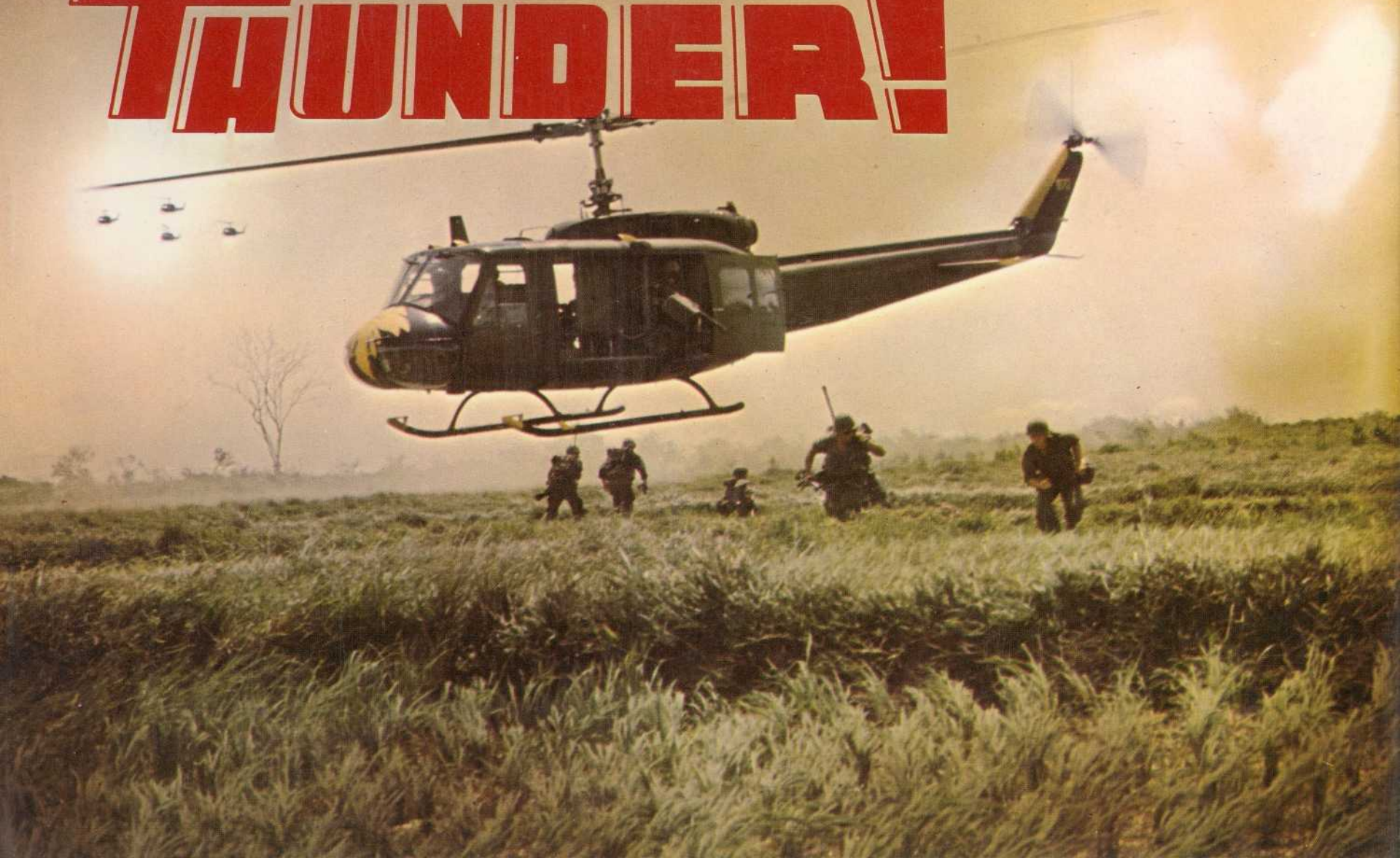


Vol. 2, No. 1

FALL 1969

THUNDER!



From the Commanding General



To the Officers and Men of Tropic Lightning:

The 25th Infantry Division is charged with a significant responsibility in our nation's efforts to secure the high ideals that man seeks to bring to fruition in this world.

Here in Vietnam, we occupy a position of immense strategic importance. We seek a world in which the just aspirations of mankind can be achieved. Others, our adversaries, seek to bring about man's enslavement. This is why the 25th Infantry Division was sent to this land.

Tropic Lightning stands between the enemy's jungle strongholds at the Cambodian border and Saigon, the seat of government of a talented people struggling to be free; striving to pursue their future with honor, dignity and purpose.

Tropic Lightning is truly a sentinel of liberty.

We are here not only in our country's behalf but, in a larger sense, to help others help themselves—in removing once and for all the yoke of terror that their adversaries seek to place on them. We are here not only to do this but to prevent the spread of that malignancy of terror and subjugation elsewhere.

You and your comrades—valiant soldiers all—are here to defend the frontiers of the Free World; to uphold the principles of America; to assure the long range security and stability of those who seek the same ends of peace and freedom as do we.

Let us do this together—with honor, with dedication, with steadfast devotion, with soldierly skill.

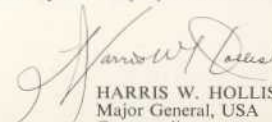
In the days ahead we will be confronted with challenges, to be sure, but even more importantly, we are met with opportunities: opportunities to rid this land of communist terror and intrusion; opportunities to assist in the constructive purposes of building and strengthening a free republic; opportunities to maintain the momentum of freedom's vigor.

I ask each of you to meet fully and squarely these opportunities—to drive out the enemy; to stand fast with courage in the din and clamor of battle; to seize every opportunity to aid the forces of the Republic of Vietnam; to assist them in strengthening their free institutions; to be of good cheer in the days of difficulty and challenge; to maintain stout hearts; to accomplish fully and proudly your mission.

Your job is the job of a real man, a real soldier—a Tropic Lightning soldier.

When I accepted the colors of this superb division from Major General Ellis Williamson I did so with a full awareness and deep appreciation of the magnificent record achieved by its soldiers over the course of years. The record of this division is a record of pre-eminent valor. It is a record of service to country and mankind of which we can be justly proud. I am immensely privileged to join with you in the pursuit of its historic mission. I pledge to you my best in upholding and enhancing the traditions of Tropic Lightning.

Let each of us—let all of us—do our best to secure for our country and our people the noble objectives they seek.


HARRIS W. HOLLIS
Major General, USA
Commanding



COMMAND GROUP

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 Commanding General
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THUNDER!

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FALL, 1969

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Front Second Battalion, 14th Infantry Golden Dragons move out after being dropped off at a landing zone by a 116th Assault Helicopter slick.

Photo by SP4 Frank Ditto

Back An M48A3 tank stands ready for action at the base of Nui Ba Den.

Photo by SP4 Doug Elliott



A Place In The Sun





H. Anderson

Schmitt



H. Anderson

by SP4 Bert Allen

Care to get away from everything for a few days? We've got just the place for you right here in Cu Chi Base Camp.

The place is Waikiki East, built exclusively for the infantrymen who are in Cu Chi on stand-down. It is a great place to get away from the noises and relax, and yet it is centrally located so that any personal services that are needed are within close walking distance. Directly across the street from Waikiki



H. Anderson

H. Anderson





Karlgaard

East are the division offices for finance and personnel. The PX is just a short walk away and close to the PX is one of the two steam baths located in Cu Chi.

Waikiki East itself has everything that will make your stand-down a pleasure. The most prominent attraction is the beautiful swimming pool where



Allen

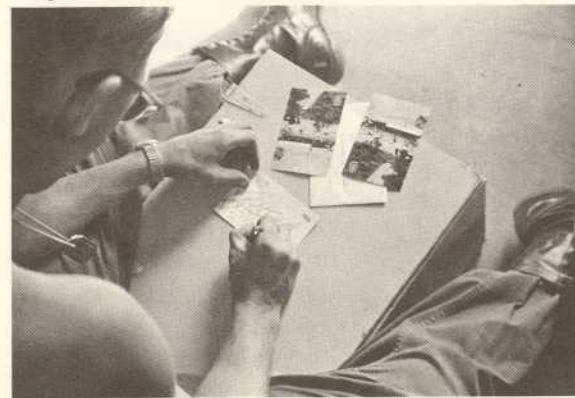
you may sit and catch the rays or swim from before noon until eight in the evening. There is no need to buy a swim suit or towel because they are available at the pool.

Adjoining the pool is a large snack bar staffed by competent chefs who can prepare anything for you from hot dogs to Southern fried chicken and even Italian pizzas and spaghetti. With your meal enjoy a cold soda, cool-aid or icy beer.

Each evening dinner is served in the spacious covered picnic area where steaks and beer are the number one items on the menu. After finishing a large steak and downing several beers, you can walk inside one of the large hootches cooled by overhead oscillating fans and catch the evening news on the television before heading to the basketball court or the show.

Yes, each of the spacious hootches is equipped with a TV for your viewing enjoyment. You may even catch "Laugh

Karlgaard



In" or "Mission Impossible!"

If you are not in the mood for television, try basketball. There is a full basketball court at Waikiki East that is even equipped with floodlights for nighttime play.

After watching the tube or playing basketball, you can enjoy a floorshow or movie at the Waikiki East theatre directly behind the basketball courts. There is a movie both nights while you are in the area and on one of the evenings there is also a floorshow and band.

We are recommended by the 2d Wolfhounds, our first guests and we hope that you will be our next one, along with all your buddies. We know you will enjoy your stay at Waikiki East. ♣



Allen



Allen

Allen



“This is Lonely Summit”

by 1LT John C. Burns



SP4 Richard Waldren slouches low in a red, yellow and green striped beach chair, his feet curled over the edge of a small black table, his eyes fixed on the tiny amber light on the face of an AN/GRC 46 radio. With his right hand he methodically adds circles and triangles to the growing doodle that started in the corner of the notebook and now threatens to surround and obliterate the notes. His left hand grips a small black microphone as he barks the staccato shorthand of retrans:

"Dusty Squaw, this is Lonely Summit. Roger, I read: xray tango three four seven six niner four, alfa papa charlie detonated alfa tango mine. Bravo, four slash two three requests victor tango-romeo. Negative contact, negative casualties. Over."

There is a sudden rush of static as the armored personnel carrier in distress confirms the message. Waldren shifts slightly in his beach chair and starts calling Tay Ninh Base Camp to relay the call for help.

"Ah, Travis Regard this is Lonely Summit, over . . ."

Up on the wall behind the radio W.C. Fields examines his poker hand in a scene from "My Little Chickadee." And someone has drawn a valentine balloon above the poster exclaiming "Love is Everything."

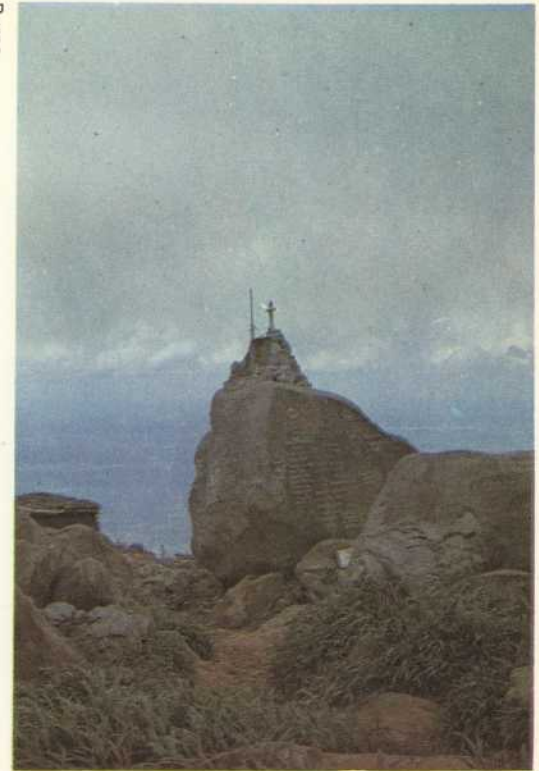
Specialist Waldren and Mr. Fields share a cubicle four feet wide and four and one-half feet long in the corner of an old stucco shrine on the summit of the only mountain in III Corps, Nui Ba Den.

Thrusting up from the jungle floor, Nui Ba Den is a 3,200 foot pile of fissured granite, honeycombed with caves; scarred and craggy from years of constant shelling and bombing. Scrub pine and undernourished vines cover the

"The Pagoda" is home for the FM retransmission operations on the mountain. This old stucco building on the highest point of the mountain houses the static and crackle of communications for three divisions and a half dozen groups and brigades.

