SOUTHERN CROSS
AMERICAL DIVISION
Vol. 3, No. 40 Chu Lai, Vietnam October 30, 1970

Air-ground assault nets 30

By SGT Matt Gryta

LZ CENTER (196th INF BDE IO) – Thirty enemy were killed in a lightning-swift air-ground assault staged by a 196th Infantry Brigade rifle company and gunships of the 16th Aviation Group on the homeland of the 72nd Local Forces Battalion near Ky Que Village, eight miles southwest of Tam Ky.

First indications of new large-scale enemy activity in the area, along a hotbed of communist insurgency in Quang Tien Province, came at approximately 10:30 a.m. A "Stinger" gunship cruising over the rolling terrain studded with hedgerow - covered knolls took small arms fire from the vicinity of a large rice paddy.

The chopper crew radioed in a report of an estimated 100 enemy positioned all along the woodlines.

Shortly after the report came in, Lieutenant Colonel Charles P. Saint, Bethesda, Md., commanding officer of the 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry, left the "Gimlets" forward firebase, LZ Center, and made a low-level visual reconnaissance of the area. Accompanying his craft were two "Stinger" gunships.

Company A, under the command of Captain Harmon E. Heed, Tustin, Calif., had been sitting on LZ Center waiting to make a combat assault into another location when the other came for the company to be airlifted into the new LZ without carrying their rucksacks, a new wrinkle in "Gimlet" tactics.

"The original plans had also called for the company to leave their rucksacks on our supply pad to be hauled out to them at a later time to give our air-assaulting troops greater maneuverability immediately upon disembarking," commented Captain John A. Cope, Jackson Heights, N.Y., battalion operations officer.

As five helicopters set the company's 1st Platoon down on the rice paddy shortly after 12:30 p.m., gunships cruising over head spotted and engaged 15 enemy soldiers who had fired on the first wave of division soldiers from two hootch areas in a hedgerow just north of the landing zone.

"When we started taking AK-47 fire from a northeasterly direction we all hit the dirt," said Sergeant Ronald Martino, Staten Island, N.Y., 1st Platoon sergeant. "After the lift ships took off, my platoon and the company command post swept into the woodline and set up security for the rest of the company."

As the airlift took place, Colonel Saint ordered Company B, operating 1,500 meters northwest of the hot LZ, to move south to serve as a blocking force in an effort to cut off the enemy's escape routes as Company A commenced to push the hostile force north.

After the entire company had been set down, gunships straffed the next woodline in preparation for an on-line assault by the ground troops.

With Colonel Saint directing the operation from an airborne command post, the soldiers moved on the enemy positions utilizing organic weapons. The ground forces killed 15 enemy on the initial sweep up the knoll and found nine others killed by the gunships.

"We must have taken them by complete surprise," noted Private First Class Wallace E. Walraven, Summerville, Ga., a squad leader for 2nd Platoon. "As we moved through the area we came across packs, weapohs, radios and all sorts of other equipment scattered all over the place. We were flushing enemy soldiers out of spider holes and bunkers in the thick vegetation and attempting to hide in the bushes."

"After moving up the knoll about 50 meters, two guys some 20 meters to my right yelled over to me after they took fire from a patch of leafy bushes four or five feet high right next to my position," Sergeant Martino said.

With his M-16 on automatic the young platoon sergeant spayed the bushes killing four NVA soldiers. An 18-year-old VC suspect was later captured near the would-be ambush site.

Shortly before 5:00 p.m., a patrol moving back to the company command post near the LZ heard voices coming from a hootch area 50 meters south of their position in the dense, steaming-hot hillside vegetation. Raiding the hootch complex the "Gimlet" troops engaged and killed 10 NVA as the enemy force attempted to flee.

A division soldier from Company B, 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry, 11th Infantry Brigade and a Regional Forces soldier hold their equipment high as they cross a stream near Duc Pho. (Photo by SSG Tim Palmer)

Division recap

Rains slow action, kill 94

CHU LAI (AMERICAL IO) -- The arrival of the monsoons caused the tempo of fighting to decrease this week in the southern part of the First Military Region as Americal soldiers killed 94 enemy troops. However, the rains did not seem to slow the action in Operation Geneva Park as infantrymen of the 198th Brigade combined with gunships of the 123rd Aviation Company to net 33 enemy.

Geneva Park

In major action late in the week, gunships and machinegun - wielding light observation helicopters from Bravo Company, 123rd Aviation, engaged and killed 14 enemy soldiers in an area northwest of Chu Lai. The gunships had observed the enemy moving toward bunkers in the Ky Tra Valley area.

There was also heavy action south of Chu Lai as the "Ready Rifles" of the 1st Battalion, 52nd Infantry killed 11 enemy in scattered engagements. South of the Tra Bong River, Echo Recon, 1-52nd Infantry killed two enemy soldiers. Later, Charlie Company spotted an engaged two Viet Cong in the same area and killed one. The other VC was wounded and evacuated to a Chu Lai hospital. Charlie Company also accounted for the death of an NVA later in the day when the enemy approached the "Ready Rifles'" position.

Two Viet Cong were spotted moving down a trail and Alpha Company, 1-52 quickly maneuvered to a better firing position. Both VC were killed. Charlie Company later killed four more and captured four satchel charges, eight Chicom grenades and several NVA pistol belts.

Middle week action saw Echo Recon discover a large rice cache. The find consisted of 13,000 pounds of both polished and unpolished rice. Some had been buried in the ground while the rest had been stored in metal containers.

The "Professionals" of the 5th Battalion, 46th Infantry killed six enemy during the week and captured several enemy weapons. While working with a rallier and a psyops broadcasting helicopter, Delta Company, 5-46th Infantry, observed three NVA moving to the west. Disregarding a plea to rally, the NVA attempted to evade to the north. The "Professionals" opened up with small arms fire, killing all three NVA.

Frederick Hill

The "Gimlets" of the 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry, began the week when Company C uncovered a cache containing 250 pounds of rice and 50 pounds of potatoes, which were stored in a structure northwest of Tam Ky. Elsewhere, Recon, 3-21, was sweeping an area northwest of Tam Ky when the platoon encountered six NVA. Four enemy were killed in the skirmish.

Six enemy took a lunchbreak

(continued on page 6)

A division helicopter descends to insert Vietnamese RFs into a defensive position formed by armored cavalry vehicles of B Troop, 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry, 10 miles northwest of Tam Ky. (Photo by SP4 Steven Elschlager)

Division photo contest

The Division Information Office is sponsoring a photo contest for the members of the Americal Division. The contest will include black and white and color photos and cash awards will be given to the winners. Awards will be as follows:

1st Place - $50.00	Honorable Mention - 5.00
2nd Place - $25.00	Honorable Mention - 5.00
3rd Place - $10.00	Honorable Mention - 5.00

The winning photos will be published in the Southern Cross with the photographer's name and unit. The winning photos will also be released to both the military and civilian press. The procedures and rules governing the contest are as follows:

1. The contest will be limited to only one entry per person.
2. Participants must enclose both picture and negative and their name and unit and send it to:

Editor, Southern Cross
23rd Admin Co (IO)
APO 96374

3. Photos must be received by December 1.
4. Photos must have been taken during 1970 in the Americal Division area of operations.
5. No member of the Division Information Office, 523rd Signal Battalion, 10th PID, 31st PID or person in any other information position will be allowed to participate.
6. A brief description of the picture, where and when it was taken, and the circumstances under which it was taken must be included with the picture.

