Lamson 719; successful in many ways

(Editor's note: The following article is an information letter issued to XXIV CORPS by Lieutenant General James W. Southerland Jr., commanding general of XXIV CORPS. The subject of the letter concerns the assesment of the results of LAMSON 719.)

In assessing the results and effect LAMSON 719 had on the operations and plans of NVA and Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces, the operation must be placed in the proper relationship with regard to the assesment made in September-October 1970, of NVA plans and intentions.

By late September and early October 1970, it became obvious from various enemy actions and intelligence sources that the NVA planned to:

a. Attempt to strangle Phnom Penh and overthrow the Lon Nol government.

b. Continue the aggression against the RVN and rebuild its bases along the Cambodian border adjacent to III and IV Corps.

c. Conduct an intensified resupply and reinforcement operation in southern Laos beginning with the dry season (mid-October to mid-April 1971).

d. Build up supplies and equipment in Northern Military Region One to support large scale operations in that area during the 1971 dry season in Quang Tri Province and Thua Thien Province.

During the period October 1970 to April 1971, the GVN and RVNAF had to take actions, within their capabilities, to accomplish the following objectives:

a. Support in Cambodia a non-Communist government either truly neutral or friendly to the GVN, and prevent the rebuilding and restocking of NVA base areas in Cambodia along the RVN border.

b. Interrupt or delay if possible the flow of supplies and equipment from North Vietnam through Laos to the Republic of Vietnam and Cambodia.

c. Continue to fight successfully the war in the Republic of Vietnam and to advance the Rural Development program and at the same time make available Republic of Vietnam Armed Force forces for operations in Cambodia and Laos.

The Free World Military Assistance Forces in the Republic of Vietnam and in Southeast Asia were prepared to assist and support the Government of Vietnam in achieving these objectives.

Interdiction of the entry points from North Vietnam into southern Laos was started in mid-October and has continued. The destruction of enemy trucks was initiated by the 7th Air Force using the most effective weapons systems available. The attack of enemy trucks on the Laos route system has enjoyed more success than in previous years and new records of kills were reached in December and January.

The Army of the Republic of Vietnam operations into Cambodia with the mission of opening land and water routes to the capital were started in November 1970, and have been successful. Operations against NVA divisions in Cambodia were started in January 1971, and are continuing.

Base Area 604 and the route structure through it offered the greatest potential for attack by GVN forces. During December and January there was a sharp increase in the amount of supplies moved into Base Area 604 and 611. Only a small portion of these supplies had been moved on to the south. In previous years the enemy has reached his peak efficiency in February and March in moving supplies to the south. Therefore, the timing of an attack on Base Area 604 and 611 during February and March would present the highest probability of inflicting the greatest damage on the enemy resupply and reinforcement plans. Therefore, the GVN decided to commit 3 ARVN divisions into LAMSON 719 to commence in early February 1971.

The fact that ARVN forces could at the same time conduct two out-of-country operations (Cambodia and Laos) and concurrently continue the conflict in the Republic of Vietnam and progress with the Rural Development program is remarkable.

The total effect and results of LAMSON 719 may not be accurately determined for several more months. However, we can confidently state that these results have been achieved:

a. Enemy plans for movement of supplies and equipment south during February and March were changed by LAMSON 719.

b. There is much evidence that units and replacement personnel enroute south were diverted to the enemy force opposing LAMSON 719.

c. Thousands of tons of ammunition, POL and other supplies and equipment were destroyed by LAMSON 719 forces including US air assets. The enemy had plans to use these in some area other than Base Area 604. His plans have been changed. In addition to the destruction of ammunition, equipment and supplies, the enemy forces opposing LAMSON 719 have consumed supplies from the stocks of Base Area 604. In fact, there is some evidence that some equipment and supplies already moved into storage areas in Northern Military Region I had to be removed and returned to Laos to help support enemy forces opposing LAMSON 719.

d. We know that enemy personnel losses were very heavy. Of course, these losses can eventually be replaced. However, the requirement to replace losses in such Regiments as the 1st Viet Cong, 29th, 36th, 64th, 102nd, and 803rd will draw off replacement personnel programmed for other units. Main Force and Local Force units in the provinces will probably be on low priority for replacements from North Vietnam.

e. One of the most valuable results of LAMSON 719 is the detailed knowledge now available concerning the POL pipeline, depot locations and road and trail network in Base Area 604. This will permit more precise targeting in the future and should assist in further destruction of enemy storage areas, truck parks, depots, and other logistics installations.

f. As far as ARVN is concerned, LAMSON 719 has added to their confindence and experience. Also, the exploits of companies, battalions, individual officers and enlisted men will add to the history and tradition of the ARVN units that participated in LAMSON 719. Certainly the hard battles of the Rangers and the Airborne Division against the heavy attacks by elements of two NVA divisions supported by tanks contributed in a major way to the success of LAMSON 719 and will add to the history and tradition of these fine units. The exploits of individuals and units of the 1st ARVN Division will add much to the already glorious history of that division.

SOUTHERN CROSS
AMERICAL DIVISION

Vol. 4, No. 18 Chu Lai, Vietnam April 30, 1971

Crime doesn't pay

Private E-2 Richard J. Barber, Headquarters Company, 123d Aviation Battalion, was convicted by special court-martial convened at Headquarters 23d Infantry Division (Americal) on 29 March 1971 of wrongfully possessing heroin in violation of Article 134, UCMJ. Following announcement of findings of guilty, the court sentenced Private Barber to a bad conduct discharge, forfeiture of $80.00 per month for six months, reduction to the lowest enlisted pay grade and confinement at hard labor for four months. He is presently serving the sentence to confinement in the USARV Installation Stockade, Long Binh, Vietnam.

Outfitted with a rucksack and numerous canteens a replacement for Delta Co., 2nd Bn. 1st Inf., darts off a resupply helicopter southeast of Tien Phuoc. (U.S. Army Photo by SP4 John Cushman)

PROJECT HELP, Question of the week
QUESTION: Exactly what do I need to have hold baggage sent home in way of orders, ets.? Where do I take my hold baggage to be shipped?

Answer: You will be required to have 9 copies of orders and 9 copies of inventory. The hold baggage warehouse is located in Warehouse No. 8, Rosemary Point, 226th S&S Company.

