Cavalrymen turn tables on enemy

By SGT Matt Gryta

LANG VEI, (23rd Inf. Div. IO) – Eight NVA regulars were killed and a quantity of enemy munitions captured as cavalrymen of the 23rd Division used infantry tactics to turn the tables on an enemy anti-tank unit during operations west of here.

"We'd been making frequent contact with the enemy and experiencing almost nightly probes of our defensive perimeter and attempted ambushes," explained 1st Lieutenant Phail Wynn Jr., a platoon leader with the 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry.

"They would invariably hit us around seven or eight o'clock in the evening," the Lawton, Okla., native said, "so we decided to hit them as they moved toward our location again.

"My platoon sergeant and I took a 12-man patrol out of our night laager at about 5 p.m. and moved into a ravine at the bottom of the hill."

"A few nights before we had been hit with rocket fire on a nearby hill overlooking the valley where we had been searching out their laager sites," recounted Staff Sergeant Oliver J. Warnock of New York City.

"We found a lot of trails in the area and figured the most likely route of their movement had to be along a road a road near the ravine which we had used quite often."

"Moving on to high ground we picked a clear spot about 700 meters from our platoon laager site,'. said Wynn. "The area was heavily vegetated and we figured they would move through the clearing rather than chance making a lot of noise breaking brush."

The "Black Hawks" moved into an ambush position at the spot where the road leveled off beofre entering the valley and placed mechanical ambushes out at two points along the road.

The Americal troops had lain in wait for about an hour and a half before their machinegun crew spotted 25 to 30 enemy troops coming up from the ravine under the first light of a full moon.

"We laid back for them and as the second or third man walked past our position he hit one of our mechanical ambushes and three or four of them went down, including the pointman, who was blown away in the backblast."

Directing the fire along the perimeter, Warnock had his men lay down a sweeping barrage of small arms fire over a hundred meter radius.

"The enemy troops were totally disorganized when we opened up on them," Wynn noted, "but they did manage to toss some Chicoms (Chinese Communist grenades) and fired four B-40 rockets into our perimeter.

The NVA attempted to retaliate, but the lieutenant had ordered five tracks to move in from his platoon laager, with his mortar track firing illumination rounds, exposing the enemy troops trapped in the open.

"We saw them split into three main groups as they fled and called in artillery on their escape routes," he said. "When we swept the area we found eight enemy dead near the ambush site and quite a bit of blood leading into their escape routes."

In addition to severely mauling an NVA unit which had been plaguing them for weeks, the "Black Hawks" action netted them three AK-47's, seven rocket propelled grenade (RPG) launchers and a number of RPG's, a B-40 rocket launcher, 10 Chicom grenades and assorted personal gear.

VIP gets results

By Capt. John J. Hollingsworth

DONG HA COMBAT BASE, (11th Inf. Bde. 10) – The 11th Infantry Brigade's Volunteer Informant Program (VIP) recently paid great dividends. In a two day period, March 16 and 17, Vietnamese in the Dong Ha area turned in more than 75 live rounds to men of Americal unit.

Captain Jon Watson of Kalamazoo, Mich., the 11th Brigade's civil affairs officer, credits the two day deluge to the effectiveness of his organic ground broadcast team.

The ground broadcast team uses a truck to travel QL1 in the brigade's area of operation (AO). The broadcast team has been on QL1 since March 8th and they spend four to six hours daily broadcasting the VIP theme. They play Vietnamese music to gather a crowd; then VIP tapes, Watson related.

The deluge of munitions we picked up during the two days won't continue, it should slow down to a steady campaign now. "The results were good and showed that their hadn't been an effective program in the area," Watson said.

Units have moved in and out of the AO frequently in the past and this is why there was no profitable turn-in of munitions until now, Watson added.

The VIP tapes instruct the Vietnamese in the area to give any munitions they find to any U.S, personnel and they are told how much money they will receive for the munitions they bring to us, continued Watson.

"We don't pay them for American ammunition. We are interested mainly in the foreign ammunition and munitions don't have to be clean or serviceable," Watson said.

We have problems paying the individuals who bring in munitions because they are supposed to give the ordinance to any American personnel. The GI's can give food or piasters as payment. Often the GI's pay piasters from their own pocket and then they are reimbursed upon returning to their unit, Watson added.

"I consider VIP very important. You are not trying to change the course of the war, but to eliminate ordinance that is being used as booby traps. The booby traps are the things that take American lives. We don't expect to drain the Communist source of supply; we are interested in saving lives," he said.

Pathfinder — ringing

By SP4 Gregory Wright

DONG HA COMBAT BASE (11th Inf. Bde. IO) – "Pathfinder, Sir...Ringing, Sir" and with these words another call is placed to prove that a move of over 300 miles can be made without a loss of efficient communications.

The Pathfinder switchboard is now located in a truck near "Warrier Forward" at Dong Ha rather than its customary place in the 11th Infantry Brigade TOC at FSB Bronce. However, the switchboard operators are quick to point out that they are working with the same switchboard and equipment to accomplish the same job, regardless of surroundings or location.

Private First Class Helmut A. Gerber of Ochsenfurt, West Germany, is one of the operators who works a tedious six hour shift at the switchboard.

Asked about significant problems during the move from Duc Pho, Gerber smiles and comments, "possibly our living conditions left a little to be desired, but I don't think we had any problems as far as our work is concerned."

Whether operating from a fortified Tactical Operations Center or from the back of a commo truck, Pathfinder switch accomplishes its mission and "Jungle Warriers" of the 11th Infantry Brigade are assured prompt, efficient, communications when they hear the greeting "Pathfinder, Sir."

Project HELP, Question of the Week:
Question–If you are still an E-5 after 12 years of service, will the Army kick you out? Answer–According to DA MESS 0423112 Dec 70, personnel will not be permitted to reenlist in grade E-5 with over 12 years. There will be many exceptions however, including: a) personnel who have declined promotion or promotional recommendation in order to remain in a particular duty position or MOS; b) Personnel who have not received equitable opportunity for promotion consideration; c) Personnel in a specialist field where limited grade structure precludes promotion. There could, conceivably, be other exceptions to the new regulation.

