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Brief History of the 501st, 502nd and 2nd Brigade (101st ABN DIV)

The 502nd, or "five-oh-deuce", was activated July 1, 1941 at Fort Benning, Georgia as the 502nd parachute infantry battalion, as an experimental unit formed to test the doctrine and tactics of parachute assaults. The 502nd entered combat in World War II on June 6, 1944, by jumping into NORMANDY, with allied forces landing on D-Day and the Battle of NORMANDY. Between 1945 and 1964. A major reorganization took place on 3 February 1964, when the 2nd Brigade of the 101st Airborne was activated at Fort Campbell, replacing the 1st Airborne Battle Group, 501st Infantry Regiment. The reorganization from the battle groups to brigades and battalions placed two battalions of the 502nd in different brigades of the 101st.



The 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry was in the 1st Brigade with 1-327th and 2-327th Infantry. Which deployed to Vietnam and arrived at Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam on 29 July 1965, they were commanded by the most notable commander LTC Hank "The Gunfighter" Emerson.



The new 2nd Brigade's original organic battalions were the 1st and 2d Battalions, 501st Infantry, and the 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry. December 1967 the 501st, 502nd and 2nd Brigade deployed by C-141 aircraft and arrived at BIEN HOA Airbase on 13 December 1967. Over the next five years, Soldiers of the "Ready to Go" Brigade participated in twelve campaigns, compiling of a distinguished combat record as well as an enviable reputation for success in the rehabilitation of a war-torn nation. The Brigade redeployed to Fort Campbell in April 1972.



During this week, in the span of 8 years since the 501st Infantry Regiment, 502nd Infantry Regiment and 2nd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division deployed in support of the Vietnam War the following are from After Action Reports, Staff Duty Logs, and Personal Accounts. (* All items have been reproduced from the Unclassified / Declassified Holdings of the National Archives.)

- 08 – 09 December 1967 **Operation KLAMATH FALLS:** A/2-502 IN was air assaulted into an AO in the SE portion of the BN AO. The TAC CP was relocated by air on A/2-502 IN LZ on 09 December. The southern boundary was extended in coordination with 1-327 IN BN. A/2-502 IN was detached and 1-327 IN BN assumed OPCON. All landings were unopposed, and no contact was made. (HQ, 2-502 IN BN; After Action Report, Operation KLAMATH FALLS; 11 January 1968)
- 08 December 1968 **Operation CHECKERBOARD:** TF 2-502 IN BN initiated Operation CHECKERBOARD by infiltrating two "Hatchet Teams" across the SONG THI THINH River, at 1930. A/2-502 IN and C/2-502 IN each provided one team. The A/2-502 IN patrol infiltrated to a position vicinity XT674349, and C/2-502 IN team infiltrated to a position vicinity XY709319. These patrols remained in position during 09 December 1965. (After Action Report, Operation CHECKERBOARD; 07 December 1965)
- 08 December 1968 Although Recon was the only unit to make contact (they engaged 1 VC at their NDP with negative results), the 1-502 IN BN conducted several units moves by "hook". C/1-502 IN moved from AN LO to vicinity YD6922. D/1-502 IN moved from vicinity YD6139 to AN LO. Recon moved to vicinity YD6139 from LZ SALLY.
- 08 December 1970 **Operation JEFFERSON GLEN:** B/1-502 IN, 3rd platoon, 1st squad at location YD773056 found two bunkers six to eight months old and four fighting positions, all facing east. There was no recent activity and the bunkers and fighting positions were then destroyed the squadron.
- 09 – 12 December 1965 **Operation CHECKERBOARD:** The A/2-502 IN "Hatchet Team" had been discovered at 0900H and had come under attack by a VC platoon. Communication with the patrol had been disrupted due to a faulty handset, which permitted receipt of traffic but prohibited transmission of information. Three platoon size assaults upon the patrol's position during 9 December were repulsed. As a result, one team member was wounded and estimated 10 VC killed. At 1700H, the patrol received word to move to a new location, and at 1730H, the lead man activated a booby trap which killed one man and wounded another. Two more assaults, by a VC platoon, during the night of the 9th and 10th were repulsed. During this action, two members of the "Hatchet Team" were killed and estimated 5 to 10 VC were killed. At 100815H, the "Hatchet Team" established radio contact with an airborne FAC and began calling for supporting fires. At 0945H, A/2-502 IN after a rapid sweep, arrived at the team's location, and the VC were dispersed with no further contact.
- B/2-502 IN and C/2-502 IN arrived at PL SPADE at 1148H and 1400H, respectively. At 1700H, the battalion formed a defensive perimeter at coordinate XT668333. The battalion was resupplied in this area by helicopter and by organic M274 vehicles. At 1930H, a "Hatchet Team" from each rifle company was infiltrated into the area by the battalion was to clear the following day. The patrols moved to positions vicinity XT648350, XT640344 and XT650358.
- At 110737H, the battalion crossed PL SPADE and began to sweep to the northwest in the direction of PL CLUB with A/2-502 IN on the left and C/2-502 IN on the right. A/2-502 IN soon discovered numerous VC supply points in the vicinity XT655338. While A/2-502 IN halted to destroy these supply points, which included rice and building materials. B/2-502 IN became the left flank company in the sweep. TF BAKER screened the right flank and provided security for the TAC CP. At 1012H, B/2-502 IN received sniper fire from coordinate XT656335. Artillery fires and an air strike were utilized, and an estimated VC squad dispersed. B/2-502 IN and C/2-502 IN proceeded to PL CLUB without further incident, reaching PL CLUB at 1525H and 1610H respectively. A/2-502 IN and TF BAKER reached PL CLUB at 1630H.
- The battalion established a defensive perimeter at coordinate XT646352 and improved a bomb crater to be used as a resupply point. Pioneer tools were brought in by helicopter and the attached engineer platoon completed preparation of the helicopter pad. The pad was able to accept aircraft at 1930H. "Hatchet Teams" were again infiltrated into the area to be cleared the following day. At 2030H, three patrols, one for each rifle company, infiltrated the positions vicinity coordinates XT639369, XT6266377 and XT619369.
- At 120700H, the 2-502 IN BN continued to sweep northwest towards PL JOKER. B/2-502 IN was deployed on the right and A/2-502 IN on the left in the battalion sector. At 0915H, B/2-502 IN made contact with an estimated VC coordinate XT638368. During the ensuing engagement, B/2-502 IN suffered five WIA, one of which later died of wounds. VC casualties were one KIA, confirmed by body count. B/2-502 IN uncovered a number of large rice caches vicinity coordinate XT635572 and destroyed these by explosive and spreading the rice on the jungle floor. At 1516H, B/2-502 IN linked up with elements of A/1-327 on the PL JOKER. A/2-502 IN reached PL JOKER at 1545H, C/2-502 IN and TF BAKER reached PL JOKER at 1605H. A battalion defensive perimeter was established at coordinate XT635388. (After Action Report, Operation CHECKERBOARD; 07 December 1965)