Noise nets nine enemy

By SGT Louis W. Miller

LZ STINSON (23rd Inf. Div. 10) -- A little smoking and joking at the wrong time can get you into a lot of trouble if you are an NVA soldier, especially when infantrymen from the 23rd Infantry Division's 198th Infantry Brigade are nearby. As a result of the enemy's poor noise discipline, nine NVA soldiers were killed and one captured. Also, two AK-50 rifles, 14 packs, 400 pounds of salt, and other military items were captured.

A platoon from Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 52nd Infantry, had just finished setting up their day laager position in a mountainous region southwest of Chu Lai. The laager site was located in a heavily vegetated area, and was surrounded by steep hills on three sides.

"As soon as the men had finished setting up their positions I sent a squad of men out to patrol the hills," said First Lieutenant Joseph K. Dowley (Wallingford, Conn.), the platoon leader. "The squad was gone only a short time when I received a message from them."

The patrol had moved up the first hill when suddenly they heard voices directly above them, 200 meters away. Artillery from a nearby fire base was called in. When the fire mission ended the patrol swept the area, but found only a heavily used trail.

"The next day I moved another platoon into the area and had the two platoons link up," said Captain James A. Pace (Swannanoa, N.C.), the company commander. "Later that day we heard the same voices, only they were loud because we heard them from our laager position, about 600 meters away."

This time an entire platoon was sent to investigate the talking. The "Ready Rifles" found a gorge filled with large boulders and followed it up the hill. While the infantrymen moved up the hill they again heard talking and laughing, so more artillery was called in on the enemy location.

"Once we found that gorge and heard the voices we knew where the enemy were staying," said Dowley. "Only we didn't know how far."

When the "Ready Rifles" neared the suspected enemy location the artillery was stopped. The only problem remaining was to find out exactly where the enemy were hiding. Sergeant Michael Maier (Redwood City, Calif.), a squad leader, who was with the point element, stepped on a large rock, peeked over the side and spotted the NVA soldiers in a small clearing among the rocks.

"The enemy had an excellent location," Pace said. "All of the boulders were at least ten to fifteen feet thick so we knew we had a difficult task ahead of us."

The whole platoon got on line and opened fire on the NVA soldiers, assualting the enemy location at the same time. The enemy that were out in the open were killed immediately, but those under the rocks presented a greater problem. When the infantrymen moved into the enemy location every area had to be checked. The "Ready Rifles" found two AK-50 rifles, 14 packs, 400 pounds of salt, ponchos, hammocks, and clothing among the rocks. One man found a cave where an NVA soldier was hiding. After a brief exchange of rifle fire the enemy was captured and removed from the cave.

Later a dust-off helicopter was called in and extracted the enemy to a Chu Lai hospital for treatment. The captured equipment and salt were also extracted.

"The enemy had their fun and they paid for it," Pace said. "Also I was real proud of the way my men reacted to the situation. We didn't suffer any casualties in the contact."

Mother's Day is May 9

HELP, helps GI keep ventilated helmet

By SGT. Matt Gryta

CHU LAI (23rd Inf. Div. 10) – Private First Class Merle Elliot was shot in the head twice on his first combat mission but came out of it with nothing worse than a lop-sided haircut, due to the fact that he was wearing a steel pot and helmet-liner.

"My buddies who witnessed it didn't think it could happen and neither did I," the young Denver, Col., resident said.

But seeing is believing and thanks to the 23rd Infantry Division's Project HELP the evidence has become his private property.

Elliot was on a routine patrol with other elements of Co. B, 1st Bn. 52nd Infantry when a couple of Viet Cong quite obligingly ventilated his chapeau.

"We were moving along a mountain trail and had stopped for a breather," he explained, "and I went over to a large boulder on the side of the trail for a better view of a couple of hootches that we had spotted along the top of the ridgeline."

His curiosity almost got the better of him, for as soon as the 198th Brigade trooper poked his head over the boulder he was greeted by several bursts of automatic AK-47 fire from the hootches.

The next thing Elliot knew he was experiencing a sharp pain on the right side of his head.

"When the first round hit it tore off a big chunk of my hair and telted the steel pot slightly back on my head," he said, "I didn't even feel the second round hit. It knocked the pot off my head and I dove for cover.

"After that I completely forgot about the steel pot and concentrated on the fire fight that was going on. When it was all over somebody handed it to me and I just couldn't believe it when I saw the entrance and exit holes of the bullets. Somebody up there really likes me, I guess."

"That was almost nine months ago," Elliot continued, "but guys still keep asking to see my steel pot and want to know if I'm going to take it home.

"I asked around to see if I could take it back to the world with me as sort of a war souvenir and some guys told me to just stick it in my duffle bag and take it that way. But I wanted to know if there was any legal way I could take it back. That's why I wrote Project HELP."

Project HELP is designed to assist the individual soldier in the 23rd Infantry Division with personal problems or questions concerning military life and Elliot's query was forwarded to the office of the Chief of Staff of the division.

A few days later he was informed by Sergeant First Class Jimmy R. Miller, (Louden, Tenn,) supervisor of Project HELP, that a "certificate of authorization for retention of U.S. government property" had been issued for his use.

The young trooper was elated by the assistance he received from division headquarters.

"I really need the steel pot to prove it all actually happened," he said, "Who would believe me without the proof?"

Nixon reviews trial

President Nixon will personally review the trial and sentence of Army Lieutenant Calley, convicted of premeditated murder in the slaying of 22 Vietnamese, before any sentence is carried out.

The presidential review will be in addition to a mandatory review of the case called for by the Uniform Code of Military Justice, Presidential Assistant John Ehrlichman told newsmen April 3.

Since the Calley sentence does not involve the death penalty, the President's involvement in the case is entirely discretionary on his part, Mr. Ehrlichman said. Mr. Nixon is taking the action under his Constitutional authority as Commander in Chief of U.S. Armed Forces. The Uniform Code also grants him authority as the ultimate convening authority.

Mr. Ehrlichman made it clear that the normal legal process of military review will take place before the President takes the case under consideration.

When the transcript of the lengthy court martial is compiled in an estimated 30 to 60 days, the case will be refered by the Commander of the Third Army to his judge advocate, who will provide a review to commander, General Albert Connor.

General Connor may make findings as to guilt or innocence and on the sentence. Should the court martial's sentence stand, the case will go to the Court of Military Review, a mandatory step.

That court's decision can be taken to the Court of Military Appeals. Should the sentence at that point still involve Lieutenant Calley's dismissal from the Army, the Secretary of the Army would then review the case.