SOUTHERN CROSS
AMERICAL DIVISION

Vol. 4, No. 14 Chu Lai, Vietnam April 9, 1971

"Romeo Serria" is a popular phrase in the "bush". Resupply usually means C-rations, SPs (Supplement Packs), and even hot meals every now and then. These troopers from Company A, 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry received a hot meal from this bird. (U.S. Army Photo by SP5 Robert A. Spangler)

Bell symbolizes struggle of war

By SP4 Tom Mano

LZ HAWK HILL (196th Inf. Bde. IO) – A bell will soon ring over a battalion in the 196th Infantry Brigade reminding its men of a bitter struggle for a small village three years ago.

The bell, all that was left of a church in Nhi Ha, was recently returned to the "Gimlets" of the 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry.

The presentation was made by Colonel Clark V. Judge, of Hanover, N.H., commanding officer of the 5th Marine Regiment, to Major James F. Humphries of Aransas Pass, Tex., executive officer for the battalion, at LZ Baldy.

The battle took place near the DMZ during May, 1968. All civilians had been evacuated from their hamlets and an NVA battalion had made the town its stronghold. Major Humphries, now on his second tour, was then a captain commanding Delta Company and remembers the assault well.

"For four days we attacked the village in three-company strength," said the Americal officer. "We poured everything we had into that ville."

On the fourth day the men managed to break through the barrier. Their "prize" was a string of desolated buildings.

"When we got there, there was nothing but rubble left," said Humphries. "The structures had been completely destroyed by air sorties and artillery rounds."

Searching through the stones, Major Humphries saw a greenish piece of metal covered with dust. Removing the debris, he found a large bell, the sole remnant of a Catholic Church.

When the "Gimlets" left the town, the bell was flown to the battalion command post. From there it came to LZ Center, home of the 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry, when their operations on the DMZ had finished.

"We figured the bell would be lost or destroyed if we left it there," explained Humphries. "We planned to return it to Nhi Ha when the village was resettled."

The bell was donated to the Brigade Chapel, then at LZ Baldy. When the Marines took over the landing zone in October 1969, the bell stayed there.

Now it has returned "home" to be affixed to a Catholic Chapel. Its peal will now call American soldiers as it did so faithfully for the Vietnamese.

Cavalrymen secure route 9

By PFC Darrell McGillen

LANG VEI (23rd Inf. Div. IO) – Elements of the 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry are still part of the task force involved in Operation Lam Son 719 presently taking place northwest of Quang Tri.

The Americal Cavalrymen's primary mission since they first arrived there on January 28, has been to secure Route 9 from their forward base at Lang Vei to the Laotian border.

Once enemy movement has been detected along the route or in the surrounding area, the cavalry opens up with artillery fire, peppering the suspected area with explosive rounds. After the artillery has completed their fire mission, mechanized tracks move into the infected area checking for enemy infiltration.

Make a call; any call at all

By Capt. George F. Bennett

LZ HAWK HILL, (196th Inf. Bde. IO) – The job's nerve racking, the pace often hectic, and the rewards slight, but the contribution is great, for communications serves as a lifeline between an Infantry Brigade and its maneuver elements.

1st Lieutenant Peter M. Cuviello of Tonawanda, N.Y., platoon leader of the 1st Platoon, Company B, 523rd Signal Battalion is charged with an integral part of the communications for the 196th Infantry Brigade. His platoon, among other things, operates the "Charger" switchboard.

The excitement and mental strain a telephone operator experiences results largely from individuals who expect "stateside service." Frequently, because the situation is urgent, the caller may forget he's in a combat zone. "Even my operators get a little angry, when they try to call another switchboard and don't get an immediate response," commented Cuviello.

"When a man gets upset with the phone service, he frequently doesn't understand the problems," Cuviello continued. "During each of the peak hours of 9:30 to 11:30 a.m., and between 1:00 and 3:00 p.m., my operators have handled up to 300 calls. Once they had almost 400."

"Generally, service given by 'Charger' is exceptionally good, for a combat area, tactical type switchboard," said Major Phillip V. DiMauro of Leavenworth, Kan., brigade executive officer.

The switchboard used at Hawk Hill is an MTC-1 (Manual Telephone Contral) with a capability of 200 telephone lines. Presently, there are 130 lines, 29 of these being trunk lines (long distance–switchboard to switchboard).

To perform the telephonic communications mission, 10 men are assigned as operators. Two operators work together and alternate with two others every two hours for a 12 hour period. "For a man to work the board more than a couple of hours would drive him crazy," stated Specialist 4 Andrew Acree of Fredericksburg, Va.

Ths switchboard also offers a special service for top priority calls known as "Blue Arrow". This means the operator will stay with the caller until the call is terminated. They'll monitor the circuit for quality and terminate the conversation. A "Blue Arrow" also authorizes the operator to break into a conversation taking place on the number called.

"Charger" switchboard has direct telephone lines with all of the 196th Infantry Brigade firebases. Not only does the switchboard handle all the brigade's administrative business, but frequently it's called upon to place tactical calls. "I really feel good when I can help one of the guys in the field," said Acree. "They're the ones we're supporting."

Chaplain (Cpt.) Lawrence Herton of the 11th Brigade's 3rd Battalion, 1st Infantry conducts the first baptism in a baptistry constructed of sandbags and concrete. The baptistry is also available to other units at FSB Bronco. (U.S. Army Photo by SP4 Greg Wright)

Chieu Hois rally for all reasons

By SP4 Gregory Wright

FSB 4-11, (11th Inf. Bde. IO) – For the Vietnamese who heeds the Viet Cong promises for a better way of life and whose illusions are subsequently shattered, rallying to the Government of Vietnam side is often the only course of action left.

Captain Rial V. Coleman, Washington, D.C., 11th Brigade S-5, explains the enemy decides to change sides for many reasons.

"Often these people are given arms and equipment by the VC or NVA," he said. "They get to use them for a short while, then the weapons are taken away. When the combined strength of GVN and American forces falls on them in retaliation they have nothing to fight with. They feel cheated and decide to come over to us."