The entire length of a 105mm howitzer is crowded into this photo, from the muzzle break on the end of the tube to the iron ring that is used to connect this artillery piece to a truck for towing. The gun belongs to Delta Battery, 1st Battalion, 14th Arty. (Photo by SP5 A.C. Barnett)

Chapel emits 'canned heat'

By SP4 Tom Mano

LZ HAWK HILL (196th BDE IO) – When you ask someone here where to get some canned heat, he might steer you toward the chapel.

Bewildered, you'll walk inside looking for stacks of supplies, hoping the canned heat isn't in the bottom box. In the main room you're confronted with rows of paperbacks, pasted against two walls, but no supplies. Checking to the right, you'll see a neatly-decorated altar with wooden chairs standing at attention.

Your only recourse is to cross the main room and enter a room marked "library." Immediately you face a man sitting behind a desk, tinkering with an impressive tape recorder complex.

Silently cursing the guy who had directed you here, but dismissing him as imcompetent, you ask," Do you know where I can obtain some canned heat?"

Displaying a broad smile, a man pushes a large green notebook across the table. "Number 12," he says.

Opening the book, you read, "Bot Dylan, Joe Car, 'World's Greatest Ragtime Player,' Frank Sinatra, Aretha Franklin and finally Canned Heat. By this time you're too excited by this tape collection to worry about your initial goal.

"Can I check out these tapes?" you ask.

"Sorry, no. But if you bring in a blank tape, we'll be glad to tape any of these albums for you. We have about 400 hours for your listening pleasure," he replies.

Taping facilities have been present in the brigade since the opening of the chapel in March, 1970. The 196th Brigade is the only brigade in the division to enjoy this facility.

"We buy tapes through the Americal Consolidated Chaplain's Fund," said Specialist Four Daniel L. Burns, Dalton, Ga., a chaplain's assistant who also helps out with the taping. "A lot of the stuff also comes from Special Service and from generous people who come by to donate tapes. We also get tapes fed to us from the 196th standown area in Chu Lai," added Burns.

Big Bertha rolls on

By PFC Don Newton

Hawk Hill (196th INF BDE IO) -- You don't have to see her to know she's coming. The tremor begins in a small way. Then the vibrations increase until all 56 tons of "Big Bertha" have come and gone.

"Big Bertha" is the one nickname used for the M-88, the largest track (steel treaded vehicle) in the division. Although primarily used to extract crippled tanks and armored personnel carriers (APC's), this giant lady of steel can go where other tracks dare not tread.

"Last year our own M-88 cleared a path for some more tracks right through a mine field," said Chief Warrant Officer Norbert Shula, El Campo, Tex., an automotive maintenance technician for the 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry.

"On that occasion the M-88 was out to recover a medium tank whose tread had been snapped by nearly a hundred pound mine," added Mr. Shula. As Big Bertha moved out with the disabled tank through rice paddies west of Tam Ky, another mine exploded. Before the next rice-paddy dike, two more surprise explosions rocked her.

"Those same type explosions had snapped the treat on the tank in tow, but our M-88 hauled on," said Mr. Shula. "Other tanks and APC's in the squadron rolled along safely in single file."

Specialist Four Alfred Drake, Elk View, W.Va., drives the M-88 almost daily for the squadron maintenance section. He controls the mass of power which lies hidden beneath its inch-thick skin of steel.

"Early this year I pulled an APC out of a large underground cistern," said Drake. "It was an area thick with brush northwest of Tam Ky, so thick that the APC crew never saw the well before falling in. When our crew got there, I couldn't even see the track until I got next to the edge."

"All 14 tons of that APC were below ground level, but we pulled it straight up the side of the well," related Drake. "It took less than 15 minutes. No sweat."

Evidently the 56-ton Big Bertha has created highway systems that even Army engineers don't know about, "She goes almost anywhere, and she can hit 46 miles per hour on a smooth straight-a-way," said Drake enthusiastically.

"The ride is surprisingly smooth," added Mr. Shula. "A lot of bothersome bumps go flat under the M-88."

Nomad SGT served 4 armies

By PFC Guy Winkler

CHU LAI (AMERICAL IO) – Twenty years in the Army is a long time but 30 years in four different armies is a different story altogether.

Sergeant First Class Henry Holik, Buffalo, N.Y., who is currently serving as manager of the division's Officers' Club in Chu Lai, started his military career in 1940 as a basic trainee in Flendsburgh, Germany, since he was a native of that country. He served with the German Army for four years until he was taken prisoner of war by the British during the D-Day Invasion.

It was a turning point in his life which proved to be for the better. After three months as a POW, Holik was given the option of remaining a prisoner or becoming a soldier of the Polish Legionaires in England. Having a knowledge of the language, he chose the latter and served with the Legionaires for three years under an assumed name.

"That was undoubtedly the most miraculous event of my life," states SGT Holik. "I was one of 13 left from my entire battalion when we were captured."

He then joined the British Army, a former enemy, in 1948 and remained for two years. "There were never any bad feelings or regrets while I was with the British Army," he says. "As a matter of fact, I'm probably the only soldier in the United States Army who is authorized to wear the British War Medal."

Holik terminated his service with the British Army and decided to make his home in America. He settled in Buffalo and found employment as a baker. While working one day, he asked a friend what was in the building across the street. The structure was decorated with flags and as it turned out, Holik was soon in that building taking the oath of induction into the United States Army as a volunteer.

"With each army, I've had to start from scratch–meaning basic training," muses Holik. "But since I joined the (U.S.) Army, nothing but good things have happened to me."

Sergeant Holik will retire next year after serving proudly for 20 years with the U.S. Army.

"This Army is the best," he asserts. "It's the best supplied army and I have been very happy to serve with it. America has been good to me and I feel that serving in the Army for her is the best way I can think of to return the favor."

Asked how the U.S. Army is different than the other armies he has served with, the replies, "Well, it's sort of a relaxed and easy going army, but it does a hell of a good job. It's relaxed but straight, easy but hard."

On R and R of his last tour in Vietnam, Holik went to Australia and met a woman of Mexican origin. He later married her. He says that after he retires he plans to take his wife and settle in Mexico.

Sergeant Holik's job in the Army has been in food service. He has cooked in four different general's messes and has served several celebrated personalities. While in Korea in 1951, he was flattered when the late Marilyn Monroe ate a whole loaf of his French bread. She later told him that it was "the best break I've ever eaten. Just don't tell my agent I ate the whole thing."

Civil defender kills 49 enemy soldiers

By PFC Joseph F. Alward

FSB BRONCO (11th INF BDE IO) – Viet Cong stand in awe at the man. His exploits as a civil defender in southern Quang Ngai Province approach the legendry. Fifteen scars earned in encountered with insurgents give testimony to his contempt of danger.

Endangering himself countless times in his three years of service with the division, Nguyen Phao, 31, from Dien Truong, has worked closely in ground combat operations with the 4th Battalion, 21st Infantry. He can personnally account for 49 Viet Cong KIAs since 1967. In addition, Phao has been directly responsible for the elimination of approximately 500 guerillas since 1965.

Formerly with the 4th Division in Pleiku, Phao began his close association with the 11th Brigade in 1967. He quickly won the confidence and respect of the battalion and his assistance proved invaluable on search and destroy missions with Recon and LRRP teams.

A veteran of 40 heliborne assaults, Phao's imagination and resourcefulness has led to successful conclusions of many close combat operations against the enemy.