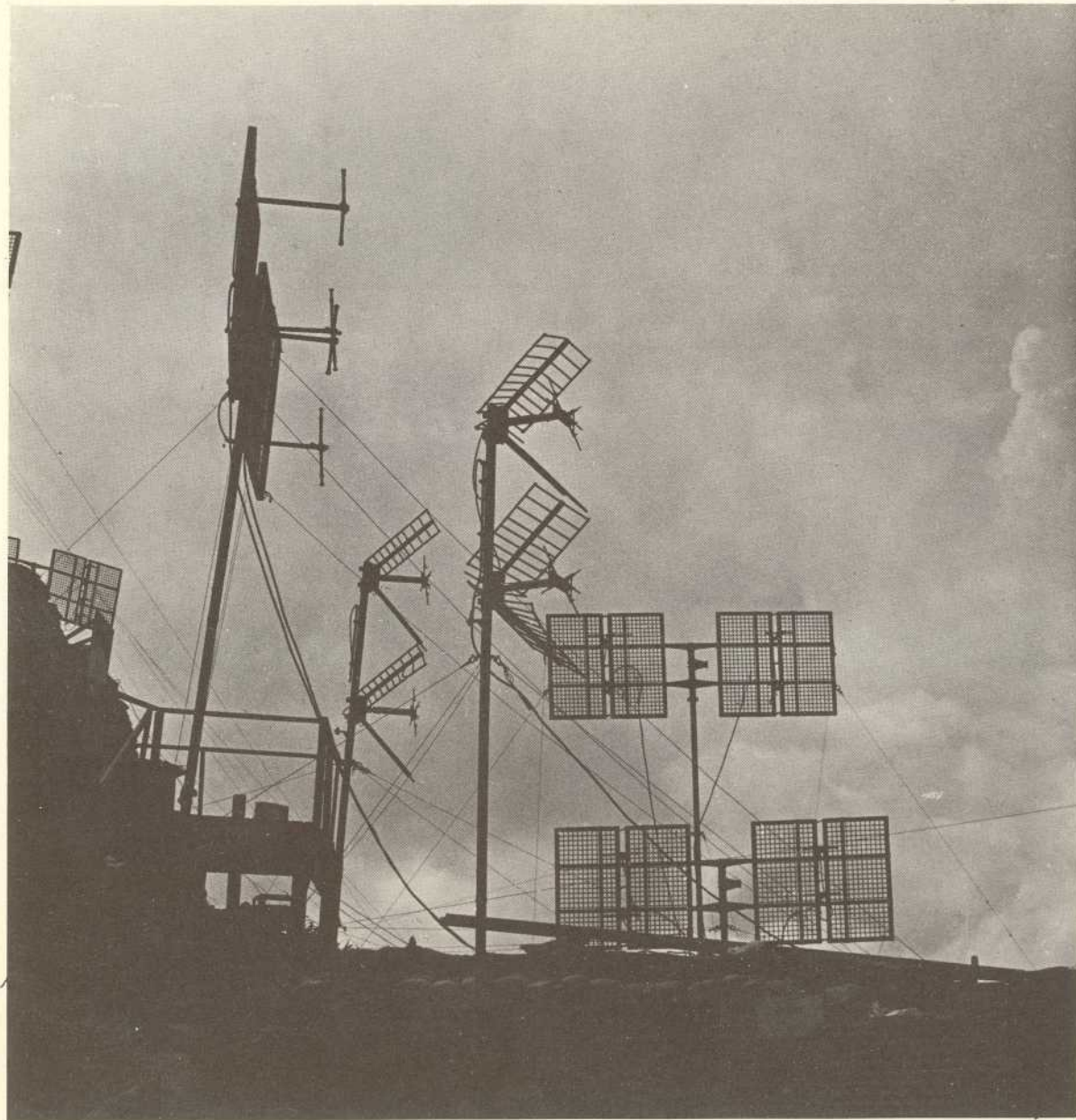


Burns



The history of Nui Ba Den has been carved into this rock, which now bears names in English, Japanese, Vietnamese, Cambodian, French, and Turkish. A small religious shrine was constructed on the top of this rock several years ago out of scraps of G.I. equipment.

Burns



Burns

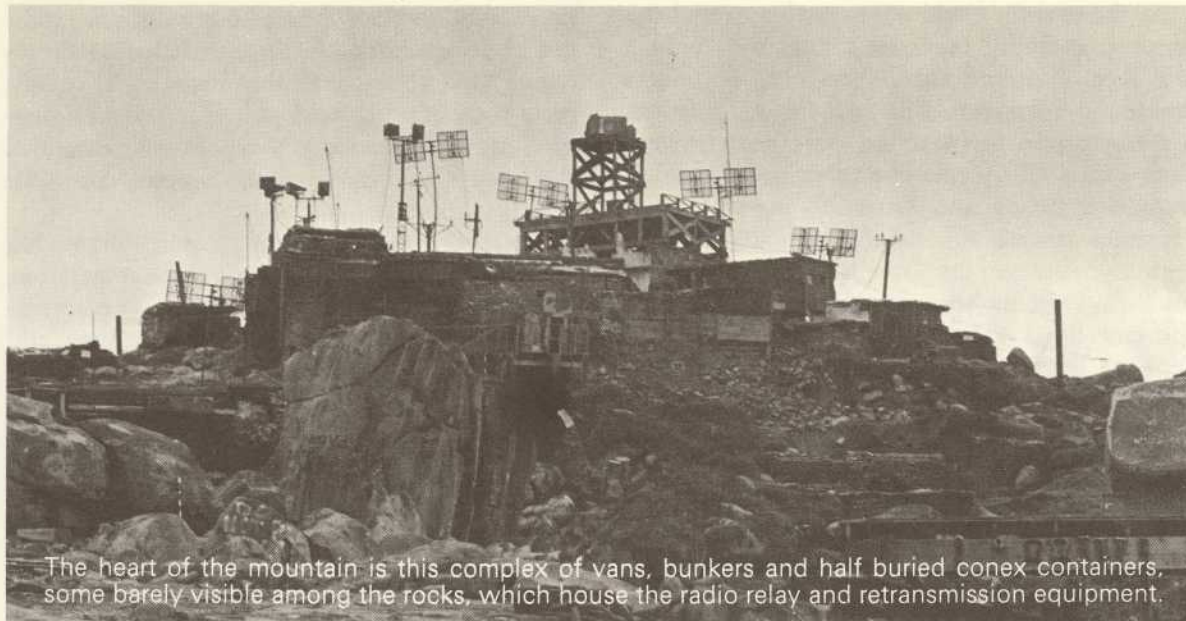
flanks of the mountain nearly to the top, where the rocks break out into the sun or fog (depending on the season) and the winds sometimes reach ninety miles an hour.

Perched on top of this mountain in a warren of vans, half buried conex containers, bunkers and small but cozy hootches fashioned in "ammo box modern" or "tar paper transitional," the Nui Ba Den Provisional Company operates a critical signal relay site for just about every division, brigade, and support unit in III Corps. Since 1940 when the Japanese took the mountain for a relay, scrawny antennas have been trussed up against the wind to relay radio signals.

Even the best tactical radio in use today is limited to "line-of-sight" transmission. Unless it is bounced off the atmospheric layer which surrounds the earth, the signal must be picked up every twenty five to thirty miles to be amplified and retransmitted, or the signal—like sound itself—becomes too weak to be understood. The mountain is ideally located for this purpose.

The Japanese operated a signal relay site on the mountain for seven years, until, under pressure from the French, they abandoned the mountain—and the country. The Viet Minh apparently took up residence shortly after the Japanese and used the position as both a signal site and an observation position. On a clear day one can see down across the Boi Loi Woods, the Ho Bo Woods, the Citadel and Cu Chi to Saigon.

From the summit of this lonely mountain, scrawny antennas beam critical signals out in all directions linking together nearly twenty units in III Corps.



Burns

The heart of the mountain is this complex of vans, bunkers and half buried conex containers, some barely visible among the rocks, which house the radio relay and retransmission equipment.

In May, 1964, the Special Forces' Third Mobile Strike Force took the mountain and established a base camp on the summit, the likes of which have not been seen since.

With a spacious enlisted club, a barracks, and a large well constructed operations bunker, the Green Berets operated the mountain as though it were a castle on the Rhine, at least until 1965, when sappers made their way to the summit in the night and destroyed the buildings with satchel charges.

Today the only evidence that remains of those earlier occupants is the inevitable collection of names carved into the rocks, and a few stumps firmly and neatly cemented onto the mountain. The lesson was clear: we were playing "King of the Mountain" up there, and playing it for very high stakes. In addition to operating the

relay site, the men would have to form and maintain an intensely alert defensive force. The mountain had become a highly strategic outpost.

It is estimated that the caves under the mountain can hold an enemy battalion. From January until August of 1969, the 88th NVA Regiment made regular but unfortunate use of these caves. They lost more than four hundred soldiers to allied guns during that period, yet they continue to cling to their rocky positions. Two reasons are evident.

The mountain is as valuable to the enemy as it is to the allies as a relay. The enemy communications network consists largely of Chinese Communist radio transmitter/receivers similar in capability to our own PRC/25's and a number of small commercially available portable radios just like those found in every

GI hootch. The mountain affords an ideal location for the CHICOM transmitters and therefore extends the enemy communications system well into Tay Ninh Province.

The second reason is perhaps the more obvious, the mountain makes a good bunker. If you think three feet of sandbags will stop an enemy rocket, imagine how safe you would be behind eight feet of granite. The mountain is a maze of natural bunkers affording the enemy a good assembly and reassembly point for sorties into Tay Ninh; a good bunker—but not a great one. Regular drops of persistent riot gas and direct fire from tanks and howitzers into the mouths of the caves have made the mountain less attractive than it once was.

With the 4th Battalion, 23d Infantry Tomahawks constantly screening around the base of the mountain, supplies are difficult to get in, and men are difficult to get out. A refuge quickly becomes a trap and a cave becomes all too often a grave.

On the very top, the Nui Ba Den Provisional Company operates a signal site barely seventy-five meters in diameter. To the obvious question: "Why doesn't the enemy overrun the position, or at least give it a good try?" one gets an interesting answer.

In a sense we provide protection for them. As long as the allies maintain a facility on the summit, it is unlikely that we will call in the air strikes and bombing runs needed to close the caves. But when the sun goes down, the enemy crawls out of the caves and up through the deep ravines to probe our defenses and test our reaction.

Around the perimeter sentries keep a constant watch on the slopes. During daylight hours it is not unpleasant duty. At night it is hell.



Burns

Supplying the 3,200 foot high outpost is the problem of the CH-47 helicopters of the 242d "Muleskinners." Buffeted by high winds and unpredictable updrafts, even the huge, ponderous "Hooks" have trouble landing supplies at the pad near the mess hall.



Burns

As the nightly cloud cover settles around the summit, visibility becomes a matter of only a few feet. A sound made hundreds of meters down the mountain will ride the updrafts on the slopes and seem to be only yards away. Each guard shift seems like an eternity of small suspicious noises and potential probes. Conversation among the men is punctuated with regular references to "the last time we were hit." And throughout the discussion runs the constant thesis: The security of the mountain depends completely upon the men who live there. The terrain would permit only close combat; scattered groups of friendly and enemy forces would battle it out only meters apart. Under these circumstances it would be impossible to bring helicopters in to rescue the men, and equally impossible to call in gunships on the embattled position. It would be hand to hand.

There has always been an attitude among the "flatlanders" of the several divisions that have signal teams on the mountain that Nui Ba Den was the final and perfect asylum for the "eightballs" of the Army. One imagines that even in 1941, a Lieutenant Hashimoto leaned threateningly across his desk and explained, at the top of his lungs, that if young Kawabata-san didn't straighten up he'd find himself on the summit of the honorable Nui Ba Den.

It is somewhat surprising then to discover that the Nui Ba Den Provisional Company is in fact anything *but* a bunch of misfits and ne'er-do-wells. The critical nature of the mis-

Nui Ba Den is defended by a series of bunkers like this along the craggy crest of the mountain. From the guard house on top, one can look down over Nui Cao toward the French Fort, deep in War Zone C.

sion leaves no place for a man who doesn't meet the high standards of the mountain. Made up largely of volunteers, the Provisional Company is an unusual band of highly skilled signalmen and soldiers, many of whom have extended their tours on the mountain beyond the initial 90-day period.

No, the mountain is no pleasure dome. No alcohol is allowed on the mountain at anytime. There is no enlisted club to relax in, no recreational facilities to speak of. Movies are rare, and USO shows are almost impossible to manage. Supplies are limited to what can be crammed into a Chinook once or twice a day. If it's foggy, or raining, or the Chinooks are busy at that precious time when the summit is clear, then it's no soap: no soap, no fuel, no milk, no mail, no water.

Camp Nui Ba Den, as the most optimistic of its inhabitants call it, is the biggest, ugliest, most unforgiving and uninhabitable pile of rocks in Vietnam. There isn't enough level land on the whole position to bounce a basketball on. There aren't any trees, there aren't any trails wider than three feet, there isn't any place on the mountain where you can walk a straight line except in the mess hall, and there's hardly enough sand and loam up there to make mud. Even the insects there have shells the size of pistachio nuts.

Visitors to the mountain—generals, colonels, travelling senators and itinerant reporters—are spotted the moment they stumble out of the Chinook by their white tee-shirts. These flatlanders as they are called trip over boulders, bang their heads on the van doors, get lost when not escorted and end up completely confused about which side of the mountain is the north side.

But there is a certain attraction about the mountain. It is almost like an island cut loose from the war, the base camp atmosphere and the noise of fire support bases. The signal teams of three to five men have a unique sense of mission and identity.

When SGT Richard Beaulieu of Fall River, Massachusetts, operates the retrans station there, he isn't just working for the 25th Division, he is the 25th Division, its voice and its most critical

courier. The men who guard the mountain have a similarly unusual sense of mission. They know their perimeter well, and they know the enemy's nightly pattern. Defending the mountain is a classic, conventional problem which brings to mind the battles of World War II. It is somehow easier to understand than the erratic, shifting battle on the flatlands. The men respond with a great commitment.

It is not unusual for a soldier to extend on the

mountain for the rest of his tour rather than go down where the war is. In spite of the isolation, the constant enemy threat, and the unusual living conditions, the men of Nui Ba Den are a dedicated band, half billy-goat, half soldier.

SGT Terry Harrison of Antioch, Illinois, seemed to sum up the attitude: "I guess it isn't bad up here. I like it. There's a lot of responsibility, and a lot of work to do. But you have a feeling of accomplishing something." ♡



Getting



Together

by SP4 Robert Stephens

The most effective method of assuring a successful assumption of military responsibilities by native forces is through combined operations. The American fighting man has knowledge which has been compiled from the most efficient combat techniques in the world and by working with the Vietnamese, he can pass this know-how on.

According to Captain Arthur C. Smith of Trenton, N.J., commander of A Company, 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry: "Combined operations will upgrade the South Vietnamese troops. We set the example in the field and provide assistance whenever necessary."

U.S. units usually work combined operations with Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) forces or Regional/Popular Forces (RF/PF). Until recently the ARVNs were the only ones taking part in combined operations while the RF/PF were responsible for providing security for hamlets and villages. However, the Civilian

Above: Rummaging through a cache found during a combined operation, a trooper from the 2d Battalion, 14th Infantry is aided by members of the intelligence squad of the 2d Battalion, 49th ARVN Regiment.

Right: Men of Tropic Lightning's 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry and their Vietnamese Special Forces scout slish through knee-deep water during operations southeast of Tay Ninh City.