One area of the 11th Brigade area of operation in particular has been very productive lately, Coleman says. This region, bordered on three sides by a large bend of the Song Tra Khuc River, is known to "Jungle Warriors" as the "Horseshoe" and is controlled by the 3rd Battalion, 1st Infantry.

Recently government intelligence sources reported that a group of 15 insurgents in this area wished to rally under the "Chieu Hoi" program. It was decided that American lift ships would be used to extract the group while gunships provided protection.

"On the day of the extraction the would-be ralliers were told to watch for the arrival of these helicopters at Firebase 4-11," said Captain Coleman. "When they saw the ships on station a prearranged signal was given and a successful pickup was made without trouble."

This group included several guerilla fighters, a teacher, and an information specialist. The reasons they gave for their decision were varied but all agreed the Communist cause, as put forth by the VC infrastructure, is not worth the struggle.

Later, six of their comrades in the same area decided to follow their example. After an aborted pickup attempt they walked in and surrendered themselves to allied forces. Although no weapons were brought in, valuable information was received from the Chieu Hois on both occasions.

Putting aside a familiar way of life, ignoring Communist propaganda, and coming over to work for the GVN is a big step and often dangerous, but it is made willingly by people with hope for betterment of themselves and their country.

With one of their assistants throwing a little light on the subject Captain Kenneth Lucius of Dallas, and Specialist 5 James Fisher of Anchorage, Alaska, inspect this villager's teeth in An Tan, near Chu Lai. (U.S. Army Photo by SP5 H. Wells)

SFC Fink is back!

By SP4 R. J. Smith

CHU LAI, (23rd Inf. Div. IO) – Getting short? Or perhaps you are a little hung-up because you are not short? Well, listen to this!

Sergeant First Class James L. Fink of Mason City, Ill., is back in Vietnam for his second tour. You say a lot of guys come back to "The Nam" for a second tour, so big deal, right? Sure, but how many guys have their first tour extended for nearly four years?

On September 8, 1970, SFC Fink left Vietnam after serving with the 23rd Infantry Division's 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry of the 196th Infantry Brigade from December 16, 1966 until September 8, 1970. Figure it out. That's 1, 365 days. And when he departed, his final remark was, "I'll be back."

While on leave in the United States, the senior NCO flew to Washington, D.C. to see about reassignment to the unit he had just left. He arrived at the Senior Records branch of the Pentagon at 1030 hours. By 1100 hours he was on his way back home to Illinois with the change of orders that he had sought.

Upon his return, he was first assigned to MACV where he was then, upon request, sent to USARV. Due to a shortage of personnel NCO's in the 23rd Infantry Division, he was finally assigned as PSNCO at Headquarters, Division Artillery here in Chu Lai.

But doesn't he feel that he did enough during his last, rather long, tour?

"Well," he said, "I like helping the guys out in the field and on the fire support bases by doing a good job administratively. It's worthwhile and, for me, preferable to working back in the states.

"You see," he continued, "I've been with this division since it was formed. It's one of the best, if not the very best."

His plans? "I'll be here for quite a while to come. I'm doing my job and I like it."

SOUTHERN CROSS
AMERICAL DIVISION

THE SOUTHERN CROSS is an authorized, unofficial weekly publication of the Americal Division Information Office for division units in the Republic of Vietnam. It is printed by the photo-offset process by Pacific Stars and Stripes, Tokyo, Japan. Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Department of the Army. Contributions are encouraged and may be sent to the Information Office, Americal Division, APO SF 96374. Tel: Chu Lai 2414. The editors reserve the right to edit all contributions.

Major General James L. Baldwin . . . . . Commanding General
Major Robert D. Bailey . . . . . Information Officer
Second Lieutenant Henry G. Grambergu . . . . . Officer-in-charge
Specialist Four Lee Habich . . . . . Production Editor
Specialist Four David P. Goodrich . . . . . Editor
Specialist Four Steven L. Elschlager . . . . . Assistant Editor

Col. Hathaway talks to "Chargers"

By 1LT. Louis R. Ogua

LZ MARY ANN (196th Inf. Bde. IO) – Communications between a brigade commander and the 3,500 to 4,000 infantrymen who serve under him often remains less than ideal. It's an understandable problem and one that's improving within the 196th Infantry Brigade, 23rd Infantry Division.

Colonel William S. Hathaway (Portsmouth, Va.), commander of the 196th, understands the importance of communications through briefings as evidenced by the following reflections from a soldier stationed on Landing Zone Mary Ann, the home of 1st Battalion, 46th Infantry, located southwest of Tam Ky.

Today, is no different than most days at the forward fire base of an infantry battalion in southern Military Region I. One element moved out on a mission early this morning, another is preparing to do the same.

Yet there is one difference. A full colonel, the Brigade Commander of the 196th Infantry Brigade is about to address the rifle company that will depart in a few hours.

He is not only going to talk with the officers and senior non-commissioned officers, but to all the men in the company.

Colonel Hathaway has been talking for almost 10 minutes now. The men are quiet and attentive, now and then nodding their heads in wonderment or affirmation.

What is being said that can hold the attention of such a mixed group of American youths? Surely, there are no attempts to stir the patriotism of these men? No, rather they are being informed of the tactical and strategic situation throughout their battalion's area of operation all the way to the northern reaches of Military Region I.

They are being told why certain changes have been made, why their lives are different today and what it will be like tomorrow.

No credibility gap exists here, no generation gap. The man standing before the company has been with them before in not so calm and peaceful a place. They have no doubts about him – nor does he about them.

Now the colonel's talking about what he feels is the best way to save lives – by moving, pushing hard and aggressively. One can get over being tired, he says, but not being dead. Keep the enemy off balance, prevent him from gathering in large numbers, from gaining the initiative. This, in the long run is the best way to save lives.

Some of the things being discussed here are great issues at home – the presence of American air support in Laos – the absence of ground troops – the pulling out of the Marines – the shifting of Army ground forces in Vietnam.

There are no generalities here, no "forseeable futures." The time frame is unknown. The mission until then will be the same.