"Phao and the 12 men of his squad of civil defenders from the nucleus of the Mini-CA," explains First Sergeant Cecil L. Zachary, kalispell, Mont., Psyops NCOIC of the 4th Battalion, 21st Infantry. "They've been present on virtually all of our missions. Mr. Phao has been on at least 70 combat operations with me in the past six months alone. His understanding of the ways of the Viet Cong has been extremely helpful to us."

On one occasion, information gathered by Mr. Phao led to a mid-morning insertion into the coastal plains near Chi Trung, seven miles south of Duc Pho. Ensuing action netted eight VC KIAs and four detainees. "Phao commandeered a boat from one of the detained VC;" recalled Zachary. "The last two were fleeing in a boat and Phao and another CD took out in to the ocean in pursuit. Both VC were killed before they could get very far."

Engineers help 1/20th Infantry unit pursue 5 VC guerrillas along QL 1

By SGT Chuck Merdzinski

FSB BRONCO (11th INF BDE IO) – Men from the division's 26th Engineer Battalion stopped their trucks recently on Highway One nine miles north of here and cut off an escape route for five VC guerrillas who were being pursued by Company B, 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry, 11th Infantry Brigade.

Sergeant Ray Sanders, Oblong, Ill., the leader of a search and clear patrol was told to expect contact as he left a day laager position to search for a rice cache believed hidden in the area. The men were searching a hill about a mile and a half from their day position when they spotted five VC evading the area.

One VC was killed instantly with M-79 grenade fire as he was running across a rice paddy. The engineers were alerted by the blast and stopped their trucks to fire at the VC as they attempted to cross the Redball. Said Sergeant Sanders, "The engineers were instrumental in the success of the patrol because they forced the VC back into the rice paddies."

Specialist Four Tony Flores, Santa Clara, Calif., brought his element to the area to help in the search. After an hour, Specialist Flores found one of the VC in a village being treated for minor wounds from M-79 shrapnel. The guerrilla later revealed to South Vietnamese authorites that he had thrown his SKS assault rifle into a flooded rice paddy as he was attempting to escape. The next day Popular Force soldiers found an AK-47 in the rice paddy at the initial site of engagement.

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Division soldier teaches Viet students English

By SP4 Terry Williamson

LZ BAYONET (198th INF BDE IO) – Every Tuesday and Thursday the eyes of over 100 Vietnamese students strain to see the doorway of their classroom at the Binh Son Public School for their newly acquired English teacher.

The teacher, whose reception is so eagerly awaited, is an NCO from the division's 198th Infantry Brigade.

Sergeant Douglas Nichols, Charlotte, N.C., civil affairs NCO of 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry, spends two mornings every week to help Vietnamese students with their pronounciation of English.

"It's the most rewarding thing I've done since I've been in Vietnam," Sergeant Nichols said. "The kids are so eager to learn, and, because I am American, they are fascinated with the class."

Father Thiep, principal of the school and teacher of English and civics, conceived the idea, and states that it has made his students more aware of their pronounciation, and has given them a much keener appreciation of the subject.

When the idea came to Father Thiep, he went through battalion channels to procure a man for the job. Sergeant Nichols had already done considerable work in the MEDCAP program at the orphanage at Binh Son, and was well known to the staff of the school. He seemed to be a natural for the job in the eyes of the teachers and, most important of all, he was more than willing to tackle the job.

"It was something that I really wanted to do, and I'm glad everyone concerned is happy with the arrangement we made with the school," Nichols said.

The language barrier has been no problem to Nichols. "It is the main concern of the school for me to help the students with true pronounciation, and they feel that if the students can hear an American speak to the class and let them repeat the phrases, they will learn to speak clearly," he said.

Two classes are taught each Tuesday and Thursday morning by Nichols. Each class contains about 50 students, so during the week he faces about 200 students. The school has more that 1000 students, ranging from elementary grades to high school, and English is a subject all the children receive.

Sergeant Nichols has become quite a celebrity since taking over his new job. Whenever he appears at the school, a murmur of excitement and anticipation fills the air.

"When Sergeant Nichols is late for some reaon, the children get very anxious, and you have to assure them that he will come," said Father Thiep. "They are very glad to receive him, and it is the highlight of the week for them."

The normal class starts off with the traditional greeting between the American teacher and the Vietnamese students. He says "good morning" to the class and they bow and repeat his greeting in English. Nichols then reads passages from the students' English textbook, and the students repeat each phrase after him. When the reading is completed, Nichols pronounces some of the words that the children have been having difficulty with for the last week.

"The students have trouble pronouncing the 'th' sounds in our language," Nichols observed. "But they are very eager to show me that they can do well. They are all smiles when you compliment them."

"My students can't wait for Sergeant Nichols to come," said Mr. Sang, teacher of English, geography, Vietnamese and history at the school. "They want more teachers like him so they can have these type of classes more often."

Nichols' teaching chores are in addition to his regular duties and preparation for his classes have to be done in his spare time. But the rewards he receives make the extra effort worthwhile.

"I actually think I get more out of the classes than the kids do," Nichols said. "They try so hard to please you, and you can see improvement every week."

Nichols' work also has other benefits. Father Thiep's parrish recently presented him with a giant lobster in appreciation for his work with the children.

The story of the fatigue-clad English teacher grows in Binh Son, but it seems that an American NCO is the one who is really looking forward to Tuesday and Thursday mornings.

Regional Forces expertly depart from this division helicopter to prepare for an operation 10 miles northwest of Tam Ky, with support provided by Bravo Troop, 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry. (Photo by SP4 Steven Elschlager)

Weather forecasting essential to division

By PFC Lee Habich

CHU LAI (AMERICAL IO) – Through the years, weather conditions have often been a key factor in determining the eventual success of military operations.

General Washington's heroic struggle through a wretched Valley Forge winter ultimately assured a successful conclusion to the Revolutionary War. Napoleon Bonapart's underestimation of the devastating nature of Russia's frigid winters placed an irrepairable strain on his men. Perhaps the classic example of the importance of weather forecsting in military strategy was General Eisenhower's successful, though unorthodox, storm-ridden Normandy landing.

U.S. military strategy in Vietnam is similarly dependant upon reliable weather forecasting. In the division this responsibility rests on the shoulders of the Air Force Fifth Weather Squadron, a support unit of division headquarters.

The weather staff, directed by Captain Gordon S. Jones, Camp Hill, Penn., recently moved to the weather tower at the Chu Lai airport. The move is part of an operation to fill the vacancy created by the departing Marines who directed the airport operations before their redeployment.

Once the move is completed the weather staff will have the additional responsibility of providing weather bulletins to incoming aircraft as well as maintaining its present liaison with Division Headquarters.

The weather staff currently releases two weather bulletins a day. The bulletins, which cover the entire division AO, are distributed to the various brigade headquarters and to all the aviation companies at Chu Lai.

While it is common knowledge that Vietnam has two types of weather: hot and dry or hot and wet, military operations necessitate a more detailed weather forecast. "As far as the Army is concerned," points out Captain Jones, "the main concern is whether or not it is going to rain and if so, how much? This information is important because the Army is primarily ground oriented."

In addition to Captain Jones, the weather staff has one other weather forecaster, Captain James Morgan. Both have degrees in Meteorology and it is their responsibility to make the weather predictions.

Assisting them are nine Air Force weather observers. The obervers receive 13 weeks of technical training at Chanute Air Force base in Rantoul, Ill., before going out into the field. The greatest source of weather data, however, comes from Tan Son Nhut (AFB) Saigon.

