefing about ditching procedures—just like a stewardess on a Freedom Bird. For what seems like a fairly short airstrip, the plane taxis forever, then ascends with a roar and dripping sweat.

The cramped quarters of the fuselage make movement impossible, so some stand for a minute and have a cigarette while others nap or read. Nobody says much.

The flight from Phu Bai to Bien Hoa takes a noisy hour and forty minutes. The time goes fast. The loadmaster wades through the sea of men and takes a position near the door. He puts his head set on. They're about to land.

The door yawns open with a deafening squeal of hydraulics, and Bien Hoa is in view. Bien Hoa is a long way from "the world," but the general atmosphere is more "world-like" than Phu Bai, and infinitely more so than Sally. Scottie already feels a little closer to home.

There are soldiers in the terminal actually wearing khakis. They are waiting for their Freedom Bird, of course, but just the sight of clean, pressed khakis is significant. It reminds Scottie that he's be going to Ft. Bragg after leave, and he

BY SPEC. 5 J. MICHAEL MC LAUGHLIN

wonders, again, what it will be like after all this.

There's another formation and another bag drag as the whole group filters through the busy terminal and loads onto a bus headed for Camp Ray, the 101st's Screaming Eagle Replacement Training School. It's called SERTS. SERTS is also where you go before R&R, leave and DEROS.

Here processing will be done on Scottie's records and he will prepare his uniform for his encounter with the Freedom Bird. His jungle fatigues, clean that morning, have seen several great sweats by this time, and he looks as though he has been out in the field for a week. But he sits patiently through another briefing and silently plots his course through the maze of forms involved in DEROS.

With weapon turn-in, field gear to sort and return, khakis to find, brass and boots to polish, he is busy. There is a special four-building complex for processing that covers everything from awards to finance.

The outprocessing is well organized and efficient. The cadre try to keep close tabs on the processing groups through the various stages, and Scottie's group leader tells them that their stay at Camp Ray will be only 24 hours.

It turns out to be more like 48. When Scottie finishes processing out, the only thing to do is wait for his name to appear on the manifest sheet posted every morning.

But the waiting is not really painful. Scottie feels no pain. Neither do his buddies—most of whom have come down to Camp Ray on subsequent flights. There's an excellent floor show that night, a rock band from Bangkok, and movie after that, all provided by the Division for its home-

ward bound paratroopers.

The whole scene is filled with excitement, old friends and fun. Only once does a shadow fall over the crowd of homeward-bound paratroopers. Just after midnight, sirens blast to warn of a mortar attack, and Scottie finds himself in a bunker once more. A few painful memories come back to him then. The night he got his Purple Heart is among them.

At six o'clock in the morning after the attack, there is a police call and then the final formation and briefing at SERTS. Scottie's name finally appears on the manifest. With bags, tickets, and khakis all ready, they line up for a haircut check. A fleet of OD buses pulls up to the formation.

There is a short speech by Brig. Gen. Richard Allen, a spontaneous cheer of "AIRBORNE!" and the group is dismissed. They melt into the waiting transportation. Even the band, which came down from Camp Eagle, is there playing "Rendezvous With Destiny," the Division song, and Scottie can't help being excited.

As the bus pulls away in a swirl of dust, he looks back at the area he just left, still swarming with his OD-uniformed buddies, still processing, still waiting. Looking back at the last two days he thinks just how much time must have gone into making the processing so quick and easy.

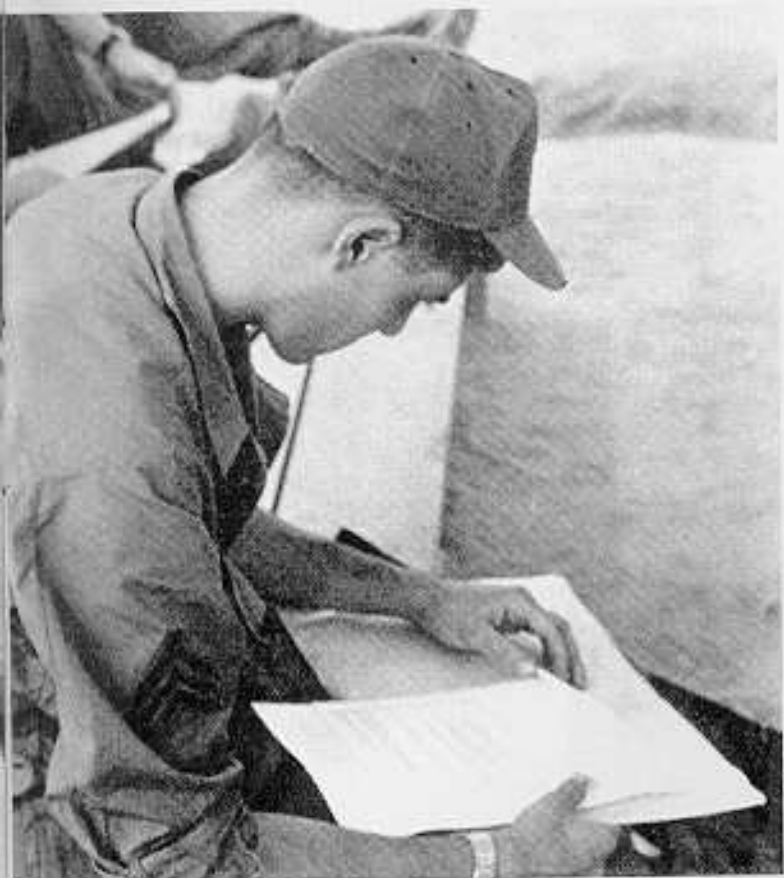
The bus goes to the 90th Replacement Battalion in Long Binh just a few minutes away. They are halted at one of the many gates, and an MP very officially asks when they are going. The pressure that has built up to this point finds its outlet, and the poor man hardly knows what has hit him. They drive by.