The colonel is done now – Charlie Company's commander, Captain Richard V. Knight (Lake Wales, Fla.), speaks quietly for a few minutes and then the men move away to finish preparing for the mission.

This is what some call the new Army – senior officers talking to the men who do the job – explaining, motivating.

What do the men think of it? I spoke to three from the group. There was general agreement. Sergeant Jerry D. LeDoux (Orange, Texas), a squad leader said, "I saw Colonel Hathaway when he came out to the bush to see us – I like the way he told us the truth."

A rifleman – Specialist Four James E. Edgemon (Bellevue, Texas), said "I thought what he said made sense. If the Vietnamese stop them up North, so much the better."

Private First Class Bruce Ordoyne, (Thilbodaus, Louisiana), a rifleman said, "It's better to hear this stuff from him. You know it's real and that it's the truth and not a rumor."

First Lieutenant William Knight, New London, Ohio, looks on with satisfaction as one of his Vietnamese high school students successfully completes an oral exercise during one of his classes at the all-girl Quang Tin School here in Tam Ky. (U.S. Army Photo By SP4 Ronald Cryderman)

Griffin and Griffin Are father and son

By 2LT Fred G. Vigeant

Chu Lai, (23rd Divarty I0) – "Turn over the engine while I check the fuel Pump."

"Sure Dad."

"Say again?"

"ER—Yes Sergeant." Actually, either response is acceptable to Staff Sergeant Hardy Griffin. motor sergeant for headquarters motor pool, 3rd of the 18th Artillery in Chu Lai. You see, the man asking the question is 20-year-old Private First Class Michael Griffin, the sergeant's son.

Mike shows up frequently to help at the motor pool when there's time off from his medic job at headquarters, 3rd of the 18th.

"Most families get separated as a result of Vietnam duty," says Mike. "But in this case, just the opposite is true."

The junior Griffin was stationed in Japan when he requested orders to join his father.

"I told him to stay where he was," relates the sergeant. "He was in real comfort over there, with easy hours and air conditioned work facilities; but, you know how it is, youth never listens."

So blood proved thicker than water, which was in this case the South China Sea, and Mike came over to join the elder Griffin.

It really isn't that rare that a father and son should be assigned to the same unit. A similar situation occurred about a year ago at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, when a tough drill sergeant was called upon to put his green-recruit son through the rigors of basic training. The name of the sergeant? Staff Sergeant Hardy A. Griffin and the son was, naturally, Mike.

"He'd been taking orders from me for a long time, so he really had a jump on the other trainees," said the former drill sergeant.

Although Mike and his dad maintain a somewhat unorthodox father-son relationship (youger Griffin will have to wait some time before he can accompany his dad to the NCO Club). Mike has no regrets about disregarding his father's advice to stay put. It's a definite plus in the morale column to have your own flesh and blood nearby.

Back in the world another Griffin son, Lawrence, wears the Army green at Fort Polk, Louisiana.

Is he about to expand the unit strength of the Griffin family in Vietnam?

"Negative", replies Pop, "I told him the same thing I told Mike when he wanted to come over. Lawrence is a little older, a little wiser; he listened to me."

Variety is "Spice of life"

By SP4 Zin Balaban

LZ HAWK HILL' (196th Inf. Bde. I0) -- In the northwestern part of the United States, some people make their living trapping fur-bearing animals. If a trapper wants to snare a bear, he would usually use a spring operated pressure-type bear trap.

However, the Viet Cong have a quite different use for this kind of trap. Because of the lack of bears in Vietnam, they decided to utilize it as a booby trap against the infantryman. afternoon while on a small patrol out of their day defensive perimeter. ofternoon while on a small patrol out of their day defensive perimeter.

"I was walking point," said Staff Sergeant Ronald Stailey of Seminole, Okla., 2nd platoon sergeant of Company C, 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry, "when, just as explosive type trap and was already saying my prayers. Man, was I relieved to see that explosive type trap and was already saying my prayers. Ma, was I relieved to see that it was only a bear trap!"

The saw-edged tooth of the trap caught on the hard rubber sole of the sergeant's combat boot, leaving his foot unharmed.

After seeing that he was alright, the sergeant turned around to his platoon leader, raised the leg with the trap around it and calmly announced, "Sir, I just hit a booby trap."

At first the lieutenant was apprehensive, but when he saw that his platoon sergeant was smiling, they both burst out laughing.

In their attempt to remove the bear trap, the platoon leader and a squad leader got their fingers caught in it. After they were freed everyone laughted about the incident.

The trap was eventually destroyed by the squad.

"Only now do I appreciate the value of the jungle boot," concluded Stailey. "If it wasn't for them, that bear trap would haVe done my foot a job."

Mountainmen hunt

By SP4 James Tabata

FSB SAN JUAN HILL (11th Inf. Bde. I0) – The hunter became the hunted as "Mountainmen" from the 4th Battalion, 3rd Infantry turned the tables on a spying NVA to eliminate the enemy before he could do damage to them. The action took place seven miles northwest of Fire Support Base San Juan Hill.

A long patrol of the immediate area was ending as a squad of Charlie Company's 1st Platoon was working their way back to their larger position. The ridgeline on which the men were positioned extended into a small valley from which the men were returned leaving 15 burned VC hootches behind.

Sergeant Douglas Ayers, Plainsville, Conn., describes the action which took place. "The squad was moving up the ridgeline when work was passed up that our dragman had spotted an NVA 50 meters behind following us up the trail. I motioned to the pointman to keep moving and at the first bend in the trail breakoff into the bushes."

The hasty ambush was set up without the detection of the enemy soldier as he continued up the trail. The action was quick and ended as suddenly as it began when the unsuspecting NVA walked into the squads hands.

Confiscated from the scene were Chicom grenades, trip wire, AK quick loads and an NVA pistol belt.