Observers are broken down into Combat Weather Teams consisting of two men each. The staff has teams in Duc Pho and Quang Ngai, which report daily weather observations, It is on the basis of these observations, the information from Tan Son Nhut and their own observations that Jones and Morgan make their forecasts.

Some of the more interesting information the weather staff keeps is in the dorm of yearly temperature and precipitation charts. For example, the yearly rainfall in Chu Lai is 101 inches and the average mean temperature is 80.7 degrees. The mean starting date for the fall monsoons is October 14th with that month having the greatest amount of rainfall of any month in the year. Last year Chu Lai had 52 inches of rainfall in October alone.

Asked about the staff's accuracy Jones replied with typical weatherman tactfullness, "It depends what predictions you're asking about. In some areas we're on the mark 98 percent of the time. In others the forecast reliability factor is 75 to 80 percent. It all depends upon the weather."

Americal has 'human can opener'

By PFC John P. Szaynowski

LZ MARY ANN (196th INF BDE IO) – Without a P-38 (can opener), life in the bush would surely be much more of a problem than it already is, except for Private First Class Juan Finona, Agat, Guam.

This soldier from the 2nd Platoon, Company A, 1st Battalion, 46th Infantry, possesses a rather unique ability. He can open cans with his teeth and he does so with a rather unnerving ease.

Juan attributes his curious can "cracking" capabilities to participation in a popular pasttime of the people of Guam, coconut cracking. "To crack a coconut, "Juan explains," you first grip the out husk with your teeth and start peeling a narrow strip of the husk away in successive layers until you reach the coconut meat."

Coconut cracking has taken on the dimensions of a sport in Guam, with frequent contests held to decide who is the fastest cracker. "A good time is 20 seconds for a young coconut and one minute for an older, tougher coconut," he said. This sport has led to similar contests involving cans of assorted sizes. "My best time for opening a can is four seconds flat," noted Juan.

Juan has been opening cans in this manner sice he was 13 years old, with no apparent adverse effects. He is one soldier to whom the problem of opening cans poses no difficulty.

PFC Juan Finona demonstrates how to open cans without a P-38. He is assigned to Company A, 1st Battalion, 46th Infantry of the 196th Infantry Brigade.
(Photo by PFC John P. Szaynowski)

Draft ends 'Conspiracy'

By PFC Joseph Alward

FSB DEBBLE (11th INF BDE IO) – The efforts of an 11th Infantry Brigade "Jungle Warrior" on this remote firebase have led to a modest revival of the "Peanut Butter Conspiracy" within the division.

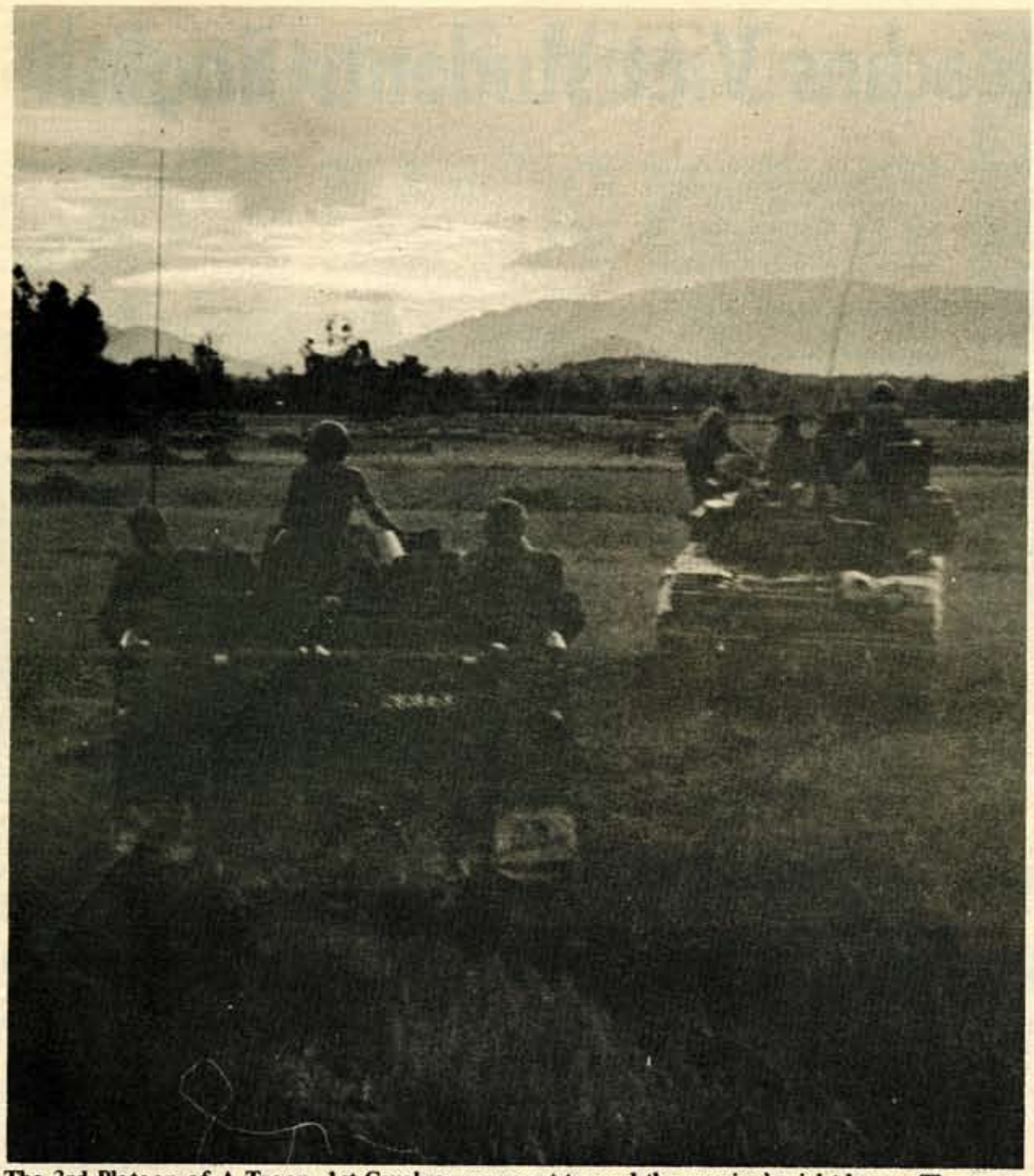
To Specialist Four Edward B. Fralick, Helena, Mont., medic with Company A, 4th Battalion, 21st Infantry, the spirited strains emanating nightly from bunker 17 high atop LZ Debbie are the heartening reminder of better days gone by.

"We had a going thing then," reflected Fralick, former bass guitarist for the disbanded group. "The 'Conspiracy' was playing concerts with Led Zeppelin and Steppenwolf and had just cut its first album. Then there came a letter from my draft board."

"Occasionally there's time to conduct one-man concerts for the guys on my bunker," explained Specialist Fralick who, with the members of his company, rotates onto the battalion firebase every three weeks.