Any of the Review procedures could result in a reduction of the sentence. None of the authorities, however, may increase it. The Uniform Code provides for appeal to the review process "include more than a simple, technical legal review that the Code provides."

The President consulted members of his administration who are attorneys, including Mr. Ehrlichman, Attorney General Mitchell, Secretary of Health Education and Welfare Richardson, Treasury Secretary Connally and Presidential Coonsellor Robert Finch. He also conferred with Defense Secretary Laird.

Private First Class Merle Elliot, right, points out one of the bullet holes in his steel pot to Specialist Four Thomas E. Legge, (Baltimore, Md.) A couple of Viet Cong quite obligingly ventilated the Denver resident's chapeau on his first combat mission with Co. B, 1st Battalion, 52nd Infantry. (U.S. Army Photo by Sgt. Matt Gryta)

A 23rd Infantry Division trooper with Delta Co., 2nd Bn. 1st Inf., checks an abandoned ville southeast of Tien Phuoc for signs of recent enemy activity. (U.S. Army Photo by SP4 John Gushman)

SJA 'runs for his life'

By Cpt Frank N. Griscom, III

CHU LAI (23rd Inf. Div. 10) – You've heard of the C.C. Rider? Well, the Americal can do you one better--the C. C. Runner. LTC Harold L. Miller, Staff Judge Advocate of the 23rd Inf. Div., has logged more miles in three months than Ben Gazarra managed in three years of running for his life on television.

Miller considers jogging "running for his life" because of all the healthful benefits he has reaped during the past year. "I've lost 20 pounds and reduced my pulse rate from the mid-70s to the low 60s since I began running in March of last year. I just got tired of spreading out and figured it was time to do something about it," he added with a smile.

The 38-year-old lawyer began his strict routine at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas where he was attending the Command and General Staff School.

"The first day I ran I could only manage a half a mile, and that took all I had." Miller reminisced. "It took me two days to recover. Now I can run seven miles in less than an hour and still do 65 setups when I finish."

His routine consists of changing into his shorts and rubber-soled shoes during the lunch break and jogging at least four miles per day, depending upon the weather.

"Before it got so hot and humid, I was running five miles and each one was under seven and a half minutes," Miller noted. "Now I'm happy to break eight minutes in this humidity."

Even the monsoons were no obstacle to the trim barrister.

"I have never gone more than four days without running," he said. "When the weather would not permit me to run outdoors, I would run in place in my room."

Miller plans to continue his fitness program at his next duty station, Camp Zama, Japan, where he will be the Staff Judge Advocate of the United States Army, Japan (USARJ).

He will be joined there by his wife, Virginia, and their four children: Kathrine, 17; Harold, Jr., 15; Betty, 9; and Jewel, 8. Mrs. Miller is also an avid runner, averaging three miles per day at their home in Roswell, New Mexico.

Miller has tallied 252.7 miles since 8 January toward his goal of 1000 miles during 1971. He reeled off 130 miles in March and intends to add at least another 100 miles during Arpil.

His ultimate jogging goal is to cross the United States on foot.

So, if someday look out your window and see a tall, tanned, bald runner trot past your house with a law book under his arm, don't be surprised it's only the C. C. Runner doing his thing.

SOUTHERN CROSS
AMERICAL DIVISION

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Second Lieutenant Henry G. Grambergu . . . . . Officer-in-charge
Specialist Four Charles L. Habich . . . . . Production Editor
Specialist Four Ron W. Cryderman . . . . . Editor
Private First Class Darrell L. McGillen . . . . . Assistant Editor

April, traffic safety month

By SP4 Ron Cryderman

CHU LAI (23rd Inf. Div.) -- Due to the mounting number of traffic accidents in the Southern Sector of Military Region 1, the office of the Provost Marshal recently began a Traffic Safety Program for the month of April.

During 1970 a total of 534 traffic accidents resulted in 312 injuries and 40 deaths. In the first two months of 1971, 94 accidents with 63 injuries and 12 deaths have been recorded.

A wide range of accident preventing steps are to be taken by the Provost Marshal in coordination with the 23rd Military Police company.

The program is seperated into two parts. The first part in trying to make vehicle drivers more aware of their driving habits, is to have all commanders conduct traffic safety classes. Brigade Provost Marshals will make tours within their brigades to speak on problems that cause most accidents and what is needed to curb the increase of the casualty rate.

The second part of the safety program is a step-up of the local traffic law enforcement.

"This will include sending more MP patrols on Highway One, intensified LOH (light observation helicopter) patrols of Highway One and spot checks of all vehicle safety equipment", said 1st Lieutenant James M. Brakord (Farmington, Mich.), Provost Marshal operations officer.

Another measure to make all drivers conscious of their driving habits is a display in front of the Provost Marshal buiding. It consists of a serverly damaged jeep parked behind white crosses, each cross representing one death within this year.

196th Advisory team aids Heip Duc

By Sp/5 Robert Spangler

LZ HAWK HILL (196th Inf. Bde. IO) – Two Americans begin their journeys from the small peak known as LZ (landing zone) Karen to the foggy mist-filled valley of Hiep Duc below.

These Americans are two of several who live on LZ Karen, a Regional Forces outpost located in Hiep Duc Territory. The Americans, of varied backgrounds, jobs and units are all thrown together atop the tiny hill to congeal into an efficiently run conglomerate.

The runs that are made to the villages and hamlets of Hiep Duc Territory are the task of Specialist Four Bob Jean (Nadeau, Mich.), a medic with the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry and Staff Sergeant Bobby Watlington (Philadelphia), a medic with a MACV (Military Assistance Command, Vietnam) Mat (Mobile Advisory Team) stationed at Karen. They perform MEDCAPS (Medical Civic Action Program) in the main village at the newly-constructed hospital.

The Mat team at Karen consists of several military advisers and medics. Other members of the conglomerate are Specialist Six Joe Tarbell (Security, Colo.), Civil Affairs Adviser from the XXIV Corps; and Specialist Four Jim Ellis (Jackson, Tenn.), RTO (Radio-Telephone Operator) from the 4th Bn., 31st Inf.

The Hiep Duc Territory has been rebuilt almost totally since last spring when a major communist offensive nearly destroyed the main village. Several major advances have been made during recent months in Hiep Duc. Hiep Duc had built two concrete school buildings, a concrete hospital and currently is working on a well lining and capping project that will prevent pollution of the water supply. Tarbell was involved in all of these projects.