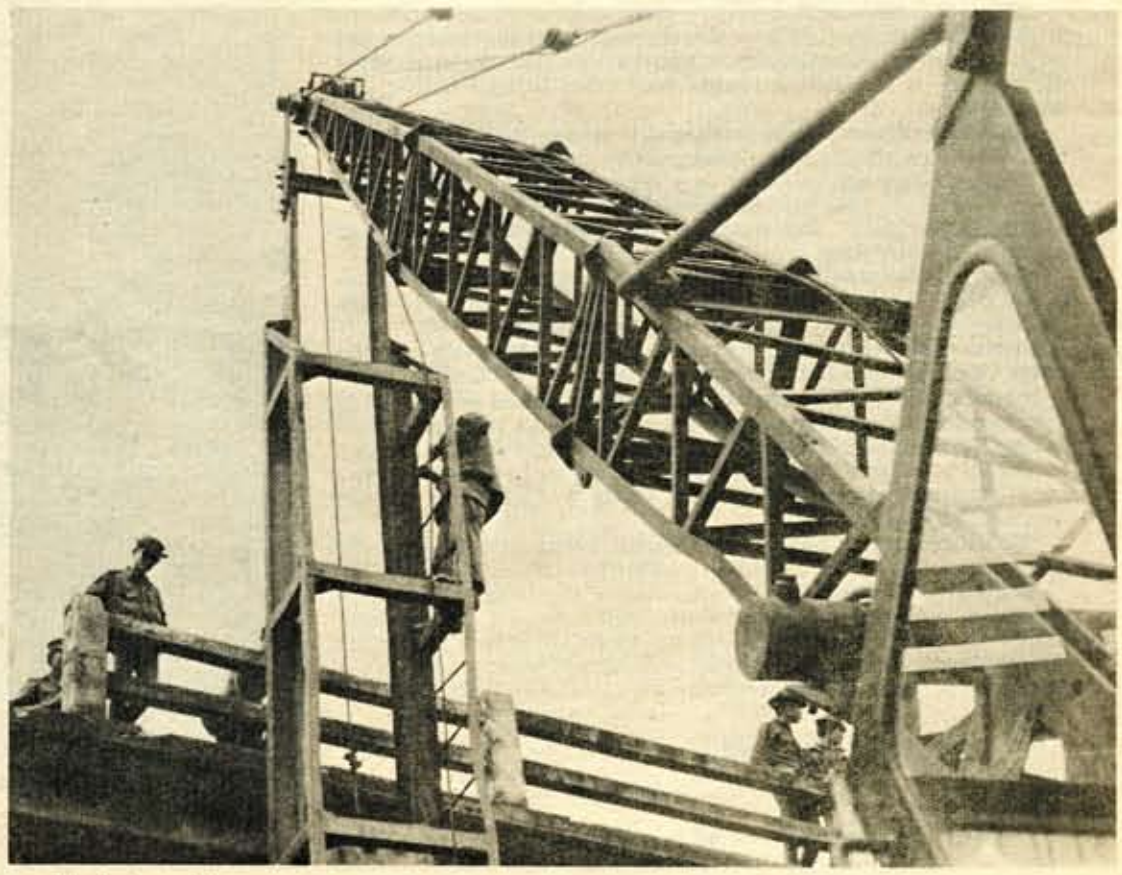
Captain Kenneth Lucius, Dallas, Tex., and Specialist Five Gary Naden, Kelloge, Idaho, both of the 23rd Medical Detachment, team up to inspect a Vietnamese woman's teeth. U.S. Army Photo by SP5 H. Wells)

Engineers with the 137th Light Equipment Company drive 60 foot piles into the Song Tra Khuc River, near Quang Ngai. The bridge damaged by a floating mine is being reenforced through the joint effort of Company E, 26th Engineers; Company B, 39th Engineers, and the 137th Light Equipment Company.

Clinging to a scaffold above the Song Tra Khuc River, Specialist 4 Bill Burba of Austin, Tex., inspects the progress of a 60 foot pile being driven into the bed of the river.

Story by Sp4 Lee Habich

Photos by Sp4 Terry Cohencious



The hefty ruff-terrain crane lowers the boom on the 60 foot piles in the construction project.

Construction routine for engineers

In a recent combined operation 23rd Infantry Division troopers from Echo Co., 26th Eng.; Bravo Co., 39th Eng.; and the 137th Light Equipment Co. team up to repair the Tra Khuc River Bridge near Quang Ngai City.

The 200 meter structure, damaged by a floating Viet Cong mine, is a vital link along Highway One, the primary artery in the crucial resupply network throught the division.

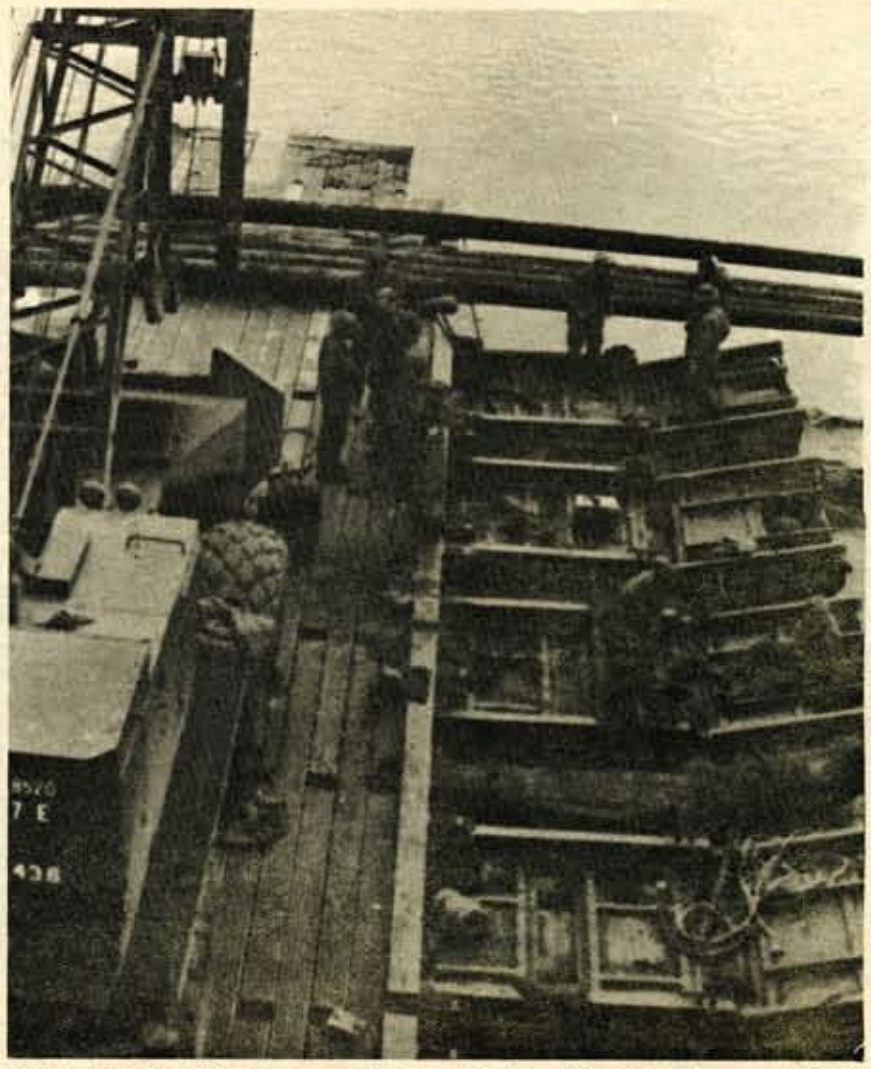
While traffic was restrained to a one lane, snail paced flow above them, the engineers worked for two weeks repairing the weakened supporting columns beneath the bridge.