Ditto



Novak



25th Inf

During a combined MEDCAP, an ARVN soldier and Wolfhounds from the 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry mingle with villagers, listening and learning.

Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) has taken over much of the local security mission and the RF/PF soldiers now spend as much as a week in the field with their U.S. advisors.

There are two ARVN units working within the Division area of operations. One is the 25th ARVN Division, elements of which are stationed in Hau Nghia Province. This division is made up of the 46th, 49th and 50th Regiments and the 10th Cavalry. The other is an Airborne brigade consisting of two battalions that work in Tay Ninh Province. This airborne brigade is rotated every few months and a new brigade comes in to replace the old one.

One of the more striking examples of U.S.-Vietnamese teamwork was the defense of Tay Ninh City during the month of June. An entire VC-NVA division tried twice to make its way to the city. Both times the combined efforts of the 25th Division's first brigade and the ARVN Airborne Brigade stopped the enemy cold. More than 1200 of their number died in the intense fighting.

Not all operations are on such a large scale as this, however. Most are of company size or smaller.

In July the 2d Battalion, 22d Infantry, working with the 309th RF Company discovered a huge ammunition cache in a bunker complex 18 miles east of Tay Ninh City. The find included over 100,000 small arms rounds, 300 RPG rounds, 200 mortar rounds and 100 boxes of .51 calibre ammunition. These large finds became critical losses for the enemy and disrupted planned operations for weeks.

A more recent combined operation in September brought the 4th Battalion (Mechanized), 23d Infantry and the 7th ARVN Airborne together against an estimated enemy

battalion at the foot of Nui Ba Den, a traditional VC stronghold. The enemy fought from the caves and crevices on the lower slopes most of the day, finally withdrawing under cover of night. Their losses were 61 killed.

Coordinated combat movements such as these are taking place regularly within the 25th Infantry Division's area of operations. Some battalions in the division conduct more than 100 of these operations a month. American and Vietnamese infantrymen not only combine for ground operations, but they also take part in combined airlifts, naval river searches and artillery fire missions.

Combined operations have their beginnings within the South Vietnamese command structure, which is similar to that of the U.S. The G-3 or operations officer will call his staff together for a routine briefing concerning future plans and goals. If, for example, intelligence reports point to a concentration of enemy movement in a certain area, the officers may decide to conduct a reconnaissance-in-force mission.

Once it is concluded that a sweep is necessary, the G-3 will have a schematic drawing made showing where the troops will be operating during the movement.

At this point the U.S. and South Vietnamese begin working in conjunction with each other. The Vietnamese G-3 will take the preliminary plans to his American counterpart and from then until the completion of the mission the two will be in constant communication.

One of the first steps is to determine what kind of assistance will be necessary to accomplish the mission. Most support is provided by the U.S., so the American advisor may recommend changes in the plans if he feels they are

needed for the safety of the soldiers in the field.

Once the operation is found to be secure, there are many other factors to be considered. Will it be necessary to use helicopters or river boats to take the troops to the area where their sweep begins? Will artillery and air support be needed and, if so, how will they be employed? Which units will sweep through the objective and which will act as blocking forces? All of these problems must be solved before the mission can continue.

When the initial plan has been completed, it is then submitted simultaneously through each

chain of command for approval. Both U.S. and South Vietnamese officials review the project and if it is agreed that the operation is feasible, it is sent back to the originators. Although this sounds like it takes a lot of time, if there is a real hurry, a combined operation can be arranged within a matter of hours.

Once the go-ahead sign has been given, coordination of activities becomes the important factor. The Vietnamese and American advisors usually have their TOCs (Tactical Operations Centers) located in the same building with an interpreter on hand to relay information.

Combined sweeps take advantage of the ARVN's knowledge of the land and people and the American's experience with tactics and support, making an unbeatable team.



25th Inf



DeMauro

Having each one know what the other is doing eliminates wasteful overlapping and acts as a safety factor.

From the TOCs, vital information is sent out to all concerned units in order to insure perfect timing. Participating infantry companies are told when and where to rendezvous for embarkation and all commanders are briefed on the objectives of the project. If an artillery prep is desired, it is arranged so the ground troops will be afforded maximum protection. Air or water transportation will be waiting to take the infantrymen to the operation's starting point if they are needed.

Everything made ready, the foot soldiers meet at their appointed places and begin to move out. All Vietnamese units will have an American advisor along to offer assistance and call in artillery or air support if necessary.

Meanwhile, the U.S. and Vietnamese operations officers have set up a CP (Command Post) in the field, from which they will control the mission. With this kind of system, any emergencies that might arise can be coped with in a minimum of time. If a Vietnamese unit runs into trouble and is in danger of being overrun,

Left: A combined commanders' briefing and planning session helps iron out schedules and preparation for the next day's operations.

Right: On operations near Trung Lap, a Tropic Lightning advisor confers with an ARVN regiment commander concerning support needed by the Vietnamese troops.

Below: A firm handshake of friendship between a Tropic Lightning battalion commander and a hamlet chief gets a combined MEDCAP in Tay Ninh Province off to a good start.



Frame



Karlgaard

the RTO simply calls in and either advisor sends his closest company to their aid.

As the infantrymen sweep through their objectives, constant radio contact is maintained with the CP and each commander is informed of his present situation in relation to the other units in the vicinity.

When the operation is completed, the CP moves back to the point of origin. Vietnamese and U.S. officers then meet and review the day's activities. Strong points are emphasized and suggestions are made whenever improvements are needed.

Combined operations are meeting with great success throughout Vietnam and the country's fighting force is molding itself into one of the finest in the world. Their familiarity with the environment makes them adept at beating the enemy on his own grounds. The ARVN and the RF/PF have shown themselves capable of carrying out any type of mission.

Captain Smith, who is now on his second tour here, says, "The Vietnamese soldiers now have more discipline and better fighting techniques than ever before." ♡

Top: Digging fox holes is a universal part of soldiering. An ARVN and a Regular from Tropic Lightning's 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry share the chore during a combined operation outside Tay Ninh City.

Bottom: Not all combined operations involve real combat. Manchus of the 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry and Regional Forces from Thieu Thom engage in combat soccer during a break from field operations.



Cullen

Tschirner



Bravely Earned and Proudly Worn

In the fatigues and flak-jacket world of Vietnam, awards and decorations are essentially a forgotten aspect of military life, but when R & R or DEROS come around they become an important part of the uniform.

Basically, awards and decorations fall into two categories: personal medals for valor or service, worn over the left breast pocket, and unit citations worn over the right breast pocket. In order of precedence, personal awards are worn from left to right with decorations of greater importance included in surmounting rows and centered over the left shirt pocket. Unit citations progress to right in order of importance centered above the right shirt pocket. In both types of decorations, those presented by the United States Government take precedence over all foreign awards.

Personal and unit decorations represent a visible history of an individual's service or heroism and the merits of his unit. Both should be worn correctly and with pride.

Described below are the awards most often presented to those serving in Vietnam. They are listed

in descending order of precedence and pictured as they would be worn on the uniform.

The Combat Infantryman's Badge is awarded to all infantry officers in the grade of colonel and below and all warrant officers or enlisted men with an infantry MOS who have successfully performed their duties while assigned to an infantry unit during any period in which the unit was engaged in active ground combat with enemy forces. Special provisions for award of the CIB to

personnel with an MOS or branch other than infantry are set out in AR 672-5-1.

The Distinguished Service Cross (DSC) is awarded to an individual who has distinguished himself by acts of heroism so notable and involving a risk of life so extraordinary as to set the individual apart from his fellow soldiers acting in the same situation.

The Silver Star is awarded to an individual who is cited for gallantry in action having performed with marked distinction

at the risk of great personal injury to complete the unit mission or assist his fellow soldiers.

The Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) is awarded to any member of the Armed Forces who distinguishes himself in a single act of heroism or extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight which sets the individual apart from others acting in the same situation.

The Soldiers Medal is awarded to any member of the Armed Forces who is cited for an action involving great personal hazard and voluntary risk of life not resulting from conflict with an armed enemy.

The Bronze Star Medal for heroism is awarded for acts involving risk or personal injury while on military operations against an armed enemy. The Bronze Star for service is awarded to recognize single acts of meritorious service which set the individual apart from his fellow soldiers.

The Air Medal is awarded to any individual serving with the United States Army who distinguishes himself by meritorious achievement beyond the normal call of



Left to right top to bottom: Presidential Unit Citation, Valorous Unit Award, Meritorious Unit Commendation, Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm.

by **CPT Mark J. Verbonich**

duty while participating in aerial flight. Awards are made both for single acts of merit or for sustained operational activities against an armed enemy.

The Army Commendation Medal is awarded to any member of the Armed Forces who distinguishes himself by heroism, achievement or meritorious service of such outstanding magnitude as to set the individual above his peers while serving in any capacity with the Army.

The Purple Heart is awarded in the name of the President of the United States to any member of the Armed Forces who is wounded, killed or dies of wounds received while in action against an armed enemy of the United States or who is injured in an accident directly resulting from enemy action.

The National Defense Service Medal is awarded to all members of the Armed Forces after thirty days of active duty with a combat or support unit. This decoration recognizes the high level of performance maintained by any individual in the steady performance of his normal duties.

The Vietnam Service Medal is

awarded to all members of the Armed Forces serving in the Republic of Vietnam after July 3, 1965, who served regularly for one or more days with an organization participating in or directly supporting military operations.

The Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal is awarded to all members of the Armed Forces who have served in the Republic of Vietnam for a period of six months during war time. The Vietnam

Campaign Medal bears the date of the beginning of hostilities in the country.

The Presidential Unit Citation is awarded to a unit for extraordinary gallantry, determination and esprit de corps in accomplishing its mission under extremely difficult and hazardous conditions. This unit decoration is comparable to awarding the Distinguished Service Cross to an individual.

The Valorous Unit Award is




Schr

Left to right, top to bottom: Combat Infantryman's Badge, Distinguished Service Cross, Silver Star, Distinguished Flying Cross, Soldiers Medal, Bronze Star Medal, Air Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Purple Heart, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal.

given to recognize a unit that has performed with marked distinction under difficult and hazardous conditions in accomplishing its mission so as to be set apart from other units participating in the same conflict. This decoration is comparable to the individual award of the Silver Star.

The Meritorious Unit Commendation is awarded to units of the United States Armed Forces that have displayed outstanding devotion and superior performance of exceptionally difficult tasks as to set the unit above other units with similar missions. Service in a combat zone is not required. The Meritorious Unit Commendation is comparable to the individual award of the Legion of Merit.

The Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm was awarded to the 25th Infantry Division by the Government of Vietnam in recognition of the Division's service to the people of South Vietnam through civil and military action during the period December, 1965 to August, 1968. This decoration may be worn by all members of the Division for their tour in Vietnam as a temporary award. Those personnel serving during the cited period of meritorious action may wear the Cross of Gallantry as a permanent decoration. 

365	364	363	362	361	360	359	358	357	356	355	354	353	352	351	350	349	348	347	346	345	344	343	342	341	340	339	338
337	336	335	334	333	332	331	330	329	328	327	326	325	324	323	322	321	320	319	318	317	316	315	314	313	312	311	310
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166	165	57	114	113	112	46	111	110	41	109	34	108	107	29	106	20	105	104	15	103	102	101	4	100	99	124	123
164	163	56	55	54	98	47	43	44	40	97	35	96	95	28	94	21	12	13	14	93	92	91	3	90	89	126	125
162	161	88	87	53	86	48	85	84	39	83	36	82	81	27	80	22	79	11	78	77	76	75	2	74	73	128	127
160	159	50	51	52	72	49	71	70	38	69	37	24	25	26	68	23	67	66	10	65	64	63	1	62	61	130	129
158	157	156	155	154	153	152	151	150	149	148	147	146	145	144	143	142	141	140	139	138	137	136	135	134	133	132	131

by SP4 John Haydock

The word DEROS brings to mind pleasant thoughts of life back in the States: a beautiful girl, a waiting family, your sports car, the beach, skiing or a thick steak. Make sure when your DEROS comes around you are ready to go or you may find yourself here for a few extra days. Here's what you can expect as you prepare to depart Vietnam for the world.

● **ORDERS**—If you haven't received your PCS or ETS orders 30 days before your DEROS, notify your personnel officer. You will need orders before you begin any out-processing.

● **HOLD BAGGAGE**—The hold baggage section will ship any personal property home for you at government expense. Keep in mind that you can only carry 200 pounds of luggage on the plane with you. Any amount over this will have to be shipped home.

● **PORT CALL**—You will be notified by Personnel of your port call date. This is the date you will leave Vietnam. You may get a drop and actually leave before your normal DEROS date.

● **CLEARANCE PAPERS**—When you have your port call, pick up clearance papers from your company orderly room. These will list the areas you must clear before signing out of the company. The areas listed include such places as supply, the dispensary and the mail room.

● **DD Form 1580**—Pick up a DD Form 1580 at the orderly room if you plan to travel by plane at military rates once you get back to the states. You will need it to get your discount.

● **SIGNING OUT**—After you have closed out

your records at all the areas listed on your clearance papers, return them to the orderly room. Your company commander must sign them and will tell you when you can sign out of the company.

● **25TH REPLACEMENT DETACHMENT**—If you are stationed outside Cu Chi Base Camp you must travel to the 25th Replacement Detachment for a final day of outprocessing before leaving the division. This includes clearing both the finance and personnel sections. If you are assigned to a unit on Cu Chi, you should complete this processing before reporting to the replacement detachment.

● **90TH REPLACEMENT BATTALION (LONG BINH)**—From Cu Chi you will be transported to Long Binh where you will be manifested for your plane ride home. Be sure and make all formations or you may miss a trip home. When your name is called at formation then you will begin three more hours of processing: customs, baggage check, boarding pass and currency conversion.

● **BIEN HOA AIR BASE**—With processing complete, you will be transported to Bien Hoa where you will board a jetliner for a 20-hour flight to the States.

