Giant Cordon Tightens On Enemy

SOUTHERN CROSS
AMERICAL DIVISION

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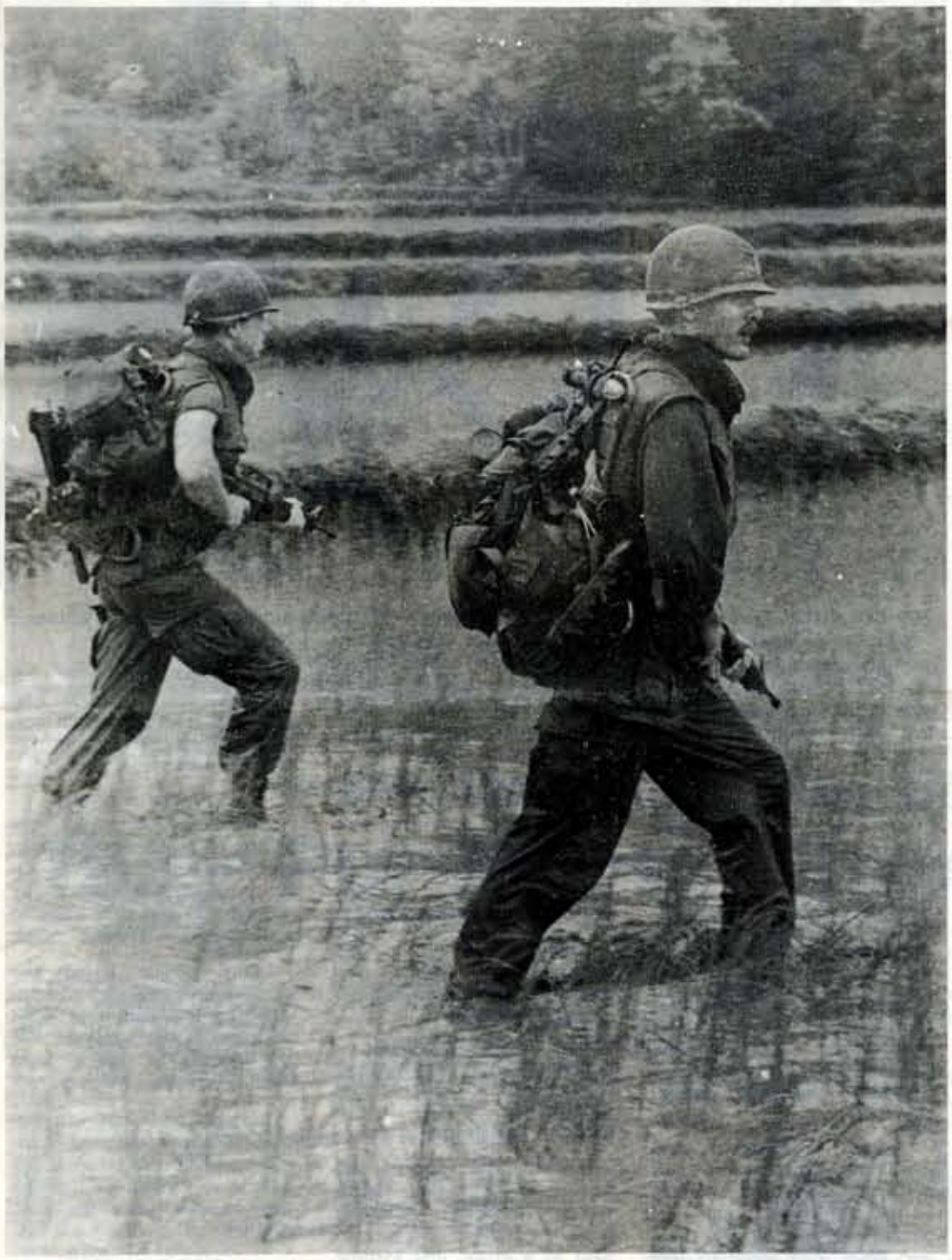

MOVING OUT ON LINE through a monsoon rain and across a flooded rice paddy, these two infantrymen are part of the giant cordon in Operation Russell Beach. The soldiers are members of D Co., 5th Bn., 46th Inf., 198th Bde. (Photo by PFC Art Noel, 198th Inf. Bde.)

Cripple NVA Coastal Efforts

11th Uncovers NVA Camps

DUC PHO—The continued discovery of NVA base camps west of here, by probing soldiers of the 11th Inf. Bde., has denied a valuable rear zone to NVA coastal operations in southern I Corps.

So far, during Operation Vernon Lake II, the "Jungle Warriors" have unearthed 73 enemy base camps in an area southwest of Quang Ngai City.

D Co., 4th Bn., 21st Inf. recently found a probable NVA division-level headquarters and base camp 22 miles west of Duc Pho.

The camp covered nearly half a grid square (250,000 square meters) and contained three separate complexes of 50 structures.

NVA Leave In Hurry

CPT Robert E. Winn (Rankin, Tex.), D Co. commander, stated that the base camp was the most sophisticated one he had ever seen.

No contact was made with the enemy, but it was apparent that the camps had been occupied in the previous 24 hours.

Hub Of Activity

1LT James H. Elliot Jr. (Smithfield, Va.), 1st Plt. leader, noted, "When my element went in the lowest camp, they found pots on the tables in the officers mess with fresh flowers and a freshly-plucked chicken in the kitchen."

The camps were connected by well-worn paths, with

(Continued on Page 3)

Combined Forces Push Against VC Stronghold On Batangan Peninsula

CHU LAI—In one of the largest pacification operations of the Vietnam war, Operation Russell Beach, Americal soldiers, Marines, and ARVNs continue to tighten their cordon around the trapped Viet Cong stronghold on the Batangan Peninsula, 10 miles northeast of Quang Ngai City.

Beginning on Jan. 13, the 5th Bn., 46th Inf., 198th Inf. Bde. and the 4th Bn., 3rd Inf., 11th Inf. Bde., together with two battalions of Marines, two battalions of the 2nd ARVN Div., and Navy Swift Boats established an 11½-mile land cordon and sea blocking force to encircle the peninsula.

★ ★ ★

River Is Crossed By 'Old Guard' In Initial Thrust

LZ South—The 2nd Plt. pushed off from the grassy beach in rubber boats and paddled across a gently flowing river. This was the first thrust into the enemy dominated area and the initial movement towards collapsing the ever-tightening cordon in the Batangan Peninsula as part of Operation Russell Beach.

The objective lay hidden in the large clump of trees on the westernmost edge of the unnamed island in the Song

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The operation began as a twin-pronged strike at the peninsula when one company of Marines landed on the beach. The rest of the almost 9,000-man force walked or were flown in and moved on line less than 10 meters apart.

Trap Two VC Battalions

The cordon, which winds across hills and rice paddies now flooded by monsoon rains, locked in an estimated two VC battalions, which have been using the area as a staging and resupply point.

Laced with tunnels, caves and fortifications, the peninsula has not been under effective GVN control for almost 20 years.

