



# STRIKE

Weekly History



Est. 1941

February 28<sup>th</sup> – March 5<sup>th</sup> 2016

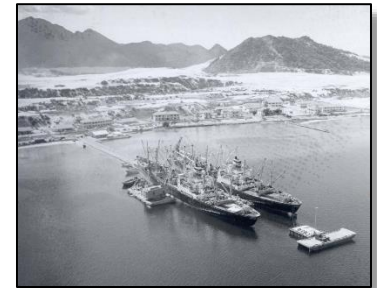
Issue: 45

## Brief History of the 502<sup>nd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade

The 502<sup>nd</sup>, or “five-oh-deuce”, was activated July 1, 1941 at Fort Benning, Georgia as the 502<sup>nd</sup> parachute infantry battalion, as an experimental unit formed to test the doctrine and tactics of parachute assaults. The 502<sup>nd</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne was activated at Fort Campbell, replacing the 1<sup>st</sup> Airborne Battle Group, 501<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment. The reorganization from the battle groups to brigades and battalions placed two battalions of the 502<sup>nd</sup> in different brigades of the 101<sup>st</sup>.



The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 502<sup>nd</sup> Infantry was in the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade with 1-327<sup>th</sup> and 2-327<sup>th</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade’s original organic battalions were the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2d Battalions, 501<sup>st</sup> Infantry, and the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 502<sup>nd</sup> Infantry. December 1967 the 501<sup>st</sup>, 502<sup>nd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.



In September 1980, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 502<sup>nd</sup> Infantry regiment deployed to Sinai as a peacekeeping for Operation BRIGHT STAR. The unit was first U.S. forces in the region since World War II.



In 1982, Task Force 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 502<sup>nd</sup> Infantry deployed to Panama in support of Operation KINDLE LIBERTY to demonstrate U.S. ability and resolve to defend the Panama Canal in the light of spreading pro-Soviet/Cuban influence in Nicaragua and Central America.

1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 502<sup>nd</sup> Infantry deployed to Egypt again in September 1982 to enforce Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel by serving on the Sinai Peninsula as part of the Multinational Force and Observers.



May 1984 through a complex “reflagging” process the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalions, 502<sup>nd</sup> were placed under the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (AASLT). With this reorganization the Brigade adopted the regimental motto, “STRIKE!”

On 5 June 1984, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 502<sup>nd</sup> Infantry deployed to Sinai, Egypt at part of Multinational Force and Observers from July to December 1985. On December 12, 1985 at 0645 the DC-8-63 charter carrying 248 passengers and a crew of 8 crashed just after takeoff from Gander International Airport, Gander, Newfoundland, Canada. All on board perished as a result of the impact of the post-crash fire.



In the late summer of 1990, the “STRIKE” Brigade moved to Saudi Arabia as part of Operation Desert Shield to deter a possible Iraqi invasion. On February 25, 1991 the “STRIKE” Brigade participated in the largest helicopter air assault in military history to establish FOB Cobra.

During Operation Desert Storm, the 2nd Brigade and 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) cut the enemy’s lines of communications, struck deep into his country, threatened a lethal strike against his capital and shut off his escape. The Brigade redeployed to Fort Campbell in March of 1991.



Between 1993 and 2001 the Brigade participated in multiple peacekeeping mission to include: Operation Safe Passage (Panama), Jungle Operations Training Center (Panama), Bosnia-Herzegovina (QRF) Stabilization Force 6 (SFOR6), Kosovo and Republic of Macedonia as part of NATO’s Kosovo Force.



The STRIKE Brigade deployed to Iraq in support of OIF I (2003), OIF 05-07 (2006) and OIF 07-09 (2007). The Brigade received multiple awards and decoration during these operations. During this period in 2004 the "STRIKE" Brigade went through another transformation. With the inactivation of 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 502<sup>nd</sup> Infantry and reflagged as 1<sup>st</sup> Squadron, 75<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment and also transformed from an Infantry Brigade to a modular Brigade Combat Team with adding 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 320<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade Special Troops Battalion and 526<sup>th</sup> Brigade Support Battalion.



The STRIKE Brigade deployed to Afghanistan in support of OEF X-IX (2009), Security Force Advisor Team (SFAT) (2010), Security Force Advisory Team (2012), OEF XV.



STRIKE Brigade also transformed once again in 2014 with the loss of 1-320<sup>th</sup> FA which joined 2-320<sup>th</sup> FA and 3-320<sup>th</sup> FA to make the up the Division Artillery (DIVARTY) and 1-26<sup>th</sup> IN joined STRIKE Brigade.



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**During this week, in the span of 72 years since the 502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment originated in July 1941 as the 502nd Parachute Battalion, an experimental unit formed to test the doctrine and tactics of parachute assault, the following are from After Action Reports, Staff Duty Logs, and Personal Accounts.**

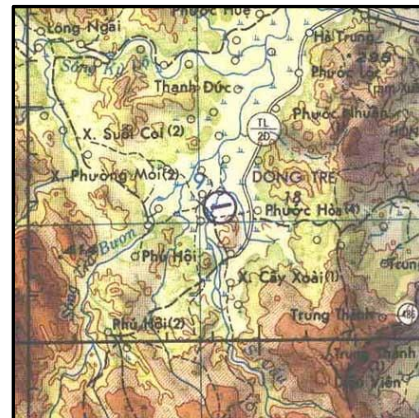
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28 February 1966