- 09 – 10 December 1965 **Operation CHECKERBOARD:** At 2330H, the 2-502 IN BN departed the base camp on foot. The order of march was A/2-502 IN, B/2-502 IN, C/2-502 IN and TF BAKER. The lead company crossed the LD (bridge vicinity 738328) at 100002H Dec 65. The battalion then moved to PL PINE and deployed with A/2-502 IN on the right of C/2-502 IN on the left. B/2-502 IN was to follow A/2-502 IN. At 100343H Dec 65, the battalion began the sweep of the assigned area. (After Action Report, Operation CHECKERBOARD; 07 December 1965)
- 09 December 1968 Screaming Eagles killed four enemy, captured two prisoners and eight weapons in the AO. A/1-327 IN discovered six German Mauser rifles in a hut south of FSB TOMAHAWK. 1-502 IN BN, Recon platoon ambushed and killed two enemy north-west of FSB OMAHA. A/1-501 IN captured two VC near the coast. (Rendezvous with Destiny (Volume 2, Number 1) Spring 1968-69)
- 09 December 1968 1-502 IN BN, Recon platoon was the only platoon to have contact. They sprung an ambush on 1 VC at vicinity YD6139, resulting in 1 VC KIA. Another ambush at vicinity YD5939 killed 2 VC with small arms.
- 09 December 1969 **Operation RANDOLPH GLEN:** 1-502 IN BN began Operation RANDOLPH GLEN. The battalion remained at FSB BIRMINGHAM, FSB ARSENAL and POHL BRIDGE. Elements of the battalion continued to work with RF/PF's. The elements providing security at POHL BRIDGE also conducted boat patrols on the river. At the end of the year the 1-502 IN BN was still conducting Operation RANDOLPH GLEN.
- 09 December 1969 **Operation RANDOLPH GLEN:** A/1-502 IN BN, 1st platoon was assigned security duty on POHL BRIDGE. It was the only crossing SW of HUE to Southern edge of A SHAU VALLEY via HWY 547 that passed FB BIRMINGHAM and FB Bastogne heading west. 2nd and 3rd platoon was assigned to secure FB ARSENAL.
- 09 December 1969 **Operation RANDOLPH GLEN:** A/1-502 IN moved from CAMP SALLY to POHL BRIDGE with A/1-502 IN, 2nd platoon and A/1-052 IN, 3rd platoon continuing on the way to FSB ARSENAL. B/1-502 IN moved to FSB BIRMINGHAM to provide security at that location. C/1-502 IN conducted platoon size C/A's to YD778073, YD774050 and YD708034. From these locations the platoons conducted saturation patrols and night ambushes. D/1-502 IN conducted S/A to YD754114, YD761098 and YD770095. The platoon then conducted saturation patrols and night ambushes. 1-502 IN BN, Recon platoon moved by vehicle to FSB BIRMINGHAM and conducted a C/A to YD738033 and conducted patrols and night ambushes.
- 09 December 1969 **Operation RANDOLPH GLEN:** Screaming Eagles killed four enemy, captured two prisoners and eight weapons in the AO. A/1-327 IN discovered six German Mauser rifles in a hut south of FB TOMAHAWK. 1-502 IN BN, Recon ambushed and killed two enemy north-west of FB OMAHA. A/1-502 IN captured two VC near the coast. (Rendezvous with Destiny (Volume 2, Number 1); Spring 1969)
- 09 December 1970 **Operation JEFFERSON GLEN:** B/1-502 IN, 1st platoon, 2nd squadron found a well-used trail, two feet wide about three weeks old at grid YD791047. The trail runs west to a stream. There were no signs of recent activity.
- 10 December 1965 **Operation CHECKERBOARD:** At 0500H, vicinity coordinates 713322, one man of A/2-502 IN was killed and four others were wounded by a booby trap. A medical evacuation helicopter extracted all casualties at 0557H. A minefield extending 250 meters north and south of the area was discovered.
- Young male inhabitants of a village, located vicinity XT710315, were conscripted and detailed to each company. These indigenous personnel were plantation workers and it was concluded that they would be aware of the location of VC minefields. Therefore, two such personnel were caused to precede each unit to reduce the possibility of walking into an enemy minefield. As a consequence, no additional casualties from booby traps were sustained.
- At 0840H, A/2-502 IN "Hatchet Team" reported it was being attacked by 30 VC at coordinate XT674334. The battalion at this time had almost completed the sweep of its assigned sector. Upon learning of the engagement, the battalion commander requested that the battalion be allowed to cross PL ELM and sweep north. Permission was granted and the battalion crossed PL ELM at 0905H, with three companies on line, C/2-502 IN on the left, A/2-502 IN in the center and B/2-502 IN on the right. TF BAKER and the TAC CP followed behind A/2-502 IN. (After Action Report, 1st Brigade; 07 December 1965)
- 10 December 1967 **Operation KLAMATH FALLS:** Beginning 100830DEC1967, 2-502 IN BN air assaulted into multiple LZ's and conducted operations to search for and destroy enemy installations and forces, initially in the SW portion of the assigned AO. Emphasis was placed on careful search of all likely sites, particularly draws. Initial air assaults were preceded only by TAC Air and gunship preps. The TAC CP locations was changed after initial CP elements were on the ground because of unsuitability of terrain for Arty. (HQ, 2-502 IN; Operation KLAMATH FALLS, Combat After Action Report; 11 January 1968)
- 10 December 1968 On this day we lost the "Street" section of our AO to the 3-5 CAV, for an 8-day operation. Recon and C/1-502 IN, 26 elements, went OPCON to 3-5 CAV. For 4 days (10-13). D/1-502 IN was the only company that had contact when they engaged 3 VC, vicinity YD6124, with negative results.
- 10 December 1969 A 2BDE aircraft fired at southwest of SANDY, returned fire and an infantry sweep revealed two enemy killed and two AK-47's. (Rendezvous with Destiny (Volume 2, Number 1); Spring 1969)
- 10 December 1969 **Operation RANDOLPH GLEN:** A/1-502 IN provided security for POHL BRIDGE and FSB ARSENAL. B/1-502 IN provided security at FSB BIRMINGHAM. The rest of the 1-502 IN BN continued to patrol and conduct night ambushes. At 1155H at YD779065, C/1-502 IN, 1st platoon found 2 hooches and 1 new pair of Vietnamese sneakers. There were no signs of recent use or trails.