In addition to the civic advancements made by the territory in the past few months, there have been major military advancements. Regional and Popular Forces in the area continue to "beef up" and improve their ranks. On a recent operation the Regional Forces from LZ Karen killed 17 Viet Cong during a three day period on the outskirts of the territory.

Tarbell stated that the territory has made a 30 per cent agricultural expansion during the last three months and continued expansion is predicted.

One of the main medical problems in Hiep Duc involves the Vietnamese diet. According to medic Bob Jean, "the Vietnamese diet consists mostly of rice, fish and other assorted meats, but it lacks essential amino acids."

Tarbell, working with the 196th Infantry Brigade's S-5 section, obtained various types of vegetable seeds from the United States which were planted by the local villagers to attempt to correct the deficiencies in their diets.

The Hiep Duc Territory has had a major economic problem since the war began. The territory is cut off from trade with other villages because it lies west of most of the secured areas around Highway One.

This has been the focal point of recent studies and action is planned to rid the community of this economic thorn. Tarbell believes improved land routes would enable the local villagers to improve their way of life and more easily purchase items that they cannot produce. The villagers have had to travel by means of Vietnamese air service to Tam Ky once a week from LZ Karen.

The capacity of this service is limited and the only other option was to travel on the unimproved, unsecured road to Que Son and risk being robbed by Viet Cong terrorists.

In the future, the group of Americans will continue to work with the local South Vietnamese officials to create a more secure and affluent way of life for the people of Hiep Duc Territory.

"Roger That" is the reply this Infantry RTO (Radio, Telephone Operator) received after he had reported his company's location during a recent patrol near Hiep Duc. The infantrymen are from Delta Company, 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry. (U.S. Army Photo by Sp/4 John Cushman)

Khe Sanh—once a garden

By 1st Lieutenant James Jordan

KHE SANH (23rd Inf. Div. IO) – Today it is extremely hard to picture this area of Vietnam as a prosperous agricultural region, but the evidence around this combat base indicates just that.

Khe Sanh has become the focal point in two well-known campaigns of the Vietnam War. The Marines established the first combat base here in 1968 and withstood strong enemy attacks until they were withdrawn late in the year.

The combat base was reopened early this year and was occupied by units of the 23rd Infantry Division and units of other divisions to provide support for the South Vietnamese thrust into Laos.

The base resembles a horseshoe with the airstrip forming one side. It is situated on a spacious, but rugged, plateau between two valleys; Highway 9, the main east-west artery through Quang Tri Province passes through one of the valleys at the foot of the combat base.

The mountains forming the valleys are slightly higher than the plateau of the combat base. The plateau itself is pock-marked from past combat construction and enemy fire. Much of the area is covered with a green, wheat-like grass, sometimes approaching six feet in height. A plant resembling the sage brush of the middle United States is also prevalent.

The refuse of the former occupants of the base is also prevalent: rusty artillery canisters, rotting ammunition boxes, twisted metal, segments of the first airstrip, old C-Ration cans, small arms brass, hand grenade pins and corroded barbed wire standing amid new wire.

But the area was at one time an agricultural region.

Along Highway 9 between Khe Sanh and Lang Vei to the west, stand the remnants of a half a dozen stone structures suggesting a strong French influence. Walls and chimneys stand now where rather gracious farmhouses once lined the road. Several such ruins can be seen within the confines of the combat base itself.

The trees around Khe Sanh have been severely battered by the give and take of ground combat. Most are now white and dead. The trunk is all that remains of many.

But along the hillsides surrounding the base, occasional well disciplined rows of trees and plants can be seen in spite of the undergrowth that has captured the area. Nature and war have not yet had sufficient time to erode the works of former residents of the hillsides and valleys.

"The last time I was here," commented an airman, "that house on the ridge, there was three walls and a roof with one side missing. The second story floor was there. There was even some furniture I believe. I think a rocket took care of all but the wall that's standing now."

Other memories come to soldiers on their first period of duty at Khe Sanh.

"I felt sort of uneasy when I heard we were going here," said Private First Class Steven Erkel (Sacramento, Calif.) a member of a 23rd Infantry Division cavalry unit. "I read a lot about this place when the Marines were here and it didn't sound like a nice place to visit at all."

"But now that I'm here, I don't think it's much different than our old AO (Area of Operations). It's a little cooler, especially at night, and it's a little more rugged, but the words 'Khe Sanh' don't have the same meaning for me that they used to."

"I feel pretty much the same way," said Sergeant William Anderson (Redwood City, Calif.) from the same unit. "I don't like Khe Sanh as well as the old AO, but it's not nearly as bad as I thought it would be.

"It poses some special problems for the cavalry that we didn't have down south, but you have to be prepared for that sort of thing in this war."

Pilot's inspiration to fly

By Sp/4 Don Newton

LZ HAWK HILL (196th Inf. Div. IO) – Boyhood dreams to pilot an airplane usually do not become reality. For many though, this aerial fascination does not die.

It returns to life for the man who gazes up at a jet trail or stops momentarily under the charisma of a vanishing engine drone. Such loftly visions often rest in the planning stages indefinitely. The man remains earthbound.

What, then, inspires a dreamer to become a pilot? The question was posed recently to three Light Observation Helicopter (LOH) pilots here who make up the 196th Infantry Brigade Aviation section, 23rd Infantry Division. They gave their varying reasons, and agreed that money generally ranks as a secondary incentive among aviators.

"The chance for me to fly came with flight school," said Warrant Officer Donald L. Delaplaine (Bayville, N.Y.). "One thing should be understood--and that is a candidate in flight school must really have a love to fly if he hopes to earn his wings. You can drop out of the program and its harrassment any time. Many men do."

Delaplaine then mentioned a basic inspiration for many potential pilots of draft age. "Right now I could be humping the bush rather than flying," he said.

Warrant Officer One Gerald R. Schindler (Phoenix, Ariz.) recently joined the "Charger" aviation section. He and Delaplaine both agree the television and movie media help create a desire to fly, especially for young people.

"I've always enjoyed watching pilots on the screen," commented Schindler. "It was fun to imagine myself doing the same things."

One man remembers the television serial "Whirley Birds" as his sole boyhood inspiration to fly. The show was an adventure series about two commercial helicopter pilots. "I watched "Whirley Birds" during my high school days," mused Captain Wayne G. Hicks (Augusta, Ga.) section commander of the "Charge" LOHs. "As far as I was concerned, those "Whirley Bird" guys could do no wrong."