At 90th Replacement, the last rem-





McCauley



McCauley



McCauley



Couley

nant of field gear is turned in and lots of forms and lengthy explanations are handed out. Scottie has to have his port call and three copies of his orders ready to hand in to be included on the flight list. There are also last-minute checks on his paperwork.

It's noon, and he goes over to the mess hall to get something to eat. It will be his last meal in Vietnam. At one o'clock, the processing continues through another series of buildings where all the baggage is checked and finally his Military Payment Certificate (MPC) are converted to good old "greenback" dollars. It's nice to see it again.

Scottie's plane ticket reads: "Flight time: 1:30 a.m." It means a wait of almost 12 hours before he'll see that Freedom Bird—his Freedom Bird.

There is so much happening and so much to talk about that the time goes very fast. Everyone has to stick close to the formation stand, as announcements are always being made that might pertain to Scottie's flight. Scottie skips dinner; he's too excited. Before long it's nine o'clock.

The loudspeaker blares: "Attention all personnel manifested for Flight Q71..." This is it. Now they'll leave for the airport. Scottie gets on the bus with a completely new spirit. It seems only minutes away—going home.

Through the darkness, the short drive to the air terminal and the final wait, Scottie sees very little of his last glimpse of Vietnam. It looks just like any other military base in the world, maybe even Ft. Bragg. It's still balmy and the air is heavy with humidity. That much, at least, is Vietnam.

Those manifested with Scottie are restricted to a certain area of the terminal.

They can't even go to the snack stand. Nobody really minds. Nobody wants to be gone when that last call comes.

Then it happens—12:30 a.m. The great silver Freedom Bird, a Boeing 707, gracefully touches down and everybody's heart pounds a little. Man, it's beautiful. That gleaming feat of modern American technology was never more heralded for its beauty, wonder and symbolism that right now as it is reflected in Scottie's eyes.

It seems almost too easy now to just walk out and get on the plane, but after all the processing and waiting, there's nothing else to do. The men on Scottie's flight to San Francisco are in khakis. They file out from under the large steel-roofed terminal and walk to the plane's passenger ramp. The maximum of darkness and flashing navigational lights on the plane make it seem unreal, as in a dream.

Scottie is with the others on the ramp and he stops long enough to glance back once before he disappears into the warm light inside the plane.

The plane taxis away into the darkness, then there is a marked increase in the jet engines' noise. With a roar, the heavy bird lifts its sleek hull into the night sky. The blinking red lights dim and disappear with the sound. Soon it is gone. Scottie is on his way home.

That's the way it was for Sgt. Ronald D. Scott, RA18956224, 2nd Bn., 501st Abn. Inf. Hue, Cu Chi, Phuoc Yen and the whole of Vietnam and his part in its history are now totally behind him.

So long, Scottie. See ya back in the world.