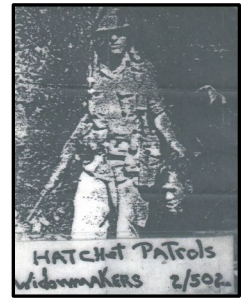


- 10 December 1970 **Operation JEFFERSON GLEN:** B/1-502 IN, 1st platoon, 1st squad at grid YD792046 found on dud 155mm round and don't have any explosive to blow it. It was along a trail running south to north. They also found a Bandelier of M-16 ammo in the same vicinity. B/2-502 IN, 3rd platoon, 1st squad observed smoke coming from a densely covered ravine at grid YD786068. No friendlies were in the area and it was fired up with fifty 105mm HE rounds. Sweep of the area will be made in the morning of the 11th.
- 10 December 1971 A/1-501 IN, 1st platoon had MA detonated resulting in 2 VC/NVA KIA, 1 VC/NVA WIA vicinity YD822085. The WIA Charcoal colored, shorts and brown shirt. The KIA's wore black shorts, one had charcoal colored shirt the other a blue shirt. 1 AK-47 with folding stock was observed 3-4" away from the bodies. All bodies were on trail, all lying close together, probably heading north. One KIA was lying perpendicular to another KIA. AK-47 was destroyed by miniguns. No blood trail was observed by Night Hawk. Battalion Commander saw 2 blood trails headed in NE direction when he picked up WIA POW. (1st Battalion (Airmobile), 501st Infantry; Annual Supplement to the History; 1 January 1971 – 31 December 1971)
- 11 December 1967 **Operation KLAMATH FALLS:** A/2-502 IN returned to BN's control in the morning and the afternoon was again released to 1-327 IN BN OPCON. (HQ, 2-502 IN BN; After Action Report, Operation KLAMATH FALLS; 11 January 1968)
- 11 December 1968
– 04 January 1969 **Operation PHU VANG IV:** Was initiated to interdict the regrouping of the Viet Cong infrastructure and local forces following Operation PHU VANG II and III in PHU VANG, HUONG THUY and PHU THU Districts of THUA THIEN Province. Elements participating were the 1-501 IN BN, 54th ARVN Regiment, Regional and District Forces and US Naval Forces. As the Operation PHU VANG II and II, the area of operation was cordoned, swept and intensively searched, with emphasis placed on rapid exploitation of intelligence gained from detainees processed through the Combined Intelligence Center Combines Allied Forces, as in the previous operations, made imposing strides in rooting out the enemy forces, even though the latter had made tremendous progress in recruiting and reorganization in the area. Enemy personnel losses throughout the operation were high – 75 Killed and 99 prisoners of war, 35 of whom were confirmed members of the Viet Cong infrastructure. In addition, 60 individual weapons were captured, and numerous bunker complexes were destroyed. Combined friendly losses were low – 2 Killed and 12 wounded. (DA-Senior Officer Debriefing Report, MG Melvin Zais, CQ, 101st ABN DIV; Period 19 July 1968 – 25 May 1969)
- 11 December 1968 **Operation PHU VANG IV** begins. It is the continuation of the PHU VANG series where the 2BDE, 101st ABN DIV returned the 1-501 IN BN to team with the 54th ARVN Regiment to conduct further cordon and search operations aimed at preventing the main force and local VC units from regrouping in the area east and southeast of HUE. Casualties: US 2 KIA, 12 WIA; enemy 75 KIA, 99 POW.
- 11 - 12 December 1968 A/1-502 IN secured T-BONE. B/1-502 IN conducted RIF operations, vicinity YD6118. They engaged 5 VC while operating in this area, but the VC fled with negative assessment. C/1-502 IN (-) is OPCON to 1-501 IN BN. C/1-502 IN, 26 elements, is OPCON to 3-5 CAV. C/1-502 IN secured AN LO Bridge. Recon is OPCON to 3-5 CAV.
- 11 December 1968 **Operation NEVADA EAGLE:** PF's took control of Bridge 3 from B/2-502 IN, two squads of E/2-502 IN were air lifted into FSB QUICK as security for an Arty raid by C/2-320 Arty from 0750-1410H. (HQ, 2-502 IN, After Action Report, Operation NEVADA EAGLE; 31 January 1969)
- 11 December 1968 Two combined forces cordon operations were established. With air and amphibious assaults, 1-501 IN BN with 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. (Rendezvous with Destiny (Volume 2, Number 1); Spring 1968-69)
- 11 December 1969 **Operation RANDOLPH GLEN:** A/1-502 IN continued providing security at FSB ARSENAL and POHL BRIDGE. B/1-502 IN provided security at FSB BIRMINGHAM. C/1-502 IN conducted patrols and ambushes. D/1-502 IN conducted similar operations and Recon platoon conducted patrols and night ambushes. All results were negative.
- 11 December 1970 **Operation JEFFERSON GLEN:** B/1-502 IN, 3rd platoon, 1st squad made a sweep of the area fired up on the night of the 10th and found a VC.NVA campsite at the location YD786068. The camp had been occupied when the artillery was fired. All indications point to a hasty flight from the area by the enemy. They fled north and in a number of six to eight men. The unit found in the area eight RPG rounds, eight 60mm mortar rounds, a cooking pot with five pounds of cooked rice in it, on US map sheet number 6442, a pistol belt with on M-26 grenade, two AK-47 magazines with ammo, some clothes, two cans of non-electric blasting caps, and assorted other items such as bags and cans. All of the items were laying around in the open, supporting the belief the enemy fled the artillery fire. B/1-502 IN, 3rd platoon, 1st squad observed two men at grid YD778056 and called in artillery with unknown results. B/1-502 IN, 1st platoon at 1915H saw a light at grid YD778056 and called in artillery fire which resulted in four secondary explosions. At 1955H they heard loud noises and movement at YD786046 and again called in the artillery. They will sweep the area in the morning. B/1-502 IN, 1st platoon at 2330H received mortar fire from the west hitting NW of their NDP. They are adjusting artillery fire from their DT's. B/1-502 IN, 3rd platoon heard were the rounds hit about 300 meters away coming from the SE. In all, ten to twelve rounds were counted. Prior to the mortar rounds, 1st platoon heard small arms fire from the approximate impact area of the mortar rounds.
- 11 December 1971 D/1-501 IN, 2nd platoon vicinity YD798063 found a tunnel with 3 entrances, too small to allow US pax to enter. Tunnel is in a valley; entrances are camouflaged by trees & brushes. Camp fire located outside one entrance. Last used within 24hrs by 3 pax. Entrance support by wood & bamboo. Platoon will enlarge entrance on 12 December and investigate. Investigation of tunnel was delayed due to resupply. (1st Battalion (Airmobile), 501st Infantry; Annual Supplement to the History; 1 January 1971 – 31 December 1971)