Another aspect of "why fly?" exists, which can be fully understood, perhaps, only by pilots in Vietnam.

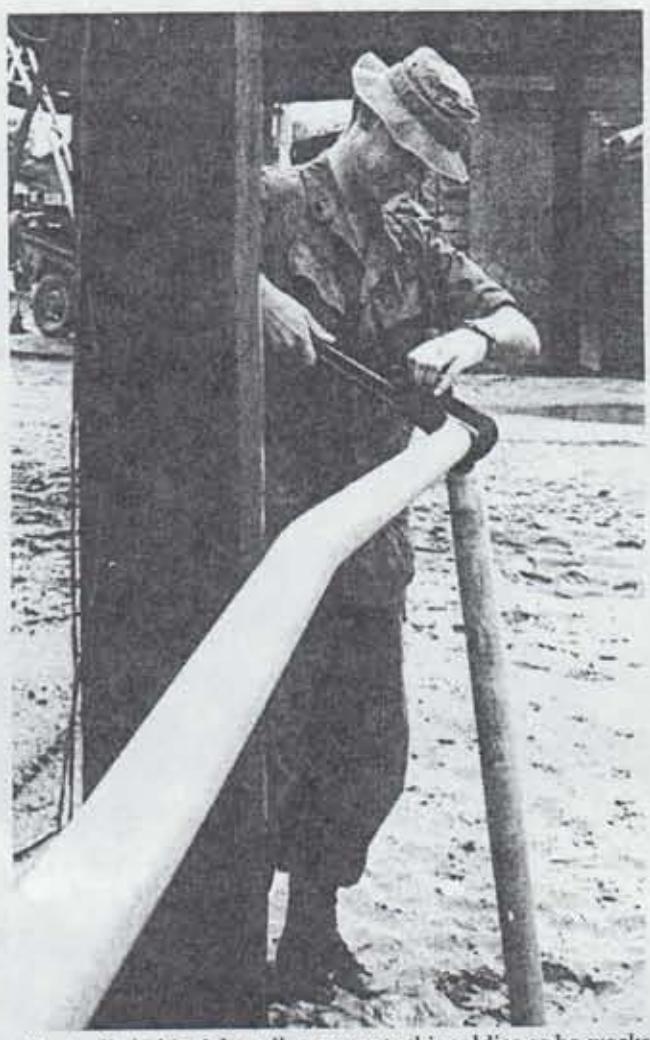
"Most ground troops over here remember at least one helicopter mission," said Delaplaine. "It may have been a dustoff, a resupply or a fire mission. If a guy wasn't assisted directly by aviation support, then he will usually have a friend who was.

"In a Saigon bar, I was bought a drink by a GI who didn't know me," continued Delaplaine, "but the pilot's wings on my shirt meant something special to him. That type of gesture is not uncommon to us."

These infantrymen with Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry, take time out to have a can of "C" Rations during a recent patrol near Hiep Duc. (U.S. Army Photo by Sp/4 Brad Mandel)

With a little help fro

Employing a cutting torch a member of Hdqs., Hdqs. Battery, 1st Bn., 14th Artillery severes a section of pipe to be used in the construction of the playground toys.



"Just a little bit tighter," comments this soldier as he works on one of the many playground toys.

A 23rd Infantry Division soldier, working in his spare time, puts the finishing touches on this swing set soon to be enjoyed by the children of Ky Chan School.

With a little help from an obliging artilleryman the children of the Ky Chan School take a s

n our friends

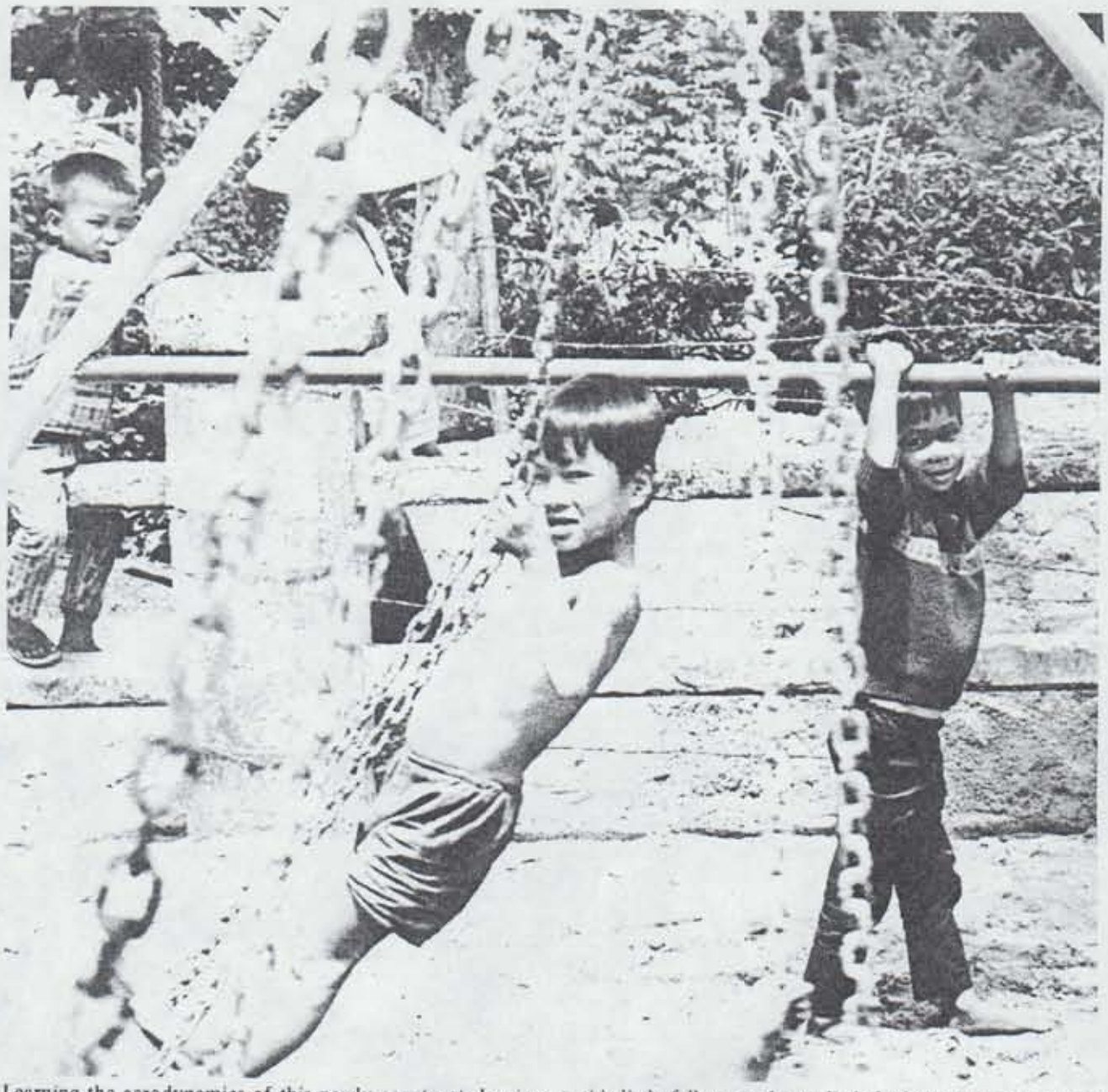
CHU LAI (23rd Inf. Div. IO) -- The men of Headquarters, Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 14th Artillery worked in their free time with available equipment to produce playground toys for the children of Ky Chan School located in the neighboring village of An Tan.