**Operation HARRISON:** At 0800H, A/2-502 IN displaced to vicinity BQ950631 to sweep village vicinity BA950643 and link up with CIDG forces from DONG TRE SF camp; negative enemy contact. Bravo and Charlie Companies continued CHECKERBOARD operations to the west and southwest of the Battalion base to the limit of Artillery range. Commencing 0900H, both companies were withdrawn over multiple routes. At 0910H, Bravo Company RECONDO patrol (B-1) engaged 12 VC vicinity BQ 875558; results: 1 VC KIA (BC), 1 Mauser rifle captured, remainder broke contact to northeast. At 1230H, Bravo Company RECONDO patrol engaged 10 VC porters and 3 VC guards with weapons vicinity BQ 889519; results: 2 BC KIA (BC), 3 VC WIA (EST). RECONDO platoon had 1 squad remain at link up point vicinity BA 927590 until 1000H. Commencing 1200H, RECONDO platoon helilifted to TUY AN vicinity CQ 112677 with mission of conducting RECONDO patrols, discovered a platoon size VC camp vicinity BQ 953613 with barracks, sleeping quarters and mess hall; results: All were destroyed. CHECKERBOARD operations continued to include additional RECONDO and Ambush patrols provided by the reserve company with emphasis in the western portion of area VULTURE, vicinity position LION. RECONDO platoon engaged and estimated 5 VC vicinity CQ 069704 at 010730H March 1966; results: No casualties. (HQ, 2-502 IN; After Action Report, Operations HARRISON; 1 April 1966)



28 February 1968

1-502 IN moved to FSB Nora, 14 km northwest of Hue. The Battalion began operations in new AO and Charlie occupied positions for preparation for LZ Sally.

28 February 1969

The month drew to a close with an important day in 101st Airborne history: Operation Nevada Eagle terminated at midnight. On the last day of Nevada Eagle, four enemies 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 60mm 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.

28 February 1970

A/1-502 IN, 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon departed FB Normandy for an in-country 3-day R&R at Eagle Beach which was actually only a day and a half due to a call to return to FB Normandy for a combat assault and stand by as ready reserved/rapid reaction force.

28 February 1991

After 100 hours, the ground phase of Operation DESERT STORM is over.

29 February 1968

1-502 IN Battalion began search and destroy operations in new AO. Alpha and Delta moved northwest from An Lo Bridge. Alpha taken under fire by estimated company of NVA, Alpha pulled back and called for and received air strikes, artillery and gunships. Results: 5 NVA KIA (BC)

29 February 1968

**Operation TACOMA/HOUSTON:** B/2-502 was removed from AO to rear base for refitting. They were reinserted by road on 011420H March to continue mission of Search and Destroy in assigned AO. (HQ, 2-502 IN, Combat Operation After Action Report, Operations TACOMA/HOUSTON; 20 March 1968)

March 1943

The 502nd PIR took part in division maneuvers in Southern Pines.

March – April 1969

**A Shau Valley:** During this period, five Battalions of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division including A Company and the rest of 2/501<sup>st</sup>, air assaulted into the A Shau Valley. Combat assaults and fast moving reconnaissance in force quickly determined the NVA were avoiding contact and moving its main forces back across the border. The operation yielded many large caches, one that included 14 trucks, 600 brand new SKS rifles, ChiCom radios and field telephones.



March 1968

2-501<sup>st</sup> Battalion operations were characterized by aggressive daylight patrols and sweeps and numerous night ambushes in the area of the West of Hue. Although numerous booby traps were encountered initially, and enemy body counts of fourteen were not uncommon for the night ambushes, enemy contact decreased as the month passed. The enemy was successfully repelled from the villages adjacent to Hue and forced out into the densely vegetated foothills.



March 1982 XVII Airborne Corps designated the 1st Battalion 502nd Infantry Regiment as the replacement unit to be sent to the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt for a six-month tour of duty with Multinational Force and Observers (MFO). Supporting the American commitment to the peacekeeping force established under the terms of the 1979 Egypt-Israeli peace treaty, the Screaming Eagles and the 82nd Airborne Division from Ft. Bragg alternated six month tours of duty.

Mar-May 06 **Operation Glory Light.** Disrupt AIF and deny them access from Fallujah to Shakaria Triangle, through the use of Sadr Yusufiyah. 2-502 IN led the assault into Sadr Yusufiyah. 1-502 IN prevented the AIF from fleeing to the South from Sadr Yusufiyah. 1- 320 FAR fielded MiTT teams, assisting ISF in search efforts and combat operations across the area of operations. At the end of the mission, Strike BCT found 28 IEDs and 20 caches were seized. The BCT established Patrol Base Warrior as a base of continuous operations in the Sadr Yusufiyah area.

01 March 1966 **Operation HARRISON:** Commencing 0730H, Alpha Company conducted a sweep from position LION to link up with CIDG forces from DONG TRE SF camp vicinity BQ957643. At 0740H, RECONDO platoon engaged an unknown number of VC vicinity CQ 056715; results: 2 BC KIA (BC). The Battalion was alerted for possible deployment by air vicinity CQ0672. (HQ, 2-502 IN; After Action Report, Operations HARRISON; 1 April 1966)

01 March 1966 **Operation HARRISON:** Commencing 1200H, 2-502 IN Battalion conducted heliborne assault to seize and secure position SNAKE vicinity CQ 065724. 113 sorties of UH1D helicopters were utilized in 5 lifts. The 1<sup>st</sup> lift touched down vicinity CQ 065724 at 1120H and all lifts were completed at 1645H; negative enemy contact on LZ. One helicopter crashed and burned on LZ vicinity CQ 065724; minor injuries sustained, 3 M-16 rifles destroyed. The alternate LZ, vicinity CQ 068715 was utilized for the 5<sup>th</sup> lift. Alpha Company secured objective 3 vicinity CQ 061722 (LZ), Bravo Company moved to and secured Objective 1 vicinity CQ 050725 and Charlie Company moved to and secured Objective 2 vicinity CQ011745. The Battalion CP closed battalion base vicinity CQ 061722 at 1400H. Objective 1 was secured at 1519H, Objective 2 at 1745H and Objective 3 at 1400H. CHECKERBOARD operations were initiated immediately to include Search and Destroy operations in sector. Alpha Company provided security for battalion base, vicinity CQ 061722, assumed mission of battalion reserve and conducted RECONDO and ambush patrols vicinity battalion base. Bravo Company initiated RECONDO patrolling in sector immediately and commencing 1615H initiated a Search and Destroy operations to the South of position SNAKE. At 1811H, Charlie Company also initiated a Search and Destroy operation to the South of position SNAKE. Bravo Company was in the West and Charlie Company was in the East of Bravo Company. At 1818H, Charlie Company engaged unknown number of VC vicinity CQ 049690; results: 2 VC KIA (BC), 2 VCG evacuated. RECONDO platoon engaged approximately 7 VC at 1940H vicinity CA 068731; results: 3 VC KIA (EST). At the end of the day, Alpha Company was located at battalion base vicinity CQ 061722, Bravo Company vicinity CQ 030697 and Charlie Company vicinity CQ 049686. (HQ, 2-502 IN; After Action Report, Operations HARRISON; 1 April 1966)



