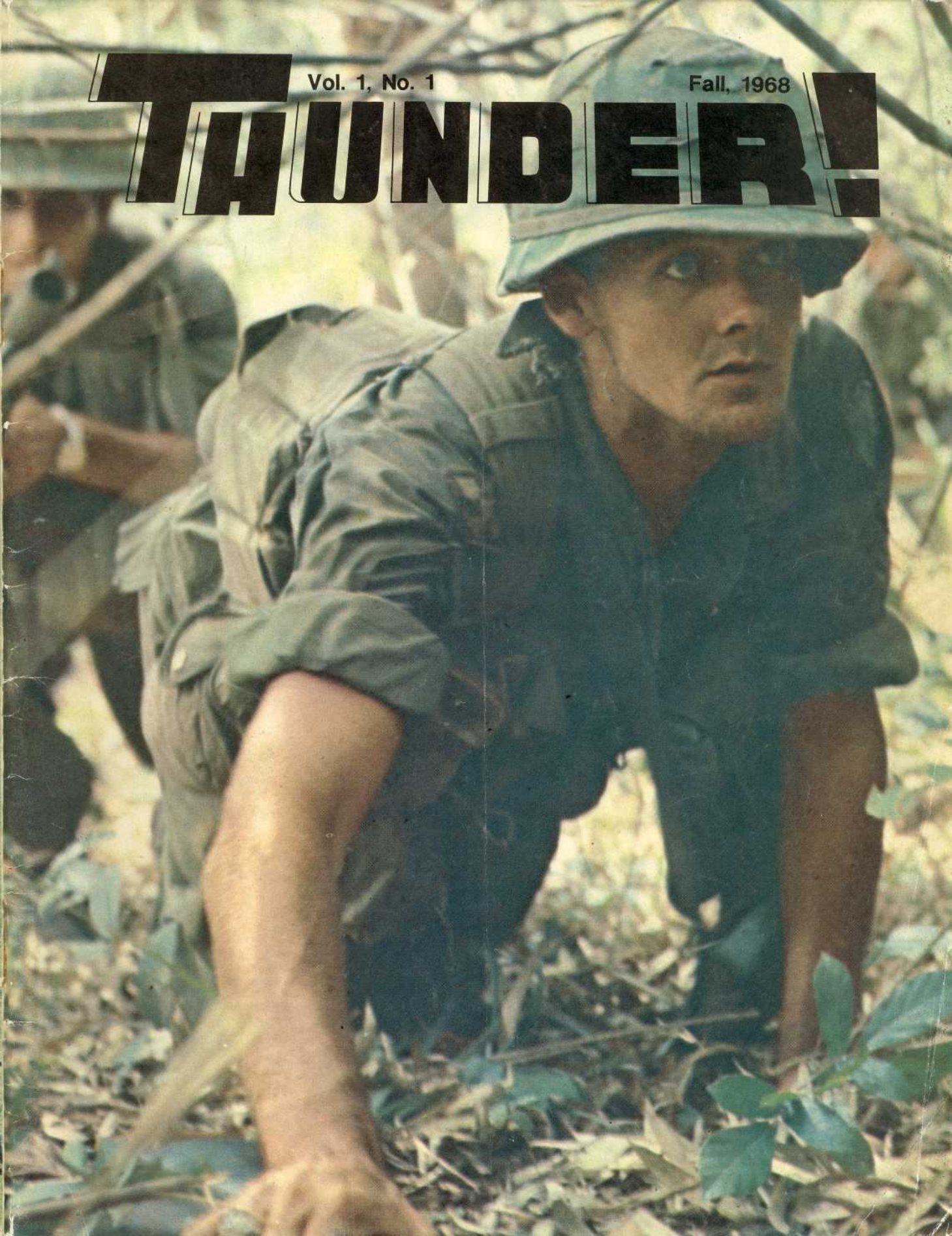
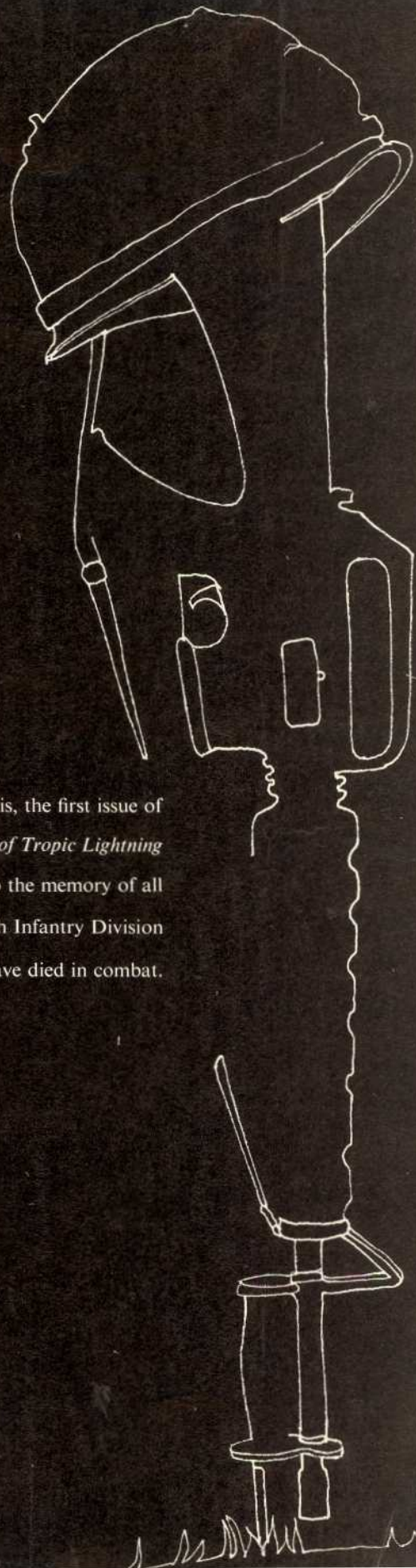


Vol. 1, No. 1

Fall, 1968

# THUNDER!

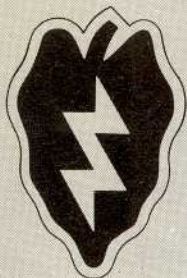




This, the first issue of  
*THUNDER, the Voice of Tropic Lightning*  
is dedicated to the memory of all  
25th Infantry Division  
soldiers who have died in combat.

Take up our quarrel with the foe!  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders' fields.

*John McCrae—In Flanders' Fields*



# the Voice of Tropic Lightning **THUNDER!**

Vol. 1, No. 1

Fall, 1968

## COMMAND GROUP

MG Ellis W. Williamson  
Commanding General

BG Glen C. Long  
BG Carleton Preer, Jr.  
Assistant Division Commanders

COL Burton F. Hood  
Chief of Staff

## INFORMATION STAFF

MAJ Andrew J. Sullivan  
Information Officer

CPT Michael H. Clark  
Editor

## MAJOR CONTRIBUTORS

SP4 Don Brown  
SP4 Harry R. Caddick  
SP4 Bill Clevenger  
SSG Julio C. Diaz  
SP4 William Flaherty  
1LT Wayne Guest  
SP4 Dennis Johansen  
SP4 Robert C. Krysiak  
SP4 Steve Lochen  
PFC Richard W. McDowell  
SP4 Robert O'Hare  
SP4 Richard A. Patterson  
CPT Leslie L. Raschko  
PFC Thomas Roberts  
SP4 Raymond R. Shultz  
SP5 Bill Sluis  
SP4 Robert Smith  
SP4 Larry Weist

## SPECIAL CONTRIBUTORS

USA Sp Photo Det, Pac

## THE CONTENTS

To save a life .....	2
Somebody up there likes us! .....	8
Ready to strike .....	14
Move fast, hit hard .....	19
A tribute .....	24
Toan Thang I .....	26
A dragon and a goddess .....	32

## THE COVERS

**FRONT.** For the Tropic Lightning infantryman every square foot of Vietnam's lush, but war-torn countryside possesses a new challenge—a new danger. A fellow just can't be too careful. SGT John Nix, then with 3d Brigade's 2d Battalion, 12th Infantry, demonstrates this caution as he crawls warily under bamboo while setting up a daylight ambush near Dau Tieng. SSG Alfred Batungbacal, of the US Army Speical Photographic Detachment, Pacific, and formerly assigned to the 25th Division, caught the moment on film.