12 December 1965

HATCHET MEN, BEN CAT Vietnam: Personal Account by George R. Bassett (E4), Point Man 2nd squad, 1st platoon, Co B, 2/502 Abn. Inf., 101st Airborne Division. I will relate my participation in an event that took place at Ben Cat, Viet Nam, Dec.



My company, B, 2/502, was conducting combat operations in the Michelin Rubber Plantation at BEN CAT, V.N. in Dec 1965. The plantation stretched for miles and had been neglected, waist high brush had grown threw out the plantation. This area was known to be a VC haven and they were there in large numbers. Shortly before being deployed to the plantation, our battalion Cmdr. COL Hank "GUNFIGHTER" Emerson, had ordered, out of his own pocket, hatchets from the United States. When they arrived at our battalion, COL Emerson let us know that we were all going to have to pay him \$3.00 for a hatchet and that we had no choice in the matter. He also informed us that the first trooper's squad to kill a VC with a hatchet would be rewarded with a case of liquor. We were now to be known as the "Hatchet Men" and our patrols would be known as "Hatchet Teams" and our company sign was changed to show two crossed hatchets. We didn't want the hatchets, as we had no use for them and we had enough to carry on our backs without another three pounds, but we had no choice in the matter. When the hatchets arrived, and were passed out to us, the handles were white, and we were instructed to paint them black, so they would not stand out in the bush. I was in charge of the detail for my platoon to paint the handles black and have supplied a photo showing them drying after being painted. With our new hatchets, we were deployed to the Michelin rubber plantation. Our three company platoons were traveling in file on a narrow plantation road, 3rd platoon on point, 1st platoon following and 2nd platoon last. Suddenly gunfire erupted from in front of us, 3rd platoon on point, had been ambushed. Word was quickly passed to us, 1st platoon to go forward and engage the enemy and assist 3rd platoon which we did. The gunfight lasted about an hour with the VC withdrawing, leaving behind some dead and wounded. We were dispersed in the brush along the road side and one of the 3rd platoon troopers, who I shall not name, came across a wounded VC and with the assistance of some others managed to hold him down and he then proceeded to whack his head off with his new hatchet. The trooper proceeded to the road, very proud of his trophy and held it above his head as proof that he had killed the first VC with a hatchet and that his squad would claim the case of liquor that "GUNFIGHTER" Emerson had promised. A reporter from Life magazine was attached to us at the time and he took a picture of the trooper displaying the head, I believe that his name was Malcolm Brown. Shortly thereafter the picture appeared on the cover of the Dec. 65 issue of Life Magazine in the U.S. Word very quickly came down to get rid of the hatchets and anyone caught with one would be brought up on charges of "Brutality" Needless to say, "Gunfighter" did not refund us our three dollars each for the hatchets that he had forced us to buy from him. The trooper that had taken the head was later KIA. Our Co. commander was Cpt. Thomas Taylor, son of Gen. Maxwell Taylor. Pictures are enclosed.

12 December 1965

A U.S. paratrooper of the "hatchet team" of B/2-502 IN, 101st ABN DIV, holds the severed head of a Viet Cong guerrilla who was killed in hand-to-hand jungle fighting 12 miles northwest of BEN CAT during the Vietnam War, Dec. 12, 1965. The company had chased a squad of Viet Cong guerrillas, one of whom dropped a grenade that wounded several soldiers. Soldiers jumped the guerrilla and beheaded him by hatchet. His head was buried in the jungle.