During the early phases of Operation Russell Beach after the cordon was established, PSYOP (Psychological Operations) leaflets and helicopter broadcasts urged civilians to evacuate the peninsula through check points along the cordon.

Cordon Begins Closing

After four days of PSYOP saturation, 2,449 refugees had moved through the cordon to small processing centers behind the cordon and then to a central holding and interrogation center near Quang Ngai City.

After four days, Operation Russell Beach (and the Marine Operation Bold Mariner) had accounted for 21 VC killed and six individual weapons captured. The Americal force, named Task Force Cooksey for its commander, BG Howard H. Cooksey, assistant division commander, had killed 10 VC and taken three weapons.

Russell Beach—1st Day

1/6 Receives Valor Award

CHU LAI — "For extraordinary heroism while engaged in military operations," the 1st Bn., 6th Inf., 198th Inf. Bde. recently became the first unit in the division to win the U.S. Army Valorous Unit Award.

While conducting a search operation south of the hamlet of Lo Giang in Quang Nam Province on Feb. 7, 1968, C Co. was pinned down by a heavy attack from an enemy force of unknown size.

A Co. moved from north of the hamlet to help out, but came under a barrage of small arms, rocket, and mortar fire.

The lead element held their ground to cover the withdrawing remainder of the company, and engaged the Viet Cong in savage hand-to-hand combat to halt a human wave attack that followed the barrage.

Their inspired fighting temporarily repulsed the enemy, and enabled the rest of the company to regroup and launch a counterattack which drove the VC back into the hamlet.

At the same time, B Co. arrived and thrust in to help cut the beleaguered C Co. in repelling the enemy.

The three companies then completely destroyed the Viet Cong force, killing more than 250.

Religion and You

A Modern Parable

By Chaplain (CPT) JAMES W. COSNER
198th Inf. Bde.

One day an accident occurred when a man driving an obsolete car hit a hole in the road. The car was wrecked and the man badly injured. It was obvious, from the man's physical features, that he was a derelict of society, a foreigner, and many would rather have seen him dead than alive.

A leading citizen, and clergyman of First Church, Metropolis came driving by in his 1969 Chrysler, saw the wreckage and the man, and hurried on by. One of the lay leaders in a large church also came along and saw the situation. He was greatly concerned and muttered something about people never learning, as he drove by.

Later, a man who was looked upon as an idealist by the righteous and established people of the area, came driving by in his 1964 Chevy. He stopped, looked over the wreck, applied some first aid to the injured man, placed him in the car, and took him to a hospital.

Jesus, at the conclusion of the parable of the "Good Samaritan," says, "Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell...?"

We are serving in an Asian country that, by our standards, is destitute and torn by hostility, prejudice, and distrust. A little compassion, well-placed concern, and a discerning helping hand here and there by each one of us can go a long way. How about it? Are you big enough to crawl out of your shell of complacency, disinterest, or selfishness to "do to others as you would have them do to you"?

Jesus says to us, using the example of the good Samaritan, "Go and do likewise."

VIETNAM-STYLE

By SFC LARRY BABITTS

Many Beliefs In One

Nearly two-million Vietnamese are followers of a religious sect known variously as the Cao Dai, the Third Amnesty of God, or the Eye of God.

The popularity of the Cao Dai (it's most common name) is a fairly recent phenomenon, having been founded early this century by a former colonial administrator, Le Van Trung.

It is an attempt to universalize the religions of south Asia, and so incorporates facets and doctrines of the many churches throughout this part of the world.

The physical aspects of Cao Dai churches and cathedrals are unique. In the nave of their buildings is placed a picture of a single, staring eye—"the eye of God." This symbol is quite familiar to most Americans, as it is used by the Masonic Order and appears on the reverse side of our green money to signify the omniscience and omnipresence of a Supreme Being.

The many religions of the world have affected Cao Dai, not only in tenets and precepts, but even in its architecture: Church towers from Europe, open floor spaces from the mosques, and statues of Cao Dai "saints" such as Confucius, the father of Asian ethics, Jesus, Buddha, Lao-tzu, the poet-philosopher, and the Hindu dieties Brahma, Vishnu and the many-armed Siva.

The Cao-Dai has a central organization, modeled after the Roman Catholic Church with certain modifications, so as to more successfully complement oriental thought.

The first bureau is known as the "Executive Corps", headed by a pope, who controls temporal power. It is believed that he is not really a living person, but a reincarnation of the venerated Vietnamese poet, Ly Thai Bach.

The second bureau is charged with religious affairs and church dogma and is led by the senior living Cardinal—who may be a female. The third ruling group is the "Charity Corps" that cares for the poor and sick of the Cao Dai community.

The basis of Cao Dai-ism is the belief that there is only one true and sanctifying belief, and that the Creator has scattered these seeds of truth over the many centuries over the several continents. It also is believed that the message of all of the world's great religious leaders are forms of the great truth.

In the words of Cao Dai's founder, Le Van Trung, "in their depths, all religions come together."

Heritage: Our Unseen Ally

By SP4 JOHN W. HEATH

Mud. It's everywhere. And the days are always too hot and the nights too cold, the mosquitos too persistent, the last letter from home too long ago.

You ask yourself the perennial question voiced by all GIs in all wars: "Why Me?"

Part of the answer lies in the past—the heritage of individual sacrifices made by Americans on other shores.

A Special Month

During February, we honor the birthday of two of those countrymen whose contributions to our heritage strengthened the nation in critical times.

George Washington and Abraham Lincoln did not perform their heroic roles in battles far from home, but hardships endured by them and their men were no less severe.

Revolutionaries Fight Cold

Their frost-numbed feet warmed only by thin rags, Washington's men at Valley Forge suffered from elements quite the opposite of the oppressive heat of Vietnam.

Undoubtedly, they voiced the same complaints we do today, and would much rather have been home by a warm hearth sipping ale.

But they knew the friendly fire was theirs only if they guarded its flame from extinction. That thought was enough to warm the icy snow biting at their toes.

Washington Chooses Freedom

Breaking ties with an English past, the future first president was also making a notable sacrifice.

Washington must have reflected on how much easier it would have been to court the British nobility in the halls of wealth and luxury.

Instead, he staked his future on a rag-tag army whose foremost weapons were the twitter of a piccolo, beat of a drum, and inspiration of a new flag.

America Quakes

The heritage forged by the Revolutionary Army threatened to crumble less than a hundred years later when hatred festered between North and South.

In the bloodiest of all wars, Americans in blue and gray suffered starvation and horror-filled battles for different concepts of freedom.

A Troubled Leader

Conscience torn by the killing of brother by brother, Abraham Lincoln sorrowfully pursued the policy he judged was the only balm to heal a nation ripping apart.

Many people hated the somber president for his unwavering dedication to what he knew in the long run was the course of action that would save our country.

Bloodstained but strengthened, the American heritage survived the internal upheaval to sustain us through three major wars the next century.

Inherit Legacy

Recently, a basic training commander asked a throng of new recruits seated before him to raise their hands if their fathers or relatives had ever served in battle.

A sea of hands sprang up as virtually every man acknowledged the tradition he followed.