01 March 1968 1-502nd Battalion began operations in Quang Tri district from FSB Nora, An Lo Bridge and continued construction of FSB Sally. Alfa moved to Ap Lai Xa (YD 638310) where they had made heavy contact on 29 Feb 1968. They found no enemy but villagers stated that there had been approx. 200 NVA/VC in the village and that they had been up most of the night dragging off their dead. Delta made light contact in vicinity YD 642298 and Battalion CO's C&C ship used to kill 16 NVA. Results: 16 NVA KIA (BC) by Strike's C&C. (1-502 Unit Annual Historical Supplements)

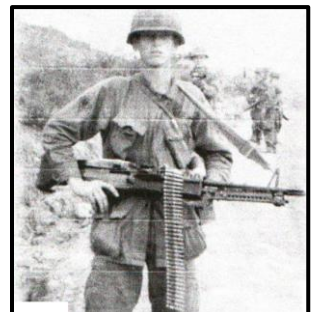
01 March –  
26 March 1968

U.S. intelligence reports warned in early 1969 that North Vietnamese Army (NVA) troops were busy stockpiling weapons and ammunition in key areas of South Vietnam's Northern provinces. The NVA viewed one such area, the A Shau Valley, as a relatively safe haven from which they could launch an attack on Hue, some 26 miles to the northeast. The 28-mile-long A Shau Valley, located in rugged country in southwestern Thua Thien province along the Laotian border, branched off from the Ho Chi Minh Trail and provided a natural thoroughfare toward Hue and Da Nang. The A Shau ran south down the Laotian and Cambodian border areas to some 37 miles from Saigon.

As of March 1969, it was apparent to U.S. commanders that NVA troops were on the move into the area. Maj. Gen. Raymond Davis, then-commander of the 3rd Marine Division, said the Communists had hacked a road to within 17 miles of Hue. Davis said the road, if extended another four miles, would have allowed the NVA to bring their 122mm guns within range of the former imperial capital.

The goal for U.S. forces, therefore; was clear: prevent the NVA from using the valley as a staging area for an attack on Hue and the coastal provinces, as the Communists had done the previous year during the Tet Offensive.

On March 1, 1969, the 101st Airborne Division's 1st Bn., 502nd Infantry launched the first of three operations (Massachusetts Strikes; Apache Snow and Montgomery Rendezvous) designed to drive out or destroy NVA forces in the valley. Working from the southern end, the unit's A, B, and C companies moved north.



**Above:** Dave Nesbitt, holding an M-60 machine gun, pauses while on patrol on Jan. 1, 1969, the day before his 21st birthday. Nesbitt was later wounded at Dong A Tay on March 20.



On March 12, C Company assaulted an area near Fire Support Base (FSB) Veghel, a U.S. position in the central valley that had been abandoned the previous year, to establish a landing zone for the battalion. Awaiting the troopers was the 816th NVA Battalion. Fighting from about 4:30 p.m. through the night, C Company soldiers secured the base, losing 2 K1A while killing 12 NVA. The rest of the NVA troops tied some four miles southwest to the 2,640-ft. Dong A Tay Mountain, described as a "round, squat hill with a large razorback ridge flowing out of it to the north."

Initially, U.S. commanders thought the enemy force guarding the area around FSB Veghel was only squad-sized, and after it was cleared thought it might be a company. But soldiers in the field knew differently.

"The first couple of nights near Dong A Tay, we could hear the ticking of generators in the background of our radio communications," said 1st Lt. John Eastham, commander of 2nd Plt., Bravo Company. We knew then we had something big."

### **The Noise Was Ungodly'**

On the morning of March 19th, American commanders called in Air Force fire-power to blast NVA troops out of their labyrinth of bunkers on Dons A Tay. 1st Lt. Ed Donaldson, who commanded 2nd Plt, A Co., recalls an Air Force jet dropping a 10,000-pound "daisy cutter" bomb (used to clear landing zones) on the hilltop. Immediately thereafter, 2nd and 3rd Platoons led the attack.

"We were running into delaying contacts as we moved toward the hill," "Every so often we would get contact from two or three NVA. But we kept getting pressured by division to get to the top, so we didn't chase them."

Lt. John Sorge, who commanded 3rd Platoon, recalled that his unit suffered the first casualties. "My platoon sergeant Sandy Muhlengraft was the first one wounded and my RTO (radio telephone operator) Lawrence Olive was the first KIA," Sorge said.

Donaldson says his platoon saw "bunkers everywhere" as they moved forward. Upon reaching the top of Dong A Tay, "we noticed commo wire and there were clothes and other debris up in the trees," that he surmised was caused by the huge daisy cutter explosion. "Just then a couple of NVA went running down a ridge, and my guys, who were real aggressive, went after them," Donaldson said. "I yelled at them to return but it was too late."

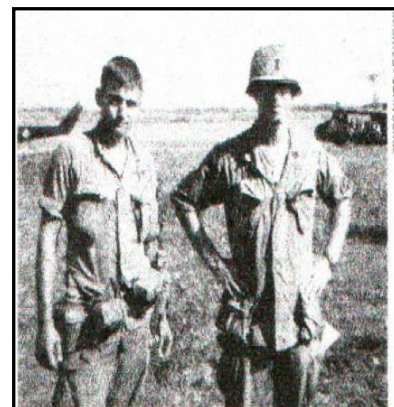
An NVA ambush lay in wait. "The whole jungle erupted," he recalled. "We got pinned down on a little saddle on a very narrow ridge." Donaldson called in artillery fire, estimating that 1,700 rounds—some landing only 25 yards from 2nd Platoon's position—blasted the hilltop for the next three hours.