12 – 17 December 1967

2BDE main body began departing Fort Campbell in a continuous airstream and closed in-country 17 December 1967. (HQ, 101st ABN DIV; Operational Report for Quarterly Period Ending 31 January 1968)

12 December 1969

Operation RANDOLPH GLEN: A/1-502 IN and B/1-502 IN continued their security missions. C/1-502 IN conducted patrols vicinity YD785040. C/1-502 IN, 3rd platoon found at YD705074, 1 NVA/VC explosive device and 1 ChiCom field phone on a trail. The trail showed no signs of recent use. 1-502 IN BN, Recon platoon found at YD823054 a HO CHI MINH type sandal print 3 to 5 days old, 1 piece of a Vietnamese poncho, and possible sleeping positions for 3 to 5 persons.

12 December 1970

Operation JEFFERSON GLEN: B/1-502 IN, 3rd platoon at grid YD784065 found seven M-16 magazines all loaded. B/1-502 IN, 1st platoon sweep the area of the area where the secondary explosions were heard had negative results. C/1-502 IN returned OPCON to the 1-502 IN BN at 1530H.


13 December 1965

Operation CHECKERBOARD: At 0805H, the 2-502 IN BN swept north towards objective Juliet and Kilo with A/2-502 IN moving on the left, B/2-502 IN in the center, and C/2-502 IN on the right. During the search and clear operations on 13 December, numerous base camps and hospital facilities were discovered. At 1630H, A/2-502 IN closed on objective Kilo. By 1730H, a battalion perimeter was established around Objective Juliet and Kilo. Five "Hatchet Teams" were infiltrated into the area where the battalion had passed through 13 December. The teams departed prior to 2000H and moved to positions at XT602392, XT627410, XT626425, XT635401 and XT622385. The teams returned by 140600DEC65. (After Action Report, Operation CHECKERBOARD; 07 December 1965)

13 December 1966

Operation PICKETT: 2-502 IN BN with CIDG company from POLEI KLENG in direct support conducted an airmobile assault into LZ SHERMAN. The commitment of the 2-502 IN BN brought the total force taking part of Operation PICKETT to three organic infantry battalions and supporting artillery, one ARVN battalion, one ARVN battalion (-), two companies of the Black Eagle battalion and four CIDG companies. (HQ, 1BDE, 101st ABN DIV; Combat After Action Report, Operation PICKETT; 15 February 1967)



- 13 December 1967 **Operation KLAMATH FALLS:** 2-502 IN BN was air assaulted into the new AO to the NE. Four LZ's were used. Reconcos received several rounds of automatic weapons fire on their initial insertion but no casualties were taken, and no subsequent contact was made. A/2-502 IN began working from the high ground west into the valley area. B/2-502 IN moved east towards the valley and C/2-502 IN maintained the initial LZ with patrols working out from a base. (HQ, 2-502 IN BN; After Action Report, Operation KLAMATH FALLS; 11 January 1968)
- 13 December 1967 2BDE, 101st ABN DIV deploys to the Republic of Vietnam from Campbell Army Airfield.
- 13 December 1968 In the day's heaviest fighting, near Leech Island. Rangers engaged seven enemy and killed four. The 2BDE 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 2BDE and 3BDE 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. (Rendezvous with Destiny (Volume 2, Number 1); Spring 1968-69)
- 13 December 1968 A/1-502 IN secured T-BONE with platoon RIF, vicinity YD6222. This RIF utilized 2 scout dog teams. A "hook" was utilized to move one 4.2 and one 81mm mortar and crew to Apache for practice firing and was then lifted via "hook" to T-BONE. B/1-502 IN RIF operations with day and night ambushes, vicinity YD6218. C/1-502 IN (-) is OPCON to 1-501 IN BN. D/1-502 IN secured AN LO Bridge. Recon is OPCON to 3-5 CAV.
- 13 December 1969 **Operation RANDOLPH GLEN:** A/1-502 IN provided security at FSB ARSENAL and POHL BRIDGE. B/1-502 IN secured FSB BIRMINGHAM. C/1-502 IN conducted patrols vicinity YD785040. C/1-502 IN, 1st platoon found a tunnel complex at YD794070. C/1-502 IN completed a LZ at YD783078. D/1-502 IN conducted patrols vicinity YD752116 and YD779108 in conjunction with the 221st RF platoon.
- 13 December 1970 **Operation JEFFERSON GLEN:** B/1-502 IN, 3rd platoon, 3rd squad at grid YD786068 found on Russian 7.62mm pistol with eight rounds in the magazine, one AK-47 with two full magazines, 27 loose pistol rounds in a plastic bag, 58 AK-47 rounds in a sand bag, one NVA ruck sack, one NVA poncho, two ½ lbs. explosive blocks with pull type fuses, six ½ lbs. explosive blocks without fuses, three RPG boosters, two 60mm mortar rounds, and one flashlight. The cache was above ground and in good condition. B/1-502 IN, 1st platoon, 1st squad found a trail 1 ½ feet wide running north south at grid YD7859044 about fifty feet from a stream. There were three sets of shoe prints made in the last 48 hours. B/1-502 IN, 3rd platoon, 1st squad found on M79 HE round and a piece of black shirt in a cave in manmade cave one to two months old at grid YD788063. There were no signs of recent activity. D/1-502 IN made and combat assault from FSB ARSENAL to three LZ's at grids YD7889006, 772018, and 798118. C/1-502 IN took over security of FSB ARSENAL. D/1-502 IN, 3rd platoon, 1st squad check out and cleared areas around their LZ's at grid YD798119 where bunkers had been reported. The open area looked like an old rice paddy and the platoon's KOS said there were three men in the area up to three hours before because of sandal prints on the trail. The trail ran north-south and the prints went north.
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- 13 December 1971 A/1-501 IN, 3rd platoon found a 12" wide trail vicinity YD840093. They followed the trail East and ran into N/S intermittent stream where the trail was lost.
- 14 December 1965 **Operation CHECKERBOARD:** At 0840H, two platoons from A/2-502 IN departed the battalion perimeter and moved to the VC base camp vicinity coordinates XT610386, which had been seen the day before. At 0840H, platoon sized forces from both B/2-502 IN and C/2-502 IN, departed the battalion perimeter and returned to destroy VC base camps discovered the previous day. (After Action Report, Operation CHECKERBOARD; 07 December 1965)
- 14 December 1968 A/1-502 IN secured T-BONE with 1 platoon on local RIF operations. The unit concentrated on rebuilding and improving fortifications of T-BONE and unit training. Unit training is being stressed in all units as the turbulence of personnel has been a point of concern for the Battalion Commander. B/1-502 IN conducted RIF, vicinity YD6188. They found a bunker complex (negative signs of recent use), vicinity YD6117 and destroyed it. C/1-502 IN (-) released from 3-5 CAV and returned via "hook" to LZ SALLY. D/1-502 IN secured AN LO Bridge. Recon released from OPCON to 3-5 CAV, and returned to LZ SALLY, via "hook" to be RRF.
- 14 December 1969 Two 101st AHB gunship 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, A/1-501 IN and C/1-502 IN captured seven prisoners and four weapons. (Rendezvous with Destiny (Volume 2, Number 1); Spring 1969)
- 14 December 1969 **Operation RANDOLPH GLEN:** A/1-502 IN and B/1-502 IN continued with their mission of providing security. A/1-502 IN, 1st platoon found 2 sleeping positions with fresh leaves on them at YD752145. They also found 2 fighting positions in the same area that showed no signs of recent use. They searched the area with negative results. C/1-502 IN, D/1-502 IN and Recon platoon conducted patrols and night ambushes with negative results.
- 14 December 1970 **Operation JEFFERSON GLEN:** B/1-502 IN BN, 1st platoon found a trail one and half feet wide. NVA/VC type trail, at YD784044. The trail runs NW-SE and lead into a ravine. There are definite signs of activity only hours old.