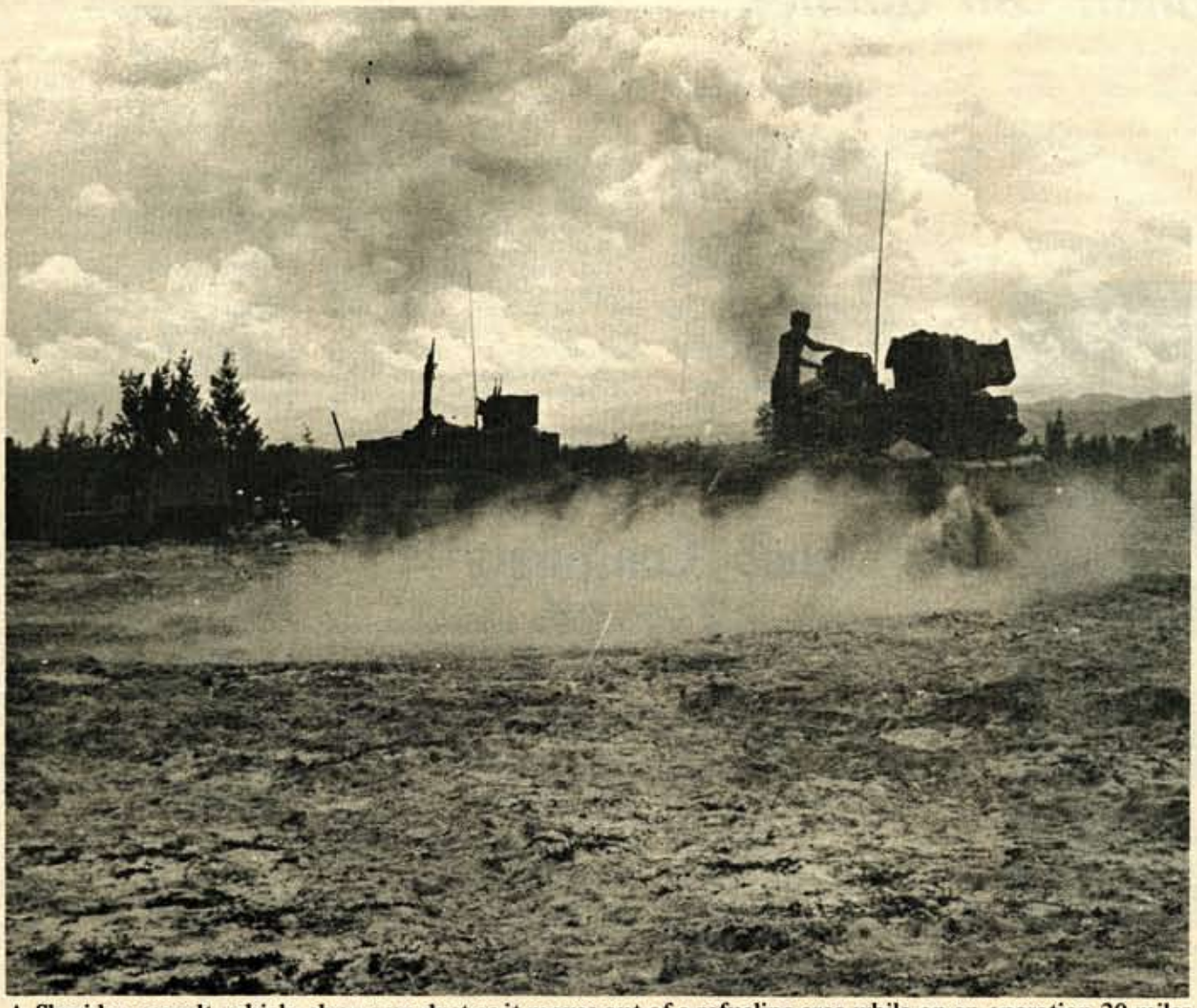
Fralick, a professional musician since 1967, finds that his talent will still draw an occasional admirer. "Most of the guys coming to see me just want to show me their athlete's foot," lamented the medic.

A day in the



The 3rd Platoon of A Troop, 1st Cavalry moves out toward the evening's night laager. The troop was participating in an operation nicknamed "Rock Crusher" in the flatlands of Quang Tin Province, 20 miles south of Da Nang. (Photo by SP5 William J. Hayes)

Armored personnel carriers and Sheridan assault vehicles night of the operation nicknamed "Rock Crusher".



A Sheridan assault vehicle churns up dust as it moves out of a refueling area while on an operation 20 miles south of Da Nang. (Photo by SP5 William J. Hayes)

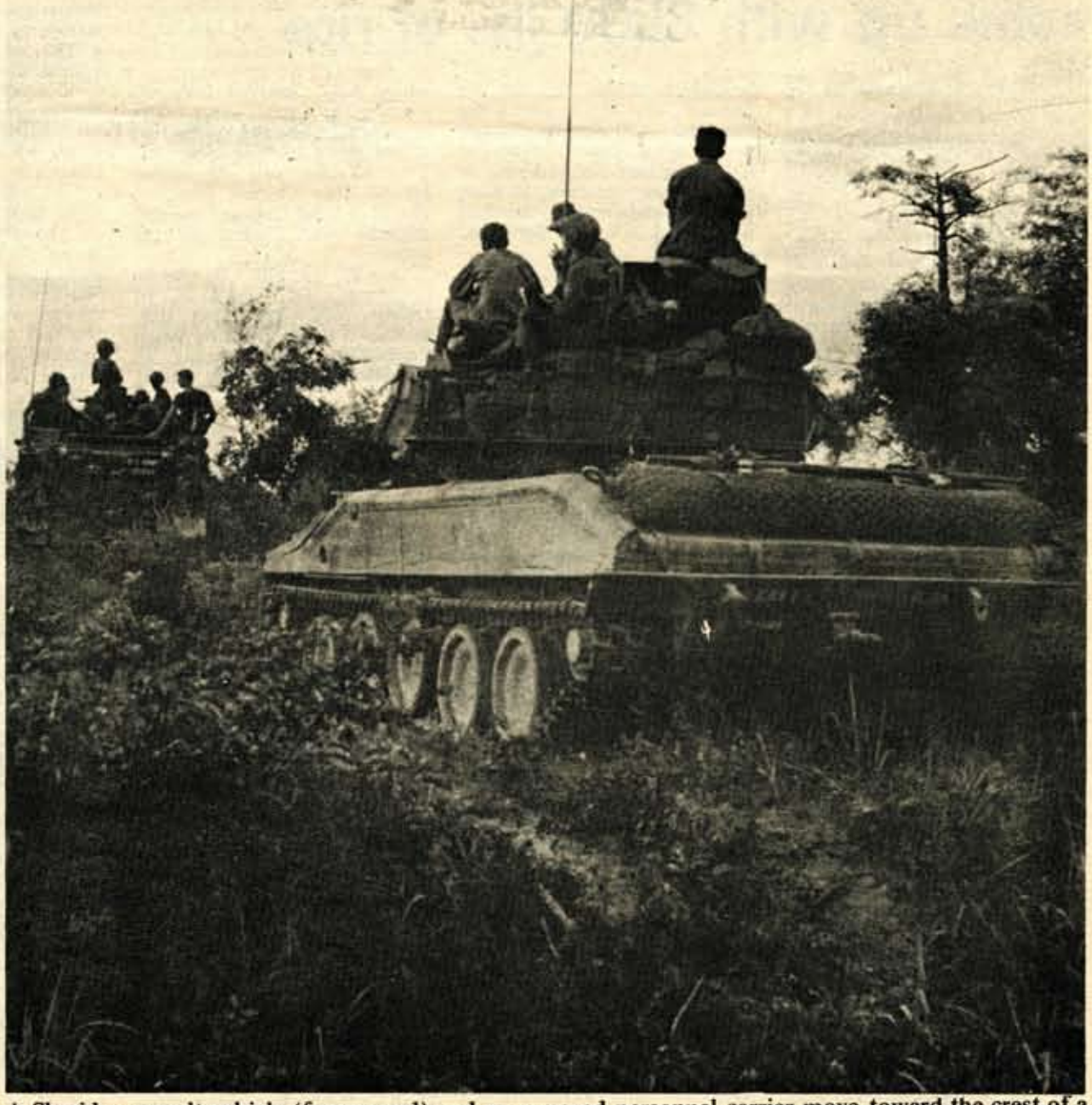
An armored personnel carrier churns through around a field resupply point.