"They laid down a wall of steel," he said, "We would've been in a lot worse shape if not for the artillerymen." Freddy Baker, a rifleman with A Company who was awaiting a helicopter for a planned R&R leave, says he was ordered back to his platoon when the shooting started. "The noise was ungodly," Baker said. "Arty, machine guns, rifle fire. RPGs, as well as gunships and jets. I remember the F-4 Phantoms releasing their ordnance and you could see it tumbling right toward you."

Dave Nesbitt was a 21-year-old specialist 4 serving with A Company's 1st Platoon. He says he and another soldier were digging foxholes when they heard small-arms fire erupt down the ridge from them. "He jumped up, grabbed his M-16 with only one magazine and ran down toward the firing," Nesbitt, a VFW member of Post 3034 in Sumter, S.C., said. "It was a very bad mistake. I helped retrieve his body the next day."

Nesbitt was wounded the following day, March 20, when "a big ball of fire from a mortar or command-detonated artillery round" exploded as he manned an M-60 machine gun behind a tree. He remembers a couple of his fellow troopers pulling him up the hill and out of firing range where A Company's 1st Platoon medic, James "Doc" Feliciano, could apply first aid.

"I had a hole in my knee big enough to put in a grapefruit," said Nesbitt, who later had his knee fused together instead of amputating his leg. Feliciano recalls Nesbitt as the last casualty he treated that day. "Wally Morrow gave me cover fire as I worked on Dave," said Feliciano, a VFW life member from New York. "Besides an ambush in Tam Ky in July 1969, this operation was the worst for me. We were making contact daily and it was pretty hectic."



**Above:** RTO Lawrence Olive and LT John Sorge. Olive became the 1<sup>st</sup> KIA at Dong A Tay.



### 'The Best Thing I Ever Did in My Life'

The next two days, March 21-22; were particularly bad for B Company when it lost seven KIAs. On March 21, 1st Lt. William Dent, who commanded 3rd Platoon, was wounded in an ambush and later died. "I put him on a chopper alive," said B Company 1st Sgt. Royce Burkett, a life member of VFW Post 6018 in Fayetteville, N.C. "He had three bullet holes in him. I guess he must have lost too much blood. I remember him asking me to secure his Ranger knife."

Burkett, also a Korean War vet, was wounded March 22 when fragments from an RPG hit him in the head, leg and arm. "It knocked me back into a bomb crater," he said. "I had blood sloshing around in my boots, but I didn't think my condition was had enough to be evacuated then. I spent that night on the hill and was medevac'd out the next day. I spent 45 days in the hospital with an infection."

Casualties were taking such a heavy toll on B Company platoons that Spec. 4 Dean Smith, an RTO with 1st Platoon, remembers a fellow RTO, Spec. 4 Robert E. McAferty, walking point for a squad because all other point men had been wounded.

"He walked past me and down a trail," said Smith, a former five-time commander of VFW Post 2494 in Irving, Texas. "All of a sudden I heard him screaming, `they're all around us, and then hell broke loose. It sounded horrible?"

Smith says his unit later found McAferty's lifeless body tied to a tree. Donaldson says A Company secured the hilltop on March 24. He was then ordered to take command of Recon Platoon. "It was the most intense time of my year in Vietnam," said Donaldson, who became a lawyer and judge as a civilian. "It also was the best thing I ever did in my life."

The next day, B Company would make the final push to move the NVA off Dons A Tay,

### 'Jane Fonda Stuff Found in Bunker'

Around 10:35 a.m. on March 25, 2nd Platoon discovered a deserted NVA hospital bunker complex that Eastham said contained Communist propaganda leaflets depicting U.S. POWs and "Jane Fonda stuff," like blankets and towels sent by sympathetic Americans.

According to the book *Hamburger Hill* by Samuel Zaffiri, soldiers found a list "of medicines that had been shipped to the hospital, followed by the words: 'Donated by your friends at the University of California at Berkeley: "

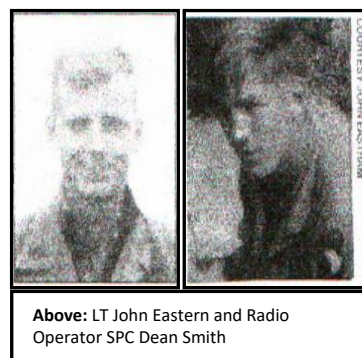
At 11 a.m., 1st Platoon soldiers discovered a small bunker complex, and three were killed "instantly" upon entering it. It is unclear how they died, but 1st Sgt. Burkett believes the bunker was booby-trapped. The other four soldiers who died that day—from both 1st and 2nd Platoons—were killed by sniper fire.

Firefights continued throughout the afternoon as 2nd Platoon moved to reinforce 1st Platoon. By 6:30 p.m., the enemy had broken contact with B Company. All seven Americans killed March 25 were from B Company's 1st and 2nd Platoons. Overall, from March 19-25, 1st Battalion's official death toll shows 20 U.S. KIA. According to daily after-action reports, 1st Battalion members had 39 WIA while killing 56 NVA troops.

"It was most certainly the worst day of my Vietnam tour," said Eastham, a member of VFW Post 201 in Waterbury, Conn. "I think about it every day."