Your Invisable Buddy

As you slosh through mud up to your thighs, or shiver at night under a clammy poncho, it's reassuring to know you're not the only one.

The spirit of men at Concord, Shiloh, and Pork Chop Hill stands right alongside, lending a hand, letting you know you're not alone.

SOUTHERN CROSS
AMERICAL DIVISION

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Find NVA Base Camps

(Continued from Page 1)

other paths leading into the mountains.

"Judging by the trails leading into the area," said SP4 Lewis Miller (Alexandria, Ohio), "it looks like the base camp was popular with the NVA."

Training Center Found

The most recent base camp discovery in the Duc Pho area was made by B Co., 4th Bn., 21st Inf. It consisted of 16 well-constructed huts.

Used as a training area for VC, the NVA base camp contained huts of varying sizes, with some three or four feet in the ground.

Some of the hootches had walls with three feet of dirt between logs for fortification.

Well-Camouflaged

Dominating the camp was a large mess hall with a cooking house where smoke was filtered out through tunnels to prevent discovery from the air.

Using the best camouflage techniques, the NVA built their huts around trees, and gathered logs from a wide area to prevent evidence of construction.

A few structures were made from pre-fabricated materials.

The camp was so well-camouflaged that B Co. had walked by the same area a week earlier and did not detect the site.

Discover Instruction Devices

Evidence of the training area mounted as the "Gimlets" found documents on hand grenades and anti-tank mines, including detailed descriptions and drawings on how to construct the mines, 20 Chicom grenade booby traps, and 500 pounds of nitro starch explosive.

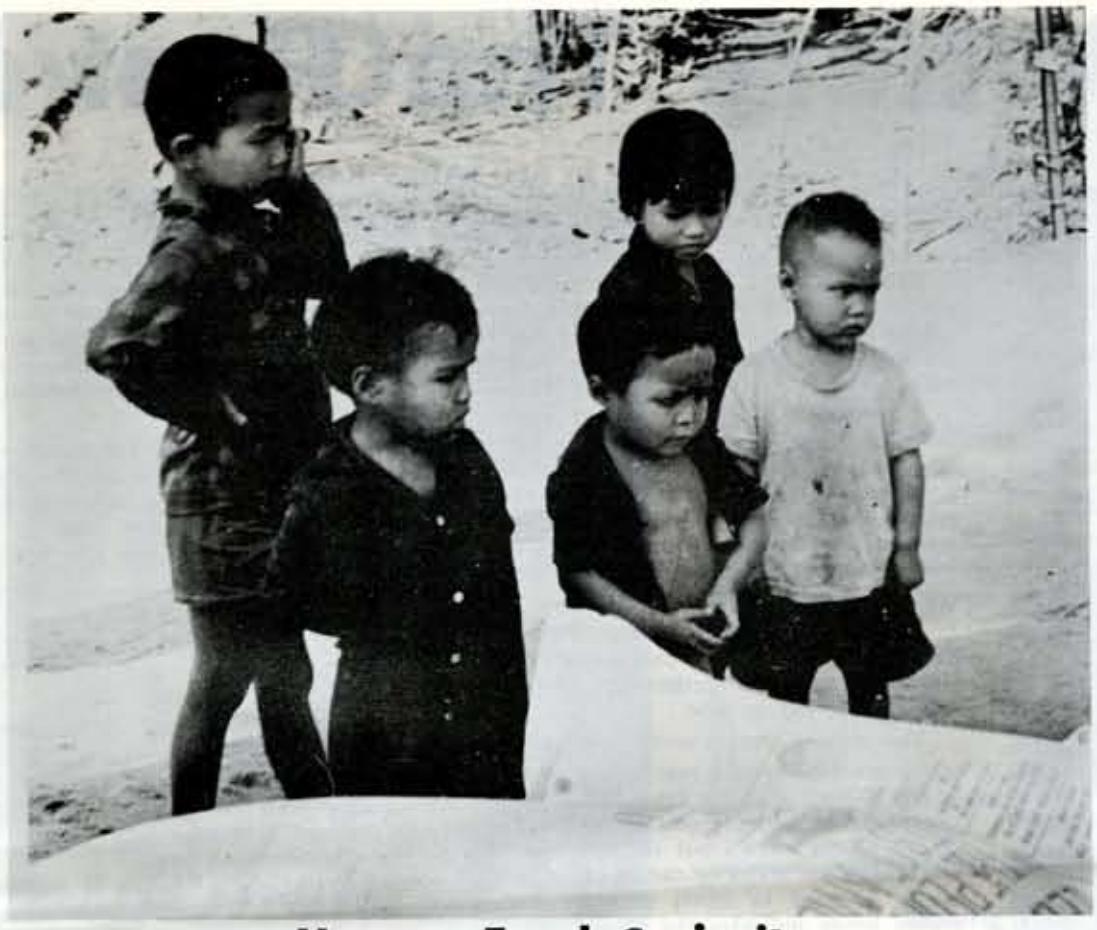
When B Co. moved out of the area, there was nothing left for the NVA to come back to.

C Co., 26th Engr. Bn., used 500 pounds of C-4 explosive to destroy the huts, some of which had stone walls 36-inches thick.

Discoveries Hurt NVA

The area in which the enemy structures were unearthed has long been an unmolested sanctuary for the NVA.

Recently, however, elements of the 11th Bde. have moved in to drive the enemy out, forcing him to leave many supplies and weapons.



Hungry-Eyed Curiosity

Refugee children look on as sacks of wheat are distributed to the people of their tiny hamlet outside Duc Pho. The distribution is part of the 11th Inf. Bde. civil affairs program. (Photo by PFC Karl Brendel, 11th Inf. Bde.)

Reclaim Homes From VC

Village Returns To Thrive Again

LZ BALDY — The South Vietnamese flag is flying high again over Phu Tho—this time to stay.

Three years ago the people and chief of this small village, located 20 miles west of Tam Ky, were overrun by VC and forced to flee.

They headed north and south from enemy terrorism to the Vietnamese government security areas of Moc Bai and Que Son.

'Chargers' Lend Hand

Now with the assistance of a battalion from the 196th Inf. Bde., Phu Tho again will be a thriving community consisting of more than 1,200 people located in three large hamlets.

The village is presently the focus of a new and intensive pacification effort by "Legionnaires" of the 2nd Bn., 1st Inf.

"We have been working toward this phase for the past five months," said MAJ Jerry E. Rowe (Quincy, Calif.).

Rice Remains

"During the rice denial program, rice was purposely left in that area for the people to harvest," he continued.

"We back this move because we feel the people are ready. There is a strong desire on their part to return to their village."

Organize PF

A group of former residents with a strong desire to resettle in their old homes have formed a Popular Forces (PF) platoon which is responsible for security in conjunction with the village relocation.

The platoon runs periodic patrols through the area accompanied by a "Legionnaire" rifle squad to insure communications and artillery support.

The first objective is to root out the VC infrastructure among the people who remained behind when the enemy gained control of the village.

Potent PFs

"The Phu To group is the best PF platoon we have ever operated with," said LTC Sinclair L. Melner (Reno, Nev.), 2/1 commander.