The playground consists of swing sets, merry-go-rounds, monkey ladders, and teeter-boards.

Was it worth the effort? Picures of the playground, taken at its March 15th dedication, provide an excellant answer.

Photos and story

by 2Lt. Fred G. Vigeanti



Learning the aerodynamics of this newly constructed swingset, this little fellow employs a little body motion to build up some momentum.

their new merry-go-round.

Pausing on his way down the monkey ladder this youngster posses momentarily for our every-ready cameraman.

LOH crew nets 9 KIA's

By SP4 Don Newton

LZ HAWK HILL (196th Inf. Bde. IO) – After two months experience flying the friendly skies of Vietnam, a young warrant officer recently demonstrated his confidence and skills in a big way–nine enemy kills in a matter of minutes. Sixty days earlier he might have considered his feat a fairy tale.

"All I heard back in the States was that LOH's (Light Observation Helicopters) do a good job drawing fire," said Warrant Officer Donald L. Delaplaine (Bayville, N.Y.) who currently flys the small aircraft, "Charger OO", for the 196th Infantry Brigade's Aviation.

"On top of that my friends gave me hell after flight school, when they learned of my assignment over here. One of their favorite jokes was about how cavalry units in Vietnam mark their L.Z's (Landing Zones) with burning LOHs."

Any doubts about LOH performance disappeared for Mr. Delaphlaine after actual combat experience. His recent nine enemy kills, which took place east of Tam Ky over hostile Barrier Island, represents a pinnacle in the flying career of this 23rd Infantry Division pilot.

"It was near dusk when I noticed a metal reflection by a tree along the north side of the island," said Delplaine. "Specialist Five Mickey Lewis (Hannibal, Mo.) serving as my crew chief at the time, was ready with the 'pig' (M-60 machine gun) as we circled down for a close look. On our second swing around I saw two bad guys hiding in the grass. When they knew we saw them, they opened up on us with automatic small arms fire."

On this first exchange of fire two of the enemy ran from the brush. One of them fell quickly under a short burst from Lewis's machine gun. The small helicopter circled again cutting off the second fleeing VC.

"We continued to fire up the trees and bushes," said SP4 Lewis, "until two more fell from the cover and out on the grass for a total of four enemy dead in that area."

A short distance further south over Barrier Island, the crew chief and his pilot detected movement under a small wooden bridge. Two NVA under the structure opened up with their AK-47s. An additional two NVA began firing about 10 meters from the bridge under cover of a thicket. Nearby, in another thicket, a fifth NVA completed the triangular threat to "Charger OO".

"Mickey kept firing in short bursts until all five had fallen from their cover," said Mr. Delaplaine. "We noticed each one wore an NVA uniform. The four we fought with earlier were VC."

It turned out to be one of my biggest encounters over here," added Lewis who has ten months experience as a crew chief. "I was surprised to see so many of them since a cav unit was close by."

Mr. Delaplaine no longer appears skeptical about flying the small aircraft which claims a good reputation for attracting bullets.

"It's true that I'm relatively new in country," continued the warrant officer. "But although I could not claim a large body count before this action, at least I know I've always harrassed the enemy as a LOH pilot.

"Every time 'Charlie' fires at me he loses. Either my crew chief shoots him, or I call in arty or air support.

"Also, I should add, it's really difficult to bring down a LOH, because they're so maneuverable."

Backing up Mr. Delaplaine's statement is the unscathed body of "Charger OO", which took no hits from nine VC/NVA.

Looking as though he is playing a flute Sp4 Ronald Garcia, San Lorens, Calif., drinks water from a bamboo shoot. The 23rd Inf. Div. trooper with Charlie Co., 5th Bn., 46th Inf., is taking part in an operation about 20 miles west of Chu Lai. (Photo by Sp4 John Cushman)

These Infantrymen with Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry, 23rd Infantry Division, move cautiously across an open area while on a recent patrol near Hiep Duc. (Photo by Sp4 Brad Mandel)

Just call him 'Mr. Lucky'

By Sgt. Louis Miller

LZ STINSON (198th Inf. Bde. IO) – One infantryman from the 23rd Infantry Division's 198th Infantry Brigade isn't sure if he should consider himself lucky or unlucky.

The unlucky part occurred when he tripped a booby-trapped handgrenade that was on the trail, and the lucky part came in the form of a deplayed fuse that allowed the infantryman to clear the killing radius of the grenade.

A platoon from Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 52nd Infantry, had just finished setting up their day laager position in an area northwest of LZ Stinson. The platoon leader sent two men 100 meters from the perimeter and had them set up an observation point.

An hour later two other riflemen, Private First Class Raymond Severe (Grantsville, Utah) and Sergeant Hershcell Blackwell (Indianapolis, Ind.), left the laager position to relieve the first two men at the observation point.

"We walked out to the observation point on the same trail that the first two men used," said Severe. "In a few minutes we reached our post and relieved the other men, then they returned to the laager site using the same trail."

Severe and Blackwell were on their post for the required period of time, so Severe decided to return to the laager position to get the next relief. Severe walked halfway down the trail when there was an explosion from his rear. The blast was close enough to knock Severe head over heels and throw him further down the trail.

By this time Blackwell had arrived at Severe's location, and the only thing that Blackwell could find wrong with Severe is that he had two small holes in one of his boots.