Bravo Company was airlifted off Dong A Tay on March 26. But more bloody battles awaited U.S. troops in the A Shau Valley, 1st Battalion had merely fulfilled the first objective in a campaign that would last throughout the summer of 1969. (Dong A Tay: A Costly Victory in the A Shau Valley; By Tim Dyhouse)

- 01 March 1969 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 FB Whip. A/1-327 accounted for the first enemy killed during operation 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.
- 01 March 1969 **Operation KENTUCKY JUMPER**, succeeding Nevada Eagle, begins. A 2nd Brigade thrust into the A Shau Valley, Massachusetts Striker, also begins, but is hindered by bad weather. (Rendezvous with Destiny (Summer 1969); Screaming Eagle Vietnam Diary)
- 01 March 1969 The 2d Brigade, 101st Airborne Division begins Operation MASSACHUSETTS STRIKER in the southern A Shau and Rao Nai Valleys on Thua Thien Province, vicinity of Route 548.
- 01 March 1969 The 2-502<sup>nd</sup> Battalion launched the first of three operations (Massachusetts Striker, Apache Snow and Montgomery Rendezvous) designed to drive out or destroy the NVA forces in the valley. Working from the southern end, the unit's A, B, and C Companies moved north.



Above: LT John Eastern and Radio Operator SPC Dean Smith



- 02 March 1942 The 502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR) was activated at Fort Benning, Georgia from the 502nd Parachute Infantry Battalion. MAJ Howell was promoted to Colonel but left the same month to command the parachute school at Fort Bragg, North Carolina; he passed the regiment's command to COL George Van Horn Moseley Jr. who came from a long line of West Point Graduates. Like the other airborne regimental commanders of his day, COL Moseley made enormous demands on his troops as well as himself.
- 02 March 1966 **Operation HARRISON:** B/2-502 IN received fire from vicinity CQ 026703; negative results. Alpha Company engaged and unknown number of VC vicinity 073723 at 1000H; results: 2 Friendly WIA. At 1200H Charlie Company engaged approximately 8 VC vicinity CQ034674; results: 1 VC KIA (BC) and 2 VCS. At 1530H, Charlie company made contact with unknown number of VC vicinity CQ 057677 and returned fire. Results: unknown. Link up with 2-327 IN was effected by Bravo Company at 1620H vicinity CQ044646 and CQ 029669 and by Charlie Company at 1615H vicinity CQ 055677. A total of 9 VCS were apprehended during the day and evacuated to brigade. Bravo Company Recondo patrol received automatic weapons fire from vicinity CQ030669 at 1826H. Fire was returned; results unknown. CHECKERBOARD operations continued. At 0700H Bravo Company platoon engaged 1 VC squad vicinity CQ 013695; results unknown. RECONDO platoon discovered VC KIA (BC) by Arty vicinity CQ 018675 at 1516H. (HQ, 2-502 IN; After Action Report, Operations HARRISON; 1 April 1966)
- At 1900H, CHECKERBOARD operations were initiated by Alpha and Bravo Company to the west in sector. There was negative enemy contact during the night.
- 02 March 1968 2nd Brigade closes its CP at LZ Jane and moves to LZ Sally, eight miles north of Hue.
- 02 March 1968 1-502nd Battalion continued search and destroy operations and made light contact throughout the day. Booby-Traps caused 3 WIA.
- 03 March 1966 **Operation HARRISON:** Enroute to Battalion base, C/2-502 engaged 3 VC vicinity CQ 050715 at 0830H; results: 1 VC WIA (EST), 1 US carbine captured. Charlie Company closed Battalion base at 1100H. Alpha Company was relieved as Battalion reserve at 1200H and initiated CHECKERBOARD operations to the west from Alpha Company base vicinity CQ 062723. Bravo Company sighted 15 VC with weapons vicinity CQ 017708 at 1255H; artillery adjusted results unknown. RECONDO platoon deployed to DONG TRE SF camp commencing 1300H to conduct joint squad and platoon size operations with CIDG forces. At 1350H, Bravo Company patrol received automatic weapons fire from vicinity CQ 008492, returned fire and adjusted artillery fire; results unknown. Another Bravo Company patrol engaged unknown number of VC vicinity CQ 0026722 at 1945H; results unknown. CHECKERBOARD operations continued through the night with negative enemy contact. (HQ, 2-502 IN; After Action Report, Operations HARRISON; 1 April 1966)
- 03 – 06 March 1967 **Operation FARRAGUT IV:** The third phase of this Operation began, taking place to the northwest of Song Mao in Binh Thuan Province. Several minor contacts resulted in 4 VC KIA and 5 weapons captured. In addition, one, large tiger was shot just before extraction to Song Mao on 6 March. This ended FARRAGUT IV, a rather unrelated series of operations involving no major engagements. While at Song Mao, the S-5 section of the 2-502 held number of sick-calls for indigenous civilians, and assisted in movement of refugees to Song Mao refugee center. Food-stuffs, clothing, and weapons were distributed, including rice and grain that had been captured from the enemy in the field. A vigorous leaflet and poster campaign was conducted in near-by hamlets, and 50 detainees were taken to Phan Rang for questioning. Of these, 18 were confirmed as VC, 21 as VC suspects, and 4 as draft-dodgers.
- 03 March 1968 Battalion continued search and destroy operations from An LO Bridge to (YD 671311) Ap Duc Trong. Bravo and Charlie made heavy contact from village and called for all available fire support and pulled back. After heavy contact for 4 hours, B&C were withdrawn by air. During extraction battalion commanders C&C received heavy fire wounding battalion CO, his RTO, battalion S-2, and command pilot. Battalion S-2 DOA at Evans.
- 03 March 1991 **Operation DESERT STROM:** Cease Fire terms accepted by Iraq at Safwan Airfield.
- 04 – 05 March 1966 **Operation HARRISON:** At 1015H, A/2-502 engaged approximately 20 VC vicinity BQ 995734; results: 2 BC KIA (EST). At 1015H, Bravo Company sighted approximately 24 VC vicinity BQ 99580, artillery adjusted; results unknown. There was negative contact the rest of the day and night and Alpha Company platoon ambushed 3 BC vicinity CQ 003766 at 050200 MARCH 1966.
- Alpha and Bravo Company continued CHECKERBOARD operations and Charlie Company remained as Battalion reserve. RECONDO platoon continued joint operations with CIDG forces vicinity DONG TRE SF camp. Bravo Company engaged 9 VC at 050805H March vicinity BQ 989696; results: 1 VC KIA (BC). AT 051000H March, Alpha Company captured 3 VC's with military equipment vicinity CQ 004742. The Battalion was alerted to move by air from its present location vicinity CQ 061722 to TUY HOA SOUTH Airfield and assume mission of Brigade reserve. (HQ, 2-502 IN; After Action Report, Operations HARRISON; 1 April 1966)
- 04 March 1968 1-502nd IN Battalion continued search and destroy operations and conducted joint sweep with PF's vicinity An Lo Bridge. Results: 2 NVA KIA (BC). Recon made light contact had 2 Soldiers wounded. (HQ/1-502 Annual Historical Supplement)
- 04 March 1968 **Operation TACOMA/HOUSTON:** At 0245, A/2-502 vicinity AT924926 a large explosion damaged bridge, road impassable. Engineers reconstructed and opened by 041200 March. (HQ, 2-502 IN, Combat Operation After Action Report, Operations TACOMA/HOUSTON; 20 March 1968)
- 04 – 13 March 1970 **Operation RANDOLPH GLEN:** 2-502 (STRIKE Force) Battalion returned en masse to Camp Eagle for a well-deserved period of training and stand down. (2-502 Unit History, Vietnam 1970; Approved by LTC Lloyd N. Cosby, IN Commanding)