"It must be the desire to go back," he noted. "They have rooted out more VC infrastructure from their area of responsibiilty than we have ever gotten anywhere else."

Since early November, 23 Viet Cong have been killed or captured by the platoon.

Leaders Aid People

In the past three months a 12-man village committee composed of the village chief, his assistant, and 10 hamlet chiefs has regularly visited the old and new village sites working with the people and explaining the program.

In late November, the second of a pair of coordinated operations, a cordon and search by two "Legionnaire" rifle platoons, three PF platoons, and the Phu Tho group, disclosed three VC suspects.

MEDCAP Initiated

Then the village committee PSYOP team and a combined Que Son/U.S. MEDCAP team went to work among the assembeld people, explaining the program, hearing grievances, and aiding the sick.

More than 250 received medical treatment and 180 children were bathed. Large quantities of soap, candy, and food stuffs were distributed to the villagers.

Building Underway

Construction of the village site already has begun. An area has been cleared and a foundation laid for a bunkered compound and fortified village headquarters.

This defendable core around which the village can reconstitute itself is essential if the people are to maintain their security against the threat of VC reprisals.

"Once we build a village headquarters and perimeter, we can say that at least part of the village is controlled by the government of Vietnam because we physically occupy the ground and we can give the people some protection," said CPT George E. Hamm (Daniels Road, W. Va.), the 2/1 civil affairs officer.

Courageous Chief

Perhaps the strongest factor motivating the Phu Tho people's struggle to return to their old homes is their 52-year-old village chief Ngo Thuong, a short leathery brown man with an infectious grin and persistent determination.

Thuong is mindful of the dangers involved. He has become a prime target for VC retaliation, but it doesn't matter to him.

"We have returned," he said, "and we are here to stay—both ourselves and the South Vietnamese flag."

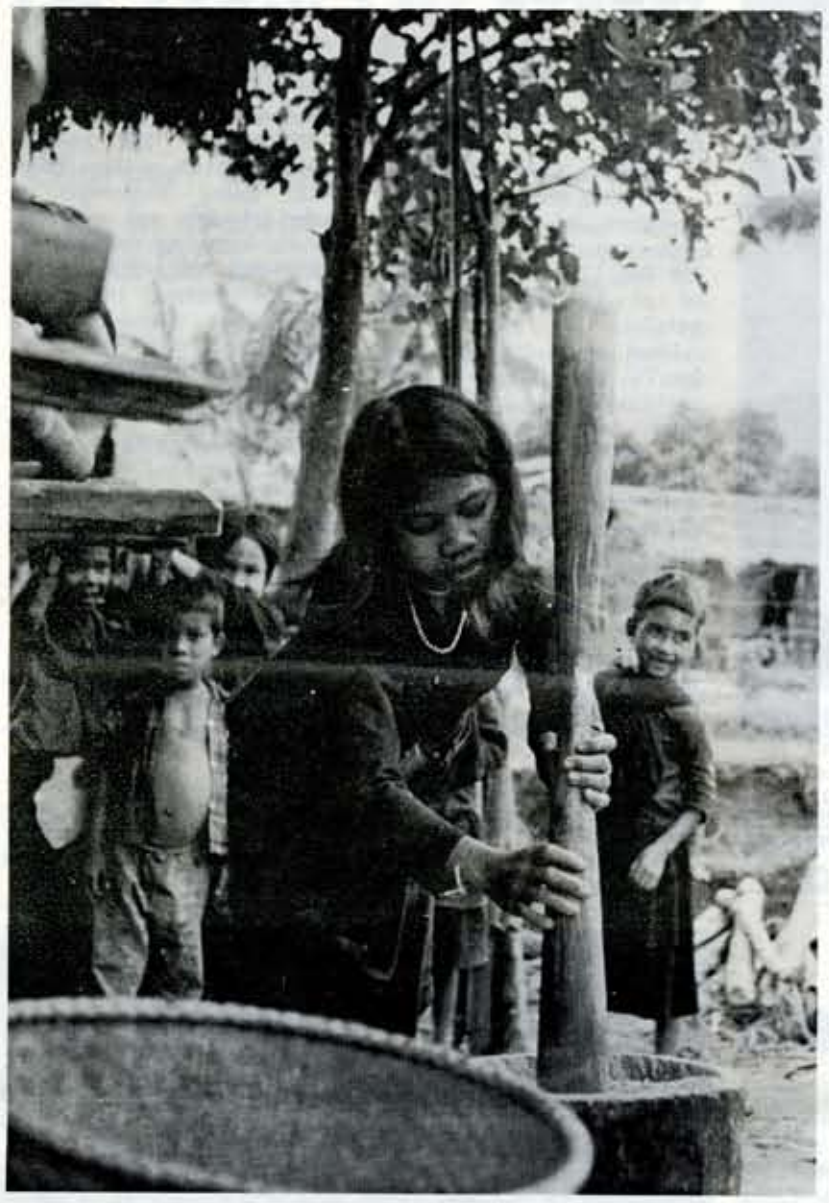
Proud VIP

Two children from a village near Duc Pho turn in two U.S. 195mm rockets during an 11th Inf. Bde. Voluntary Informant Program (VIP). (Photo by SP4 Tony Swindell, 11th Inf. Bde.)

A Village Where The Past N

Story By SFC LARRY BABITTS

Photos By BABITTS and CPT CARY S. SKLAREN



MINH LONG CIDG—Old customs and traditions die hard among the Hre (pronounced Ray), a Montagnard tribe residing in the southern portion of the Americal's AO near the village of Minh Long.

A slash-and-burn agricultural people, the Hre still measure their wealth in terms of water buffalo, rice lands, and pottery. And despite the influence of the central government, polygamy is still practiced among the wealthier tribesmen and poisoning remains a method of solving family feuds.

Displayed in each Montagnard's "long house" are the family jewels—pots and jars—in brass or in earthenware, decorated or plain, old or new.

The size of their thatched-roof house, which must be rebuilt every three or four years, is itself a status symbol. The location of the house in respect to the location of the village chief's hut and whether or not prestigious stairs or the more common ladder is used to climb into the high-stilted house indicates the importance of the owner.

Small grass tufts atop each end of the roof indicate a high social position for the head of the household.

The Hre live in a society in which almost all of the manual work is done by the woman, a woman who may have been purchased from her parents by the man for his wife. Consequently, this tribe is among the few primitives who regard the birth of a daughter with joy.

They know that she eventually will bring money or valuable rice-lands or buffalo in trade for her hand in marriage.

The Hre are a proud people who can trace their ancestry through an oral tradition to the period following the Great Flood. The spirit "Yang" chose to save their common ancestor by ordering her to safety on the top of one of the only two mountains in the world not submerged by the onrushing waters.

On one mountain were 100 Vietnamese who had been in boats when the flood began. On the other were only a woman, a dog and their son, who became the legendary forebearers of the Hre tribe.

Even this ancient creation legend contains references to the hard life led by the founder of the Hre tribe who had to struggle for survival against nature's great odds, living on roots.