● **OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA**—When you arrive at Oakland, final processing begins. If you are a PCS returnee, you have only to pick up greens and travel pay. If it's your ETS, you can expect the processing to take 18 to 36 hours. This includes clothing turn-in and issue, physical, records review, final pay and discharge.

● From here you're on your own whether on leave, enroute to your next duty station or once again a civilian. You've worked long and hard for 365 days in a combat zone, now enjoy those comforts of life you've been looking forward to.

Haydock



The Enemy...



11 Oct.

I have thought much of the question of life and death. Should I die, I will be survived by Luc and my son, but my soul will never abandon my Fatherland. I must be a brave soldier and loyal member of the Party.

12 Oct.

How can one imagine the cruelty of the Americans if one does not engage in the actual fighting on the battlefields. They have been so wicked as to bomb Saigon with B-52s.

13 Oct.

Our troops did not have to sleep in underground trenches in the anti-French struggle and the French did not possess such barbarous killing

Diary of an NVA

Edited by CPT F.B. Swenson

Artwork by SP4 Dennis R. Tupper

means as the U.S. B-52s.

17 Oct.

The war is becoming increasingly fierce. I promise myself and my dead comrades that I will follow their examples and continue to accomplish the unfinished missions they left behind.

20 Oct.

Unfortunately the rain poured down the night of 19 and 20. We had no stakes for hanging our hammocks in the trench or to pitch our tents. The rain became heavier and heavier as the night drew on and water came into the trench. At 0200 hrs., the trench was half-full with water and our clothes were all wet. We were so cold that we had to lean on the backs of one another, trembling like a leaf, until the morning.

26 Oct.

Last night, we conducted so many quick shellings that the enemy could not raise their heads. Only when our shellings became thinner was he able to react. And he reacted very strongly. From midnight till the morning, enemy mortars did not stop firing.

Why is malaria always trying to punish me? Malaria does not effect me alone but almost the entire Liberation Army is its victim.

29 Oct.

Some comrades of the company went to the training course, some others were sick. Our 7th Company just received three replacement comrades who were all sick.

31 Oct.

I and Xien were ordered to join the 9th Company. When arriving at a ditch, 100 meters from the 9th Co's location, we heard the sound of wood being cut and whispers. Comrade Xien was afraid, stepped back and stayed behind me while I moved towards the 9th Co. I laid down behind a mound of earth to observe the situation.

When I looked up, I saw a helmeted, blue-eyed American on a tree five meters away from me with his rifle aimed at me. Rapidly, I unlocked the safety pin and fired at him. The American returned fire and his shots hit my rifle which fell two meters away from me. I thought I was wounded in the head because I saw blood and I ran away, leaving my weapon

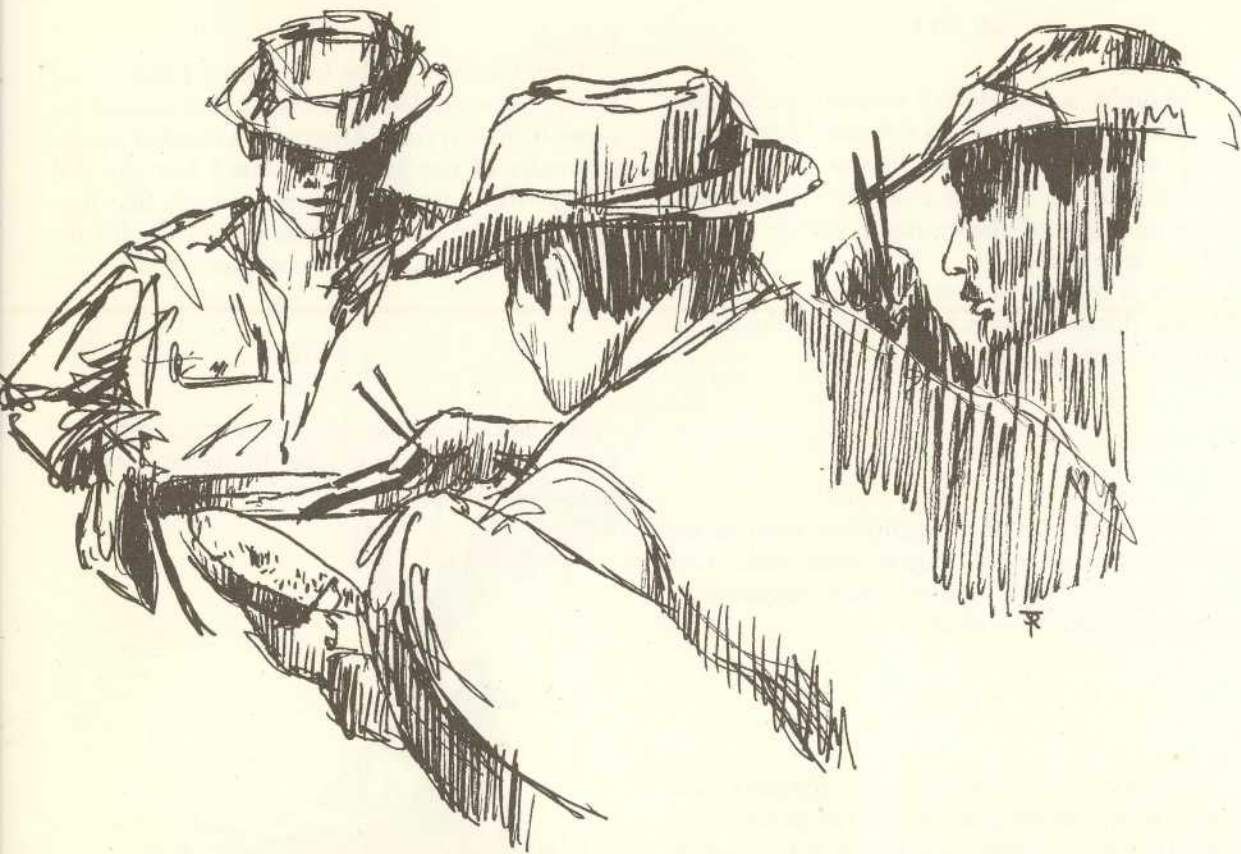
behind.

Then I arrived at the base where I discovered I was not wounded. The blood that stained me came from a certain American wounded by the comrades of the 9th. Co. Thus I lost my AK assault rifle. I was very careless in my first fire-fight with the enemy. It was very lucky for me that the American could not shoot well.

3 Nov.

We are expecting another enemy attack. I feel sick and have a terrible headache. I cannot eat rice with salted peas.





6 Nov.

I lost my prestige because I lost 11 kilograms of sugar. Now I am demoted to the rank of soldier; another misfortune happening to me.

23 Nov.

This afternoon and evening, we will be trained

in the "cell and arrow" tactics. Perhaps we are going to conduct an attack!

28 Nov.

We still don't know exactly where the target is located but we are determined to carry out the mission perfectly. We arrived at our next station in the afternoon and were informed that we would receive two buffaloes, shrimp

paste, dried fish and tobacco the following day.

The next morning, we departed at 0500 hrs to pick up rice and foodstuffs and spent a whole six hours carrying them back to our station. We returned to our compound at 1600 hrs. and at that time one buffalo had already been killed to prepare for dinner. Each company headquarters was issued one leg of the buffalo. It was very funny!

3 Dec.

Yesterday afternoon, we passed through a rubber plantation. There are asphalt roads in this plantation. For over one year we had not set foot on asphalt roads. These plantations still belong to the French. Almost all workers on these plantations came from Central and North Vietnam.

We arrived at a village last evening and were warmly welcomed by the people. They gave us cakes, beer, coffee and candies to warm our hearts. Luckily, cigarettes were available, so we are not short of them. They were very expensive in this area.

8 Dec.

In the evening of 7 December, Cuc and I entered the village and purchased two kilos of pork and five meat pies. At 2100 hours, we planned to stay overnight at House No. 5 but it was occupied so that we slept in a school. At about 2200 hours, when I was talking with Cuc we heard AK gunfire at the end of the village.

I only had time to put on my slippers and ammunition belt and we hurried out of the school. We intended to run to the asphalt road,



cross the forest and return to our compound. Upon arrival at the road, we encountered heavy gunfire, fire from M-79 grenade launchers and claymore mines so we had to turn back. Our position was then disclosed due to enemy flares. The enemy used machine guns to shoot at us but the trajectory was high.

After running barefoot on a portion of the route, I followed the other comrades to flee to another sector of the village. The population here was not sympathetic to us so we ran on. I was completely unfamiliar with the terrain features on the way back to my compound. I was at a loss. But finally, I had to follow the others and moved in the forest for the whole night.

On the morning of 8 Dec., we were tired, hungry and sleepy. At 1100 hours we heard that the enemy had already withdrawn. Once more, I escaped from death and gained a good lesson.

When being encircled we should be calm, collect all equipment and withdraw depending on the situation. The enemy was coming. He opened fire behind the village, making our comrades think that he attacked from the rear; so they all hurried to the front where the enemy had laid an ambush. They never use similar tactics. Therefore we might never stop being stupid.

Each undershirt can be exchanged at the local market for three packs of ARA cigarettes, three bars of sugar or one chicken.

12 Dec.

Looking at the forest, we had a deep hatred of the ruthless Americans. Trees were withered and defoliated. Large holes made by bombing

and artillery fire, and ruts left by enemy tanks could often be found in the forest and mountain areas of Tay Ninh. At 2400 hours, we reached the compound. All of us felt tired and thirsty. Thoa showed us trenches and told us that water was about a thirty-minute walk from us. The thirst and the ill smell of the trenches abandoned for a long time made us uncomfortable and discouraged.



18 Dec.

We rested in the forest today. I tossed in my sleep due to the buzz of the mosquitoes. They clustered on our faces and bit us through our clothes. Due to the U.S. abundance of aircraft, bombs and ammunition, we must clutch to the earth for existence. A trench which is two

meters long, one meter and a half wide, and 1.2 deep can accommodate three persons. Sometimes, six or seven of us slept like sardines in a box in such a trench.

28 Dec.

Thus I have penetrated into the U.S. Dong Du

(Cu Chi) area for two consecutive nights. I have learned how to go on reconnaissance, detect mines, move through fences and detect sentries and objectives. I have crawled into the last fence. There were countless tanks and shepherd dogs. Dogs and helicopters equipped with searchlights are the most fearful enemies.

Yesterday, enemy tanks moved and stopped only one meter short of our tunnel entrance to conduct searches. Lying deep in the tunnel for five hours, we became extremely nervous. The enemy set fire to the entrance of our tunnel, but fortunately he was not able to discover it. If he had discovered us and thrown smoke grenades into our hideout, we would have had a difficult moment.

3 Jan.

For nearly 15 days we have been sleeping in underground trenches without sunshine and oxygen which has resulted in us having itchy bodies. Furthermore, we have to contend with mosquitoes that are also a dangerous enemy. In this situation, we miss our unit, our families and our beloved North Vietnam.

9 Jan.

The Dong Du (Cu Chi) position is very important; it lies near big lines of communication and is a corridor to defend Saigon. I walked on National Road #1 running from Saigon to Tay Ninh. When peace is restored, we can go to Saigon by walking or riding bicycles in two hours. This morning, enemy



tanks swept our area from 0630 to 0800 hours. After the withdrawal of U.S. troops, the enemy used aircraft to broadcast surrender appeals, threatening that he would drop bombs if we would not surrender. And so he did. We were unhurt. The enemy psywar could not shake our determination.

25 Jan.

My body is diseased by ringworm. We met no local inhabitants, therefore we will have to go without food today.

7 Feb.

I miss Luc and Hoa so much and perhaps Luc also misses me very much. Take courage, my darling.

8 Feb.

Last night, we buried one hero whose unit is unknown. He was detected and killed by an enemy tank when he was on a mission. Such is the misfortune the war causes to human beings. We must end the war so men can live in happiness forever.

12 Feb.

I haven't had a happy Tet for nine years now; a Tet spent with my relatives.

15 Feb.

At the Paris Talks, the U.S. and its henchmen are still stubborn; they demanded the restoration of the DMZ and distorted the spirit of the Geneva Agreement. They also said that the Saigon Government is constitutional.

16 Feb.

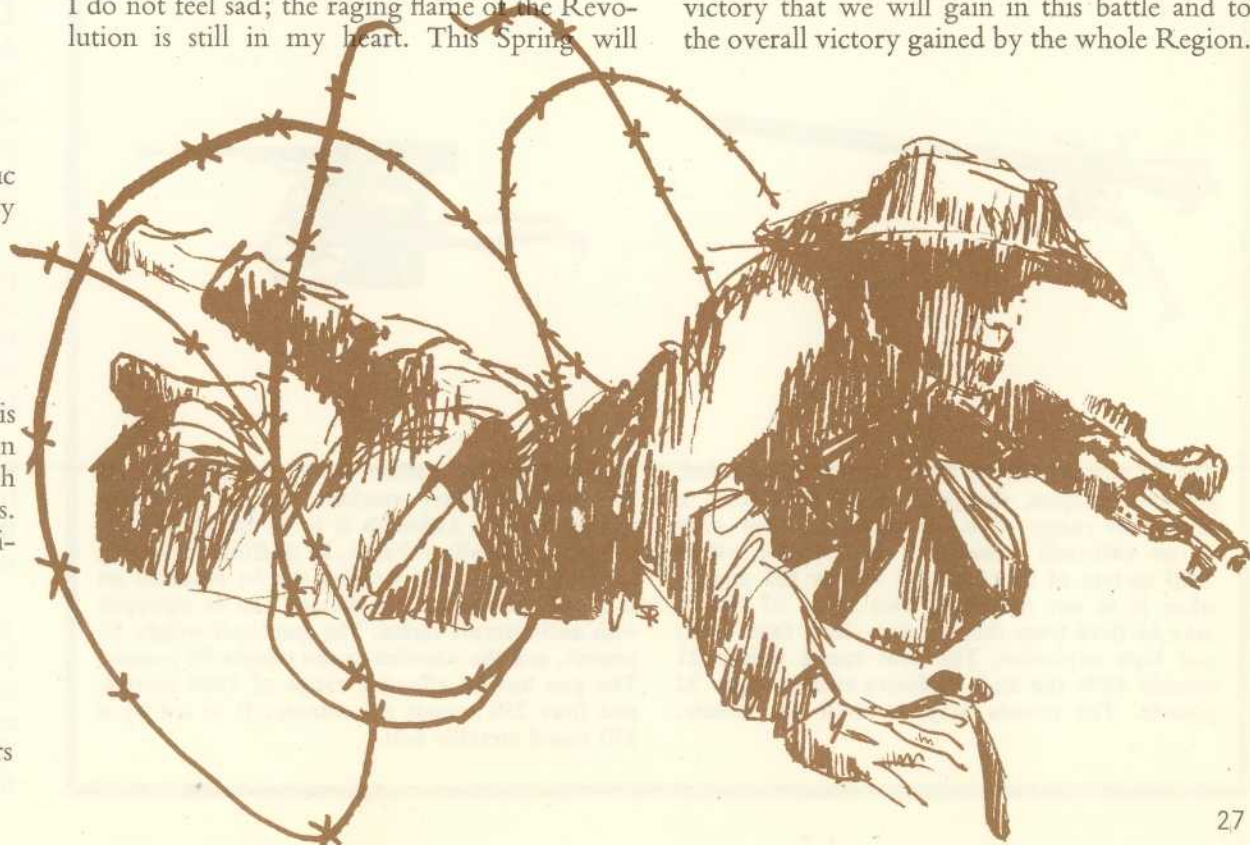
How much I miss my wife and child! But I do not feel sad; the raging flame of the Revolution is still in my heart. This Spring will

bring great victories and my country will enjoy next spring in peace forever.