04 – 13 March 1970 The 2-502 IN returned to Camp Eagle for a well-deserved period of training and stand-down. Training continued at Camp Eagle throughout the 13<sup>th</sup> of March.

04 March 1970 A/2-502, 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon was attacked while they were in their NDP by a sapper squad; Alpha lost one KIA and eight WIA.

05 March 1968 1-502nd IN Battalion continued search and destroy operations with light contact, 1 Soldier WIA from punji pit. (HQ/1-502 Annual Historical Supplement)

05 March 1968 **Operation TACOMA/HOUSTON:** C/2-502 was relieved in place by a unit of the 1/5 Marine at 1550H and deployed by motor convoy to Gia Le Base. At 1945H, Alpha Company vicinity AT 923926 engaged 2 or 3 VC with small arms. Sweep at first light revealed 1 Chicom Claymore and 300 feet of copper wire. At 2300H they received a single sniper round, result 1 US WHA. (HQ, 2-502 IN, Combat Operation After Action Report, Operations TACOMA/HOUSTON; 20 March 1968)



05 March 1991 **Operation DESERT STORM:** The 502nd with fire support teams from the 1-320th FA leaves FOB Viper by Blackhawk and returns to TAA Campbell near Rafha.

05 March 2003 Strike 6 and planning staff arrives at Kuwait in what would later become Operation Iraqi Freedom I. Within 10 days the entire Brigade was completely in theater. The Strike Brigade fought as part of the 101st Airborne Division and participated in Stability and Support Operations in Al Samawah and Al Nasiriyah. It conducted the longest air assault in military history to seize the bridge at Al Kifl.



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**During this week, in the span of 72 years since the 502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment originated in July 1941 as the 502nd Parachute Battalion, an experimental unit formed to test the doctrine and tactics of parachute assault, the following awards were awarded to members of 2BCT and the 502<sup>nd</sup> IN Regiment or those assigned to the Brigade during operations.**

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2 x Silver Star Medal  
 1 x Bronze Star Medal with Valor (1 x Posthumously)  
 3 x Bronze Star Medal (3 x Posthumously)  
 20 x Purple Heart Medal (16 x Posthumously)  
 26 x Army Commendation Medal  
 1 x Prisoner of War Medal (1 x Posthumously)  
 63 x Combat Infantry Badge  
 1 x Died of Wounds  
 1 x Died of Non-Hostile wounds or Illness

28 February 1970 SP4 Larry E. Dailey (C/1-501 IN) earned the Purple Heart (Posthumously) for military merit and for wounds received which resulted in their deaths when a booby trap detonated in the Thua Thien Province, South Vietnam.

28 February 1978 SP4 Earl E. McCarty (B/1-501 IN) earned the Bronze Star Medal (Posthumously) when he died while on a military mission when an artillery round fired by a friendly force impacted the area, in the Quang Tri Province, South Vietnam.



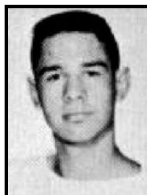
29 February 1968 SGT Gerald Cervantes (D/1-501 IN) earned the Purple Heart (Posthumously) for military merit and for wounds received which resulted in their deaths from small arms gun fire wounds while on a combat operation in support of USMC retaking Hue City, in the Thua Thien Province, South Vietnam.



March 1944 PFC Baxter M. Teal (502nd PIR) earned the Purple Heart (Posthumously) for military merit and for wounds received in action resulting in his death during WWII in Belgium, Germany.

March 1945 PFC Vern W. Maughan (502nd PIR) earned the Purple Heart (Posthumously) for military merit and for wounds received in action resulting in his death during WWII in Belgium, Germany.

01 March 1966 SP4 Bruce L. Marosites (HHC/2-502 IN) earned the Purple Heart (Posthumously) for military merit and for wounds received which resulted in his death from gunshot wounds to both thighs during hostile ground action in the Province not reported, South Vietnam.