field with 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry

rcle up to form their night laager on the last
(Photo by SP5 William J. Hayes)

An armored personnel carrier races across open ground while on an operation 20 miles south of Da Nang.
(Photo by SP5 William J. Hayes)

lusty coastal sand to its position in the perimeter
(Photo by SP5 William J. Hayes)



A Sheridan assault vehicle (foreground) and an armored personnel carrier move toward the crest of a hill as dusk approaches.
(Photo by SP4 Steven Elschlager)

Web snares 3 Viet Cong

By SGT Louis Miller

LZ BAYONET (198th INF BDE IO) – Infantrymen from the division's 198th Infantry Brigade slowly spun a web around three connecting spider holes and killed three enemy and captured another in a day's activity southeast of Chu Lai recently.

While on a patrol, an element of Echo Recon, 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry, observed four VC entering a deserted village. Before any action was taken, the patrol leader called for a LOH to make an aerial reconnaissance of the area.

After the LOH had reported no sightings and had left the area, members of the patrol removed some of their gear and left guards to secure it. The rest of the element then moved toward the village.

Near the center of the village, the men of the recon element observed a VC evading to the south. Reacting quickly, a member of the patrol brought him down with an M-79 grenade launcher.

Finishing the sweep, the patrol came upon three spider holdes, about 20 feet apart, each a foot and a half in diameter, just outside the village.

"This was where we had last observed the enemy," said First Lieutenant Peter Heesch, Jr., Westfield, N.J., platoon leader for Echo Recon. "So after we received no response from the enemy when we asked them to surrender, we decided to throw several handgrenades into the holes. But we were short of greandes so four men were left to watch the spider holes while the rest went back to their gear for more equipment."

After they had returned, the "Regulars" dropped three grenades into each hole and, when the smoke had cleared, Sergeant Jon Lair, Sikeston, Mo., entered, carrying a flashlight and a pistol.

Just then an enemy soldier fired at Sergeant Lair from within the hole. Lair pulled himself out unscathed and the infantrymen threw several more grenades into the holes. Again Lair tried to enter and again a shot rang out from within. This time, however, when Lair came out of the hole he brought with him a dead VC.

As members of the patrol searched the body, another enemy soldier stood up from one of the spider holes and fired two bursts from his AK-47.

"I was walking toward one of the holes when I heard two bursts," said Lieutenant Heesch. "The next thing I knew leaves were falling all around me and one round had hit the handguards on my rifle. I was not hurt however."

The enemy lowered himself back into the hole, again firing a burst from his rifle, this time hitting a bandoleer of ammunition which was on the ground, setting it on fire. The "Regulars" returned fire, forcing the VC into the hole and again threw grenades into the spider holes. Sergeant Lair attempted to enter again, and once more his advance was halted by enemy fire.

Lieutenant Heesch then radioed for tear gas grenades in an attempt to flush the enemy out of the hole. When they arrived, they were thrown into the three holes and, finally, the enemy emerged from his sancturay with his hands up.

But the enemy wasn't through yet. As Lair went toward him, the VC suddenly grabbed Lair and tried to push him into the hole. After a short struggle, the VC tried to escape, but his effort was useless as the members of the patrol brought him down with small arms.

A few minutes later, the third enemy came out of the spider hole, with his hands up. After the recon element's Kit Carson Scout spoke to him for a few minutes, the VC returned to the spider hole and brought back with him one AK-47, two empty AK-47 magazines, and one canteen cup.

Men of Company A, 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry of the 196th Brigade know the importance of a good foxhole. These soldiers are building their new home on LZ Melon. (Photo by SP4 Jim Logue)

Mosquito nets thwart sappers

By SGT Chuck Merdzinski

FSB BRONCO (11th INF BDE IO) – Soldiers from Comapny B, 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry were in a semi-permanent position on a small hill 12 miles north of Duc Pho recently when 40 NVA soldiers attempted to overrun their compound.

The enemy began their attack with a barrage of 60mm mortar and B40 rocket rounds from locations around the hill. As the rounds rained down, the infantrymen protected themselves from the shrapnel by remaining inside their bunkers, which were made of metal culvert halves and reinforced with seven rows of sandbags. Within seconds 10 sappers cut the perimeter wire and made an attack while mortar rounds were exploding inside the compound.

"We knew it was going to be more than a mortar attack but we thought they'd make their move when the mortars stopped," said Sergeant Ray Sanders, Oblong, Ill. A sapper crawled next to a sandbag wall five feet from the entrance to a bunker where Sanders and Private First Class Tim Brown, Rodondo Beach, Calif., were protecting themselves from the mortar blasts. The sapper flicked a Chicom greande at the entrance of the domeshaped bunker, but it failed to get inside because it hit the mosquito net covering the opening.

"We hit the floor when we saw the sparks from the Chicom grenade coming at us," said Sanders. "Luckily it bounced off the net and landed next to the culvert and some sandbags before it exploded. The shrapnel went over our heads.

Sergeant Sanders and Brown crawled out the other entrance of the bunker into an adjoining fighting position, which was fortified with sandbags. The sapper threw a second grenade into the circular fighting position, but again his attack was in vain. The grenade hit a box and rolled beneath Sergeant Sanders, who instinctively heaved it out.

"I figure that it was the only thing I could do because I thought the sapper was hiding outside waiting for us to come out," explained Sanders. "When we went out to get the sapper, he had already left."

At the same time, mosquito nets on the other side of the perimeter were also foiling the attempts of a sapper who tried to neutralize a bunker containing five infantrymen. The sapper heaved two Chicom greandes at the entrance of the bunker, but the tightly secured net caused them to bounce to the side of the culvert where they exploded. Private First Class Fred Young, Clarksburg, Pa., fired his M16 rifle and killed the sapper while the others rushed out to engage the attackers.

"Nobody panicked and everyone pulled together," remarked Staff Sergeant Ron Morgan, Salem, Ore., platoon leader. "The men did a great job and everything worked out. The mortar platoon had illuminated the area almost immediately after we called them."

In the morning the men found six enemy KIA's, four AK47 assault rifles, one B40 rocket round, 40 Chicom grenades and a 40 pound shape charge that was wired for command detonation.

Patrols uncover enemy bunkers come up with 8800 lbs of rice

(continued from page 1)

in a clearing northwest of Tam Ky but it turned out to be the last meal for five of them. Alpha Company, 3-21 came across the luncheon, killing five and extracting the sixth to LZ Center. Five packs, five AK-47 rifles and eight Chicoms were confiscated.

In another operation, Company D of the "Gimlets" killed one NVA while on a patrol in double canopy jungle northwest of Tam Ky. The enemy was killed about an hour after Delta Company heard voices in the same area. Earlier, Company C, 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry spotted several VC in an area west of Tam Ky. The enemy fled leaving behind 500 pounds of rice and one rifle.