By contrast, according to this story, the Vietnamese were not only foresighted enough to have been in boats when the flood began, but they were surrounded by frogs for food, a delicacy much enjoyed by both the Montagnard and the Vietnamese.

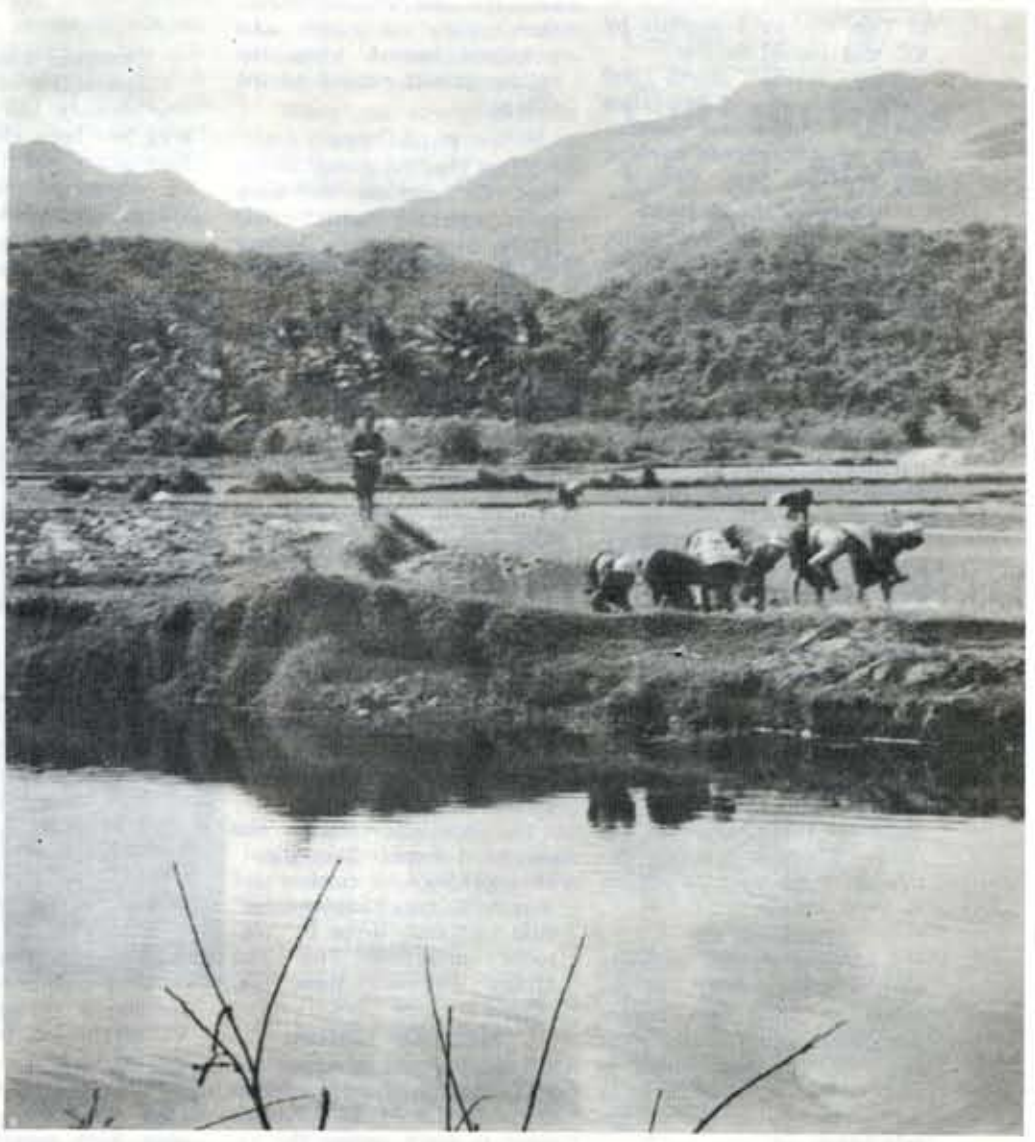
Information about the actual origin of the Hre tribe, as opposed to the legends, is practically non-existent. Very little is known even now about the tribe's history in modern times, except for recent years when the Hre, like many other tribespeople, were drawn into the struggle between the French and the Viet Minh and then into the conflict between the two Vietnams.

The Hre are not aggressive or warlike. Like most Southeast Asian aborigines, they are rather timid and spend their lives in a world governed by hostile spirits associated with topographic features, insects, birds, or animals.

However, these people will fight, and fight well, when attacked or otherwise provoked and sufficiently motivated.