During this week, in the span of 8 years since the 501st Infantry Regiment, 502nd Infantry Regiment and 2nd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division deployed in support of the Vietnam War the following awards were awarded to the service members during combat operations.

1 x Distinguished Service Cross
3 x Silver Star Medal (1 x Posthumously)
6 x Bronze Star Medal (5 x Posthumously)
7 x Purple Heart Medal (7 x Posthumously)
2 x Army Commendation Medal with Valor
2 x Army Commendation (2 x Posthumously)
2 x Died of Non-Hostile Injuries or Illness

08 December 1967



PFC Victor A. Mazitis Jr. (HHC/2-502 IN) was awarded the Purple Heart Medal (Posthumously) for military merit and for wounds received which resulted which resulted in his death from metal fragment wounds received while on combat operation when hit by fragments from a friendly claymore mine in the LAM DONG Province, Republic of Vietnam.

08 December 1967



SGT David A. Tanner (HHC/2-502 IN) was awarded the Bronze Star Medal and Purple Heart Medal (Posthumously) for military merit and for wounds received which resulted in his death from the result of metal fragment wounded received when he was mistakenly hit by fragments from a friendly mine while on combat operations in the LAM DONG Province, Republic of Vietnam.

08 December 1969



PFC Joseph E. Hardee (D/1-501 IN) died from Non-Hostile Burns as a ground casualty in the THUA THIEN Province, Republic of Vietnam.

10 December 1965



SP4 Rudy M. Sagon (A/2-502 IN) was awarded the Bronze Star Medal and Purple Heart Medal (Posthumously) for military merit and for wounds received which resulted in his death as a result of metal fragment wounds in the chest during a hostile ground action in the Province not reported, Republic of Vietnam.

10 December 1965



(A/2-502 IN) was awarded the Purple Heart Medal (Posthumously) for military merit and for wounds received which resulted in his death from multiple fragmentation wounds received in hostile ground action in the Province not reported, Republic of Vietnam.

10 December 1965



SP4 Charles E. Boston (A/2-502 IN) was awarded the Purple Heart Medal (Posthumously) for military merit and for wounds received which resulted in his death from multiple fragmentation wounds received in hostile ground action in the Province not reported, Republic of Vietnam.



10 December 1965



SP4 Robert R. Bohler (A/2-502 IN) was awarded the Purple Heart Medal (Posthumously) for military merit and for wounds received which resulted in his death from multiple fragmentation wounds received in hostile ground action in the Province not reported, Republic of Vietnam.

11 December 1971

1LT Philip S. Gallagher III (E/1-501 IN) died from Non-hostile illness or disease as a ground casualty at Phu Bai Combat Base in the THUA THIEN Province, Republic of Vietnam.

13 December 1968



PFC Salvatore A. Rowe (B/1-502 IN) died from other Non-hostile causes while as a passenger on a military air cushioned vehicle on a reconnaissance patrol when he left his forward position to inspect the rear of the craft and was struck by the craft's propeller in the THUA THIEN Province, Republic of Vietnam.

14 December 1965



SSG Pete A. Valasquez (B/2-502 IN) was awarded the Bronze Star Medal and Purple Heart Medal (Posthumously) for military merit and for wounds received which resulted in his death from cardiac arrest due to multiple fragmentation wounds in hostile ground action o 12 December 1965, in the Province not reported, Republic of Vietnam.

14 December 1970



PFC Richard L. Maynard Jr. (D/2-501 IN) was awarded the Bronze Star Medal and Army Commendation Medal (Posthumously). PFC Maynard died from Non-hostile causes as a ground casualty while outside of artillery firing position when an explosive device (Claymore Mine) detonated in the THUA THIEN Province, Republic of Vietnam.