Delta Company, 1-46th Infantry killed one NVA while on a patrol in heavy foliage southwest of Tam Ky. Two Chicom grenades and a pistol belt were captured. Also southwest of Tam Ky, Recon, 1-46th, engaged and killed two NVA in jungle terrain. An extensive search of the area uncovered four enemy structures and one enemy rifle.

Iron Mountain

Early in the week, Alpha Company, 4th Battalion, 3rd Infantry, engaged and killed one NVA soldier in the mountains west of Duc PHo.

Later, in the same location, Alpha Company engaged and killed another NVA. An AK-47 and two Chicom grenades were captured.

Units of the 4th Battalion, 3rd Infantry had a successful day in finds of enemy bunkers, huts and equipment. Operating northwest of Duc Pho, the 3rd Platoon of Alpha Company, discovered 400 pounds of corn, wrapped in plastic. Moments later, the unit found five huts with six wooden beds, building material and several hundred pounds of NVA clothing and equipment.

At the same time, Charlie Company's third platoon found seven bunkers with overhead cover and water-proofing. The 2nd Platoon found two huts and a bunker with personal NVA gear inside. Also found were 50 pounds of corn and a handle from a .51 caliber rifle.

Working in the mountains southwest of Duc Pho, the 3rd platoon of Delta Company, 4-21, observed one NVA at 30 meters in a large bunker complex. The infantrymen engaged and killed the enemy.

Late in the week, two caches of rice were found in the lowlands north of Duc Pho by Delta Company, 1-20. The two finds totalled 8,800 pounds of rice. Meanwhile, Bravo, 4-21, unearthed a base camp and several items of enemy equipment. Searching the mountains southwest of Duc Pho, the 2nd platoon found one NVA body and 35-40 hootches. The unit also found eating utensils, practice Chicom grenades, a mess hall and a furnace. The find was destroyed. The company later found another basecamp, which consisted of 40 huts.

Shark gunships of the 174th Aviation Company engaged and killed one Viet Cong in the lowlands southwest of Quang Ngai City. Later, Recon 3-1 was inserted in the same location where they observed four VC evading to the south. The infantrymen engaged the enemy, killing three and detaining one. Two AK-50's, two .45 caliber pistols, four Chicom grenades, two M25 hand frags and medical supplies were seized in the action.

One VC was killed by Charlie Company, 4-21 southeast of Quang Ngai. The next day, another VC was killed by Bravo Company, 1-20th, during an operation southeast of Quang Ngai.

Tunnel network found

By PFC Joseph F. Alward

FSB BRONCO (11th INF BDE IO) – A soldier's curiosity recently cost the enemy one of the largest and possibly most varied of recent caches found in Southern Quang Ngai Province.

"At first I thought it was just another 'spider hole,'" explained Private First Class Thomas F. Riggs, Ft. Smith, Ark., a rifleman with the 4th Battalion, 21st Infantry. "I decided to check it out anyway and it turned out to be a little bigger than I expected."

Riggs' "spider hole" turned out to be the entrance to one of the most elaborate tunnel and cave complexes found in recent years in the Gimlets area of operations. One of the tunnels subsequently exposed, elbowed its way for 40 meters through heavily-studded rock formations to a spacious chamber capable of easily accomodating a company size complement of soldiers.

"The whole complex was fresh air fed by elaborate venting and escape hatch systems, concealed above by thick vegetation," recalled First Lieutenant Herbert C. Boutwell, Pensacola, Fla., Company C's platoon leader.

"It was apparent that the room had been used as a factory for the construction of grenades. We uncovered 4,000 rolls of green trip wire and monofilament fishing line and enough explosives and blasting caps to put together about 80-100 of those soda can grenades." They even had a sandbag full of shrapnel, which is used to lace the explosives, making it more lethal," continued Boutwell.

In addition, the men uncovered a wide variety of articles, including assorted food, clothing and cooking utensils. "We also found a large amount of medical supplies and propaganda leaflets," added Lieutenant Boutwell.

"I think, though, that the men were happiest with their find of an embroidered picture of Ho Chi Minh."

Trick or treat?

Our unidentified "punkin" seems to enjoy stretching her curvacious form every "witch" way as she goblins up the ol' sol's rays. You warlocks may just be "witchful" thinking, but wouldn't it be nice to drink one of her patented potions from her boiling cauldron.

4th Bn, 3rd Inf kills 11 enemy in last mission before standdown

FSB BRONCO (11th INF BDE IO) – The last mission before standown proved to be very successful for the members of Company D, 4th Battalion, 3rd Infantry, 11th Infantry Brigade.

The division infantrymen netted 11 enemy soldiers in a six-day period while working the mountaious terrain southwest of Duc Pho recently.

The first contact was made late one afternoon when the 2nd Platoon of Company D initiated an ambush with the detonation of a claymore.

"We found a lot of signs of recent enemy activity in the area so we set out our ambushes near a good trail which ran along the side of a ridgeline," reported Sergeant John Cavanaugh, Long Island, N.Y.

It wasn't until 5:00 p.m. that movement was heard on the trail advancing in the direction of the waiting infantrymen.

Anxiously the men initiated the action with the detonation of a claymore and followed it with M-16 fire. At the same time AK fire sprayed the area the men were in and the fire fight was on. Trying to obtain fire superiority the men advanced on line with the M-60 machinegun up front leading the assault while M-79s covered the high ground.

"We fired up the whole area while moving," said Private First Class Vernon Songer, Kansas City, Mo. "When we reached the trail we found two NVA that must have been hit in the initial ambush and 50 meters further down the trail another dead NVA was found."

Company D's 3rd Platoon was next to see action when they netted three NVA while on patrol.

A lot of stored food, recently constructed hootches and a well kept garden were good indications of recent enemy activity in the area the element was working.

The night passed slowly but early next morning voices were heard moving down the trail. After a barrage of machinegun and automatic weapons fire combed the enemy location, the men moved out to check the area.

"As the pointman moved out of the bushes and onto the trail one VC was spotted evading down the trail. We opened up and were lucky enough to get him," said Sergeant Paul Dudley, West Terre Haute, Ind. Two other VC were also found on the trail killed by the patrol. Confiscated from the scene were hand greandes and an officer's belt.

The next day two more VC were added to the company's total as the CP and 81mm Mortar Platoon got into the action.

Acting as the CP for the other platoons the element was set up defensively with claymores out on the trails to protect their position. It was early morning when movement was heard along a trail near the CP's position and the claymores were detonated. Checking out the trail the bodies of two VC were found.

The last kills of the mission came in the early morning when the 1st Platoon of Comapny D sprung its ambush netting the "Mountainmen" two NVA. Carrying one SKS, hand grenades, and canteens, the NVA were moving up a creek bed to the top of a ridgeline when the ambush was sprung.

"After the first indication that the enemy was moving on the trail toward us it seemed like an eternity before they were in front of us so we could open up," said Specialist Four Steven Ball, Newark, N.J. Checking out the area, the platoon discovered both NVA were killed by the ambush.

The Southern Cross candid camera catches PFC Richard Campell, 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry, 196th Infantry Brigade writing a quick note to home. His unit was on a mission west of Tam Ky. Next week the candid camera may catch you! (Photo by SP4 Thomas J. Neville)

Quick thinking nets 11th Bde 3 NVA

By PFC James Tabata

FSB BRONCO (11th INF BDE IO) – Alertness, quick thinking and a little luck were the ingredients which helped infantrymen of the 11th Brigade net three NVA and confiscate two AK-47 rifles while working eight miles southwest of Duc Pho recently.