Husking rice, today the same as yesterday

In this male utopia, women do most of work



Hre tribesmen work rice fields in "The Valley

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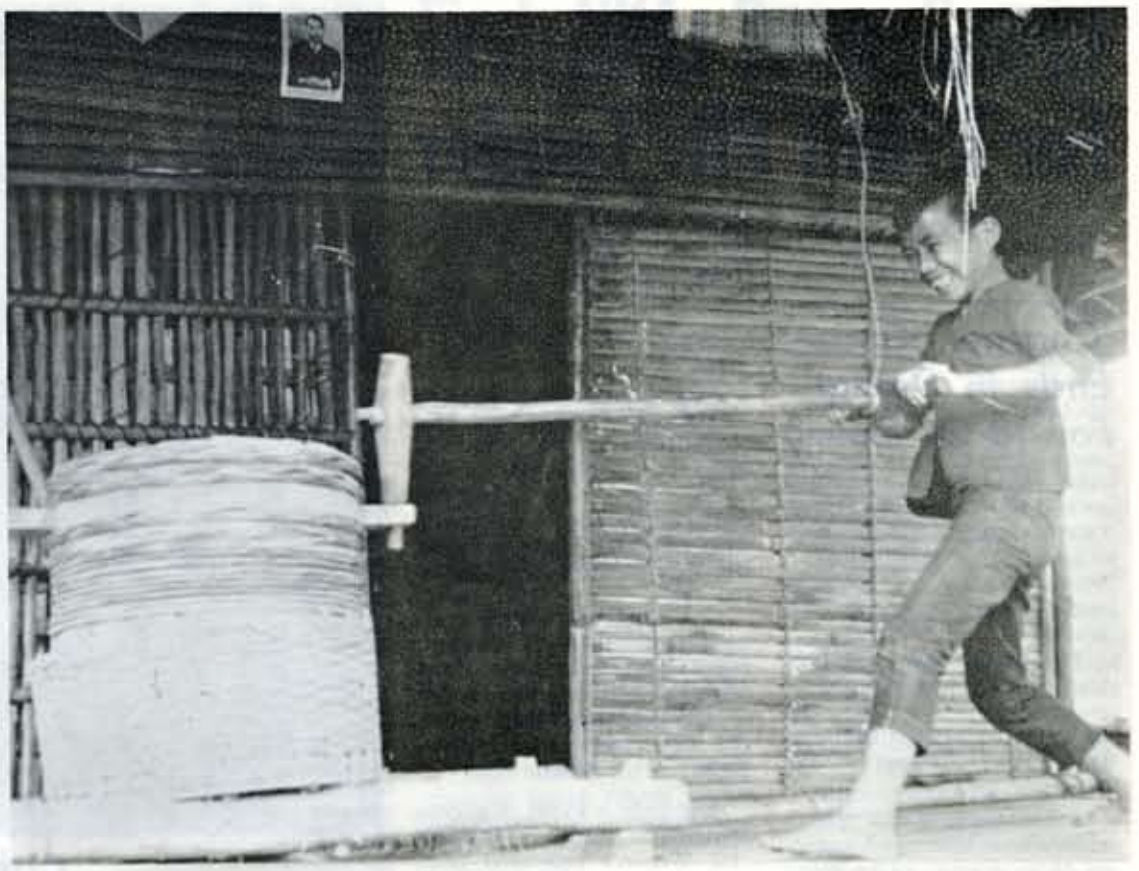
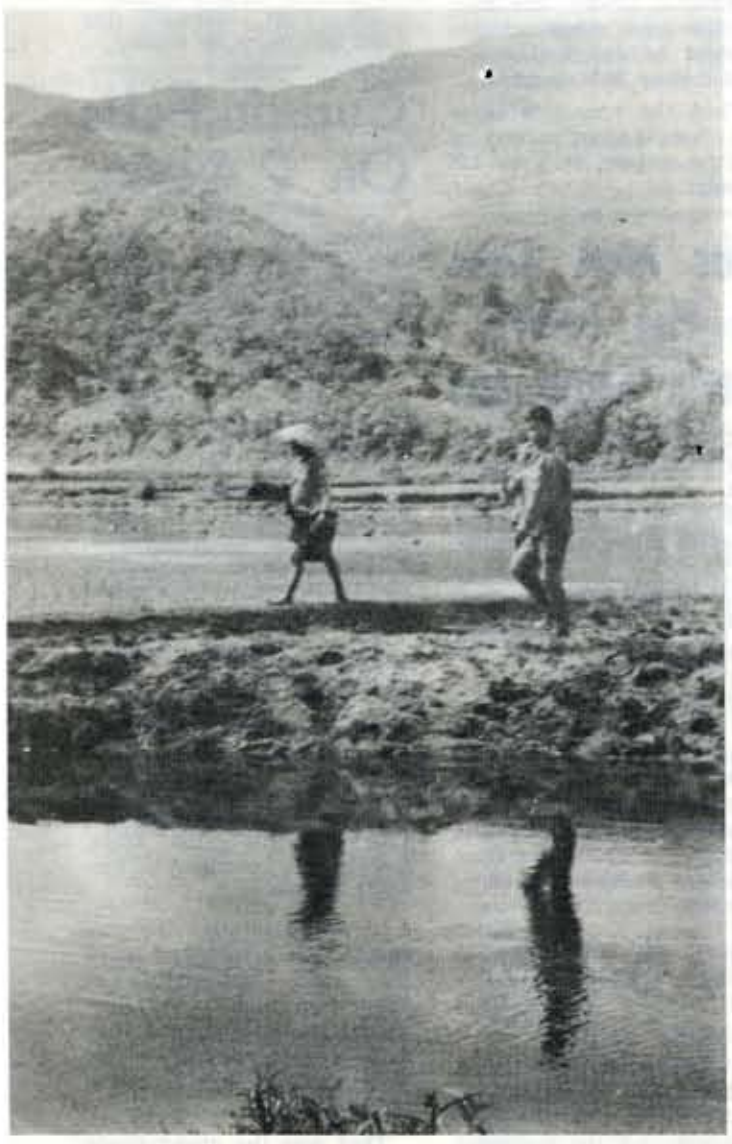
Totem stands vigil against evil spirits



Milling rice is a barrel of fun to Hre youngster

The universal mother and child

Timeless task of weaving



of the River of Happiness"

All Hre males have same name . . . Dinh, Dinh, Dinh, etc., pose

Compass A Lifesaver For 196th Plt. Leader

LZ BALDY—There is an old saying in the Army that "a compass used correctly can save your life." For a platoon leader from the 196th Inf. Bde. this old adage took a new meaning, but in a different direction.

1LT John Wilson (Boston, Mass.) was leading his platoon from D Co., 4th Bn., 31st Inf., in search of an enemy base camp when the unit came under automatic weapons fire from a well-bunkered enemy position.

Guides Artillery

With the help of his compass, LT Wilson plotted and directed artillery fire on the enemy position, then fastened his compass to a buttonhole on his fatigue shirt.

Suddenly a burst of enemy automatic weapons fire hit LT Wilson's command post, and they immediately returned fire. When the smoke cleared the lieutenant grabbed for his compass to shoot an azimuth to the enemy bunker.

Compass Plugged

"I felt a little blood trickling down my chest and saw the glass crystal had been shattered," he said.

"I took the compass off my shirt and discovered an AK-47 bullet in it. It was the closest call I've had yet.

"At least I didn't need the compass again that day because the next artillery round was a direct hit on the enemy bunker."

'Charger' Chase Ends In Defeat For 18 Of Enemy

LZ BALDY — A marathon race that included a two-day running gun battle between "Chargers" of the 196th Inf. Bde. and the VC striders ended with 18 enemy not around at the finish line.

The track meet began before sunrise during an early morning patrol by A Co., 3rd Bn., 21st Inf., in the flatlands two miles southeast of the Que Son Valley.

A Co. pursued the enemy nearly four hours and engaged them several times along the way. The meet was discontinued when the VC ran out of breath and ammunition.

Nine VC were killed and four weapons captured. On the following day two "Gimlet" patrols were sent to the same area.

Although the first patrol passed through the area and found nothing, two hours later the second patrol encountered heavy enemy resistance.

Between 15 and 20 VC took off running, apparently forgetting the final results of the race the previous day. Nine VC were killed during the ensuing scamper.

Weaponless, Grenadier Feeds Ammo To Blast NVA Bunkers

LZ BALDY—When an enemy blood trail branched in two directions, SP4 Juan Lopez (Los Angeles, Calif.) picked the route to his left and led his three-man fire team to where the action was.

A grenadier with the 196th Inf. Bde., Lopez was patrolling with D Co., 4th Bn., 31st Inf. on combat operations 26 miles northwest of Tam Ky.

As they moved up the trail, Lopez and his fire team came under intense automatic weapons fire.

Lopez took a concealed position and fired a number of M-79 rounds on the bunkers, destroying three heavily-fortified positions.

Seeing that his platoon leader was pinned down by enemy fire, Lopez threw his M-79 to the lieutenant and then repeatedly exposed himself to enemy fire in order to supply ammunition.

When his ammunition ran out, Lopez went back to a machinegun team and helped feed bandoliers of ammo to the M-60 until reinforcements arrived an hour later.

All the enemy bunkers were destroyed, and five NVA killed.

Balancing Act

Soldiers of B Co., 1st Bn., 46th Inf. cautiously move across a rickety bridge in the 198th Inf. Bde's AO. The "Brave and Bold" troopers were conducting a sweep operation west of Tam Ky. (Photo by PFC John Hollenhorst, 198th Inf. Bde.)