**BACK.** No one needs to tell a Tropic Lightning combat veteran how large his division's area of operations really is. He couldn't have been with the outfit long without having humped over a good bit of it. The size and complexity of the area is colorfully portrayed by the light, talented hand of SP4 Harry R. Caddick, a 25th Division combat artist.

## THUNDER, the Voice of Tropic Lightning

is an authorized publication of the 25th Infantry Division. It is published for the benefit of all members of the Division serving in Vietnam. Views and opinions expressed are not

necessarily those of the Department of the Army. This publication is printed at Dai Nippon Printing Co., Ltd., Tokyo, Japan.

# ***To save a life...***

***The story of men who conserve the  
fighting strength.***

***by SP4 Richard A. Patterson***



Vietnam is a small war in terms of soldiers captured, wounded, and killed; what some people call a brush-fire war. Yet, it is still a war and over 84,000 U.S. soldiers have been wounded and hospitalized as a result of enemy action.

During World War's I and II and in Korea many hundreds of thousands of American soldiers were wounded and of those wounded, a tragic number died. In this war it is different.

The United States has always provided her fighting men with the best medical care in the world. Today it is better than ever—almost perfect—over 98% of the soldiers evacuated from the battle area survive.

The Tropic Lightning soldier wounded on the field of battle is only 20 minutes away from a hospital by

helicopter. Ten minutes later he can be in surgery. Fifteen minutes after a dustoff helicopter leaves Cu Chi, he can be in the skilled hands of a neurosurgeon. A severely burned soldier can leave Cu Chi at 5:30 a.m. and, early that same morning, he will be on the way to the 106th Hospital in Japan where the staff specializes in burn cases. At the 106th he is just one step away from the world-renowned burn treatment center at Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

What do these facts and figures mean? They mean that the care given a wounded soldier in Vietnam is equal to that provided in any stateside hospital. In fact. . . .it's better!

Where does the soldier begin receiving care? How good is it and what

caliber of man provides it?

Initial medical treatment for a wounded GI is only a few steps away in most cases. The bulwark of the Army's medical profession is the combat medic. The medical specialist, fondly called "Doc" by the men he serves, travels with his unit wherever it goes—through jungles or across streams and rice paddies knee deep in mud.

He hopes and prays that he is never called but when he is needed it only takes a shout of "Medic!" to bring him on the run, a small, rubberized canvas bag swinging wildy on his shoulder.

That little aid bag, together with the skill and courage of the medic, makes a very formidable team. Highly trained in field dressing wounds "Doc" can work on a man in the dead of night



# To save

or pressed flat against the ground while bullets cut the air scant inches from his head.

His medical supplies largely consist of the little everyday items needed to combat jungle rot, dysentery and the many other diseases to which the soldier is exposed. In addition to these items, he carries the vital tools of his trade: Bandages, morphine and blood expanding solutions that will be so desperately needed during a firefight.

## A medic's story

There are countless stories, some of them taking on the proportions of legends, of the medic's courage and regard for human lives.

One medic, a member of the 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Wolfhounds, is a case in point. During a heavy, all-day battle with Viet Cong forces, "Doc" was on the battlefield tending the wounded.



Larsen

Second Wolfhound medic travels with his CO so he'll know fast when he's needed.



'Doc' maintains low silhouette while treating a wounded comrade.

Patterson

A wounded member of a 3d Brigade road-sweeping crew begins the short trip to the hospital.



Egan



# a life...

Early in the fight he was wounded by a bullet that splintered on an ammunition can he used to carry extra bandages; part of the bullet entered his chest, another chunk went into his head.

A few minutes later, while trying to retrieve a critically wounded GI, he "caught a burst of six" that shattered his arm. He calmly instructed several comrades as they bandaged his useless arm and then went back to the fight.

Throughout the day he worked over the wounded, refusing evacuation because he was the only available medic. Almost 50 wounded men were treated by the medic. Once a man stopped breathing; the medic administered mouth-to-mouth resuscitation until the soldier revived... and lived.

Late in the afternoon as the enemy broke contact, he climbed aboard a dustoff chopper and was evacuated.

His story is one that he wants to forget but the men he treated, the soldiers who live today because of that



Paterson



Lafoon

Smoke directs  
the dustoff chopper to  
its destination.

medic, or any medic, will not forget.

## Medevac problem

After the bullet hits, the mine detonates, or the boobytrap explodes and the medic performs his job, the problem of medical evacuation presents itself.

In past wars the answer was to carry the casualty to the nearest road and

Just moments out of the field,  
the patient is carried  
into the emergency room.

drive him to a medical receiving company in a jeep or truck. At the receiving company, he would receive all medical care possible under field conditions and then be evacuated (often by vehicle) to a regular hospital for more intensive treatment.

The advent of the helicopter produced revolutionized combat medical treatment.

"During the past two months we received four soldiers with heart wounds. Three survived. Without the speed of a dustoff helicopter none of the men would have reached the 12th

# To save a life...

Evacuation Hospital in time."

Thus Lieutenant Colonel Robert E. Neims, commander of the 12th Evacuation Hospital at Cu Chi, vividly illustrates that the obvious advantage of medical evacuation by chopper is speed.

The helicopter ambulance system is the culmination of years of planning. Dustoff by helicopter began during the Korean War and was called Aero Medical Evacuation. The patients were carried in makeshift litter racks strapped to the skids of the OH-1<sup>7</sup> helicopter which was similar in appearance to the OH-23 observation helicopter being used in Vietnam today.

The patient received no medical care during flight, the only advantage over conventional ambulance being speed.

When the Korean War ended, air evacuation was pushed into the background. The consensus was that "there is just no need for it right now." As a consequence medical units had to make due with obsolete aircraft and equipment.

## A chopper designed

After years of planning and arguing, proponents of the Aero Medical Evacuation system won their case. A helicopter would be designed from the ground up with medical evacuation in mind.

That helicopter became the highly successful UH-1A or "Huey." The craft was so popular that it was immediately grabbed for other uses, and it was not until the beginning of the Vietnam War that high priorities were given to medical evacuation units.

Dustoff units now in Vietnam receive the highest priority on new ships and are using the most advanced model of the Huey.

One such unit is the 159th Helicopter Ambulance Detachment based at Cu Chi and responsible for providing air evacuation for two-thirds of the 25th Division area of operation. The 57th Medical Detachment, based at Long Binh covers the other third.

The goal of the 159th, commanded by Major Raymond A. Jackson, is a scramble time of five minutes or less. From the moment a mission comes through Cu Chi dustoff control until they are airborne and on the way to a pick-up zone, the clock seldom ticks

off more than five minutes. A life may hang in the balance of a few precious seconds and the 40-man unit never wastes seconds.

Once airborne the aircraft commander (AC) has complete authority over the ship. He usually knows how many soldiers are to be evacuated; his crew plans accordingly. The dustoff can carry four litter and four ambulatory, or "walking wounded," patients.

Jackson, a resident of Wabasso, Florida, explained that each mission is different. There are always enough variables, such as weather and the proximity of the enemy units, to make each dustoff unique.

The AC has to determine from the facts given him by the unit on the ground, the probability of success if he goes into a hot landing zone. He is responsible for the crew, helicopter and the lives of the wounded soldiers waiting for pick up.

A general rule, built and maintained by the courage of dustoff pilots, is that if the ground unit can suppress the

enemy fire, the ship will go in.

Before the dustoff starts into the landing zone, a variety of signals are used to identify friendly positions. During the day smoke grenades are the most common and effective signal. At night anything that lights up is used.

As the dustoff roars in for a landing, the crew chief and aero-medic slide back the doors and prepare to load the wounded. Time is critical. The helicopter is unarmed and defenseless on the ground. Swiftly and efficiently the wounded are secured aboard the ship.

The men of the 159th dustoffs try to spend no more than 60 seconds on the ground—seldom more and often much less.

In-flight care is intensive. Crew members, specially trained for the job, carry a non-standard aid bag. The aero-medics have blood expanding solutions, plastic airways, bandages and artificial respiration equipment readily available. Highly skilled in administering aid while in flight the medics have yet another trick up their sleeves. They can accu-

Army doctors are specially trained and skilled to handle battlefield wounds.



Egon



rately diagnose wounds and the treatment necessary to save the life of a critically wounded soldier.