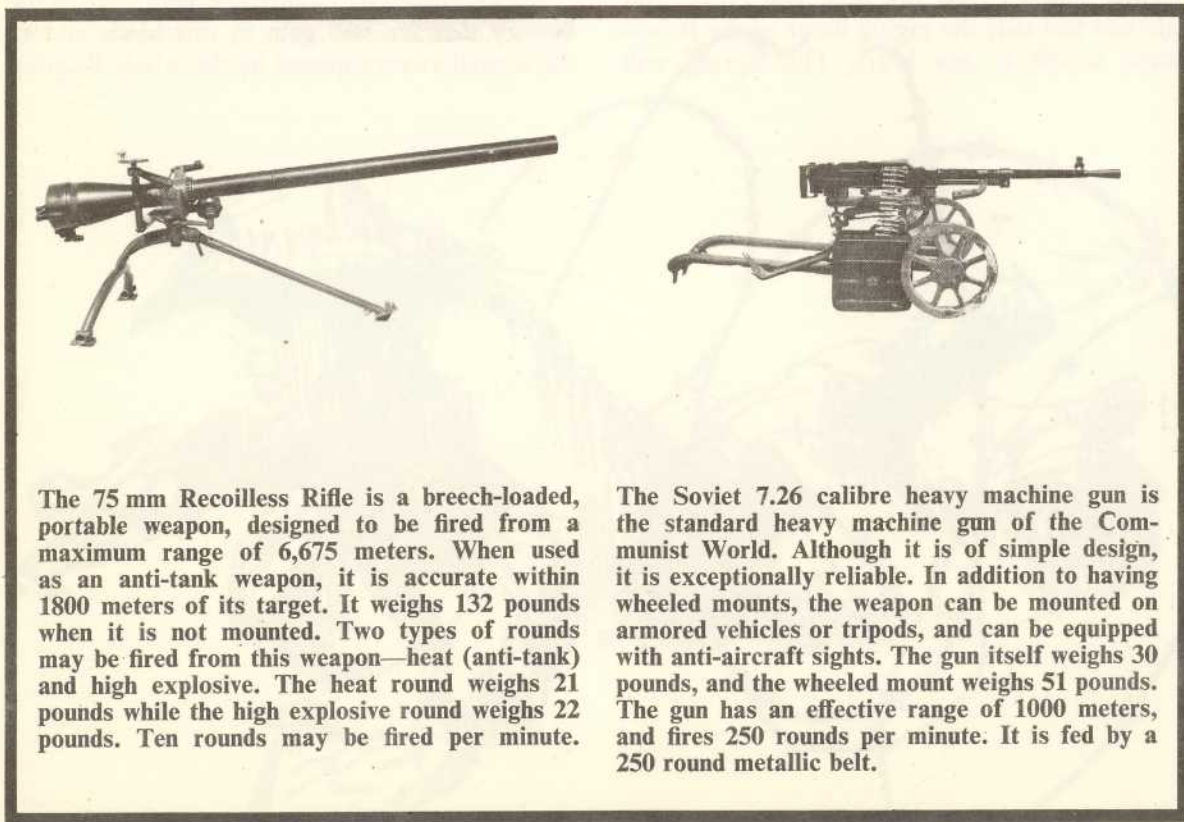
25 Feb.

Three months of hard preparation for the battlefield! Tonight, I, Assistant Arrow Leader, and Comrade Dau, Arrow Leader, will lead our unit in launching an attack on the U.S. position in Dong Du (Cu Chi).

March Forward! Contribute your part to the victory that we will gain in this battle and to the overall victory gained by the whole Region.



On The Other Side...



The 75 mm Recoilless Rifle is a breech-loaded, portable weapon, designed to be fired from a maximum range of 6,675 meters. When used as an anti-tank weapon, it is accurate within 1800 meters of its target. It weighs 132 pounds when it is not mounted. Two types of rounds may be fired from this weapon—heat (anti-tank) and high explosive. The heat round weighs 21 pounds while the high explosive round weighs 22 pounds. Ten rounds may be fired per minute.

The Soviet 7.26 calibre heavy machine gun is the standard heavy machine gun of the Communist World. Although it is of simple design, it is exceptionally reliable. In addition to having wheeled mounts, the weapon can be mounted on armored vehicles or tripods, and can be equipped with anti-aircraft sights. The gun itself weighs 30 pounds, and the wheeled mount weighs 51 pounds. The gun has an effective range of 1000 meters, and fires 250 rounds per minute. It is fed by a 250 round metallic belt.

Enemy weapons and tactics—not always easy to understand when the enemy uses anything he can get hold of as a weapon and anything he can dream up as tactics. But any soldier who wants to minimize his dangers during a tour in Vietnam takes the trouble to learn the kinds of weapons the enemy normally uses and the methods he often employs.

The weapons most commonly used are pictured on these pages. A former NVA senior captain detained by the 2d Battalion, 14th Infantry explained his battalion's tactics in employing these weapons during talks with interrogators at Cu Chi.

The NVA/VC forces do not have the striking power and the mobility that U.S. troops have. They therefore must rely heavily upon the element of surprise. Their most frequently used "surprise" is an ambush.

There are two types of basic ambushes employed by the NVA/VC. An attack ambush is most commonly used against allied truck convoys. The first steps in planning the ambush are to investigate the terrain in the area where the ambush is to be staged and learn the time that the convoy is due to arrive. When the time

Story and Photos by

SP4 Gary Sciortino

comes, the ambush sets up its equipment on line along one side of the road from 50 to 500 meters away from the edge. Anti-aircraft machine guns, usually 7.62 caliber variety, are set up in a circle around the ambush site on both sides of the road. The ambush firing line which is to destroy a convoy of 20 trucks, for example, will be composed of about five firing positions with four to five men on each position. Dispersed among these positions will be approximately three RPG-2's, four RPG-7's, and three 7.62 caliber heavy machine guns. This is in addition to the individual small arms carried by the enemy.

The attack begins when the last truck of the convoy passes the first enemy emplacement and the first truck approaches the fifth enemy position. The fifth position opens fire first and moves across the road in order to block the convoy. The men in the first emplacement simultaneously move across the road behind the convoy to block it from the rear. The ambushing force attempts to inflict as much damage as possible on the convoy before allied aircraft attack them and it is necessary to disperse.

The attack ambush is also used to block



The 107 mm Chinese Communist Rocket is usually used against targets which cover an area at least 400 meters. It is often used in support of enemy infantry. It may be fired from its normal launcher; but because of mobility problems, the enemy generally fires it from crossed stakes, as shown here, mounds of dirt, etc. It is 33 inches long and weighs 42 pounds. Its range is between 6000 to 8000 meters. The rocket launcher, which may or may not be used, weighs 49 pounds with two tubes and 548 pounds with twelve tubes.



The 122 mm Soviet or Chinese Communist Rocket is fin-stabilized has more range and destructive power than the 107 mm rocket with approximately the same accuracy. It is not only used against villages and military installations, but also cities, bridges, and ports in the Republic of Vietnam. The rocket itself is 75 inches long and weighs 102 pounds. Its maximum range is 6,000 to 11,000 meters. The rocket's warhead holds 15 pounds of high explosive. Its normal launcher weighs 121 pounds.

The Soviet or Chinese Communist Anti-tank Grenade Launcher RPG-2 is a muzzle-loaded, shoulder-held, smooth-bore recoilless launcher, which fires a fin-stabilized round. It may be fired from the right shoulder only, since there is a gas escape hole on the right side of the weapon. The launcher weighs 6.3 pounds. The round travels at 84 meters per second and has an effective range of 100 meters. Three to six rounds may be fired per minute. The heat and shock produced by the round causes the most damage when it explodes. It can penetrate up to 12 inches of steel armor.



The Soviet Anti-tank Grenade Launcher RPG-7 is patterned after the RPG-2. The center section of the tube has been enlarged to provide greater thrust for the projectile. A large, funnel-shaped deflector is located at the rear of the tube. The telescopic sights are detachable. This launcher weighs 14.5 pounds. The projectile travels at 120 meters per second and the weapon is effective within 300 to 500 meters from its target. The RPG-7's round can penetrate up to 16 inches of steel armor.



The AK-47 (top) is the basic weapon of the NVA/VC. The AK-50 (bottom) is merely an AK-47 with a bayonet attached. The bayonet can be folded backwards into position underneath the weapon. This lightweight (10 pound) weapon can fire 40 rounds per minute when set on semi-automatic and 90-100 rounds per minute on automatic. Its effective range is 460 meters. The weapon's magazine holds 30 rounds. NVA/VC troops receive fifteen hours of classroom instruction on the weapon, but they are not allowed to test-fire more than 30 rounds before actually going into combat.



allied infantry units from reinforcing other allied troops who are under attack.

The counterattack ambush, the second type, is used to foil allied attacks. It is used on the basis of intelligence that an allied attack will occur at a particular time and place. Often the only warning that NVA/VC troops receive of an allied attack is when the area is reconnoitered by artillery and helicopter gunship fire. In any case, the enemy usually tries to set up mortars, machine guns, RPG launchers, and small arms surrounding the area that is presumed to be the planned landing zone for an allied eagle flight.

Another favorite offensive tactic of the NVA/VC is the standoff attack. This means that they try to use rockets, mortars, and recoilless rifles to attack allied military installations. There are four primary objectives for this type of attack. The first, of course, is to destroy as many allied military combat assets as possible. Second, the enemy tries to show that he has the ability to attack and impose damage on major allied posts at any time and place. Third, he tries to force the allies to use a sizable part of their military capability to protect their base camp. The final but not least important of the objectives is to wear down the morale of the soldiers stationed in these base camps.

Enemy preparation for a standoff attack involves reconnoitering the base camp to be attacked at least three times before the actual attack. The surveyors try to determine the position of critical equipment and the disposition of

the installation's external and internal defenses. They also set up aiming stakes at the proposed launching area for the reference of rocket and mortar crews who will arrive at the site later.

The rockets and mortars are moved to a storage and preparation area within one hour's walking distance from the launch site. On the night of the attack the launching crews prepare mortar and rocket launching pits, wire the rockets for firing, and load the rockets. Usually the standoff attack site is located about two or three kilometers from the target.

Rockets are usually fired in salvos of three, six, twelve, or eighteen. Mortars and recoilless rifles, although they don't have the destructive capabilities of rockets, are more accurate and can be used to hit smaller targets. However, this heavier launching equipment is harder to evacuate from the launch site as quickly.