01 March – 31 July 1969 The following Soldiers: PFC William R. Ingle, PFC Joseph E. Lehmer, PFC James A. Sgroi (C/1-501 IN); 1SG Paul C. Purcell, SFC Juan Jose, PFC Charles C. Sergeant (D/1-501 IN); PFC Calvin W. Bailey, PFC Jerome F. Favors, PFC Paul Hernandez, SP4 Phillip E. King, SP4 Thomas M. Ray, PFC Leslie Skelly, PFC Wilbur Steward, SGT Norman M. Takeoka, PFC Lionel S. Tatsutani, PFC Clifton J. D. Walker (E/1-501 IN); SSG Alfred F. Bustin, SP4 Ronald A. Feiertag, SP6 Wallac Nakandakari, PFC Robert Ramirez, SP4 Ernest L. Taintor (HHC/1-501 IN); SP4 Victor G. Brothers, PFC Gregory H. Bucknor, PFC Steven L. Tropf, PFC Thomas J. Wells, PFC Larry C. Williams (D/2-501 IN) earned the Army Commendation Medal for meritorious achievement. (HQ 101<sup>st</sup> ABN DIV (AM), General Order Number 10612; 16 August 1969)



02 March 1978



SSG Robert L. Platt Jr. (B/2-502 IN) earned the Purple Heart (Posthumously) and the Prisoner of War Medal for military merit for action on 10 June 1967 while as a member of a ten-man patrol on a search and destroy mission operating about five miles southwest of the City of Mo Duc in Quang Ngai Province, South Vietnam. During the patrol, the team was ambushed and then PFC Platt was reportedly wounded in the shoulder. When the patrol withdrew under fire, PFC Platt was carried a short distance when the man carrying him was wounded and PFC Platt was again wounded in the back. At this point, PFC Platt was left behind.

After the patrol regrouped, search operations were begun and continued until 16 June. During the search, items were found that were believed to belong to PFC Platt, but he was not found. A captured enemy document indicated that an individual whose first name was Robert had been captured and died the next day from wounds. This report was not specific enough to classify PFC Platt as a prisoner of war. Subsequently, Vietnam acknowledges that SSG Platt had been captured alive and classified as missing in action and was posthumously promoted to Staff Sergeant. Remains and body has not been recovered.

03 March 1944

PVT Harry S. Scott (502nd PIR) earned the Purple Heart (Posthumously) for military merit and for wounds received in action resulting in his death during WWII in England.

03 March 1968

The Following Soldiers: CPL Henry Norfleet Jr. and CPL James E. Williams (C/1-502 IN), PFC Richard L. Borgman (B/1-502 IN) earned the Purple Heart (Posthumously) for military merit and for wounds received which resulted in their deaths from small arms gun fire wounds in vicinity AP HIEN LUONG, 13km NW of Hue Citadel in the Thua Thien Province, South Vietnam.

03 March 1968



SP4 Ernest E. Fawks (C/1-502 IN) earned the Bronze Star Medal with Valor and Purple Heart (Posthumously) for military merit and for wounds received which resulted in his deaths from small arms gun fire wounds in vicinity AP HIEN LUONG, 13km NW of Hue Citadel in the Thua Thien Province, South Vietnam.

03 March 1968



CPT Frank R. Dimmitt (HHC/1-502 IN) earned the Bronze Star Medal and Purple Heart (Posthumously) for military merit and for wounds received which resulted in his death from a gunshot wound received while passenger of helicopter when hit by hostile small arms fire, in vicinity AP HIEN LUONG, 13km NW of Hue Citadel, in the Thua Thien Province, South Vietnam.

03 March 1986

SP4 Paul F. Newman Jr. (C/1-501 IN) died from small arms fire wounds received on 06 April 1968.

03 March 2006

SPC Kamsart Thong (HHC/2-502 IN) earned the Purple Heart for military merit and for wounds received during actions in combat while at the TCP on the intersection of Route Slipknot and Janbi Run, at around 1030, SPC Thong was hit with sniper fire from an undetermined location. The bullet struck him in the lower leg.

04 March 1968



SGT Anthony E. Reed (A/2-502 IN) earned the Bronze Star Medal and Purple Heart (Posthumously) for military merit and for wounds received which resulted in his death when accidentally shot in the vicinity of DaNang as a ground casualty in the Quang Nam Province, South Vietnam.

04 March 1970



SFC Rudolfo R. Alura (B/1-501 IN) earned the Purple Heart (Posthumously) for military merit and wound received which resulted in his death while on a combat operation when the area came under mortar attack by hostile force in the Thua Thien Province, South Vietnam.



04 March 2008



SGT Clifford Ritter (1-75 CAV) earned the Purple Heart for military merit and for wounds received from actions in combat while conducting a resupply mission moving south when the lead vehicle was struck by an EFP. SGT Ritter was evacuated to Riva Ridge Medical Facility where he was diagnosed and treated for multiple cuts, bruises, and a concussion resulting from the blast. He was later evacuated for further treatment for his concussion.

04 March 2008

PFC Travis Wilds (2-101 BSTB) earned the Purple Heart for military merit and for wounds received from actions in combat.

05 March 1968



SP4 Robert R. Criswell (B/2-501 IN) earned the Purple Heart (Posthumously) for military merit and for wounds received which resulted in his death from small arms gun fire wounds in the Thua Thien Province, South Vietnam.

05 March 1968

The following Soldiers: PFC William B. Alford, SSG James W. Allen, SSG Ramon M Angulo, SP4 Antonio Arrellano, SP4 Rodolfo Avelar, SP4 Robert W. Barrett, SSG Helmut W. Brinsa, PFC Donald A Brogdon, SP4 Amos C. Brown, PFC Thomas N. Cassick, PFC Aultor W. Chavis, PFC Charles E. Douglas, PFC Samuel A. Flake, SP5 Juan Flores, SP5 Jon C. Fuller, SP4 Jesse L. George, PFC Leonard E. Hannon, PFC Charels R. Hedrick, PFC Willie J. Hill, SP4 Carey J. Hobson, SGT James A. Holmes, SP4 Alvin B. Johnson, PFC Benjamin A. Jones, SP4 James J. King, SP4 David M. Kirk, PFC Andrew V. Kirkman, PFC Dennis J. Kromrey, SFC Wesley W. Petrouske, PFC Hereman McGee, SGT Mack G. McKinley, PVT Darnell Malloy, PVT John A. Martinez, SP5 George R. Meluch, SP4 Michael S. Morrow, PFC John A. Murray, PFC Joe M. Neill, PFC Ronald Purvis, PFC Lloyd R. Rutledge, SP4 Rober C. Schulz, PFC Mike J Sellers, PFC Robert Shepard, PFC Michael A. Shramko, CPT Terence Spiegelberg, SP4 Johnny B. Teasley, PVT Joseph W. Tice, PFC Alvin Tison, PFC Alexander C. Vigil, PFC James A. Web, PFC Roy L. White, PFC Billy V. Whitesville (A/1-502 IN); PFC David B. Askins, 2LT Philip G. Been, SP4 Ralph J Camus, SP5 James M. Ernst, SP4 John C Hayden Jr., PFC Donald G. Hays, SSG Herbert Hill, PFC Leonard J. Hill, PFC Frank L. Hoge, PFC Welton McCarty, PFC Arthur L. Mack, PFC James C. Rollinson, 1LT James D. Walsh (B/1-502 IN) was awarded the Combat Infantry Badge. (DA, HQ 101<sup>st</sup> ABN DIV, Special Orders Number 65; 05 March 1968)