## Hospital alerted

The AC, once airborne with his patients, receives a diagnosis of each patient's wounds from the crew. This information is radioed ahead to the receiving hospital. Thus, a hospital many miles away is alerted to the particular needs of a badly wounded man and can be prepared to give the best, most intensive, care possible to the soldier the instant the dustoff lands.

When the 12th Evacuation Hospital receives a call from a dustoff that it is inbound with patients, the emergency room (ER) staff swings into action as one of the best emergency treatment centers in the world. Hospitals in the United States may have more space, more equipment and a larger staff, but the doctors and nurses of a combat zone hospital have a large asset: Experience.

In a place where a wasted motion or a wrong move may cost a human life, experience counts; it counts heavily.

As a dustoff settles down to one of the two helipads at the 12th Evac, litter bearers are standing by, ready and waiting. A few quick steps and the wounded GI is entering the ER.

Inside the long, air conditioned quonset hut, the litters are set on racks. Seven racks are always prepared; more can be set up if necessary, and a secondary ER is just a few yards away. As a medical specialist cuts away the GI's dirty, blood-soaked clothing, other medics and nurses are checking the "vital signs." Heartbeat, pulse, respiration; all are closely observed.

The ER is equipped with emergency equipment that includes oxygen to help a person breathe and resuscitation equipment to breathe for someone who cannot breathe for himself. The staff is trained to perform closed- and open-heart messages to revive faltering hearts. On steel bars over the little racks hang bottles of blood-expanding solutions and various instruments. Within easy reach are sterilized operating kits for minor surgery or crucial operations to sustain life.

The main function of an ER is to stabilize a patient and prepare him for



Patterson

surgery or evacuation to another hospital. This is accomplished in 10 to 15 minutes at the 12th Evac.

The 12th Evacuation Hospital performs a dual function in its efforts to serve the 25th Infantry Division. Besides being an evacuation hospital, it also serves as a surgical hospital with five fully equipped operating rooms. If they are all in use and a patient needs immediate surgery, he is within easy reach of more than a score of operating rooms.

A call to the 68th Medical Group in Long Binh will tell the 12th Evac what hospital has an operating room available. Another call brings the reliable dustoff, this time to transfer the stabilized patient to another hospital, another operating room and most important, the immediate care he needs.

After surgery the patient is sent to a ward where he begins his recovery or is prepared for further evacuation.

Each day a C-130 aircraft takes off from the Cu Chi airfield with patients heading for Japan. After a day of final preparation they leave Tan Son Nhut for one of the many American military hospitals in Japan. At the hospital, the wounded GI continues to receive expert care as the healthful climate aids recovery.

By air, the wounded man is only minutes from the best medical care in the world.

Should evacuation to a more comprehensive medical facility be necessary, it's done by air.

Back to duty or home? If a patient has less than 60 days of his Vietnam tour remaining when he is fully recovered, he will be shipped home, otherwise he returns to his unit as do more than 50 percent of those sent to Japan.

From the instant he is wounded until the day he returns to duty, the American fighting man truly receives the best care in the world!



Patterson

USAF



An Air Force F-100 Supersabre hurls two more at Charlie from close in.

USAF's B-52 Stratofortress presents a majestic sight as it dumps part of its 38,000 pound load.



When troops in close contact need an immediate air strike to bail themselves out, when GI's are on the move, when they want mail, or when 25th Infantry Division commanders ask "what's the weather?", they turn to men in blue.

The men of the Air Force, flying from the air strips at the Tropic Lightning's base camps of Cu Chi, Dau Tieng and Tay Ninh, provide instrumental tactical support, passenger and mail service, and the latest weather information.

The most important and spectacular

Air Force role in the division's operations comes in the form of tactical air strikes and strafing runs which strike terror in the hearts of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army.

When a commander whose men are in a firefight appeals for help in the form

'Blue Suiters' make Lightning's job a lot easier.

# Somebody Up There L



of an air strike, his call is directed, through the division air operations officer, to an Air Force air liaison officer. The division air liaison officer (ALO) is Lieutenant Colonel George K. Barsom.

Barsom and ALOs in each of the division's brigades are in charge of planning air strikes in the division and, in a dual role, of pinpointing the enemy targets.

Each of the Air Force officers, who number almost 20, fly as forward air controllers (FAC's), which Barsom

described as "the heartbeat of the tactical air system."

Taking off in frail OH-1 "Bird Dog" planes armed only with marker rockets, the FAC flyers guide jets, which are on constant call, onto targets as they pummel enemy positions and reduce Viet Cong strongholds.

Flying along on a FAC flight is an aerial adventure which at times recalls a chapter out of the past. The slow "Bird Dog" aircraft, which resembles a Piper Cub, trundles down the runway, seeming to skip before getting free of the ground. Once airborne, it makes its way steadily but with no great haste toward the objective.

On a recent sunny spring afternoon, Captain Richard Haney allowed an Army observer-photographer to fly along as the Air Force pilot pointed his gray aircraft toward a target near the Saigon River.

High in the sky, the slightly rarified air was delightfully cool and the war, temporarily, seemed remote. From 3,000 feet, the terrain below looked deceptively peaceful.

Sleepy villages, placid rice paddies, steaming jungle and scrubby forests lay simmering under the tropic sun. To the northwest Nui Ba Den, the Black Virgin mountain, swatched in a blue haze, broke the almost monotonous flatness extending to the south.

As the plane approached the "mush-

# ikes Us!

by SP5 Bill Sluis

# Somebody up there...

room" in the Saigon River, Haney pointed out three small smokestacks sprouting out of the ground near the edge of a clearing in Boi Loi Woods. Blue smoke meandered upward from the seemingly quiet spot. Intelligence reports indicated it was an enemy bunker complex, perhaps a ferrometal shop equipped to produce grenades and ammunition.

Circling the site for more than five minutes, Haney established radio contact between himself and ground communications at Dau Tieng and Cu Chi. Meanwhile, an F-100 jet based at Bien Hoa was winging its way north to the area.

"I have you in sight; proceed to mark the target," the jet pilot's voice crackled over the radio. The "Bird Dog" aircraft dove swiftly onto the target and a roar from under one wing shook the cockpit, as a marker rocket sped to the heart of the bunker complex.

A plume of white phosphorus rose amid the lazy blue smoke as the marker rocket slammed into its objective.

"Hit 'em about 25 feet north of the smoke," Haney counseled.

The jet's roar echoed above the woodland as the F-100 wheeled in the sky, dropped over the target and ejected its ordnance.

A brilliant ball of orange flame en-

veloped the target as the concussion of a 500-pound bomb shook the surrounding terrain. The jet circled, beginning a second run, and a cloud of smoke resembling a thick black thunderhead began to obscure the target. A new ball of flame and concussion shattered the apparent tranquility of the scene below.

## Target destroyed

"Looking good—destruction of reinforced bunker complex complete," Haney's voice announced over the radio. He turned the "Bird Dog" back to its home strip while the jet disappeared quickly to the southeast.

Daily, and frequently at night, such FAC flights and air strikes or strafing runs pound targets in the division's area of operations. Three FAC's are usually attached to each brigade, although up to five are authorized. They fly in planes maintained by ground teams at each of the base camps.

"Bird Dog" aircraft usually fly low over potential targets and frequently draw ground fire. At night, especially in remote areas such as the jungles of War Zone C or the Hobo Woods, it is possible for a flyer to become disoriented and have difficulty finding his way back to a base camp.

"This is especially a hazard on cloudy

or foggy nights," Barsom noted.

The FAC flyers, who are members of the 19th Tactical Air Support Squadron are all experienced jet pilots who find the lonely "Bird Dog" craft almost a throwback to days of yore. Yet without them, F-100 and A37 jets from Bien Hoa, Cam Ranh Bay, Tuy Hoa, Phu Cat, Phan Rang and elsewhere would be unable to drop their devastation on the enemy.

## B-52 raids

The air liaison officers are also responsible for helping to plan massive B-52 raids which occasionally churn apart and level unusually persistent enemy targets. Afterwards they assess the damage.

Lesser roles for the FAC flyers are to occasionally guide gunships and artillery missions. In this and other ways, the Air Force sky jockeys are involved in "a real team effort" with the Army, according to Barsom.