All in all, the allied infantryman who makes the constant routine sweeps in specified areas of operation is the man who contributes the most toward knocking the enemy off his guard. Even if a sweep seems to prove absolutely fruitless, the odds are good that it upset a possible ambush site or forced the enemy to carry his heavy crew-served weapons on his back for long distances. It's a process of keeping the enemy off balance until he eventually wears himself out. And any experienced snakehandler can tell you that if you can keep a snake off balance with a stick so he cannot coil up, then he cannot strike. ♡

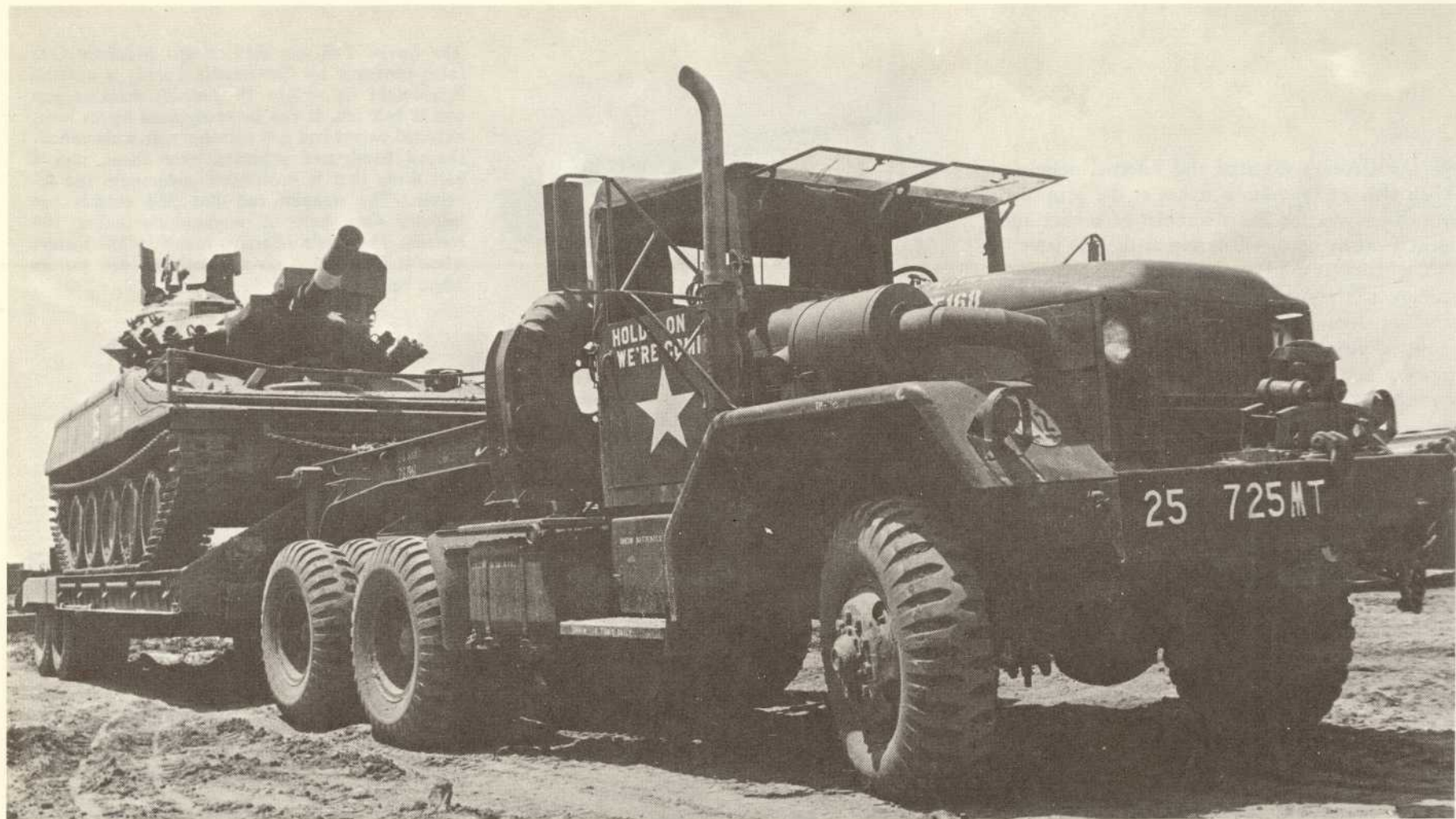


The Soviet 7.62 mm RPD Light Machine Gun (also produced by Communist China) is a small lightweight (it weighs 19 pounds) machine gun and is belt fed. It can be recognized by its long, exposed barrel and gas cylinder with a dumbbell-shaped handguard mounted over them, and a belt drum that is positioned underneath the receiver. The weapon can fire 550 rounds per minute. One belt of ammunition holds 100 rounds. The gun's effective range is 750 meters when it is mounted on a bipod and 460 meters when handheld.

The 7.62 mm Light Machine Gun (also produced by Communist China) is considered an excellent light machine gun. It has a full pistol grip in addition to a recoil spring which is located at the rear of the receiver. It can be identified by its large, flat drum magazine and unique magazine catch that also serves as a rear sight guard. This fully automatic weapon weighs 30 pounds when loaded, fires 80 rounds per minute and has an effective range of 800 meters. It is fed by a 47-round drum magazine.



The Chinese Communist 60 mm Mortar is much smaller and more lightweight than older CHI-COM models. The tube is 24 inches long, and together with the base plate it weighs 27 pounds. This mortar differs from the previous Chinese Communist copies of the U.S. M2 60 mm mortar by the addition of a carrying handle designed to allow it to be carried as a unit, with the bipod and base plate folded under the tube. The high explosive rounds fired from this weapon travel at 158 meters per second. Fifteen to twenty rounds may be fired per minute.



Haydock

"Service To The Line"

Sparks sputtering and shooting from a white-hot welding iron. The harsh clang of metal on metal. The high-pitched whine of a power drill. Machines, grease, oil and sweat. The steady hum of a computer. Skilled hands rewire highly complex avionics gear. These are only a few of the sights and sounds of the 25th Infantry Division's 725th Maintenance Battalion at work.

"Get it. Repair it. Get it out. That's the mission of the 725th Maintenance Battalion." Captain Edward Voelker, the battalion adjutant, paused, as if surprised that it could be as simple as that. "That's it," he said. "That's the whole story."

However, far from being the whole story, it was just the beginning.

Approaching the 725th for the first time is somewhat like paying a first visit to the Smithsonian Institute or Disneyland. It's possible to spend a whole day there without seeing it all. In fact, you've just scratched the surface.

Acting as repairman for the Division is a big operation. The battalion is made up of Headquarters and Company A, three forward support companies, two of which are located at Cu Chi supporting the 2d and 3d Brigades, and one at Tay Ninh supporting the 1st Brigade, and Company E, which is the Transportation and Aircraft Maintenance Company. The 725th is responsible for direct support maintenance to nearly every piece of equipment in the 25th Infantry Division. Only a few special items such as medical equipment, electrical accounting machines, quartermaster air and cryptographic equipment are excluded.

A few figures from the record books show just how big the job tackled by the 725th is. It's best revealed by two significant figures, the number of items of equipment supported and

by 1LT J.T. Richards



Karlgaard

Sine on time—An avionics technician at E Company of the 725th adjusts an FM set using the sine wave of an oscilloscope to monitor the electronic "happening" within the set.

the number of demands for repair parts.

In all, over 30,000 pieces of equipment must be kept in working order by the battalion. The task is even more difficult because this figure includes so many different kinds of equipment. Responsibility for maintaining such large quantities of so many different types of equipment results in the wide range of activity at the 725th.

On an average day a rugged M-123 trailer known as the Dragon Wagon pulled by a 10-ton tractor hauls in an M-551 Sheridan for repairs. At the same time only a short distance away a helicopter's communication system is being brought into the avionics shop for repairs. In another area of the battalion, weapons that fire projectiles ranging from the small caliber of a .45 automatic pistol to the largest artillery pieces, the eight-inch howitzers, are repaired and tested. Heavy construction equipment, dozers, graders, shovels, pumps and generators used by the Division's engineers are also brought to the 725th for maintenance.

Actually just about anything within the Division, whether large or small, simple or complex, is the responsibility of the maintenance battalion: a tank or an armored personnel carrier with damaged tracks, helicopters battered and dented in combat, a PPS-25 radar set on the blink, the precision-sighting device of a 4.2 mortar, or a typewriter with keys that stick. The list runs on and on.

Quantity and diversity of equipment aren't the only things that make 725th Maintenance a formidable operation. To carry out its mission, the battalion must also provide repair parts. An average of 24,000 requests for repair parts must be answered each month.

The 725th has excelled in meeting the demand.

Its outstanding success is due to a number of factors. Plain hard work and an around the clock operation are first on the list. This supply task is also performed faster and more efficiently by using the latest in office machinery.

At Tech Supply of Headquarters and Company A, repair parts are stacked on row after row of shelves. In the large receiving room the metal doors are wide open and a number of delivery trucks are being unloaded. Some of the packages are set aside. All are marked with large red and white "Red Ball" stickers. These cartons contain replacement parts of the highest priority. Red Ball Clerks process these items by hand. This way no delivery stays longer than 24 hours and within 48 hours is in the hands of the user.

Bulk shipments of standard items are handled by a machine which records and displays on microfilm the names, locations, and stock numbers of every supply item on hand. In this way all the vital information on everything from the smallest nuts and bolts to a tank engine is at an operator's fingertips.

Located nearby is another product of technological progress, an NCR 500 computer. The computer is housed in a small complex of air-conditioned trailers known as the Stock Records Control Center. Using the computer helps speed and control the enormous quantity of data needed to requisition the large stock of technical supplies available at the 725th Maintenance. The computer produces about 16,000 resupply requisitions a month. The battalion's determined effort to meet the demand for repair parts coupled with employment of modern equipment has increased demand satisfaction in the past six months from 28 percent to 49 percent.



The Recordak Lodestar Reader—Resupply items, stock numbers, locations and other important data are kept on microfilm for quick reference by Headquarters and A Company personnel.



Sundown—Nevertheless, the beat goes on for the personnel at Company E who work through the night to keep the Division's rotary-wing aircraft aloft.

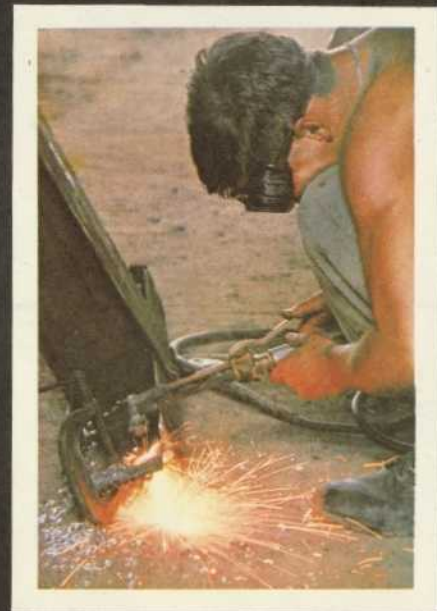


In processing—Newly delivered resupply parts are checked and shelved in the huge tech supply stock room of Headquarters and A Company.



Flashing lights and humming machinery—At the Stock and Records Control Center a National Cash Register 500 Computer is used to make the task of producing thousands of requisitions a month easier and faster.

Bedazzled—Sparks fly as a welder at the 725th Service and Evacuation section cuts a metal bar down to size.





Karlgaard

A special project which has become the pride of the Service and Evac section is the mobile dental van. A 12-ton trailer was equipped with two dental chairs, sinks, drilling apparatus, cabinets, x-ray machine and lights. It's the first complete dentist's office on wheels in Vietnam. The 40th Medical Detachment uses the van to bring dental care to Tropic Lightning soldiers at fire support bases throughout the Division. The van has also been used for medical civil action programs (MEDCAPS).

Company E, the Transportation Maintenance Aircraft Company, is also a place where the action is. On an average afternoon you'll see at least a half dozen repairmen inside, on top and under a Cobra (AH-1G) brought in for periodic inspection. In front of the production control office one of the company's six test pilots gets the lowdown from a mechanic on the aircraft he will be testing later in the afternoon. Near the Tech Supply shop a shiny new LOH (OH-6A) engine is ready for installation. In the company's armament shop Cobra rocket systems, M-60's and miniguns are disassembled for cleaning and repairs.

"Slicks" (UH-1H, UH-1D), Cobras, and LOH's make up the bulk of more than 85 of the Division's aircraft maintained by Company E. It's another big job that the men of the 725th have proved equal to. The aircraft availability rate achieved by Company E is an impressive 80 percent. This is the best of any comparable unit in Vietnam.

Tighten up—A 725th Maintenance Battalion mechanic makes repairs on the track of a Sheridan Light Armored Assault Vehicle.

Above average achievements have become almost a matter of course at 725th Maintenance. One of the surest measurements of the effectiveness of a maintenance operation is the backlog number, which is equal to the total pieces of equipment in for repairs and out of the hands of the user. Since March, the backlog has dropped from a mid-400 level to an all-time low of 189 in August.

The consistent high performance of the men of the 725th Maintenance Battalion is the result of many things. The battalion's commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Maxie O. Redic, noted some of them: long hours, planning, aggressiveness, pride and hard work. In the final analysis all of these qualities have combined to give special meaning to the battalion's motto, "Service to the Line."

Karlgard



Karlgard

Over—Tightening the last few bolts securing a Huey helicopter rotor, two aircraft maintenance mechanics from Company E put the finishing touches on a damaged chopper.

And under—Company E mechanics work with sheet metal to repair a battle-battered 2d Brigade LOH.

AUSTRALIA:

You've waited a long time for that R & R, so tie your kangaroo down, sport, and take a relaxing trip south of the Equator.

Go to the land of the miniskirt, Koala Bear and rugged countryside. Go to the land down under—Australia.

From the time that big Boeing 707 touches down at Sydney airport, you will be in a different world of excitement and good living.

No need to worry about bringing a lot of civilian clothing, since you can rent just about anything you will need from a clothing shop in the R & R processing center in Sydney. You'll want a sport coat and tie for nights on the town, and depending on the season of year, appropriate casual clothes for daytime wear.

In the meantime, get checked into a plush hotel (reservations are made for you at the R & R center) and get out to have a look at the world. For the World it is, since the Aussies speak perfect English (England-style at that), dress like Americans, eat American style food and



Different As Day and Night

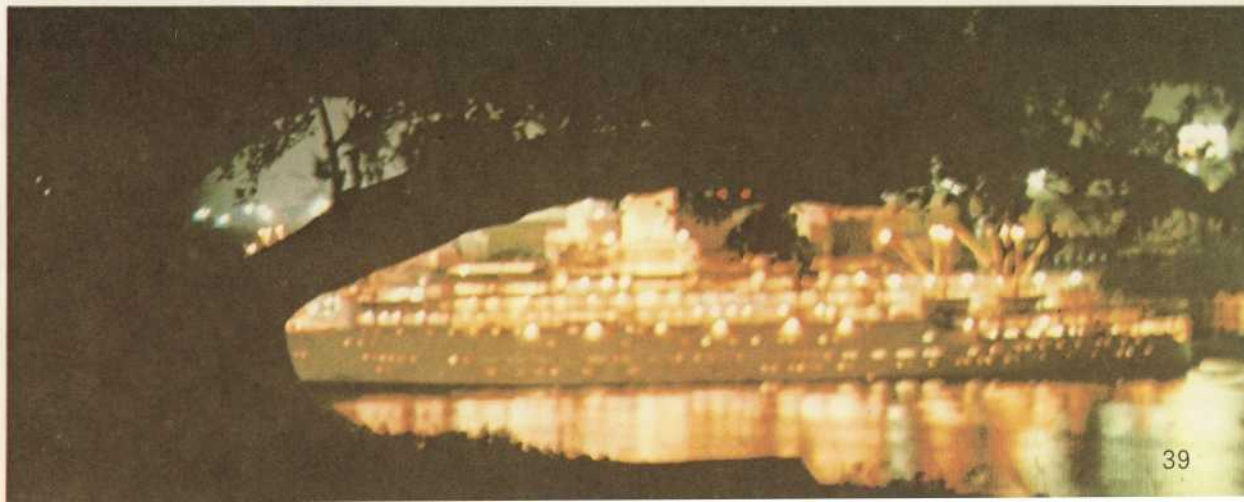
Photos and Story by James Brayer



have a most friendly air about them. So what if they drive on the wrong side of the street?