To properly reinforce the damaged bridge a raft with a huge ruff-terrain crane was needed to drive the 60 foot supporting piles into the river bed 30 feet below.

In all it took the engineers about two weeks to drive the 24 piles and build the supporting framework needed to reinforce the damaged bridge.

Engineers prepare to hoist a 15 man assault craft over the side of the Quang Ngai Bridge. The craft was employed in assessing mine damage to the supporting piles beneath the 300 foot structure.

Levers in hand, Specialist 5 Alex Ryan of Charleston, N.Y., guides the crane as it pounds the supporting piles 30 feet below.



Riding aboard a floating support raft on the Song Tra Khuc River men of the 39th discuss the best method to use in picking up the piles used for reenforcement.

Just one of the men

By Captain David L. Alexander

(Editor's note: Captain Alexander, of the 178th Assault Support Helicopter Company, recently lost a man in his command. In the following article he lays bare some of his deeper feelings about one aspect of the war little discussed in the press.)

CHU LAI, (23rd Inf. Div. IO) – What can you say about a man who dies in Vietnam by drowning? Ironic, isn't it? Here in a war zone he dies by drowning. He dies not in the heat of battle, not able to taste that long-sought victory. He dies by drowning, trying to save a life rather than take one.

You always saw him around the company area. He was just one of the men, or was he? They're all different when you think about it. Those wonderful men who are caught here for a year, and yet they still put everything they have into their jobs. They hold the company together, and they're all different.

You'd see him and he'd always say, "How you doing Sir?" Always with that careful, sportive smile. You liked him instantly. You asked him the same questions you ask everyone. He would answer cheerfully, saying "Kentucky" and "Five more more months to go" and "How about yourself, Sir?"

You'd see him on the job. He drove the trash truck. He wasn't a machinegunner, or airborne, or a ranger. He drove the trash truck.

That was his job, and he did it better than anyone else in Vietnam and you loved him for being the best. He was one of those crazy guys that you just knew would extend for another six months.

You attend a memorial service for him at the local chapel, but as the chaplain speaks and prays, you aren't listening. You're thinking about how little you really knew that man who drove the trash truck, and yet you knew he was a good man.

So you put him in for a medal, the Soldiers Medal. The citation ends, "He died trying to save the life on an American ally." His buddies said he hardly knew how to swim, and yet he tried to save someone from drowning.

Normally you'd be appalled, but you knew that's the kind of guy he was.

But he's dead, and life and the war go on. Most people will forget him. Some won't. How can you ever forget that guy. You'll remember that man who drove the trash truck and always greeted you with, "Hey, how you doing Sir?"

"On the way back to Khe Sanh a Sheridan tank of the 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry passes a convoy heading out along Route 9 to the "Black Hawk" forward tactical operations center at Lang Vei.
(U.S. Army Photo by Sgt Matt Gryta)

11th goes north

DONG HA, COMBAT BASE, (11th Inf. Bde. IO) – It was probably the only move where you could identify the vehicle you were supposed to follow in a convoy by a small portable television mounted on the dashboard of the jeep in front of you.

Administrative and support personnel of the Headquarters Company–of the 11th Infantry Brigade were moving from FSB Bronco to Dong Ha, roughly 300 miles, to support troops working near the Demilitarized Zone.

The long convoy departed Bronco with little fanfare, except for a few hootch maids and papa-sans huddled together, watching and whispering.

Along QL1 between Bronco and Chu Lai, Vietnamese lined the roadway. There was an almost silent understanding on their faces. Troops they had seen and worked for were now leaving.

After arriving in Chu Lai at midnight, troops bedded down atop canvass, in vehicle cabs, and nestled between fans and refrigerators, which were stacked on trailors after all essential gear was loaded.

The remainder of the trip was a treat. Troops boarded a Landing Ship Troop (LST) and slept on bunks and took hot showers during the 18 hour ocean journey.

A short motor trip to Dong Ha from the unloading point was pleasant for many who had never seen some of the beauties of the old provincial capitol of Hue. Once at Dong Ha though, there was work. Tents were erected, abandoned hootches cleaned, and established.

For one Private First Class, the best part of arriving at Dong Ha was "my first hot meal in days."

"Dragoons of a 23rd Infantry Division cavalry unit, presently securing Route 9 from Lang Vei to the Laotian border, take time out to freshen up. They are part of the task force involved in Operation Dewey Canyon II taking place west of Quang Tri. (U.S. Army Photo by PFC Darrell McGillen)

15 kills by 4th of the 3rd

By SP4 Les Bechdel

KHE SANH, (11th Inf. Bde. IO) – A manned ambush by members of the 11th Infantry Brigade netted 15 enemy dead recently. It is believed the enemy killed were members of a battalion command unit.