Soldiers on the move, from one base camp to another, to Saigon, enroute home, or on the way to rest and recuperation, also turn to the Air Force for help. Responding are giant C-130's, powerful C-123's, and lumbering Caribou aircraft which fly daily sorties to each of the division base camps. The passenger service, sometimes jokingly dubbed TWA (Teeny Weeny Airlines), is actually big business in the 25th Infantry Division. During a single year more than 100,000 passengers and about three and a half million pounds of cargo lift off and touch down at Tropic Lightning's runways.

Keeping track of this mass mobility function is the Eight Aerial Port control of Major Thomas R. Gravette, division transportation officer at Cu Chi.

Master Sergeant William Pierce is in charge of location OLAN, as the aerial port station at Cu Chi is known.

"During his year with the division, a typical infantryman will board a Caribou about 15 times," Pierce estimated. Trips from the field include

Running a weather station at one of the 25th's base camps is no small job.

Sluis



An Air Force C-130 stirs an enormous dust cloud as it hurls away from Cu Chi.

visits to personnel, finance, the medics, supply and other support facilities.

### Replacements first

Foremost on priorities for flights are the division's replacements, who go ahead of regular mail and other standby passengers. Usually more infantrymen are clamoring for a ride than there are seats available.

Sometimes a large part of a day may be lost in waiting, or a man from another base camp may be stranded overnight when no plane becomes available. The aerial port personnel are ready to help out by lining up meals or occasionally a place to stay.

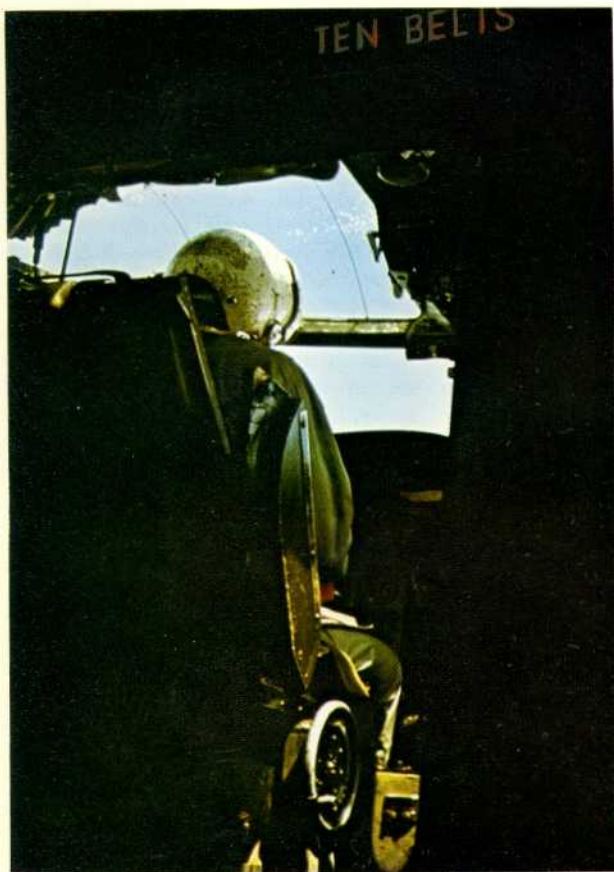
"We're glad to help when we can," Pierce said. "Of course we get a little tired of hearing the same questions 100

That fellow up in the cockpit could never have an idle moment on the short milk runs.



Johansen

Good maintenance is a must even when you're talking about weather-telling gear.



Stuis



Stuis

# Somebody up there...

Sullivan



The belly of an Air Force C-123 yields a pallet of parcel mail for Dau Tieng.

times a day, but after all that's what we're here for." The aerial ports have become impromptu information booths and answering services at the base camps, pointing wayward replacements and transients in the direction of their far-flung units.

Most of the planes, which are assigned to the 535th Airlift Squadron, 834th Air Division, are based overnight at Vung Tau. Others emanate from Tan Son Nhut.

Vietnam's wet, changeable weather is often a source of consternation to the infantryman. But for flyers and commanders in the field, knowledge of the latest meteorological data is essential for virtually every mission.

Providing hourly weather observations and reports around the clock are three teams of Air Force weathermen who are part of Detachment 32 of the 5th Weather Squadron, under command of Captain Gerald Christopher, division staff weather officer.

Hot line telephones from Dau Tieng and Tay Ninh connect the combat weather teams with Cu Chi, where

weathermen relay the information to Tan Son Nhut.

Not only do the hourly observations include temperature, humidity, pressure and wind, but the weather teams also plot the locations of storms, height of cloud cover, visibility and weather trends. With this information they can offer weather advice almost instantly and warn approaching aircraft of oncoming storms.

Infantrymen tend to think of Air Force members as mainly sedate, behind the scenes types, but in truth many have seen a share of danger and even some degree of heroics.

Two of the Tay Ninh weather staffers, Sergeants William Heath and Joseph Cardimona, were among the first on the scene of a C-130 plane crash on the Tay Ninh airstrip late in June. Both rushed forward to aid in firefighting and seeing that all of the ship's crew members escaped safely. In a few moments the aircraft exploded, but not before everyone was far removed from the scene.

Considering their relatively small numbers, the Air Force men among the

Tropic Lightning are responsible for surprisingly multifaceted activities. Two are even assigned to 12th Evacuation Hospital to supervise evacuation of sick and wounded.

In their varied and vital roles, the men in blue work closely with soldiers of the 25th Infantry Division, often almost merging in identity. As might be expected, interservice rivalries are few, instances of cooperation and genuine friendship have been many.

Perhaps the spirit was best summarized by an Air Force sergeant who was offered a chance to rotate from Dau Tieng to Bien Hoa.

"I turned it down cold," he remarked. "I told 'em to look for someone else."

"After six months here, I feel I've made too many friends. I can't leave just yet."

And then there was the battle-hardened infantrymen who, feeling the concussion of a not-too-distant B-52 strike, lifted his nose out of the C-ration can and snorted to his buddies:

"Hey, somebody up there likes us!"



A long, straight path of exploding countryside attests to the ferocity of American air power.



## A page out of history.

### Who are they?

While searching through the archives (dusty conexas) for historical material on the Tropic Lightning Division, the editorial staff ran across this jewel. We are sure it has vast historical significance, but have been unable to positively identify the group pictured. Many Suggestions have been made...

- ... the local draft board
  - ... unidentified Hoi Chanh's.
  - ... a mid-day gathering of hootch maids
  - ... a LRP
  - ... a recent meeting of the CG's staff
  - ... first graduates of the Lightning Combat Leadership Course
  - ... an E-5 promotion board
  - ... a night ambush the morning after
  - ... a road sweep crew
  - ... the suggestion awards committee
- ...do you know who they are?**



Lightning's soldiers race through angry surf to another hostile beach during a M&D campaign.

*Tropic Lightning:*

# READY TO STRIKE

*Anywhere. Anytime!*

*by SP4 Steve Locken & SP4 Don Brown*

“At the final stroke of twelve last night a fine old soldierman passed away. But in his place stepped up two lusty sons to take his place.”

These words in the October 1, 1941, edition of *The Honolulu Advertiser* signaled the conception of the US Army's brand new infantry division.

The editorial continued: “The Hawaiian Division is no more. The proud organization that was stationed at Schofield Barracks has been inactivated. In its place this morning are two new streamlined infantry divisions—The Twenty-Forth and the Twenty-Fifth.”

In the 27 years which have elapsed since their conception, the Army's two new divisions were to see long and honorable service in three wars—service which would, indeed, reflect great honor on their predecessor.

In time the 24th Infantry (Victory) Division,

would find its way to the European Theater of Operations; the Taromen were not to return to Hawaiian shores. But the 25th Infantry Division was destined to make its name in the Pacific.

And the name Tropic Lightning was not long in the making.

On December 7, 1941, just 10 weeks after the division's birth, Japanese fighterbombers roared through Hawaii's Kulekole Pass to bomb Pearl Harbor and strafe Schofield Barracks. Division soldiers responded quickly to this unexpected attack, becoming the first Americans to engage the enemy in World War II.

To counter the threat of a follow-up invasion, the 25th's infantrymen were rapidly deployed to the beaches in defense of Honolulu and the Ewa Plains.

For the next 11 months, the division trained





Korean winters proved to be a new kind of challenge to battle-tryed Tropic Lightning soldiers.

Flame throwers were used to clear jungle-covered mountains during the 165-day Luzon fight.

intensively for a second crack at the enemy. The scene was to be Guadalcanal.