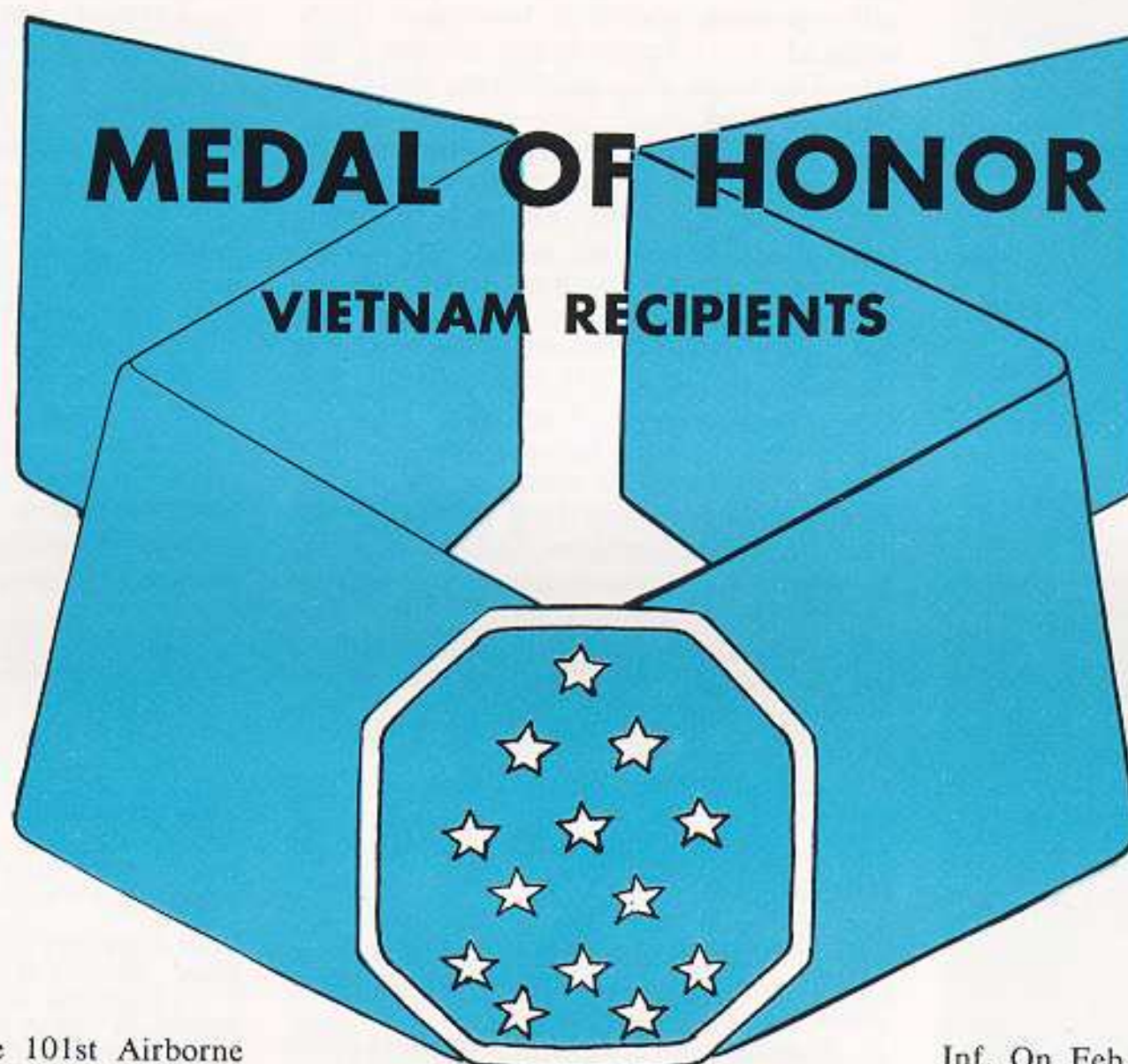
LT. James A. Gardner

U. S. Army Photo



SSG Joe R. Hooper

U. S. Army Photo



Two members of the 101st Airborne Division were awarded the nation's highest award for heroism in combat during the Vietnam War.

On Oct. 19, 1968, the Medal of Honor (Posthumous) was presented to Mrs. Joella Gardner Rosler of Clarksville, Tenn., for her former husband's "conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action" on Feb. 7, 1966.

While a platoon leader with the 1st Bn., 327th Abn. Inf., Lt. James A. Gardner led his platoon against several heavily armed and well dug in enemy bunker positions in the village of My Canh. Lt. Gardner ran from bunker to bunker throwing grenades and firing his rifle. As he approached the fourth enemy position, he was severely wounded, but continued the attack, destroying two more of the bunkers and inspiring his men to rout the enemy.

On Mar. 7, 1969, Staff Sgt. Joe R. Hooper received the Medal of Honor from President Nixon for his actions near the city of Hue while serving as a squad leader with D Co., 2nd Bn., 501st Abn.



Inf. On Feb. 21, 1968, as Sgt. Hooper's unit was assaulting a well armed enemy river bank position, it was engaged by a heavy volume of rocket and automatic weapons fire. Hooper destroyed several bunkers, then turned to help the wounded, removing them to safety. During this act, he was seriously wounded, but refused medical aid and returned to his men. On his return, Hooper destroyed three enemy bunkers and killed two enemy soldiers who had wounded the unit chaplain. He destroyed four more buildings housing enemy riflemen and killed an NVA officer.

Although his initial wound was compounded by grenade fragments, Hooper gathered more grenades and charged a line of bunkers, destroying them as he ran by, and killed an enemy soldier and three more NVA officers in close combat. He then reorganized his unit, not consenting to treatment until this was accomplished and not consenting to evacuation until the following morning. Altogether he had killed 28 enemy soldiers.

“This chapel is dedicated to the memory of those Screaming Eagles who died in combat.

“It is dedicated to men who saw their duty and simply performed it. To men who surely were aware of the way out but preferred to stay in.

“To men who witnessed the weakness of others, who heard the cries of discouragement and despair and who rejected the safe for the honorable.

“To men who, proudly wearing the patch of the Screaming Eagles, were aware of the heritage of soldiering and sacrifice reflected therein.

“To these men who knew fear and overcame it, who knew fatigue and ignored it, who knew discomfort and suffered it, who knew loneliness and accepted it—to these men who served themselves, their country and their God with lasting glory, I present this chapel for dedication.”

(Zais, February 1969)



101 ST AIRBORNE DIVISION
MEMORIAL CHAPEL



DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY
OF THOSE SCREAMING EAGLES
WHO PAID THE SUPREME SACRIFICE
FOR GOD AND COUNTRY