14 December 1970



PFC Richard J. Knickerbocker (D/2-501 IN) was awarded the Bronze Star Medal and Army Commendation Medal (Posthumously) was wounded from Non-hostile causes as a ground casualty while outside of artillery firing position when an explosive device (Claymore Mine) detonated in the THUA THIEN Province, Republic of Vietnam. PFC Knickerbocker was admitted to a medical facility and later expired on 25 December 1970.



STRIKE HISTORY (Citation's and Awards):

08 December 1968



SSG Jorge B. Otero (E/1-502 IN) was awarded the Army Commendation Medal with Valor (2-OLC) for heroism in the Republic of Vietnam on 8 December 1968. Platoon Sergeant Otero distinguished himself while serving as the Reconnaissance Platoon Sergeant of Company E, 1st Battalion, 502d Infantry, in Quang Dien District, Republic of Vietnam. While on a night operation, an ambush was sprung by the First Squad approximately two hundred meters from the platoon command position. While the Command Group was controlling the action, and directing artillery support, it received heavy enemy sniper fire. With complete disregard for his own safety, Platoon Sergeant Otero moved through the enemy fire, a distance of approximately one hundred and fifty meters, in a successful attempt to flank the enemy. From this position, Platoon Sergeant Otero routed the enemy by placing a heavy, accurate volume of fire on the enemy position. Through his courage, he contributed immeasurably to the success of the mission, which resulted in two enemy killed and no friendly losses. Platoon Sergeant Otero's personal bravery and devotion to duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army. (HQ, 101st ABN DIV, General Order Number 1710, 21 Feb 1969; Amended General Order Number 3316, 25 March 1970)

08 December 1968



1LT John F. Hay (E/1-502 IN) was awarded the Army Commendation Medal with Valor for heroism in the Republic of Vietnam on 8 December 1968. First Lieutenant Hay distinguished himself while serving as the Reconnaissance Platoon leader of Company E, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry, in Quang Dien District, Republic of Vietnam. While on a night operation, the first squad of the reconnaissance platoon initiated an ambush approximately two hundred meters from the Command position. Lieutenant Hay immediately began directing illumination and tried to establish radio contact with the first squad leader in order to take command of the situation. Finding that his radio was not operating, Lieutenant Hay moved into the open and began shouting orders and directing the action. The brightness of the illumination and his shouting orders clearly marked his position and snipers fire was directed toward him. With complete disregard for his own safety, Lieutenant Hay remained in this position for five minutes, directing his platoon until the action was completed. Through his courage, he contributed immeasurably to the success of the mission, which resulted in two enemy killed and no friendly losses. Lieutenant Hay's personal bravery and devotion to duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

09 – 10 December 1965



SGT Gene Hawthorne (A/2-502 IN) was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for extraordinary heroism in connection with the military operations against an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam. Sergeant Hawthorne, a member of Company A, 2d Battalion (Airborne), 502d Infantry, infiltrated his patrol into hostile territory to observe insurgent activity and prepare for the advance of friendly forces. Despite the skill and experience of the patrol, they were discovered after many hours in the unfriendly territory and subsequently engaged by a numerically superior force. Sergeant Hawthorne reacted to the situation by having his patrol rush the insurgents. After losing 7 or 8 men, the Viet Cong withdrew. Sergeant Hawthorne immediately began moving his patrol to a more favorable position in the even the Viet Cong attacked again. During the move, Sergeant Hawthorne was wounded in both arms by a booby-trap that took the life of one of his men. Rather than burden his patrol he courageously asked that he be left behind. His assistant refused to leave him, so Sergeant Hawthorne directed the formation of the defensive perimeter. Through painfully wounded, and barely conscious, he insisted that he be placed in a firing position to assist his comrades. During the ensuing assaults, he poured fire into the insurgents ranks. Utilizing his strength, he pointed out the patrol's position for the artillery battery and helped adjust the incoming rounds by the sound of the bursts. At this point, the insurgents broke contact. Sergeant Hawthorne's extraordinary heroism and gallantry in action are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Army and reflect great credit upon himself and the military service. (HQ, USARPAC; General Orders Number 159; 14 July 1966)

09 – 10 December 1965



SGT Gene Hawthorne (A/2-502 IN) was awarded the Silver Star Medal while distinguishing himself from 9 December 1965 to 10 December 1965 while serving as patrol leader of a squad size element during a reconnaissance mission in "War Zone D", Republic of Vietnam. After successfully infiltrating into Viet Cong territory, Sergeant Hawthorne's patrol was to remain in place until they were covered by the forward movement of friendly troops. Despite the skill and experience of the patrol, they were discovered after several hours and engaged by a Viet Cong platoon. Sergeant Hawthorne and his patrol immediately switched their M-16 rifles to automatic and repelled the attack. After two more encounters with the insurgent troops, Sergeant Hawthorne was seriously wounded in both arms by fragments from a booby trap that killed one of his men. After unsuccessfully persuading his men to leave him behind, he directed his assistant in the formation of a defensive perimeter. Sergeant Hawthorne continued to direct his assistant through two more vicious attempts to destroy the patrol. Realizing that his patrol had been out down to three effective fighting men, Sergeant Hawthorne demanded that he be placed in a firing position. Although he was only semi-conscious and could only see a few meters ahead, Sergeant Hawthorne, with complete disregard for his personal safety, held his positions throughout the last assault and delivered deadly fire into the attacking Viet Cong. Summoning the last of his strength, he pinpointed the patrol's position for an artillery battery and helped his assistant adjust the incoming rounds by the sounds of the bursts. Through his courage and outstanding leadership, the insurgents were forced to withdraw, and a Viet Cong regimental base camp was discovered and subsequently destroyed. Sergeant Hawthorne's extraordinary heroism in close combat against a numerically superior hostile force was in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflects great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army. (HQ, USARV; General Orders Number 2474; 26 April 1966)