Relieving the Marines at Guadalcanal in November 1942, division infantrymen soon found themselves engulfed in the same treacherous jungle warfare which was to become so painfully familiar to their Vietnam successors. In some of the bitterest World War II fighting in the Pacific, the division aided in the seizure of Kokumbona and reduction of the Mount Austin Pocket.

From there, division soldiers battled down the northern chain of Solomon Islands. The island of New Georgia fell to them on August 25, 1943, they cleared Arundel Island on September 24 and finally on October 6, they took Kolombangara, with its vital Vila Airport.

For their swiftness and daring during these campaigns, 25th Division combat-hardened soldiers earned for their unit the nickname Tropic Lightning.

From January to June 1945, division soldiers participated in the liberation of the Philippines, setting a record for Army divisions of 165 consecutive days in combat.

As the World War came to a close, the Tropic Lightning Division buckled down to the job of occupying a defeated nation—the once mighty Empire of Japan.

The responsibilities of processing thousands of homeless refugees was an immense burden. Indicative of the Tropic Lightning soldiers' devotion to



US Army

# Ready To Strike



US Army

this task was the manner in which the 27th Infantry Wolfhounds and 8th Artillery commenced support to the Holy Family Orphanage in Osaka, Japan, which has continued to this day. Since that November in 1949, over \$400,000 has been donated to the orphanage, now known as the "Osaka Home."

## On to Korea

Still garrisoned in Japan in 1950, the division was again ordered to combat as the North Korean "People's Army" stormed across the 38th Parallel, in an unprovoked attack of the Republic of Korea.

While most Americans were trying to find Korea on the map, Tropic Lightning soldiers, with other United Nations forces, raced to the defense of the port city of Pusan on Korea's southern tip. The Pusan Perimeter held in large part due to the heroics of 25th Division infantrymen, and soon (September 1950) Lightning soldiers were back on the offensive, doing their part to neutralize 50,000 North Koreans trapped as a result of the Marine landings at Inchon. For their role at Pusan, Tropic Lightning soldiers earned their first Korea Presidential Unit Citation.

Battling seasoned North Korean and Chinese Communist soldiers and the harsh extremes of Korean weather and

terrain, division troops fought bravely and well from the Yalu River in the north to the Han River in the south during the next two years. Even during brief respites from battle as IX Corps' reserve force, the 25th Division proved itself worthy of its motto, "Ready to Strike—Anywhere, Anytime." In the words of one corps commander, "Today, the 25th Division is like a razor's edge."

Back on the line to defend the South Korean capital of Seoul, in May 1953, Tropic Lightning soldiers successfully repelled a fierce final assault by the enemy and in doing so, earned their second Korean Presidential Unit Citation.

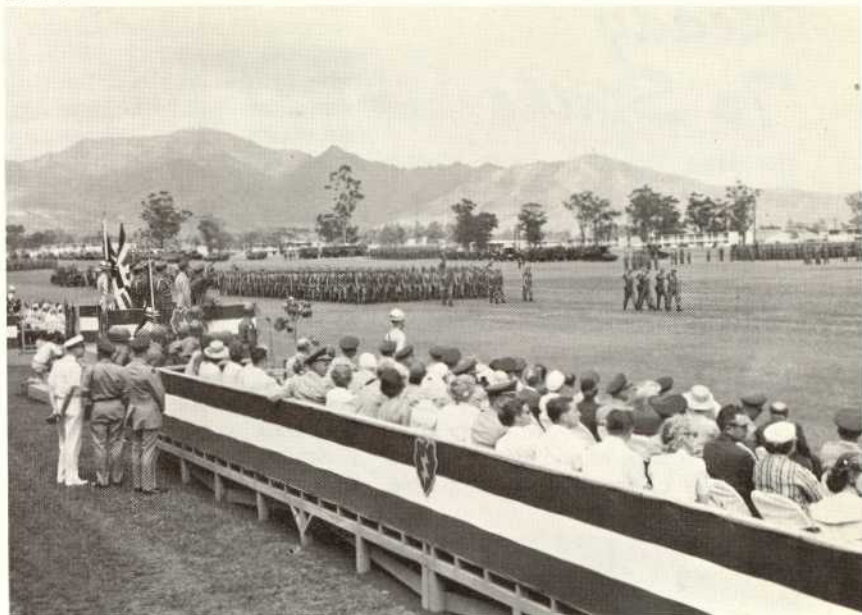
By the time the smoke of Korean

... Then the game was over;  
it was a for-keeps assault  
up Luzon's Balete Pass.



US Army

Between Korea and Vietnam—  
a well-deserved break at home in  
Schofield Barracks.



battles had cleared, 14 Tropic Lightning soldiers had earned their nation's highest military honor, the Medal of Honor.

Following the July 27, 1953, armistice, the division was again tapped to perform occupation duties and was not to depart Korea for over a year—but this time, after more than 12 years absence, the division was going home!

The first 25th Infantry Division troops arrived in Honolulu on September 21, 1954, aboard the troop ship USNS General Gordon. Bands, hula girls, and 25,000 orchids dropped from helicopters, attested to the admiration of Hawaii's citizenry for their battle-seasoned heroes.

Years of arduous training and realistic exercises followed as the division filled its role as the Army's immediate strike force in the Pacific. Tropic Lightning soldiers busied themselves by honing the "razor's edge."

The peaceful years came and went!

In early 1963, responding to a request from the US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, the first contingent of 100 aerial door gunners was dispatched to Southeast Asia from Hawaii to relieve overworked helicopter crew members, who had been forced to do double duty. By the time the program ended in November 1965, more than 2,200 men had participated.

Besides supplying shotgunners to Vietnam, the Tropic Lightning Division sent Company C, 65th Engineer Battalion, to Vietnam in August 1965, to act as a mobile force to assist in the

buildup of facilities at Cam Ranh Bay. It was the only unit from the division in-country until late 1965.

MACV sent out a request for additional combat units in December 1965 and once again the 25th Infantry Division responded, this time with its 4,000-man 3d Brigade. Operation Blue Light, the longest and largest airlift of cargo and personnel to a combat area in military history, took the brigade from Hawaii's Hickam Air Force Base to

the Central Highlands at Pleiku. The first Tropic Lightning soldiers arrived on December 31, 1965, and by the middle of January, the 6,000-mile move of hundreds of tons of men and materiel was completed.

Meanwhile, the division's 2d Brigade had left Hawaii by the sea. Arriving at the port of Vung Tau on January 15, 1966, the brigade moved by air, first to Bien Hoa and then in a convoy of more than 600 vehicles, to the former Viet Cong haven of Cu Chi in Hau Nghia Province, 20 miles northwest of Saigon.

In late March 1966, the command group, composed of the commanding general and his staff, was airlifted to Cu Chi and the 1st Brigade followed on Exercise "Moonlight," arriving in-country by the end of April 1966. The division deployment was complete.

Grab your gear, soldier!  
There's a war waiting on you!  
... And so, Vietnam.



## Same old business

In jungles and tropic heat, fighting a resourceful enemy who is barely distinguishable from his surroundings, the men with the Lightning patch once again set about the business of defending the Free World's frontiers.

By mid-July 1968, division soldiers had fought gallantly through 59 operations—each one a campaign of its own bearing names like Makiki, Kamela Kailua and Makalapa which vividly illustrate the division's Hawaiian ties; each one taking Tropic Lightning soldiers to treacherous battlefields with funny names like Hobo, Boi Loi,


# Ready To Strike

Hoc Mon, Pleiku, Soui Cut, Cholon and Bao Trai.

In these 59 operations, more than 17,000 Viet Cong and North Vietnamese soldiers have been felled by the combat power of Tropic Lightning infantrymen, cavalymen, and artillerymen. Nearly 900 more have been taken prisoner, and better than 4,600 have surrendered to division troops under the Chieu Hoi Open Arms Program.

In a new kind of war for the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese people,

division soldiers have shown a genuine compassion and understanding for the problems confronted by men and women who struggle to shake the enigma of war and to build a brighter tomorrow. An example of this compassion may be found in the more than 404,000 Vietnamese who have received medical attention during division MEDCAPS. Lightning soldiers have also built houses, furnished food and clothing, secured polling places and taught others to help themselves.