Combat In Review

Cobras Coil For Kill

Cobra gunships of F Trp., 8th Cav. patrol skies in support of elements of the 1st Sqdn., 1st Cav. The "Blue Ghosts" were flying in an operation northwest of Tam Ky. (Photo by PFC Eric Lamberson, 1st Sqdn., 1st Cav.)

Go By Chopper, Boat, Convoy

Arty Move An Odyssey

LZ BRONCO—The refrain "in the air, on land, and sea" usually brings to mind the battle hymn of a sister service.

It equally applies, however, to the 11th Inf. Bde.'s 6th Bn., 11th Arty.

The artillery unit utilized all three modes of transportation recently while providing fire support for "Jungle Warriors" of B Co., 4th Bn., 3rd Inf. in an operation in the southern tip of Quang Ngai Province.

C Btry. of 6/11 was airlifted by Chinook helicopters supplied by the 132nd Air Spt. Hel. Co., which transported the men and 105mm howitzers from their primary base at LZ Thunder to LZ Charlie Brown, 10 miles southeast of Duc Pho.

Within 10 minutes after the Chinooks touched down at Charlie Brown, the men had the guns ready for fire missions in which they expended over 200 rounds.

When the operation came to a close, C Btry. packed up for the return trip to LZ Thunder.

Since LZ Charlie Brown is almost completely surrounded by water, LCM-8 "Mike Boats" from the Naval Support Activity located at Sa Huynh were called in to move the men and artillery to dry land and the road to LZ Thunder.

The men traveled the final five miles by convoy.

Four NVA Lose To The LAW; Settle Argument

LZ BALDY — When you have a bunker full of angry NVA with automatic weapons firing at you, its nice to have the law on your side.

SP4 Jack Walder (Newark, N.J.), 196th Inf. Bde., took the law into his own hands and settled the case.

A rifleman from D Co., 4th Bn., 31st Inf., Walker grabbed an M-72 Light Anti-Tank Weapon (LAW) when his squad received a heavy volume of machinegun and automatic weapons fire from a bunker position located in an enemy base camp.

He maneuvered close to the enemy bunker, noticed a slight opening in the front of it, and fired the LAW.

Seconds later, four NVA dropped their side of the argument and Walker and his squad took the contested bunker.

Curtain Falls On 2 NVA

LZ BAYONET — North Vietnamese Army soldiers are just like GIs when it comes to liking good seats when there's a show going on.

But good seats for a show proved fatal for a couple of NVA six miles west of Tam Ky recently.

The two unsuspecting soldiers sat high on a hill overlooking a valley where U.S. warplanes were conducting airstrikes on a suspected enemy position.

As they watched the show, an element from the 198th Inf. Bde.'s D Co., 1st Bn., 52nd Inf. was climbing up the other side of the hill.

"I had just walked up and dropped my pack," said LT Larry Ruchti (Le Mars, Iowa), the company's forward observer.

"I walked around the corner to take a look and there they were, just sitting on these two rocks," the lieutenant recalled. "When they saw me they reached for their weapons and I opened up on them."

That was the grand finale for the two NVA.

GI Leads Life Of Swabbie, Cruiser His 2-Year Home

LZ BRONCO — When SFC Arthur L. Aton, the mess sergeant for HHC, 11th Inf. Bde., talks about the U.S. Navy, he speaks from experience.

Navy Supply Man

While still in the Army, he served two years aboard a Navy cruiser as a seagoing soldier.

Aton's unusual tour began in 1951 when the Navy cruiser Los Angeles was having trouble with its class I, which issues all food items aboard the ship as well as to several smaller ships.

At this time the Navy made a special request to the Army for a man to help them solve their problems. Soon after that, Aton was assigned to a two-year TDY tour aboard the USS Los Angeles.

Aton, who has spent more than 19 years in the Army, looks back on his experiences at sea with a great deal of pleasure.

Lives Life Of Sailor

"I visited many places including Hong Kong, Formosa, Japan, and the Philippines," he said. "The things I saw in those two years were worth a college education."

He said that although he was paid by the Army and wore khakis aboard the ship, he had all the privileges of a Navy man and observed all the Naval customs as if he were a sailor.

Like all sailors, he was always looking for land and free time in port.

Soviet Salute

One port that really impressed Aton was Hong Kong.

"It was a beautiful place, and when we sailed into port the Russian fleet gave us a 20-gun salute," he recalled.

"Being a seagoing soldier would be a great experience for any man in the Army," he added with enthusiasm. "The crew of the Los Angeles treated me royally."

Now Aton is back on "dry" land with the 11th Bde. But he feels right at home next to the South China Sea.

Annette

This lissome Australian lass took time out from her "Pussycat A-Go-Go" show at the Charger Hotel to pose on the Chu Lai shore. Annette packs lots of curves for a 17-year-old. The pole is a piece of driftwood that just happened by during the photographing. (Photo by SP4 Dave Clark, Americal IO)

—Americal Profile: Mortarmen—

They Put Mortar Rounds 'Right On'

BY SP4 ALFRED ANTHONY JR.
198th Inf. Bde.

LZ BAYONET—Home is a damp and muddy 198th Inf. Bde. forward fire base, and at this point it's been raining off and on for three days. Resupply birds are having a rough time getting in because the ceiling is right down to the valley floor.

The fire base rises a thousand feet into the fog and clouds, but as a mortarman will say, he's got no complaints as to getting ammo. "It sometimes gets a little hard to get illumination rounds, but the hard stuff, the heavy stuff, is always right here when we want it."

Knows His Trade

The guy starts to talk shop. The rounds he's using are 107mm, 4.2 inches, "M3229A1," he says matter-of-factly. He's putting some orange-yellow strips around what looks like the handle-end of the round.

The pieces of explosive resemble swiss cheese, each one adding about enough for 200 meters distance. He tears off a piece from a corner. "That's 25 less, there," he says.

His talk is cut short: Somebody runs from the Fire Direction Center (FDC). "Fire Mission!" A call has just come in by radio from B Co. west of the fire base. They've spotted two of the enemy with full gear and weapons moving in line.

The grid coordinates are given and the FDC computes the firing data. The squad leader shouts for his team. In a couple of seconds they're swinging the mortar tube around to position with serious faces. The 1st Bn., 52nd Inf. gunner plants his eye on the four-power telescope, getting an exact reading on the aiming stakes.

The next shout is "Fire!" The men around the tube turn from the blast, covering their ears. As quickly as the round is off, another is dropped down the tube until three have been fired.

Then there is a wait. No one knows just how the rounds have hit—in this period of tension. They've whistled off in the gray sky and their burst has been silent. Five meters off, a man's ear is glued to the handset. He almost cracks a smile-"Right on!"

Back in the FDC the direction of enemy movement is received from Co. B, and the man outside on the radio relays the platoon leader's instructions to the mortar pit. He gives the adjustment. They have decided to lead the line of enemy.

There's the guy with the handset on the edge of the pit—a smile now breaks fully across his face. "Right on, again! Perfecto!"

Three more called for; one is dropped and there's a scattering of feet in the mud, all bodies bending away from the mortar, fingers in the ears, and the gunner has his eye against the sight even before the smoke has cleared. Another is dropped, then after these three they light up cigarettes, satisfied that this group will be on target too.