The 1st Platoon of Company C, 4th Battalion, 3rd Infantry laid in ambush for the entire day along a suspected route of enemy travel. Earlier that morning 1st Lieutenant James Ronan of Posedium, Calif., directed the emplacement of his platoon's two M-60 machineguns so that they would face the possible avenues of approach. Claymore mines were positioned along the trail and the riflemen found cover and concealment in the dense underbrush.

Throughout the day the men maintained a silent vigil of the surrounding terrain and the waiting was tedious.

Movement was detected and a warning sign was passed from man to man as each soldier prepared for the impending fire fight. Twin staccatos of machinegun fire initiated the ambush. The M-16's added their firepower as the exploding claymores were heard above the din of battle. Then, as before it began, the gunfire tapered off into silence.

As preplanned, appointed men moved forward to sweep the area and search the bodies. The rest of the platoon remained in place to offer covering fire if necessary.

The captured weapons are secured. It was a good ambush; no friendly casualties. The men quietly move on to their night position, just as silently as they came to their place of ambush.

"Bird" rescue

DONG HA COMBAT BASE, (11th Inf. Bde. IO) – A forced march and fierce NVA opposition were taken in stride by the Legionaires of the 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry's Company A recently as they raced to a downed helicopter in an area near the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ).

The company had already marched over one mile that day to be resupplied, but when word came of the downed aircraft, they packed up and marched back into the area they had just left.

The Legionaires passed enemy positions several times. Occasionally, they could hear NVA troops talking and playing what sounded like transistor radios. Shortly after midnight, the soldiers atopped to rest and wait for dawn. Sleep was difficult because of a cold, steady rain.

Having left their ponchos and poncho liners with their ruck sacks, most of the men simply sat and rested until the sun started to rise. Starting out again at first light, the Legionaires soon lessened the distance to the downed helicopter.

The lead men of the first platoon had just started to cross a rice paddie when NVA soldiers started firing machineguns, mortars and small arms. Realizing that if they turned back they would get too close to the men behind them, the exposed soldiers angled back to the edge of the rice paddy.

The third platoon moved to flank the enemy position as the first platoon laid down covering fire. 1st Lieutenant James F. Gordon called in artillery and gunships as the firefight continued. After the enemy had pulled back from the combined firepower of the first and third platoons, Company A moved on towards the downed aircraft.

Privates First Class William Harris, Larry Nadeau, Richard Johnson, and John Henslev accompanied Gordon as they went to the crashed helicopter. For their actions against the enemy, these men received the Bronze Star with valor device from Colonel Warner S. Goddwin Jr., 11th Infantry Brigade Commander.

Moonlight surfing deadly for three NVA

By Capt. John J. Hollingsworth

DONG HA COMBAT BASE, (11th Inf. Bde. IO) – A hasty ambush netted three NVA just south of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) recently by members of Company B, an 11th Infantry Brigade unit of the 23rd Infantry Division.

"We were working our way north from our company's command post (CP) along the Gulf of Tonkin when we spotted three NVA in the moonlit surf," related acting platoon leader, Staff Sergeant James E. Galbert of Portsmouth, Va.

The three NVA emerged from the water and started walking toward the ridge line where we were so we set up a hasty, on-line ambush, Galbert added.

"We moved our machineguns up. It seemed like they were there forever. We had plenty of time to set up and they were right in front of my position when we opened up on them," said Private First Class Thomas M. Hayden of Springfield, Ohio, a machinegunner for the 1st squad, 2nd platoon.

"When we fired on the NVA one of the packs they were carrying," caught on fire. We heard two other explosions later. The explosions probably were satchel charges they were carrying," Galbert said. "This is the second time we have caught NVA soldiers in the water around our area," Galbert continued.

Beside the three KIA's the ambush netted two satchel charges, a life saving vest, a swimming snorkel, four Chicom grenades (concussion) and three Chicom frag grenades.

In other action the next morning the 1st platoon of Company B, while returning to the company CP, engaged and killed one NVA and captured one AK-50, and two magazines of ammunition.

Our curvacious cottontail has left her briarpatch in hope that one of you handsome GIs might put an egg in her basket this Easter Sunday. Although we can't supply you with our bunny's name we think you'll still appreciate this rare-bit of visual delight.

'Cheyenne' walks point for Chargers

By SP4 Tom Mano

LZ HAWK HILL, (196th Inf. Bde. IO) – "Nobody can tell me how fast to walk. Not the company commander, not even a general," exclaimed a full-blooded Indian infantryman who has walked point for the 196th Infantry Brigade "Chargers" for four and a half months.

Nicknamed "Cheyenne" by the men he led, though he is a member of the Nooksack and Lummie tribe, Specialist 4 Donald V. Miller of Bellingham, Wash., served as pointman for the 3rd Platoon, Company D, 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry from the second day he was in the bush until a week before he caught some schrapnel in the hip from a fragmentation pressure device and was sent to the rear.

Usually, a prospective pointman will walk with the previous pointman for up to three months, before he graduates to the esteemed level of walking point alone. It was mere days before Cheyenne started on his own.

"When I first got here, I walked point because I didn't know what it was," said Cheyenne. "Furthermore, I guess you could say I was gung-ho."

When Cheyenne first made contact from an enemy soldier who had come up a side trail, he reacted much the same way many soldiers do. "The first enemy I saw had me really scared," explained Cheyenne. "I was putting my magazine in backwards and upside down. After I had killed him, I felt sick and didn't want to go near the body."

Cheyenne led the platoon about five to six feet in front of his slackman who was in turn ten meters in front of the man following him. It was Cheyenne's job to pick a trail, or if none were available, to blaze one.

"I either cut trail with a machete," related Cheyenne," or just crushed it with my rucksack."

This is accomplished by turning 180 degrees and falling back on the vines rising and repeating the action. The 90-pound ruck was enough to "suppress" any "wait-a-minute" vine.

The pointman must keep all senses alert if he wants to keep his men alive. His eyes, ears and even his nose must be at a constant readiness.