The platoon medic arrived a short time later and checked the infantryman for wounds. The medic found a small piece of shrapnel in Severe's neck and back.

"I don't know how the other men missed the booby-trap, but I guess that they were lucky that they did," said Severe. "The booby-trap was set up with a delayed fuse, so if there would have been more then one man walking down the trail it would have caused some real trouble."

Rude awakening

By Sp/4 Gene Colling

LZ DEBBIE (198th Inf. Bde. IO) – Stretched out in hammocks shaded by the tree branches overhead a group of Viet Cong were enjoying an afternoon nap. Their reverie was shattered when an element of the 23rd Infantry Division's 198th Infantry Brigade chanced by, while on their way to a day laager position.

"We had just moved through an open area," said First Lieutenant Vincent Varel (Bartelso, Ill.) a platoon leader with Bravo Company, 4th Battalion, 21st Infantry, "and were walking along a treeline. The point man spotted the enemy in the treeline."

Apparently having heard the approaching "Gimlets", the VC were already scrambling out of their hammocks when the lead element spotted them.

"We could only get off a few shots before the VC disappeared into the underbrush," said Varel. "We lobbed in several grenades to check out possible bunker locations. Then a squad moved on line."

The five-man squad moved into position and found that in his hasty flight the enemy had left behind some valuable equipment. Scattered around the area were an AK-47 rifle, 15 Chicom (Chinese Communist) hand grenades, 12 hammocks, 100 pounds of rice and 100 pounds of salt..

While the squad searched through the abandoned equipment, Private First Class Tom Duran (Cerritos, Calif.), who was set up as rear security, got into the action.

One VC, evidently distrubed at being jolted from his nap, had circled around and was moving toward the squad.

Crawling over a mound and armed with a grenade and a bayonet the VC didn't notice Duran lying close by. One shot from Duran's M-16 ruined the VC's plans.

Lt. spots sneaky NVA

By Sp/4 Zin Balaban

LZ HAWK HILL (196th Inf. Bde. IO) – Two moving bushes, which turned out to be well camouflaged NVA soldiers, were recently credited as kills to a platoon of 196th Infantry Brigade "Chargers" of the 23rd Infantry Division.

The mission of Alpha Company, 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry, was to disrupt enemy supply routes used to transport food from the lowlands to the mountains where the VC and NVA often hide.

While in their day defensive perimeter recently, the 3rd Platoon heard several shots from an AK-47 rifle not far away. A quick check over the radio revealed that no friendly element was taking fire.

A patrol of two squads moved out to reconnoiter the vicinity from which the shots originated. One squad secured the top of a small hill as a blocking position, while the other squad began a sweep towards the hill.

No contact resulted in the sweep, so First Lieutenant John Ford (Columbus, Ga.), the platoon leader, decided to check a clump of brush off to one side. This brush hid a small ravine. Across the ravine and about 50 meters away, the lieutenant spotted some moving bushes.

"It only took a few seconds to realize they were actually well camouflaged personnel," said the platoon leader. "I called over my 'pig' (machine gun) team and placed them in a strategic position. Then the entire platoon opened fire."

The result of this contact was two enemy soldiers, alias bushes, killed. Confiscated in the action were two AK-47 rifles, two packs filled with rice, and attached to a pistol belt were a Chinese Communist (chicom) grenade and a first aid kit.

Life may be a ball but our pretty water maid Cherie Latimer reminds you to keep on the ball and watch your driving during April: Traffic Safety Month.

Warrant Officer Donald L. television serial "Whirley Birds uncommon to us. ...g a recent patrol near Nep Duc. (U.S. Army Photo by Sp/4 Brad Mandel)

'Chargers' free civilians from VC prison

By Sp/4 Tom Mano

LZ HAWK HILL (196th Inf. Bde. IO) – It was a day of laughter, happiness and a taste of freedom for nine South Vietnamese recently freed from a Viet-Cong civilian prison camp by "Chargers" of the 196th Infantry Brigade, 23rd Infantry Division.

A joyful reunion also took place when the two South Vietnamese civilians, escapees from the camp, who led Charlie Company, 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry to the camp, were reunited with their nine comrades.

"When the escapees first came to us, we didn't believe their story," said Captain Robert A. Milner (Rockland, Mass.), company commander of Charlie Company, "but the night before we started out, they drew a map and volunteered to lead us there."

The map detailing the camp showed a stream running through the center. To the left were the cadre hootches and to the right the stockade.

Early in the morning 2nd Platoon started on the trail to the camp, while 1st Platoon waited for their call. After thirty minutes the call came.

"We found sort of a way station which added credence to the escapees' story," continued Milner. "He said the camp was only 200 to 300 meters away."

Moving cautiously through a tunnel of brush, a squad was sent ahead to investigate. Soon they came to the stream mentioned on the map. They moved down the stream and the escapee stopped and pointed toward the camp.

The pointman, Specialist Four John Devore (Torrence, Calif.), walked a few steps and spotted two VC on the cadre side, one carrying an AK-47 rifle. He laid out a volume of fire and then the M-60 machine gunner opened up. A LAW (Light Anti-tank Weapon) was fired at a structure, completely demolishing it.

By now the remainder of the platoon was coming to support the patrol, which advanced up the hill cautiously to catch the fleeing VC.

"We were walking fast, but being careful," explained First Lieutenant Walter Jaudzimas (Waterbury, Conn.), platoon leader for 2nd Platoon. "we weren't so much worried about booby traps, but one of their men could've stayed back."

The men followed a blood trail to the top of the ridge. After following the trail for 800 meters, it disappeared and they turned back.

During all the excitment of the contact none of the soldiers had paid attention to the prisoners. As they descended the hill, a horrible sight greeted them.

"Their legs were this small," said Devore touching his index finger to his thumb. "You could even see the bones right through their faces."

During questioning, the former prisoners talked profusely about their ordeal.

To the best of their knowledge the camp had been in operation since 1967. The imprisonment of the group of five men and four women had ranged from 3½ to 11 months.

They said the reason for their imprisonment was not agreeing with the Communist doctrines taught by the VC. Usually two or three VC confronted them with evidence and escorted them to the camp.

Once at the camp, they were searched and all personal belongings were taken from them. Their money and clothes were confiscated, and they were issued a set of poorer clothes.