Another chapter in the saga of Tropic Lightning is being written. In a hundred years it will be history. But today, Southeast Asia has a friend, a fighter, a defender in the razor-sharp, Tropic Lightning 25th Infantry Division. 



Clevenger



US Army

Movement from Hawaii to Southeast Asia involved one of the largest military moves ever.

A second Wolfhound machinegun team keep their guard up in new hostile environs.

Every flooded rice paddy, every meter of pitch-black jungle is a new chapter in a long, proud history.



O'Hare

It's no game, but Charlie hides, Lightning seeks;  
to keep winning, we must

# MOVE FAST, HIT HARD



Smith

Eagle flight: One answer to the move fast, hit hard concept for unfavorable terrain.

by 1LT Wayne Guest

Operations of the 25th Infantry Division are characterized in one word: Movement. Considering the continuing requirement for commitment of forces to secure three base camps and their connecting supply routes, the division, operating in uniquely hostile terrain, is pressed to use every available man for combat.

From the outskirts of Saigon, north and northwest to the Cambodian border, units of the division maneuver by air, truck, armor and on foot in the division's area of operations.

The area incorporates what must rank as the greatest variety of difficult terrain and vegetation facing any division in Vietnam. In this overall area, each brigade retains an area



Shultz

## Move fast, hit hard . . .

of responsibility which will change somewhat from day to day as intelligence sources dictate. Intelligence causing boundary changes might concern such things as the whereabouts of the enemy and his infiltration routes.

Surrounding the city of Tay Ninh, the 1st Brigade's area of operations extends toward the other base camps at Cu Chi and Dau Tieng, including many difficult terrain features familiar to every soldier in Vietnam. From the village outside its gates to the rice paddies along the Oriental River, the brigade ferrets out the elusive enemy. Once across the river the land features change, as jungle takes over to obscure the Cambodian border.

### Nui Ba Den

Moving north from the base camp, the land supports fewer rice paddies. Troops encounter the shadows of granite Nui Ba Den—the lonely 3,400 foot sentinel known as the Mountain of the Black Virgin—located only about 55 miles northwest of Saigon. North of the mountain begin endless reaches of triple canopy jungle.

If any brigade can be said to operate in seemingly almost ideal surroundings for Vietnam, it would be the 2d, based at the division headquarters base camp of Cu Chi. Stretching in all directions

from its fortress home are rich rice paddies, broken only by isolated hamlets. In the hamlets, however, the enemy frequently entrenches himself in bunker complexes which infest numerous long hedgerows.

Toward the northern edge of the 2d Brigade's area of operations lies the Filhol Rubber Plantation, located on the edge of the Hobo Woods and Iron Triangle. These areas have been a Viet Cong stronghold for years. During the past year, however, vast portions of the Hobo Woods and Iron Triangle have been bombed and Rome plowed to render them almost useless to the enemy.

Straight-leggers like the Manchus have come to appreciate the Huey.

The 25th was one of the first divisions to make extensive use of armor in RVN.



Dung



Cloud-shrouded Nui Ba Den  
at 1,200 feet in morning light—  
a moment's reflection before the fight.



Mechanized White Warriors pursue the enemy ; the desolation of war is behind them.



Ruplenos

A cave which offered cover to Viet Cong becomes their tomb.



# Move fast, hit hard . . .

Most inaccessible of the base camps in the division's area of operations is the home of the 3d Brigade, located at Dau Tieng. Situated at the edge of the Michelin Rubber Plantation, one of the largest in Vietnam, the brigade is faced with terrain that is a natural favorite of guerilla tactics. Across a ridge of humpbacked hills just north of the brigade's base camp begins War Zone C, a frontier region of wild, thick triple canopy jungle extending far north toward the Central Highlands.

## Jungle trails

Through this jungle run the primary routes of infiltration toward Saigon and the south. Some have described the trails through this steaming vegetation as virtual superhighways for North Vietnamese troops and supplies.

Largely through airmobile operations, 25th Division infantrymen have managed to destroy countless enemy strongholds in this area and have rooted out Viet Cong and NVA forces. Yet the struggle continues to subdue more of this hostile territory, which remains almost totally unsettled by permanent communities.

Among such a variety of terrains, a control problem faced by the division is keeping its widely scattered forces supplied. To do this, roads, some primitive, leading from Saigon to the three base camps, must be constantly swept and cleared to remain open.

The roads remain one of the enemy's favorite targets, and convoys travelling to Tay Ninh and Dau Tieng, in particular, are faced with the continual threats of land mines and ambush. But constant improvement of road surfaces, as well as patrols and minesweeping, bring a vast percentage of the supplies through to their destinations.

Before dawn, roadsweeping teams in armored personnel carriers begin their task of neutralizing enemy explosive charges along the land links. The job, which is never finished, often seems

thankless, but has minimized destruction and loss of life on this important daily resupply function.

Mobility is the key to quick combat reaction by the division's forces in the field. When intelligence indicates the location of an enemy element or a repositioning of enemy troops, the movement of Tropic Lightning infantrymen can match and exceed this repositioning to seize the advantage, even in remote areas.

Making this possible are the ultimate in land and air transportation, featuring a massive swarm of helicopters which insure the complete mobility of both personnel and supplies. Backing the air mobility force are more conventional track and wheel vehicles, guaranteeing rapid disposition of the 25th Infantry Division's forces in any situation.

During recent months increased mobility has enabled the division's field forces to remain detached from their base camps for months at a time.

To minimize the hardships this new relationship brings on the infantryman in the field, the Division Support Command (DISCOM) has initiated a supplementary stand down schedule which brings technical services into the field. Thus, representatives of maintenance, supply, finance and personnel functions may visit the unit in the field and provide both maintenance and personal services which, heretofore, were avail-

able only in base camp. This constitutes a major breakthrough.

The division's combat missions are, to some extent, taken for granted, but its role in civic action and medical programs frequently tends to be overlooked. Here again, mobility is a key element, as medical supplies and technical medical assistance can be provided to virtually any corner of the area of operations, even under combat or near-combat conditions.

During a typical month, division doctors and medics average more than 219 MEDCAPS (medical civic action programs), as well as 500 civic action projects by civic action teams.

Whether in combat or in the long-term efforts related to civic action, the division receives important cooperation and help from the Army of the Republic of Vietnam. In some instances, members of ARVN have been integrated as members of division units.

The 25th Infantry Division's goal—to meet the enemy, search him out and destroy him in large numbers—has been carried out through the efforts of all its members.

As long as Tropic Lightning remains in Vietnam, the division will continue to turn a seemingly hostile terrain to its advantage, by stressing its ability to bring to bear rapid movement and mobility, to devastate the enemy's forces.

  
Weist



Golden Dragons move at a torrid pace—there is no such thing as 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> miles an hour in RVN.

# a tribute:

You walk for mile on endless mile alongside the tired, dust-caked infantryman, and still you never understand what it is that keeps him going long after the ordinary human being would have dropped.

Perhaps the simple answer is that the soldier is no ordinary human being. But neither is he a machine. He is a finely-honed instrument who, at the moment of complete exhaustion or fear, can be rekindled to commit great acts of endurance or personal courage.

It's all explained in acts like the 25th Infantry Division medic who patched up his own bullet hole in his side, and then went back out into the field of fire to tend to other wounded men.

If I live to the golden old age, I'm sure I'll never see acts of endurance and courage to surpass those men of the "Tropic Lightning" have displayed in barely-known places of Vietnam like Cu Chi, Buon Brieng, Bao Trai, Phuoc My, and others.

Nobody ever gave the 25th Division men a piece of land free in combat, neither in World War II, Korea or Vietnam. They fought to own the real estate they came to live on. In return, all they asked was an occasional good night's sleep, a creek in which to wash off the grime, and a letter from home.

Good men from "Hawaii's Own" Division have fallen in Vietnam, but good men also carry on in their footsteps.

So it has gone, for 27 years of proud history of the 25th.

Some day soon, it's hoped, the "Tropic Lightning" will come back home to Hawaii. When and if it does, I'd like to be among the first at the docks to say: "Hats off, a brave soldier of the 25th Division is passing by."

—Bob Jones,

THE HONOLULU ADVERTISER





# TOAN THANG I:

Enemy soldiers found they  
couldn't outrun Lightning.

by CPT  
Mike Clark



General Ulysses S. Grant put it quite well:  
"Wherever the enemy goes let our troops  
go also."