"When you walk, you listen for voices or the pounding of tools," he said. "You look for fires on the trail, fresh tracks or crumbs from a meal. Your nose comes in handy when you approach an enemy laager position and the wind blows their cooking scents your way."

Booby-traps were this pointman's most hazardous problem. When entering a hootch area, or a deserted laager site, he had to know what not to kick or lift. Harmless-looking poles and small cans could contain pressure devices which are set off by simply disturbing them. Furthermore, it's a must to learn the omens that warn other enemy to stay off the mined trails.

"Cigarette packs, leaves and arrows pointing on a trail are frequently a sign of a booby-trap within the area," indicated Cheyenne. "Bamboo limbs and sticks in wierd shapes also warn you of booby-traps."

Having the respect of the men you lead is essential to a pointman. Cheyenne had no trouble confirming this rapport.

"The guys were confident that if I hit something I'd know what to do. They knew I wouldn't back off," explained the pointman. "I realized I was responsible for the men behind me. If I hadn't, I would've walked down just any old trail and that wouldn't even have been cool."

When Cheyenne became an established pointman, he carried his M-203 on autogetem (automatic) and sometimes let his slackman carry his on semi-automatic. In his weapon Cheyenne carried a banana clip, similar to the one on an AK-47, which held 30 rounds.

"A full magazine fired on automatic heats up the barrel fast," related the pointman, but by the time you finish, you're on the ground and your slackman is down firing."

Even if you walk point for four and a half months, a chance occurrence can cause a mental block that will keep you from concentrating on your job. It was one of these that stopped him from walking point a week before he left the bush.

"I was leading my platoon on the flats and we hit a 100 pound bomb," related the specialist. "Before it exploded, five guys had walked over it, including myself."

What walking point boils down to is concentration. The lead man can't afford to have anything interrupt his train of thought.

"You have to blot everything out of your mind," he concluded. "Like if you wake up with a headache or you get mad because you've got beaucoup things to do. I guess it's just getting up on the wrong side of the ground."

Gimlets find hospital

By PFC Gene Colling

FSB BRONCO (11th Inf. Bde. IO) – Hidden in the maze of a natural rock formation, the VC cave complex was virtually invisible until Alpha Company, 4th Battalion, 21st Infantry patrol chanced upon it. Following the path of a stream that flowed past the rock formation, patrol leader Sergeant William Fischer, Anacortes, Washington, and his men spotted the entrance to the well concealed cave.

"We were working along the boundary of our area of operation (AO) and the 173rd's" said Alpha Company Commander Captain Mitchel Ketula, San Diego, California. We knew from past experience the VC like to store equipment near an AO boundary, so we were especially careful in searching the area."

Walking through the cave entrance, the "Gimlets" found a 200 meter long cavern that could accommodate up to 100 sleeping positions.

"We found ammo cans filled with used gauze dressings and innoculation vials, which led us to believe the cave had been used as a hospital," said Kotula.

The cavern was equipped with the convenience of running water--of sorts. Split and hollowed cut bamboo shoots carried water from the stream to the cave.

Diaries and various articles of equipment were found scattered throughout the cave and still warm fire places indicated a hasty evacuation by the cave's former residents.

"We found one ammo can that was particularly interesting to everyone," said Kotula. "It contained the personal items of a VC nurse, including love letters from her boy friend."

Kids write to Winter

By SGT Kenneth Perry

FSB 4-11 (11th Inf. Bde. IO) – Every day soldiers throughout Vietnam receive mail from wives, sweethearts, family, and friends. Some of the most interesting correspondence comes from the pens of children.

Specialist Four Ralph Winter of Ann Arbor, Mich., Radio Telephone Operator (RTO) with the 11th Brigade's 3rd Bn., 1st Inf., Company C, keeps busy answering packets of mail he receives from 23 youngsters.

The children are members of his wife Ginger's second and third grade classes in an elementary school at Plymouth, Mich.

"The students first wrote me as part of an assignment in letter writing," said Winter. He added that their curiosity and concern are reflected by such thoughtful inquiries as, "How do you get your boots dry after walking through rice paddies?"

"When I wrote the class and answered some of their questions about Vietnam, they were so excited they wanted me to write again," Winter said.

This Vietnamese youngster apprehensively watches First Lieutenant James Colligan, Westbury, R. I., as he prepares to treat the boy's infected foot. The action was part of a recent MEDCAP held on Ky Kuan Island about two miles north of Chu Lai. (U.S. Army Photo by SP5 R. Wells)

Montagnard tribesmen who have fled Communist terrorism and are now living in the New Hau Duc settlement receive poultry donated to them by C Battery, 3rd Battalion, 16th Artillery who are helping the Montagnard community in their resettlement adjustment. (U.S. Army Photo By SP4 Guy Winkler)

Teach sewing

By Capt. George F. Bennett

LZ HAWK HILL, (196th Inf. Bde. IO) – A course of sewing instruction instituted by the Quang Tin Provisional Chieu Hoi Center was recently aided by soldiers of the 196th Infantry Brigade.

One sewing machine purchased with contributions from 196th soldiers was donated to the Chieu Hoi Center in Tam Ky and another was presented to the Protestant Orphanage by Major Robert L. Scott of Carrington, N.D., the brigade S-5.

Money for the machines was collected from the servicemen prior to Christmas. Because the amount collected was greater than expected a surplus of gifts was possible.

The program of sewing instruction has been in existence for two years. Currently, there are 14 female ralliers undergoing instruction. Over 300 have already benefited from the course.

The training lasts the entire 60 day period at the center. While there, both males and females undergo political training, but only the females have the opportunity to gain this valuable instruction. The males may, however, go to Da Nang where they will be taught house wiring, plumbing, auto mechanics, or carpentry.

Major Scott has also instituted a program whereby a periodic contribution of 10,000 piasters will be made to purchase cloth. The money comes from Civic Action Funds which may be used for education and various public works projects.

"The money will enable us to buy approximately 40 yards of cloth," stated Stephen H. Harrington of Philadelphia, Chieu Hoi advisor. "This will definitely aid the program and eventually permit us to spend the first 45 days instructing the women in the methods of sewing."