05 March 1971



PFC Larry D. Loden (C/2-502 IN) earned the Purple Heart (Posthumously) for military merit and for wounds received which resulted in his death while on a military mission when a booby trap detonated 4KM NE of Ba Long Airfield in the Quang Tri Province, South Vietnam.

05 March 1971

PFC Gilbert Dowell (A/1-502 IN) died of Non-Hostile causes (Homicide) as a ground casualty in the Thua Thien Province, South Vietnam.

05 March 2006

SPC Ethan John Biggers (B/1-502 IN) earned the Purple Heart for military merit and for wounds received from a sniper fire which resulted in his death after being in a coma until 24 February 2007.



# STRIKE HISTORY (Citation's and Awards):

28 February 1966

SFC Lawrence N. Koontz (HHC/2-502 IN) was awarded the Silver Star Medal (1-OLC) for actions in combat. SFC Koontz, Platoon Sergeant of the "Recondo" platoon Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2d Battalion (Airborne), 502d Infantry, was given the mission of securing a landing zone deep in Viet Cong infested jungle prior to a battalion size operation the following day. With a South Vietnamese Army platoon attached to his force late in the afternoon of 28 February 1966, Sergeant Koontz moved toward his objective 8000 meters away. After moving approximately 3000 meters, the two point squads suddenly came under hostile fire. Sergeant Koontz quickly and expertly led two squads from the rear around the embattled front squads in an effort to out-flank the enemy. Shortly after moving toward his new objective, his element came under a murderous hail of enemy fire. With his element and the point squads pinned down by automatic weapon and machine gun fire, Sergeant Koontz organized an assault on the entrenched enemy. When this failed and it became apparent that his whole force was surrounded, Sergeant Koontz grabbed an M60 machine gun and tried to infiltrate the enemy defenses. As he rose and ran for the tree line, he became the target of several enemy automatic weapons. Forced to crawl, Sergeant Koontz continued his daring assault and reached the enemy lines. His ammunition expended, and the enemy regrouping for a charge, Sergeant Koontz then returned to his platoon. He again started out by himself, with a fresh load of ammunition, this time assaulting a weaker portion of the enemy defenses. His men, inspired to great heights by this extraordinary act of gallantry, rushed forward and overran the bewildered Viet Cong. Sergeant Koontz, not satisfied with simply freeing his platoon from enemy fire, pursued the fleeing, disorganized enemy. Still carrying the machine gun, Sergeant Koontz killed three Viet Cong who tried to make a last ditch stand against the inspired, aggressive paratroopers.

After extraction of the wounded, the Recondo platoon then Recondo platoon then reorganized and continued their mission toward the landing zone. Shortly before reaching the main objective, Sergeant Koontz inadvertently stepped on a punji stake. However, he told no one of his injury and refused medical aid. As the Recondo platoon approached the landing zone, it again came under hostile fire from a small group of huts. Sergeant Koontz braved the withering fire to position himself close enough to effectively call artillery fire on the determined enemy. After the artillery was lifted, he again personally led an assault on the Viet Cong. Although limping quite noticeably and obviously in great pain. Sergeant Koontz was able to overrun the enemy and thus secure the landing zone for the forthcoming assault. Through his untiring efforts and conspicuous gallantry, the mission was accomplished, and the battalion was able to land without incident. Sergeant Koontz's avid professionalism and personal intrepidity were unparalleled. His actions are in keeping with the highest standards and traditions of the military service and reflect immeasurable credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

01 March 1966

SP4 Robert E. Bean (B/2-502 IN) was awarded the Silver Star Medal for action in combat. SP4 Bean distinguished himself on 1 March 1966 while serving as point man for a squad size patrol during a search and destroy mission near Tuy Hoa, Republic of Vietnam. While his squad was moving through the dense jungle terrain, the patrol leader stopped his squad to make a map orientation. Since he was the forward security, Specialist Four Bean had already taken cover in the dense foliage. As he lay observing to his front, he spotted fifteen Viet Cong advancing in his direction. Realizing that the Viet Cong would be upon them before he could return to warn his comrades; SP4 Bean, with complete disregard for his safety, single handedly attacked the insurgents. Although he was outnumbered, he caught the Viet Cong by surprise. Charging forward, he killed two and wounded four. After the initial burst of fire, the Viet Cong split into two groups. Later, Specialist Four Bean ran across approximately 100 meters of open terrain and attacked six Viet Cong, killing one and wounding four more. When his squad reached the area, it deployed into an assault line and began delivering suppressive fire onto the insurgent force. Determining that they were outnumbered, the Viet Cong broke contact and fled. Through his courage and determination, Specialist Four Bean contributed immeasurably to the defeat of the Viet Cong force. His extraordinary heroism in close combat against a 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.



# ACRONYMS

AD: Americal Division  
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  
CO: Company  
CP: Command Post  
DSC: Distinguished Service Cross  
DZ: Drop Zone  
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  
ROK: Republic of Korea  
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  
USAV: United States Army Vietnam  
WIA: Wounded in Action  
WHA: Wounded by Hostile Action  
WNHA: Wounded by Non-Hostile Action  
“V”: Valor  
VC: Viet Cong