You'll soon discover that the hub of Sydney, a city of about two and one-half million and Australia's largest, is a combination of New York's Greenwich Village, Chicago's Old Town, and Paris' Pigalle District called "King's Cross." "The Cross," as the Aussies call it, is characterized by a variety of fine restaurants, first-class hotels and popular night spots.

King's Cross has a distinct trademark: A large spherical water fountain illuminated at night by



colored lights. Definitely a photographic souvenir for shutterbugs.

Probably one of the delights a soldier most looks forward to when contemplating his R & R (besides the companionship of one of the friendly female natives) is a big, beautiful steak dinner with all the trimmings. You can get it in King's Cross, and it's a good way to start out a night of taking in the sights, whatever they may be.

One of the better restaurants in the Cross area is the French Restaurant. You walk up a narrow flight of stairs from street level, swing open the heavy oak door and find yourself in an authentically French atmosphere. The waiters speak French, the wine is vintage, the food is melt-in-your-mouth, the price surprisingly low.

A two-man orchestra plays soft, relaxing dinner music which helps the digestion and quickly takes the mind away from Vietnam. You might enjoy a dance or two after you've ordered.

After your appetite has been satisfied, you'll want to seek out some of the night life in the Big City. A fine place for you (and your companion) to begin would be the Red Garter on Macleay Street in King's Cross. The Red Garter features a Gay Nineties-style Dixieland band. Waiters and bartenders wear red-and-white striped shirts, black bow ties, straw hats and are willing to bring you plenty of that outstanding Australian draught beer. Patrons are encouraged to sing along, clap their hands and stomp their feet in the peanut shells which litter the floor.

If you don't care to stay there until 3:00 a.m., the Motor Club is an excellent choice for a little lower-key, higher-class entertainment. The Motor Club is an exclusive membership night spot reserved for some of the more affluent Sydney-ites, usually. Not too long ago, its members decided to open their facilities to R & R personnel. Nice indeed. You'll be presented your own temporary membership card which is valid for you and a guest during your stay in Australia.

On the third floor you'll find a plush room full of small tables and dim lights. Waiters will bring you all the liquid refreshments you like, again at quite a reasonable fee, while you enjoy the show. Leggy dancers, top-notch singers and an occasional comedy routine combine for





a high-spirited good time.

These are only a few of the many places in Sydney to keep you occupied during your evening hours but what to do while that southern hemisphere sun shines?

One suggestion is to visit the huge and breathtakingly gorgeous Royal Botanic Gardens, a large plot of government land on the shores of Sydney Cove. An afternoon walk through the Gardens with camera is well worth the time. The beauty of it all erases any memory of rice paddies and elephant grass in a hurry. The Gardens have a seemingly endless array of statues, fountains, flowers, trees and shrubbery,

and if you're inclined to girl watching you will find plenty of miniskirted young ladies strolling by the water's edge.

What else is there to do? How can you really get away from it all? How can you see a bit of the country and get to know your hosts? Easy!

Proscenia Travel Agency, located in the R & R processing center, is authorized to handle arrangements for high quality entertainment at well below normal costs. By utilizing Proscenia's services, you can amuse yourself with anything from surfing on the famous Gold Coast to moonlight horseback riding in the bush, to snow skiing, depending on the time of year.

Australia's weather situation is just the reverse of that in the States. That is, winter is summertime in Australia. It's not a bad idea to keep this in mind when considering what you would like to do during your visit Down Under.

In season, moonlight horseback riding is a favorite on R & R. Proscenia invites a number of local females to accompany riders along lonely bushland trails "out back" followed by a hearty steak dinner.

A more elaborate excursion available (again, in season) is the three day, two night snow ski holiday. A two and a half hour trip by air and road takes you to tiny Thredbo Alpine Village in the mountains, some 260 miles from Sydney.

Real snow and clean crisp mountain air make for more of that good "away from it all" relaxing atmosphere. The ski season runs June through October, and normally the snow is packed with a light, powdery cover. There are 26 miles of ski trails.

A package program available at Proscenia includes two nights in a large but cozy cabin-type motel built on the side of a hill. Breakfast and the evening meal are part of the plan, as well as rental of skies, poles, boots, parka, sweater and stretch pants. Also, round trip transportation from Sydney is included. The crackling, glowing fireplace in the lounge, good companionship, fresh air and good food all make for a most pleasant vacation.

Then, there's sailing, yachting, deep sea fishing and dozens of other interesting and exciting things to be done by adventuresome GI's.

You can find information about all these things at the R & R center as you process in. And as they say in Australia, "Ave yourself a jolly good time, mate!"

TAY NINH—JUNE 1969

1LT Mack D. Gooding and SGT Richard Adams

5 June

First indications of a planned attack came when 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Manchu surprised a large enemy force trying to position itself for a move on the city. The enemy force, a part of the 271st NVA Regiment, had entrenched itself in the dense undergrowth of the Renegade Woods, 13 miles south of the city. A day of heavy fighting by the Manchus backed by gunships, artillery and air strikes left 45 NVA dead while the remainder of the force pulled back to the safety of Cambodian territory.

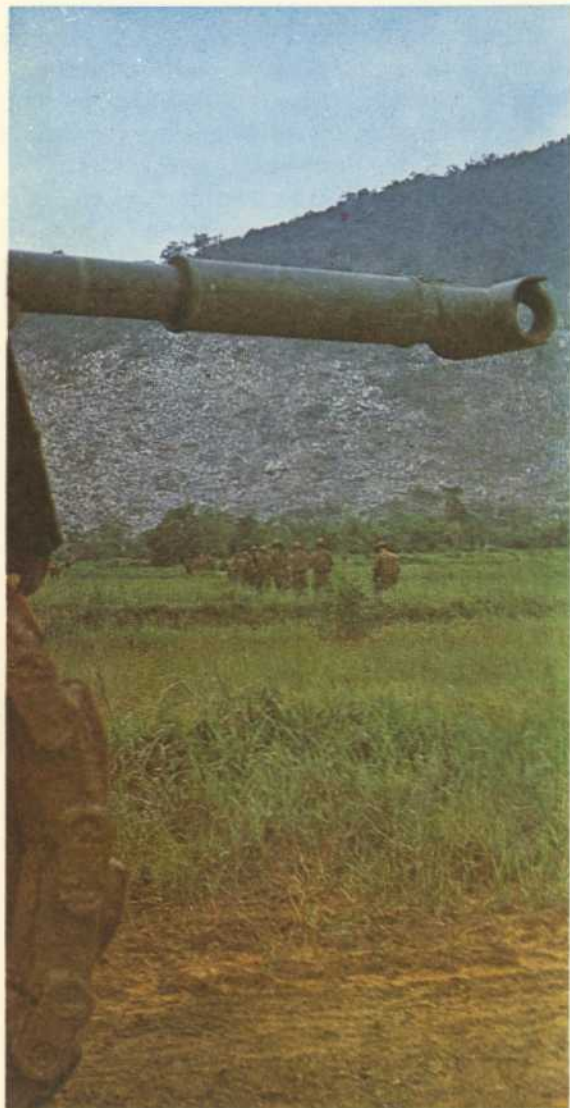
6 June

The following morning ARVN Airborne troops halted the advance of another element of the same regiment 17 miles southwest of the city. Enemy losses in that battle were 86.

Simultaneously the NVA launched its first in a series of attacks on FSB Crook, 19 miles northwest of the city. Crook, situated amidst the jungles of War Zone C, had been a thorn in the enemy's side since its construction. It lies astride several key infiltration routes formerly used by the NVA to move men into the vicinity of the city.

Throughout the evening sensing devices had picked up movement of large numbers of troops in the woods to the south and east of the fire base. At 3 a.m. a heavy barrage of rockets and mortars began, followed a short while later by a ground attack.

As the enemy poured from the woodline,



Elliott

An M48A3 tank from 2/34 Armor stands ready to support infantrymen moving toward the slopes of Nui Ba Den.

Tay Ninh Province lies to the northwest of Saigon jutting deep into Cambodia so that it is bordered by that country on three sides. The province embraces the dense forests of War Zone C to the north and fertile farmlands and rubber plantations to the south. Its most prominent geographical feature is Nui Ba Den, a forbidding mass of granite honeycombed with caves, rising starkly from rice paddies at the edge of War Zone C.

Tay Ninh City, the provincial capital and Vietnam's fourth largest city, is a bustling center of commerce and small industry only 13 miles from the Cambodian border. Its location makes it a tempting target for enemy attacks. The city is an easy night's march for a foot soldier from Cambodia, the jungles to the north or Nui Ba Den. All three locations offer the enemy a relatively secure staging area where he can mass his forces for an attack.

Operating from Tay Ninh Base Camp just northwest of the provincial capital and from its fire support bases that ring the city, the 1st Brigade of the 25th Infantry Division keeps watch over the approaches to the city with the assistance of several units of ARVN Airborne troops. One of their missions is to prevent the enemy from ever mounting an attack against the city.

In the spring of 1969, the enemy launched a division-size attack against the city, a campaign which would test the mobility and courage of the combined defense forces and deal the enemy a thundering military defeat.

across the open field toward the base, soldiers from Bravo Company, 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry and artillerymen from Alfa Battery, 7th Battalion, 11th Field Artillery opened up with everything they had, destroying the enemy's attack before it could gain momentum. Gunships and Spookies circling overhead brought down a deadly rain of fire on the exposed enemy while artillery from nearby fire support bases bombarded the enemy rocket and mortar positions and laid down blocking fires to prevent the ground troops from escaping back to the woodline.

First light brought quiet to the area, broken only by sporadic sniper fire. Seventy-six enemy bodies lay strewn about the perimeter. Captured documents identified the enemy unit as the 3d Battalion, 272d NVA Regiment.

Major Joseph Hacia, the base commander, praised his men. "They performed to perfection and fought just as if they were at a turkey shoot. The real key to our success was early warning. Our electronic devices had them zeroed in several hours before they actually made their attack. We knew they were coming and we were ready for them. The men on the bunker line knew exactly what to do and caught the sappers before they had a chance to do any damage."

At the same time FSB Crook was being attacked, soldiers from the enemy's 1st Battalion, 88th Regiment were moving toward the city from Nui Ba Den. As they moved from the safety of the caves on the slopes, their movement was monitored by sensing devices. When they reached the level ground of the rice paddies, artillery opened up on them and completely shattered their movement.

However one element, an anti-aircraft com-

pany, did make its way to the small village of Than Son, on the northern outskirts of the city and dug in for the night. At dawn ARVN soldiers mopped up this force capturing 15 of their highly prized .51 calibre anti-aircraft machine guns.

Infantrymen from Alfa Company, 4th Battalion (Mechanized), 23d Infantry moved into blocking position in front of the mountain as the ARVN soldiers pushed northwest out of Than Son. Small groups of the disorganized enemy battalion were engaged and eliminated throughout the day bringing the total enemy dead to 79 by nightfall.

The villagers of Than Son began to trickle

A spooky gunship fires its miniguns at enemy positions around FSB Crook.

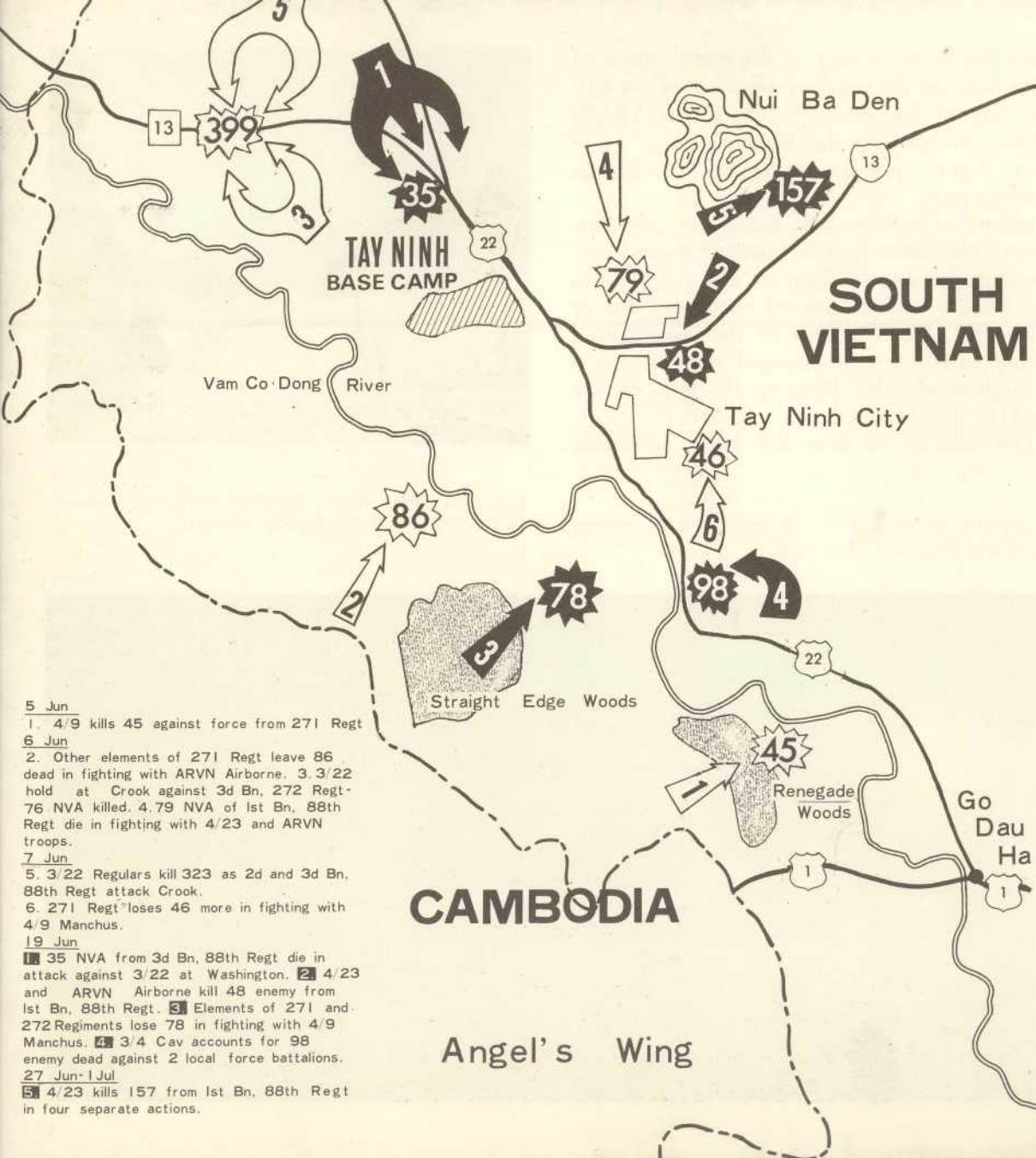


25th Inf

4/9 Manchus move toward concealed enemy positions in the Renegade Woods.