More Shop Talk

They lean back on the sandbags and start to talk again. "We're using VT (Variable Time) rounds here."

"In the kind of situation we've got today where the VC have been spotted in the open we use an air burst. We're a lot more effective this way. We got a bursting radius of 50 by 20 meters oval."

Then he picks up a white round. "These are beautiful," he smiles. "Out illumination rounds. We get a good high angle with the mortar illumination and it gives us an 800 meter radius. Last night we had this place looking like daytime. I think the troops really dig it when we give them light."

Some of the other guys are drifting back out of the rain to their wet holes in the ground. One has draped his poncho over the tube—more important to these men to keep the mortar dry than themselves.

"The tube's got to function like we do," the mortarmen's spokesman adds. "We can change clothes when we're wet, and besides, we don't rust."

Americal Green Giant Tips Scale At Only 67,000 Tons

CHU LAI—What weighs 134,616,682 pounds, give or take a few tons, and is Army green?

No, not a herd of green elephants. It's the total weight of equipment authorized the division.

Chart Weight

Several months ago the Americal's G4 section started keeping tabs on the weight of the three assigned infantry brigades and support units.

The records are maintained in case a brigade, battalion, or even platoon has to move, so G4 can provide the necessary trucks, conexes, or aircraft to transport the specific weight.

G4's records include all authorized equipment that is supposed to be in the division.

The equipment listed includes everything from trucks, aircraft, and office equipment, such as desks and typewriters, to bulldozers and artillery pieces.

1/1 A Heavyweight

Each infantry brigade averages a healthy ten million pounds, but the heaviest unit in the Americal is the 1st Sqdn., 1st Cav., which tips the scales with 36,476,096 pounds, most of it in tanks and armored personnel carriers.

The lightest vehicle is the quarter-ton truck (jeep), which weighs 2,750 pounds. The heaviest is the Combat Engineer Vehicle, weighing a hefty 110,560 pounds.

In the way of artillery pieces, the lightest is the 105mm towed howitzer at 4,780 pounds.

Packing 57,200 pounds, the 175mm self-propelled gun takes the heavy award.

Hugging The Mud

Prone along a river bank, soldiers of D Co., 5th Bn., 46th Inf., 198th Inf. Bde. await an unseen enemy 10 miles northeast of Quang Ngai City in the Operation Russell Beach cordon on the Batangan Peninsula. (Photo by PFC Art Noel, 198th Inf. Bde.)

COLs Druener, Tabor New COs

CHU LAI — Two major commands supporting the division—the 16th Combat Aviation Group and the Division Support Command — welcomed new commanding officers in recent ceremonies.

The new CO of the 16th CAG is COL Hanz K. Druener, formerly the Chief of the Logistics Division, Office of the Aviation Officer, USARV Headquarters.

COL Druener replaces COL William C. Tyrrell, who has been reassigned to the U.S. Army Engineer Construction Agency, Vietnam (USAECAV) at Cam Ranh Bay, where he will serve as the Central District Engineer.

Heading the Division Support Command is COL Harry E. Tabor, former Deputy Assistant Chief of Staff for Communications-Electronics at USARV.

COL Tabor replaces COL Lewis B. Tixier, who will assume duties in the G-3 section of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the Pentagon.

A Wade In The Water

A 175mm self-propelled gun splashes its way across the Minh Long River. The big guns were traveling a one-lane road cut out of rugged country by the 26th Engr. Bn. The road connected Binh Son with the Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) camp at Minh Long. (Photo by SGM John R. Spehar, 26th Engr. Bn.)

New FAC Plane

The division soon will be one of the first Army units served by the Air Force's new forward air control plane, the OV-10A "Bronco" (foreground), shown alongside its predecessor, the O-2. Although the OV-10A is powered by twin turbo prop engines and can fly twice as fast as the old O-2, the "Bronco" also can travel much slower than the O-2, an important feature to forward air controllers. (Photo by SP4 Dean Norland)

River Crossing Mission

(Continued from Page 1)

Diem Diem. Whatever was on the rest of the flat, cultivated lowlands would have to wait till later.

Vigilant Air Guard

Overhead, a pair of gunships from the 176th Aslt. Hel. Co. circled slowly like watchful hawks, waiting to spit fire at anyone who would attempt to stop the "Old Guardsmen."

The noise of the choppers broke the quiet of the bright, Jan. 16 morning, as the monsoon rains of the days before were forgotten. There was a job to be done, a village to be secured. The "Jungle Warriors" were ready.

A Co., 4th Bn., 3rd Inf., had come into the area three days before, forming a small part of the 11½ mile cordon surrounding the Viet Cong stronghold. To their north they linked up with a company of the 5th Bn., 46th Inf., to the south with the ARVNs.

Leaflets from division psychological operations (PSYOP) teams had been raining down on the coastal plains for three days. They were reinforced by aerial loudspeaker broadcasts telling the people to take up their belongings and pass through the cordon. Anyone who failed to do this would be an enemy of the Government of Vietnam.

Final Briefing

Battalion Commander LTC Jack Davis flew in to give last minute instructions to CPT Benjamin Maxham (Burbank, Calif.), A Co. CO.

The 2nd Plt. was to make the crossing with direct fire support from the 3rd Plt. and a platoon of the 5/46.

The 1st Plt. was to act as a blocking force to the south, while the Weapons Plt. secured the company area, and the Recon. Plt., attached to the company, joined up with the ARVNs.

After a lengthy preparing of the target by "penny-nickle-nickles" (105mm guns) and "fat tubes" (8 inch-howitzers), forward observer 1LT Joe Pallischeck (Rochester, N.Y.), B Btry., 6th Bn., 11th Arty., told CPT Maxham the area was ready. The CO picked up the radio-telephone and called in the gunships.

Choppers Comb Area

The chopper duet worked together perfectly, circling the wooded area deliberately, then turning sharply into a dive, pounding the tree line with rockets and miniguns. A PSYOP Helix made one last pass, dropping leaflets, before the infantry advanced.

The time had come. CPT Maxham emphatically gave the word to his platoon leader, 1LT Kenneth Hamlin (Bowling Green, Ohio). "Move out!"

Launch Assault

Three squads jumped into their rubber boats and pushed off. Onshore, the staccatto of the M-60s began slowly building in intensity until the sound of paddles breaking water was no longer audible.

It was 300 meters from beach to beach, and it took the boats only a few anxious minutes of waiting and watching until one squad landed and set up a base of fire.

The next squad landed and began running inland across the paddies, kicking up spouts of water that looked like enemy rounds hitting close by.

The 176th gunships circled overhead and the M-60s in the woodline, joined by M-79s on the western shore, continued their steady chatter.

Penetrate On Line

1LT Hamlin moved his men swiftly and effortlessly in the classic infantry manner, fire and maneuver, fire and maneuver. Moving on line, they made a reconnaissance of the area by fire.

They passed through and secured the village.

This was a quiet beginning for Americal troops who are expected to see a lot of action in Operation Russell Beach.