The females stated that when they reached the camp, they were interrogated. They were brought into a room and sat on a wooden board six inches high. The interrogator sat at a table. If the females were caught lying, they were forced to sit on the floor and stocks with clamps, described as "definitely medieval" by Devore, were applied to their feet until they told the truth. The males experienced the same treatment, but had to go through the gruelling torture all night.

Every two months, while prisoners, they were re-interrogated in sessions which lasted between 1½ to eight days. After the interrogation, they were usually subjected to seven to eight days of political indoctrination. This consisted of political lectures followed by questioning.

The daily schedule of the prisoners lasted from 3 a.m. to 6 p.m. From three to five they policed the camp area. Then they were taken out to the rice fields to work. They were divided into two groups with each group guarded by two VC. This work lasted until 4:30 p.m. then they were taken back to camp and put on another police call until 6 p.m. Sometimes this routine lasted ten days before the prisoners were allowed any spare time.

In the evening the prisoners were placed in stocks which forced their legs apart and bound them at the ankles. The stocks were placed at the foot of their wooden beds. There were clamps on the ends of the stocks by which pressure could be increased or decreased on the ankles. Depending on the degree of discomfort the guards wished to place on the prisoners, either both feet and both hands were place on the either both feet and both hands were placed in stocks, or just one foot or one hand.

Though the prisoners harvested rice, they never ate any of it. They were given four ounces of corn per day. The guards ate much better food and more of it.

The former prisoners said in the last nine months that nine people had starved to death, and one prisoner was sent on a VC mission. The quards later said this prisoner excapted, but the ex-prisoners think he was killed.

Because of the lack of medical supplies, any severely wounded prisoners eventually died. The former prisoners said there are six hundred graves around the camp.

To prevent further use of the stockade, all structures and the stocks were razed. Through the crackling of the flames one could hear the sobs of one of the female prisoners. Perhaps she cried for the six hundred who died or perhaps for the nine who made it.

Precariously reaching across the missing span of the recently mine-damaged An Tan Bridge, the temporarily constructed Bailey Bridge is erected by the 26th Engineer Battalion. (U.S. Army Photo by Sp/4 Lee Habich)

Sapper's mistake costs his life

By SP4 Mark Cook

LZ LIZ (23rd Inf. Div. IO) – Two enemy soldiers were killed and an AK-47 rifle and 19 Chinese Communist handgrenades captured as an element of the 198th Infantry Brigade's 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry used an enemy mistake to intercept an apparent Viet Cong sapper squad in a recent encounter south of Chu Lai.

A team from Company A, 1-20th Inf., was setting up in a pre-planned night attack position near an old French railroad route when the infantrymen heard enemy voices approaching.

"We realized the enemy were no more than 50 meters away," said Private First Class Mike Boske (Bolivar, Pa.) "so we dropped to the ground and waited for them to move in closer."

Boske and Specialists Four Larry Croom (Virginia Beach, Va.) and Daniel Ickler (Verdige, Neb.) caught sight of the enemy silhoutted in the dark just 20 meters away. The three men opened fire and immediately brought down the first two men in the enemy file.

"When the rest of our element heard us open fire, they saw the enemy and began firing," said Croom. "Then we all moved into a line formation and swept through the area."

The sweep produced two enemy killed, one AK-47 rifle, two AK-47 magazines, 19 Chinese Communist handgrenades, and a pair of wire cutters.

"The wire cutters led us to assume that the enemy element was a sapper squad," said Ickler. "But the sapper's first rule is quiet and stealth and they didn't observe that too well."

BUY
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SAVINGS
BONDS

Engineers repair An Tan bridge

By SP4 Lee Habich

CHU LAI (23rd Inf. Div. IO) – As the men of the 26th Engineer Bn. know all too well, bridges in the Republic of Vietnam have a propensity to fall down–with a not too subtle assist from an obliging Viet Cong saboteur.

When a bridge in the 23rd Infantry Division area of operation is blown or damaged it is up to the engineers to repair the destruction as quickly as possible. Unlike Humpty Dumpty a bridge can be put back together again and normally in less than a day.

In a matter of hours after a bridge is damaged, the engineers put into effect a contingency plan designed to repair the damage as soon as possible. As any engineer will vouch, less time does not mean less work. In some cases, such as the recently blown bridge at the village of An Tan, restoration of a bridge involves a number of operations.

"The objective is to get traffic moving as quickly as possible," says Lieutenant Colonel Harry V. Dutchyson, 26th Eng. Bn. Commander. "In the case of the damaged An Tan bridge a temporary panel bridge was constructed in order to get convoys moving.

Afterward a temporary floating bridge was built nearby. Traffic was rerouted to the floating bridge in order to permit permanent work on the damaged An Tan Bridge. In all the operation involved building and dismantling two temporary bridges and reconstructing the midsection of the mine damaged bridge."

The main assets for an effective engineering company are experience, skill and muscle, with a marked emphasis on the latter. In many respects bridge building is a series of "Heave-Ho's", each one adding a small but vital segment to the total operation.

Due to its importance in the division resupply network the An Tan bridge had to be repaired as soon as possible. The damage involved a 75 foot span in the center of the bridge blown by a sapper who, according to authorities, secured a 200 pound charge to the supporting piles beneath the bridge during the night.

Because of the extensiveness of the damage, members of Bravo, Delta and Echo Companies, 26th Engineers, were called out in a joint operation the following day to repair the bridge. The engineers constructed a temporary double single panel "Bailey" bridge in seven hours, thereby alleviating the traffic backlog.

The panel "Bailey" Bridge was put together piece by piece, somewhat like a gigantic erector set, and then pushed across the destroyed span of bridge. As the unsupported framework slid across the blown area, a counterweight was maintained to prevent the framework from toppling into the An Tan River thirty feet below. To maintain the delicate balance 71 feet of leverage was kept behind the unsupported span of bridge.

When the proper length of bridge was constructed the engineers did what they do most–"Heave-Ho'd" the entire structure across the blown section to the other undamaged side of the bridge. Adding wooden-slats to both sides to make a ramp, the panel bridge was ready for crossing.

Once traffic was moving again the engineers proceeded to construct the floating "Bailey" bridge in order to repair the mine damaged An Tan bridge. While engineers worked on the blown section, traffic movement was maintained via the floating bridge.

To repair the An Tan bridge the engineers rigged up a floating raft to support the heavy terrain crane needed to drive the huge supporting piles into the river bed below. In a few weeks the bridge will be totally repaired and to the credit of the men of the 26th Engineers the traffic interruption along Highway One was held to less than eight hours.