Haughey





back into their homes within 24 hours of the enemy's initial intrusion. To the credit of the government troops, little damage was done to the village and the province relief organizations were on hand to assist the villagers repair or rebuild and pass out food and clothing.

The attack on Crook and the action around Than Son were soon to be overshadowed by the results of a second assault on Crook.

7 June

Again in the dark hours of early morning, communist forces began hurling hundreds of rockets and mortars against the defenders of the tiny fire support base. This time the ground attack came from the north and east. Even before the barrage had lifted, NVA soldiers of the 2d and 3d Battalions, 88th Regiment were making their headlong, senseless charges across the open ground toward the base's perimeter and once again this tactic proved futile. As the NVA moved out of the woodline and into the open, the defenders cut their ranks to ribbons.

"I saw them coming," related Sp4 Richard Marroquin, a machine gunner for the Regulars. "This place was lit up like the Fourth of July and we could spot our targets as they came out of the woodline."

Helicopters dropped illumination all night and the artillerymen on the base fired round after round point blank at the charging enemy. Just as the night before, artillery from nearby fire support bases cut the enemy's path of retreat and pounded his artillery positions while helicopter gunships and Air Force Spookies swarmed over the area surrounding the base. There was so much air support that some ships had to wait as much as a half an hour before they could move in to deliver their ordnance.

- 5 Jun
 1. 4/9 kills 45 against force from 271 Regt
 6 Jun
 2. Other elements of 271 Regt leave 86 dead in fighting with ARVN Airborne. 3. 3/22 hold at Crook against 3d Bn, 272 Regt-76 NVA killed. 4. 79 NVA of 1st Bn, 88th Regt die in fighting with 4/23 and ARVN troops.
 7 Jun
 5. 3/22 Regulars kill 323 as 2d and 3d Bn, 88th Regt attack Crook.
 6. 271 Regt loses 46 more in fighting with 4/9 Manchus.
 19 Jun
 1. 35 NVA from 3d Bn, 88th Regt die in attack against 3/22 at Washington. 2. 4/23 and ARVN Airborne kill 48 enemy from 1st Bn, 88th Regt. 3. Elements of 271 and 272 Regiments lose 78 in fighting with 4/9 Manchus. 4. 3/4 Cav accounts for 98 enemy dead against 2 local force battalions.
 27 Jun-1 Jul
 5. 4/23 kills 157 from 1st Bn, 88th Regt in four separate actions.

The entire operation was a school-book exercise in proper coordination of available resources and the enemy paid dearly—323 NVA died in the futile assault. Not a single U.S. casualty was taken.

That same day the Manchus combined with government forces to crush the final attempt of the 271st Regiment to reach the city from the south. Close fighting just two miles from the center of the city resulted in 46 enemy dead.

Action in Tay Ninh Province slowed to slight and scattered contact for about two weeks as the enemy tried to regroup and reorganize its badly mauled force. But then on June 19th, the drive to reach the city was on again.

19 June

At FSB Washington, seven miles northwest of Tay Ninh City early warning devices began to mark sappers as they crept toward the perimeter shortly before midnight on the 18th. Within minutes flares were up illuminating the flat marshland and clearly defining the sapper squads. Enemy mortars and rockets began to rain down inside the base.

"I'd never seen so much stuff," said PFC Randolph Brogan, a Regular medic. "There must have been 200 rounds coming at us."

Alfa Company, 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry held firm while artillery, gunships and Spooky pounded the charging enemy as he came into the open. "We knew just what they were up to," said Major William C. McNamara, the base commander. "We just wanted to take full advantage of the open terrain surrounding

4/23 Tomahawks search out NVA forces on the slopes of Nui Ba Den.

25th Inf



Washington by using the rapid fire weapons, Spooky and the gunships while the NVA were without cover and still a great distance from us.”

As daylight came, the NVA fled under cover of sporadic sniper fire leaving behind 35 dead and six comrades who were picked up as detainees. There were no American casualties.

While the Regulars were fighting at Washington, the 1st Battalion, 88th Regiment was making its way from Nui Ba Den toward Tay Ninh City. Under cover of night the battalion took up a position on the western outskirts of the city, not far from the Cao Dai Temple.

The Cao Dai are in the minority everywhere in Vietnam except Tay Ninh. The population of the province is more than seventy percent Cao Dai and their influence is proportional to their size. The sect had its beginnings on the eastern slopes of Nui Ba Den and the founders established a great temple and complex that make up the Holy See immediately after the religious experience that breathed life into the new sect. Composed of features from Christianity, Buddhism and Islam, the main precept of the Cao Dai religion is that each man is responsible for his own actions, that the actions are

constantly observed from on high (hence the symbol of one gigantic eye is one of the most significant symbols of the sect) and that patience and virtue will be rewarded. Under such a concept, the sect has shunned its own defensive force since the late 1950's in favor of a small contingent of unarmed Temple Guards. The importance of this great religious shrine to the people was evident. It had to be protected.

Charlie Company, 4th Battalion (Mechanized), 23d Infantry sealed off all avenues of approach to the Temple with their APCs while ARVN Airborne troops headed by the province chief moved into the occupied section of the village and made contact with the dug-in enemy. Civilian refugees spilled from the contested area.

“The NVA were everywhere—in hootches, under hootches, in trees and haystacks. They tried to take advantage of everything they could,” said SGT John Gross, a member of the Tomahawks.

Eliminating crack shot snipers and engaging in grenade throwing fights, the Tomahawks and Vietnamese soldiers pushed the enemy steadily back. It took a day of fierce house-to-house fighting before the area was quiet again. Forty-eight NVA lost their lives.

The enemy's tactical plan was developing similarly to the one he had employed just two weeks before. The enemy was spotted in the Straight Edge Woods, 19 miles south of the city. Charlie Company, 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry was air assaulted into the area and teamed up with ARVN Marines to engage the enemy in his well fortified positions. Air strikes and artil-

A 175mm gun sends a round on its way in support of ground troops fighting around Tay Ninh City.



25th Inf



25th Inf

Troopers from 3/4 Cav take up positions as they prepare to go in after VC forces south of Tay Ninh.

lery softened the resistance and the Manchus moved in to drive the enemy from their bunkers.

"We advanced in with our M-16's blazing, throwing grenades into bunkers, blowing Charlie in place," said SP4 Dene Morris. After six hours of fighting the enemy retreated out of the woods where Bravo 4/9 in a blocking position cut them down. 78 enemy from the 271st and 272d Regiments died before the force could dissolve into the thick undergrowth.

In conjunction with the fighting elsewhere around the city, two local force battalions were moving toward the city on the eastern side of the river. One of their first missions was to ambush the vital supply convoy that daily makes its way from Cu Chi to Tay Ninh with supplies.

A Kit Carson scout acting on intelligence from local residents had warned the allies of the threat to the convoy and the 3d Squadron, 4th Cavalry preceded the convoy itself up the supply route. The enemy never fired a shot at

the convoy, but were caught off guard by the rumbling tanks. Bracing RPG and automatic weapons fire, Bravo and Charlie Troops of the Cav raced into the enemy positions. Ninety-eight of the enemy were killed as automatic weapons, the big tank guns, artillery, helicopter gunships and tactical air strikes took their toll.

Then as abruptly as it had begun—all was quiet once again. The only task remaining was to mop up the remnants of the 88th Regiment as it tried to retreat from the outskirts of the city, and from there to the security of the dense forests in War Zone C.

27 June—1 July

On 27 June the men of Charlie Company, 4th Battalion, 23d Infantry were in a night defensive position within the shadow of the mountain. In the early morning hours the enemy came from his caves attempting to by-pass the position and head north to War Zone C.


They were detected immediately and every asset in the Division was put on them. Artillery and gunships blocked their path back to the mountain sanctuary and Charlie Company was waiting for them to their front. When the sun rose that morning, thirty-two NVA soldiers lay dead. But the battle was not yet over.

Two additional companies, A and B, joined Charlie in a sweep of the Banana Grove that lay at the base of the mountain. U.S. Air Force jets dove through the cloud shrouding the mountain to pound the caves and crevices where the remaining enemy were hiding. In an unusual deployment of artillery, the big self-propelled 8-inch howitzers of Charlie Battery, 2d Battalion, 32d Field Artillery moved right up to the base of the mountain to fire point blank at the

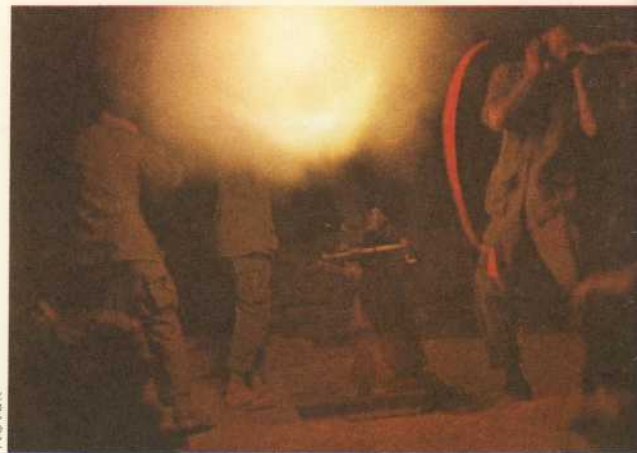
mouths of the caves.

An afternoon sweep of the area turned up an additional 62 enemy dead. Many more of the dead could not be accounted for. They were either sealed in their caves or buried under rock slides.

Two small contacts the following day yielded another 19 enemy dead to the Tomahawks. Two days later the remainder of the decimated battalion attempted to flee the mountain again. It proved a futile attempt. Forty-four of the enemy's number lost their lives.

And once again all was quiet in Tay Ninh Province. The enemy had been beaten back everywhere, its main force units crippled by staggering losses of men and equipment. It would be months before these units could become effective fighting forces again. But around the city 1st Brigade and its ARVN allies maintain a close watch . . . waiting . . . and ready. 

Flame belches from a 4.2 mortar aimed at enemy positions around FSB Washington.



Novak

Vietnam Album:



One of the most unusual records established by the Vietnam War has escaped public notice: It is the most photographed war in history. And unlike any other war, the photographers who take the most pictures are the GI's themselves, the soldiers who hump the fields and paddies in search of the enemy, stopping when possible to snap a flick for the folks back home.

Mathew Brady was the first war photographer. During the American Civil War, he travelled around the fields of battle, carrying all his new-fangled daguerreotype gadgets and weird-smell-

ing chemicals in a covered wagon. Times have changed. Just about every soldier who comes to Vietnam either brings a camera with him or buys one while here. It might be a Polaroid Swinger or a Kodak Instamatic—or maybe a Nikon F or Hasselblad if he's a more dedicated shutterbug. With the nearly infinite varieties of cameras and films available today, picture-taking has never been easier or more fun. The successors to Mathew Brady are carrying on in Vietnam—a camera to many GI's has become as essential as an M-16 or a letter from home.

The Vietnamese climate is notoriously hard



The G.I. Photographer

Story and Photos by SP4 Harry Anderson

on all types of machinery and on a delicate and sensitive instrument such as a camera its toll is doubly damaging. The only sure way to protect your camera from the ravages of heat, humidity, and dust is not to bring it to Vietnam at all. Barring that drastic and unfortunate step, however, there are several ways to protect your camera, film, and lenses from serious climatic damage.

Start by saving one of those large plastic bags that the Vietnamese laundries send your clean fatigues back in. Whenever your photographic equipment is not being used, wrap it in an

absorbent cloth such as a towel, enclose it in the plastic and store it away. This protects the delicate equipment from moisture, mold, mildew and rust.

Remember to clean your camera regularly. Use a soft brush to remove dust inside and out. The lens will need occasional cleaning to remove dirt and grease. Be careful! The lens on any camera is a very fine ground glass which will scratch easily.

Don't use lens papers made for eye glasses on a camera lens—the paper is too coarse and could actually scratch the lens. If nothing else is available, a dry handkerchief, preferably one which has been in your pocket awhile, can do a satisfactory cleaning job. Rub lightly and slowly in a circular motion. (Believe it or not, a freshly laundered handkerchief has stiff fibers which could harm the lens; one which has been in your pocket awhile has "softened" and is safer for the lens.)

Film deteriorates rapidly in hot, humid climates. Try to use it within a week or two of its purchase and process it promptly. Local processing services have been known to be inconsistent in quality, especially for color slides and prints. Mailers for stateside processing are available in the PX and are your safest bet for consistent quality.

Storing film in a cooler or refrigerator can prolong its life when you don't want to use it for a longer period of time. But beware—once the film is removed from cool storage it will

deteriorate at an extremely fast rate and should be used immediately.

No amount of protection will insure that your photo equipment escapes all deterioration during a year's time in Vietnam. But these few simple steps—coupled with common sense and quick thinking—will net you some interesting photographs and a camera still worth taking home when your tour is over. Happy picture-taking!