09 December 1965

SGT Robert E. Drake (A/2-502 IN) was awarded the Silver Star Medal while distinguishing himself from 9 December 1965 to 10 December 1965 while serving as assistant patrol leader of a squad size element during a reconnaissance mission in "War Zone D", Republic of Vietnam. After successfully infiltrating into Viet Cong territory, Sergeant Drake's patrol was to remain in place until they were covered by the forward movement of friendly troops. Despite the skill and experience of the patrol, they were discovered after several hours and engaged by a Viet Cong Platoon. While moving to a more tenable position, the patrol leader was wounded and became too weak to effectively direct the patrol. Sergeant Drake immediately assumed command and formed a defensive perimeter. On the following morning, as he was preparing to extricate his patrol with two wounded and two dead, the Viet Cong launched another assault. Sergeant Drake immediately set up another defensive perimeter and personally prevented a breakthrough on the left flank. When the forward observer was killed, Sergeant Drake, with complete disregard for his personal safety, crawled 30 meters to the radio and called for suppressive artillery fire. At least six times during the course of action, Sergeant Drake exposed himself to direct fire as he maneuvered around the perimeter to distribute ammunition and treat casualties. Through his courage, determination, and outstanding leadership, the insurgents were forced to withdraw, and a Viet Cong regimental base camp was discovered and subsequently destroyed. Sergeant Drake's extraordinary heroism against a numerically superior hostile force was in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflects great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army. (HQ, USARV; General Orders Number 2466; 22 April 1966)

12 December 1965



SSG Pete A. Valasquez (B/2-502 IN) was awarded the Silver Star Medal (Posthumously) while distinguishing himself on 12 December 1965 while serving as a squad leader in an airborne infantry battalion on a search and destroy operation in Ben Cat, Republic of Vietnam. Sergeant Valasquez was assigned to the lead platoon of the battalion. At approximately 0915 hours while advancing through dense jungle terrain, one squad in the platoon came under fire from an estimated Viet Cong squad. Hearing the initial burst of fire, Sergeant Valasquez quickly moved his squad to the front to assist the squad under fire. Upon reaching the area, the insurgent squad had slipped back into the jungle leaving several trails of blood. Without hesitation, Sergeant Valasquez led four of his men along the trail of blood in relentless pursuit of the insurgents. As they stopped off the small trail, six Viet Cong opened fire from concealed positions with automatic weapons and hand grenades. Sergeant Valasquez was wounded four times, but he quickly turned to his men and directed their fire on the insurgents. As the fire fight progressed, a grenade wounded him for the fifth time and he fell to the ground unconscious and shortly afterwards died from his wounds. Throughout the brief but ferocious battle, Sergeant Valasquez placed the welfare of his men and the accomplishment of the mission above his personal safety. His leadership, devotion to duty, and gallantry were an inspiration to his men. Sergeant Valasquez's gallant actions were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army. (HQ, USARV; General Orders Number 639; 1 February 1966)

13 December 1967 –
20 November 1968



SGT Ronald J. Ymbras (1-502 IN) was awarded the Bronze Star Medal for meritorious service in connection with ground operations against a hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam. Through his untiring efforts and professional ability, he consistently obtained outstanding results. He was quick to grasp the implications of new problems with which he was faced as a result of the ever-changing situations inherent in a counterinsurgency operation and to find ways and means to solve those problems. The energetic application of this extensive knowledge has materially contributed to the efforts of the United State Mission to the Republic of Vietnam to assist that country in ridding itself of the communist threat to its freedom. His initiative, zeal, sound judgment and devotion to duty have been in the highest tradition of the United States Army and reflect great credit on him and on the military service. (HQ; 101st ABN DIV; General Orders Number 9860; 26 November 1968)



ACRONYMS

ACAV: Armored Cavalry
ACD: Air Cavalry Division
AD: Americal Division
AD: Airborne Division (Would be after numeric numbers)
AO: Area of Operations
ARA: Aerial Rocket Artillery
ARCOM: Army Commendation Medal
ARVN: Army of the Republic of Viet Nam (also known as the South Vietnamese Army (SVA))
BDE: Brigade
BN: Battalion
BSM: Bronze Star Medal
BBT: Booby Traps
CA: Combat Assault
CANOPY: Heavily Wooded Terrain
CAV: Cavalry
CO: Company
CP: Command Post
DIV: Division
DSC: Distinguished Service Cross
DZ: Drop Zone
ENG: Engineer
FSB: Fire Support Base
HQ: Headquarters
IED: Improvised Explosive Device
IFFV: I Field Force Vietnam
IN: Infantry
KBA: Killed by Air or Artillery
KHA: Killed by Hostile Action
KIA: Killed in Action
KNHA: Killed by Non-Hostile Action
LZ: Helicopter Landing Zone
MI: Military Intelligence
MOH: Medal of Honor
MP: Military Police
NDP: Night Defensive Position
NVA: North Vietnamese Army
OBJ: Objective
OP: Observation Post
PAVN: People Army of Vietnam
POW: Prisoner of War
PF: Popular Forces
PZ: Helicopter Pick-up Zone
Recon Platoon: Reconnaissance Platoon
RIF: Reconnaissance in Force
RF: Regional Force
ROK: Republic of Korea
RVN: Republic of Vietnam
SA: Situational Awareness
SIGINT: Signal Intelligence
SSM: Silver Star Medal
STRIKE FORCE: 2d Battalion, 502d Infantry
SVA: South Vietnamese Army
TF: Task Force
TOC: Tactical Operations Center
USARV: United States Army Vietnam
USARPAC: United States Army Pacific
WIA: Wounded in Action
WHA: Wounded by Hostile Action
WNHA: Wounded by Non-Hostile Action
"V": Valor
VC: Viet Cong