Times may have changed since the Union Army stalked Lee's brave, but out-manned Confederates

through the endless Virginia woods and marshes called the Wilderness. But the tactical wisdom of Grant's simple statement has not changed one bit.

For Tropic Lightning soldiers, no Vietnam campaign has more dramatically portrayed its validity

# TOAN THANG I

than has Operation Toan Thang I. This multidivision operation took them to the very edges of the 25th Infantry Division's area of operations.

One moment they probed the triple-canopied fringes of War Zone C. The next they drew a tight cordon about the gigantic Tan Son Nhut Air Base. Then men with the Lightning patch firmly stood their ground in the face of a withering enemy assault several miles north of the extensive Michelin Rubber Plantation. And moments later, they fought their way across hedgerows and rice paddies a mere five miles south of Camp Cu Chi where a desperate enemy was pinned against an impassable swamp.

Did Tropic Lightning's fighting men go where the enemy went?

During the course of the 53-day operation, more than 3,300 enemy soldiers fell dead before Tropic Lightning's fury. This fact in itself should prove that the 25th's soldiers left little to chance as they tracked their foe the length and breadth of their operational zone.

Running its course from 8 April to 31 May 1968, Operation Toan Thang I was a coordinated campaign involving US, Vietnamese, Australian and Thailand armed forces. Up to then, it was the largest operation in terms of participating troops which the Vietnam conflict had known.

Directed jointly from the US II Field Force, Vietnam, and ARVN III Corps headquarters, the operation also involved the US 1st and 9th Infantry Divisions, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, 199th Light Infantry Brigade and the 101st Airborne (now Air Cavalry) Division's 3d Brigade.

The offensive was designed to locate and eliminate enemy forces conducting aggressive and terroristic activities from isolated and fluid bases of operation.

Once Toan Thang I began, Tropic Lightning soldiers did not have long to wait before making contact.

On Thursday, April 11th, the 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry, acting on G2 reports of intensive enemy activity, climbed from choppers into a remote

jungle region 13 miles north of the Dau Tieng Base Camp. In the few hours before darkness the 3d Brigade's Regulars busied themselves by establishing a perimeter of hastily-prepared foxholes and bunkers. Then as darkness fell, the infantrymen made themselves as comfortable as possible.

At 20 minutes past 4 o'clock on a dark, silent Good Friday morning, all hell broke loose. An unknown number of mortar rounds rained down on the Regulars. As the intensity of incoming rounds increased, a force of NVA and VC soldiers estimated at 400 swarmed toward the hastily constructed perimeter in a virtual human wave.

The Bravo Company sector of the perimeter bore the brunt of the assault. Company Commander 1LT Richard J. Prairie later said it looked pretty bad for his men in the early going. The intensity of the attack caused many of his men to pull back from their original positions.

"I pulled what men I could muster back to my CP area," Prairie said, "and with the support of the recon platoon, as the night progressed, we retook all our bunkers."

## Try, try again

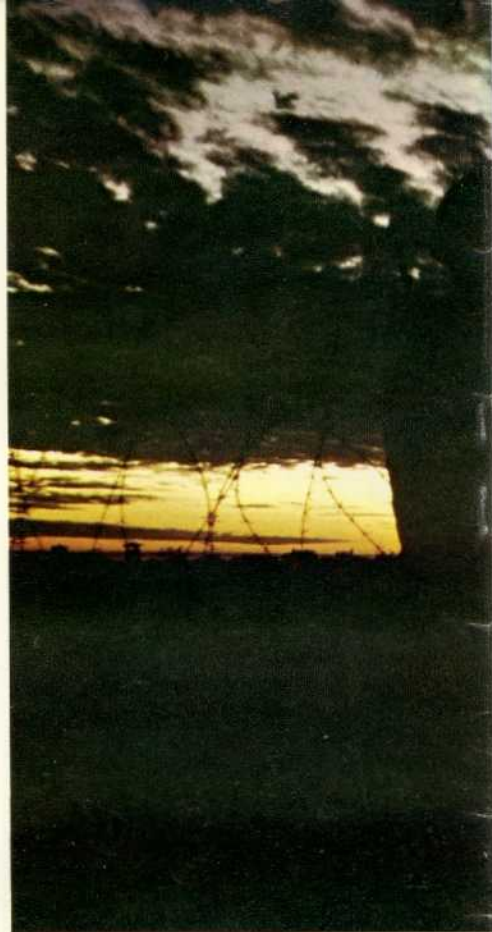
The enemy was not to be easily routed; time and again they hurled toward the American position using all manner of small arms and crew-served weapons plus the continuous pounding of mortar.

But the Tropic Lightning soldiers were determined to stand their ground. Aided by artillery, helicopter light fire teams, and USAF tactical air strikes, they did just that.

Before the fighting ended, the 2d Battalion, 22d Infantry, had worked its way through six kilometers of jungle to reinforce their sister battalion.

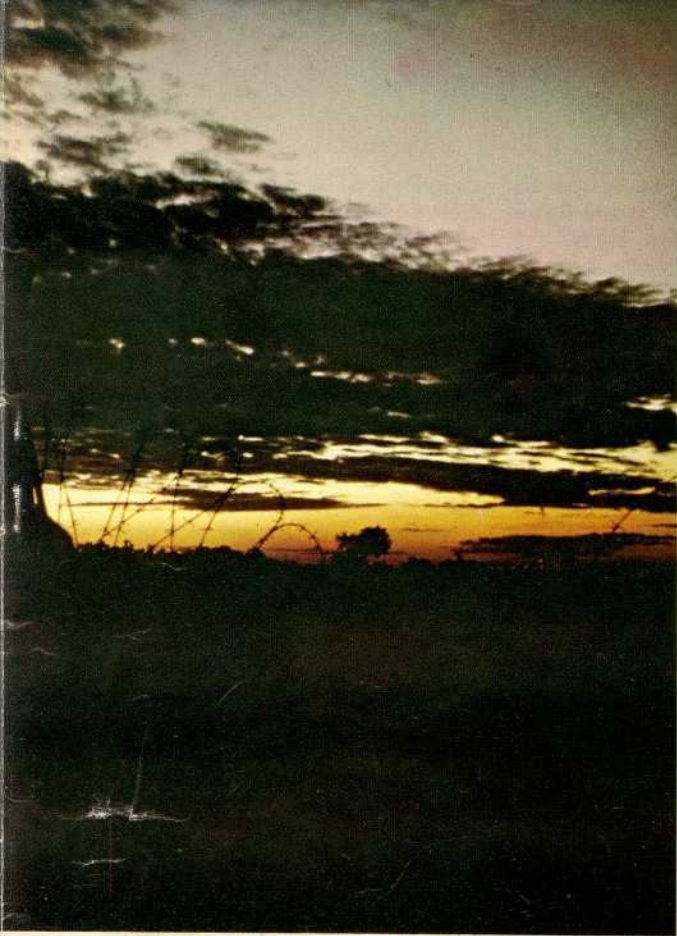
By first light, the fighting had subsided. However contact again was made in the area several hours later. When the enemy fled, for good, he left 155 of his dead comrades behind. Sixteen had been killed by air strikes, the remainder by the massed firepower of

From behind a hedgerow, a 2d  
Brigade machinegunner cuts  
loose on Charlie's position.



A Bobcat soldier stands vigilant as night approaches; Toan Thang I included much night fighting.





Roberts

Smith



For Golden Dragons, even an enemy-blown bridge represents no barrier.

Infantrymen of 1st Brigade move across a rice paddy dike on another reconnaissance-in-force.

Grigsby



Smith



# TOAN THANG I

Tropic Lightning infantrymen, artillerymen and air cavalrymen.

Twenty-two US infantrymen died in the attack and 62 were wounded.

Enemy weapons and munitions taken from the battlefield included 32 individual weapons, 13 light machine guns, and 7 RPG2 launchers.

As the light of a memorable Good Friday filtered through the jungle foliage, six tired, dirty 3d Battalion Regulars stood silently to accept the Silver Star for their heroics. It had been a Good Friday they would not soon forget.

Tropic Lightning soldiers weren't fighting the enemy alone. Just three days after the Good Friday engagement, US Air Force B-52 Stratofortress pilots set out to prove that point. Acting on intelligence provided by division troops, the strategic bombers dumped their lethal loads on a series of targets 11 miles north of Dau Tieng in War Zone C.