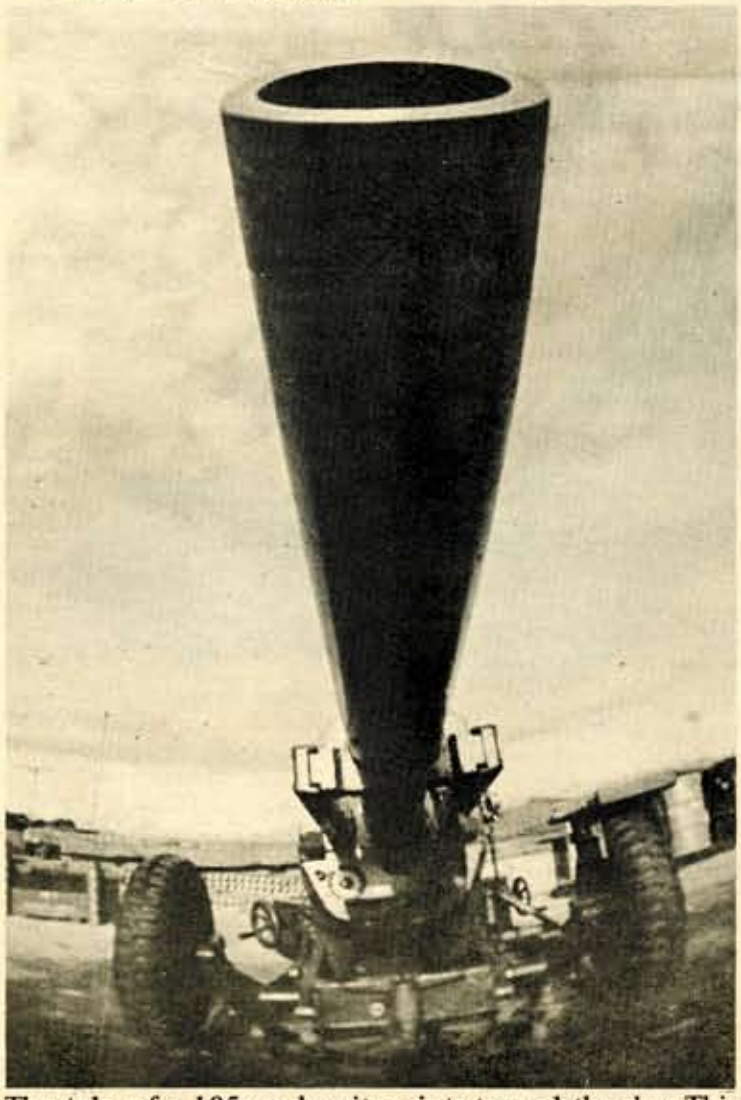
Company B, 4th Battalion, 3rd Infantry was moving into a new area of operations when the action took place. Trying to avoid the main trails, the company was moving along a ledge contouring the side of a mountain. Through the thick jungle a small river could be seen. The company had been moving all morning and the word came up from the CP to stop and break for chow.

"We had just finished eating and were getting ready to move out again when word came back that Lieutenant Riggs, Wilton, Conn., had spotted four NVA walking along the river in the valley below. I remember how quiet it got as we moved around, getting the 60s up front and finding an open spot to fire from," said Specialist Four William Goode, Whitehead, Ind.

The men waited for the unsuspecting enemy soldiers to move in closer to their position. Suddenly the firepower of M-60 machine-guns, M-16 rifles and M-79 grenade launchers was unleashed and after the firing had ceased three bodies could be seen along the river bank below.

"It was raining hard at the time, so it was rough making our way down to the base of the hill," said Goode. "We knew we got at least three of them but we were also cautious since we originally spotted four. The first platoon was sent down to check out the area while the rest of the company remained behind to pull security from the side of the hill."

Setting out security to the sides and rear the first platoon slowly moved in to check out the area. Three dead NVA lay on the side of the bank and confiscated from the scene were two AK-47s, two magazines of AK ammo, one Chicom grenade and two knives and a poncho.



The tube of a 105mm howitzer juts toward the sky. This artillery piece of the division's D Battery, 1st Battalion, 14th Artillery is one of the most important support weapons available to the 198th Infantry Brigade. (Photo by SP5 A.C. Barnett)

Squirrel adopted by 4th-3rd

FSB SAN JUAN HILL (11th INF BDE IO) – In Vietnam dogs make up the majority of mascots for various units.

The men of Recon, 4th Battalion, 3rd Infantry, however, decided that a squirrel which was captured in action might be fun to have around, so the 11th Infantry Brigade soldiers nursed him back to health.

It was late at night and the men were in their night defensive position when the squirrel bestowed himself on the recon element.

"A small animal ran right in front of me and straight into my hootch," said Private First Class Darrell Rasnake, Kingsport, Tenn. "I looked in and there lying on my poncho liner was a squirrel."

The squirrel was very weak and seemed a bit shell-schocked from a bomb strike which had taken place earlier. Being fed milk from the cream packages in C-rations, and being cared for by PFC Rasnake, the squirrel regained his strength and became attached to the recon platoon.

"Airborne Charlie", as the men named him, was carried by PFC Rasnake in one pouch of his ruck sack. He slept in a LRRP bag and t-shirt and was allowed to roam around free during the day.

Airborne Charlie covered a lot of terrain as a member of the recon platoon during the 20 days he spent with the element. He was credited with two combat assaults and a convoy covering the terrain from Southern Brigade Recon Zone and as far north as Quang Ngai City.

"We let Airborne Charlie roam around us as he pleased and he would always come back, but a couple of days before the last mission ended he took off and we never saw him again. He regained his strength so he will be able to live in the bush. He was a real nice pet and we were sorry to see him go," reflected PFC Rasnake.

MARS man serves div

By SP4 Thomas J. Neville

FSB BRONCO (AMERICAL IO) – If phone bills were issued to Sergeant Edward C. Poole, Wichita, Kan., in Vietnam, his would cite about 1,000 long distance calls per month and long distance in this case means half way around the world.

Sergeant Poole is known as "the man from MARS" in the division's 11th Brigade. MARS doesn't means a planet or a chocolate bar here. It signifies the Military Affiliate Radio System, a radio-telephone service which telephonically reunites U.S. servicemen with their families and friends at home.

A former television engineer for KARD-TV in Wichita, Poole said his first class license with radar endorsement "has been pretty helpful to me in this job in Vietnam."

Living on top of LZ Montezuma, which offers a clear view of the South China Sea and the rugged mountains of Vietnam's Central Highlands, Poole supervises the complex equipment, which beams signals of cheer to the United States.

"My station is the only one in Vietnam that can make patches from the forward firebases," he explained. This means that soldiers stationed in distant jungle areas have the opportunity to phone home when they return to their isolated basecamp.

The only charge involved is the usual collect telephone fee from the receiving point in the United States to the serviceman's home.

Placing a call takes about 30 minutes and each call lasts three minutes. "When I'm listening to a conversation, I get a feeling of satisfaction. It's a privilege to help the guys out," he added. "I don't feel like an eavesdropper when I monitor the calls and all the guys are very appreciative," said Poole.

For his work between January and June of this year, Poole was awarded the Bronze Star for meritorious service.