The strikes were some of the most successful ever experienced in the division's operational area. Attached air cavalrymen performing damage assessments that day counted 59 dead enemy soldiers, nearly 350 destroyed bunkers and military structures and 1500 meters of destroyed trenchline.

The little-haired artilleryman did his bit as well. Tropic Lightning's big guns slammed a whopping 85,000 rounds into the enemy from 29 April to 12 May.

Whether supporting troops in contact, destroying enemy positions and fortifications or harrassing and interdicting, Tropic Lightning's cannoneers were also taking the war to Charlie.

For busy Tropic Lightning soldiers, April rushed to a close with a series of medium to light contacts at widely scattered locations.

## Enemy appears

Just when things were becoming a bit routine, the enemy again appeared in Lightning's zone. They appeared to Chief Warrant Officer Sterling Holbrook, pilot of a 3d Squadron, 17th Air Cavalry, helicopter.

At 10 a.m. May third, Holbrook was flying his OH-6A Cayuse a scant five miles southwest of Camp Cu Chi.

"I went along one treeline and saw about 20 VC below me. I banked around and followed the treeline on the other side of the rice paddy and saw about 25 more. I decided that there was a whole slew of them in there."

And Holbrook was right. The number of enemy in the area was later estimated to be a multi-battalion force.

Holbrook lost little time. He radioed for gunships and artillery. Using machine guns and rockets, chopper crewmen claimed 39 enemy dead as strategists huddled to determine the next step.

A multi-battalion task force headed by one of the 25th's assistant division

commanders at the time, Brigadier General Donald D. Dunlop, was moved into a semi-circular blocking position pinning the enemy soldiers against a large, open swamp.

An ARVN battalion was inserted southwest of the area of contact and immediately became engaged with an enemy company. Another ARVN battalion was inserted to the south and also became engaged immediately with an enemy force estimated to be of battalion size.

Throughout the night a barrage of more than 5,000 rounds of artillery and 10 tactical air strikes pounded the illuminated enemy positions as helicopter gunships patrolled the swamp to prevent the enemy's escape.

At 10 a.m. on the fourth, after a blistering artillery barrage, the task force advanced only to find the enemy still very much alive. They pulled back, and again artillerymen and tactical fighter pilots pounded the NVA's fortified bunkers and extensive trenchworks.

First Lieutenant John LaRoche, air operations officer for the 2d Battalion, 34th Armor, one of the task force elements, noted that the enemy was not easily budged, but:

"Once he left his bunkers, Charlie could only run into our blocking force or out into the swamp."

On the fourth, the task force only claimed 26 dead with supporting chopper gunners adding 11 more. But the Tropic Lightning soldiers repeated their illumination and bombardment that night and advanced again on the fifth, claiming 40 more enemy lives.

Also on the fifth, the task force command was passed to Colonel Leonard R. Daems, Jr., then commander of the 25th's 3d Brigade.

On the sixth, the division infantrymen pushed completely through the enemy position, counting an additional 157 bodies. Twenty enemy dead were added by supporting gunships, giving a total for the four-day engagement of 285 dead NVA soldiers.

Task Force Daems moved on to new and scattered battlefields during the

Raschko



Division cannoneers keep the Cong on the run, taking the war into his backyard.





next 19 days, pursuing Viet Cong forces across the division's area of operations past Trang Bang and into the Boi Loi and Hobo Woods.

On May 25th, the task force was disbanded having amassed a total of more than 600 enemy killed in 23 days of operation.

Besides the 34th Armor, battalion-sized task force elements had included 4th Battalion (Mechanized), 23d Infantry; 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry, and 3d Battalion 22d Infantry. Companies from other battalions of the division were assigned to the task force for portions of the operation.

Meanwhile, the Viet Cong had mounted a long-awaited second offensive on Saigon. The majority of Tropic Lightning's firepower was now arrayed in a tightly drawn cordon around the city's northern and western outskirts. The attack itself centered on the Chinese quarter of the city (Cholon) and the Pho Tho race track. Enemy infiltration continued for several days but with ever

decreasing impetus as the 25th and other allied units drew the cordon continually tighter.

In what was probably their do-or-die final push on the capital city, a VC battalion locked horns with the 4th Battalion, 23d Infantry on May 27th. Quickly the 3d Squadron, 4th Cavalry, rushed into the fracas as well.

The infantrymen made the initial contact a little over a mile west of the city limits as small arms, automatic weapons and rocket-propelled grenades were released on their defensive position shortly before midnight.

### Infantry in contact

The infantrymen, supported by division artillerymen and gunships, kept the VC pinned down overnight. An Air Force "Spooky" kept the area of contact illuminated by flares until dawn.

In the morning, cavalrymen joined the 23d Infantry in an advanced which carried through the enemy positions.

Charlie's not even safe from his own rockets; a captured 122 heads back home.

By late afternoon all resistance had ceased. Two-hundred-eighteen VC lay dead on the battlefield, their second offensive having died with them.

US Air Force tactical aircraft had been employed with devastating effect along with short-range artillery and tank gun fire. The cavalrymen and mechanized infantrymen had also used an unprecedented number of hand grenades against the enemy's hastily-dug open foxholes. As a result of this superior firepower, Tropic Lightning loses were light, yet six Americans had died.

Four days later, Toan Thang I came to a close. The men with the Lightning patch had met the enemy on his ground and had whipped him soundly. In addition to the 3,300-plus enemy dead, he had yielded 699 of his small arms, 276 heavy weapons, 1,179 military structures, 8,123 fortifications, 60 tunnels, 286 sampans and numerous documents.

Tropic Lightning had gone where the VC went, and the VC had been forced to pay dearly.



# A dragon and a goddess



Nearly 5,000 years ago there lived a ruler named Kinh Duong Vuong. His empire—called Xich Qui, or land of the red dragons—was located somewhere south of the present day Yangtze River.

One day the ruler journeyed to the Palace of the Waters where lived the Dragon who reigned supreme over the creatures of the water.

There he married the Dragon's daughter and soon the two had a son. They called their son Sung Lam and bestowed upon him the title of Lac Long Quan, which means Dragon Lord of Lac.

In time the Dragon Lord of Lac became ruler of his father's land, Xich Qui, although he preferred to live in the ancestral residence of his mother, the Palace of the Waters.

When the Chinese invaded Xich Qui, however, the Dragon Lord returned from his retreat to repulse the intruders and to marry the daughter of the Chinese emperor.

Peace and prosperity restored, the Dragon Lord's bride, Au Co, gave birth to a sack of flesh filled with eggs.

After five or six days, the eggs hatched 100 boys. Such a birth could only have been accomplished by a goddess, the people reasoned concerning Au Co.

For reasons unknown, the Dragon Lord of Lac and the Goddess Au Co decided to separate and divide their children among them. The father and 50 sons continued to inhabit the kingdom of the waters to the south, while the mother and 50 sons settled in the mountains to the north. From them grew a nation of people known as Vietnamese who nobly trace their origin to 100 venerable sons born of a Dragon and a Goddess.

## The story of the origin of the Vietnamese people

# A message from the CG...



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
HEADQUARTERS 25TH INFANTRY DIVISION  
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96225



AVDCCG

To The Officers and Men  
Of The 25th Infantry Division

On 1 October 1968, the Tropic Lightning Division completes its 27th year of service to our great nation. I congratulate each of you who have given the full measure of your ability to insure the excellence of that service.

Our proud past is our future challenge. We must constantly strive to uphold and better our fine record. This first issue of "Thunder, the Voice of Tropic Lightning," is but one example of 25th Division soldiers surpassing their past accomplishments.

I challenge each of you to look at today as an opportunity to do your job better than yesterday. Remember our illustrious past, but do not be complacent. As the fine record of those before you is your challenge for the future, so your record must be a challenge to those who follow. It is our duty to live up to our reputation, not on it.

*Ellis W. Williamson*

ELLIS W. WILLIAMSON  
Major General, USA  
Commanding



**NUI  
BA  
DEN**

**TAY NINH**

**CAO DAI  
TEMPLE**

**DAU  
TIENG**

**GO  
DAU  
HA**

**TRANG  
BANG**

**CU CHI**

**HOC MON**

**TAN  
SON  
NHUT**

**DUCH HOA**

**SAIGON**



**OPERATIONS AREA  
25<sup>TH</sup> DIVISION**